

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

On Buddha's birthday, I forced Bo-Bo to take me to Hangzhou and to stay at a charming hotel, overlooking the West Lake. I really enjoyed the tranquility of the place and the food was just wonderful! In all, I spent 4 days at this resort city which, by rights, should be called the Garden City of China. However, if you are thinking of going there, I want to warn you about the quality of the tourist guides, assigned to you. Perhaps, that is a bit of an exaggeration because I am certain that not all of the tourist guides are bad. However, if you hear the name, Ricky Chen, steer away from this horrible person who parades round Hangzhou, pretending to be a tourist guide in the employ of the Government of China. Let me tell you that about the only thing that this lazy fellow can do is to sit in a tourist van and read his silly newspaper. Lazy? You have no idea just how lazy he is! When you ask him a question, if he does not know the answer, he fabricates one. Here is an example. We wanted to go to see the former home of the Number Two man in the Government of Chairman Mao Ze Dong. This, as every historian knows, was General Lin Biao (), who is known, today, as being one of the 2 major Counter-Revolutionary parties, during the Cultural Revolution of May [1966](#). He died in a plane crash in September 1971 in [Mongolia](#) after what appeared to have been a failed coup d'etat to oust Chairman Mao Ze Dong. After his death, he was officially condemned as a traitor. The home, in which he used to stay, is near the Shangri-La Hotel, overlooking West Lake. It is commonly known as, simply, 704. Ricky Chen, on being questioned as to the reason that the home was called by these 3 numerals, said that it was a military designation. He was lying. Bo-Bo, who may look like a frog, but who can, still, read, discovered that the reason for the nomenclature of the home to be designated as, simply, 704, was because the building of the site was started in April 1970 – 70 + 4. But that is just one of Ricky Chen's many lies. According to this fraud, he said that General Lin Biao used his home as a bunker because it was generally expected that the United States of America would attack China and, in order to prepare himself for the pending attack, he had built an underground bunker below his living quarters, complete with barracks for about 500 of his loyal soldiers (this is my estimate), all of whom were armed to the teeth. I saw some evidence of this in one underground room that was, clearly, used as an armoury. Ricky Chen, on showing us the armoury, described the machine guns and hand grenades as being water stores! But there were machine guns, everywhere in the room, standing next to wooden ammunition boxes. On wondering through the bunker, I kept thinking to myself: 'Is this propaganda? Did General Lin Biao really want to stage a coup d'etat?' I suppose that part of history I will never really know the true answer, but, according to my observations of the other Chinese tourists, visiting this fortress structure, it was accepted that General Lin Biao was planning seditious acts against the lawful government of China. Maybe he was and maybe he was not, but, according to Ricky Chen, the fortress was built in one year in order to repel an invasion from the United States of America. Could anybody in his right mind believe such nonsense? On the second day of our stay in this beautiful resort city, I asked Ricky Chen where was a good place to take afternoon tea. He suggested some bar in one area of the city. I told him that I and Bo-Bo do not frequent bars – at any time! I could not understand the reason that he would suggest, going to a bar. What did he think we were?

On touring the house of Mr Hu Xue Yan (), formerly a high-ranking member of the former Government of China, during the Ching Dynasty (1644-1911), Ricky Chen said that Mr Hu Xue Yan had hundreds of bars of gold in his house. Then, he quickly stated that this gentleman was an honest man – even though he was a member of the government of the day. As we wondered through this palatial home, I marvelled at the grandeur of it. 'Was this man really honest?' I asked Ricky Chen. 'Oh, yes!' Came the immediate answer. 'Government officials of China are, always, honest.' In one courtyard, Ricky Chen said that it was built for one of the many mistresses of Mr Hu Xue Yan. It was at this point that I asked this lazy and very strange

young man as to the whereabouts of the children and family of Mr Hu Xue Yan. The answer that I received was that they were all ordinary people, now, and the house is for the enjoyment of the people of China, not for one privileged person.

On a tour of the silk museum, I asked one of the attendants, who was explaining how silk was made and how the silk from Hangzhou was the best in the world, as to the price of certain pieces of silk on sale. On learning that the museum and the shop, which was, also, run by the museum, were part of the Government of China, I asked what kind of profit margin the government expected from the sale of the goods. Ricky Chen got angry with me: 'That is a secret!' He barked out. 'Should I not ask that question?' 'No!' came the quick answer. That was the end of that conversation. However, I did buy a lovely silk shawl from the museum gift shop, which cost me more than 1,100 renminbi. Just before leaving, Ricky Chen ran back into the gift shop and returned in a very short space of time, putting something into his pocket as he ran to the tour bus. I never discovered what he got, but it appeared to be a very big secret, too.

On my return to Hongkong, I complained about the lack of service that I received from Ricky Chen because I had had to pay for the tour bus as well as having to give a tip to Ricky Chen of \$HK800 for the 4 days. The answer that I received from the Hongkong travel agency that arranged the trip to Hangzhou shocked me. Ricky Chen claimed to the Hongkong travel agency that his unwillingness to do his duty was because I had asked rude and naughty questions and that I wanted to know how to get a prostitute. He, also, claimed that I asked sensitive questions about Tibet. My Dear Grandchild, I am a grandmother and Bo-Bo is much too old to be going out with any other lady, let alone a prostitute. Anyway, Bo-Bo would not even know what to do with a lady of the night even if she were presented to him on a silver plate. I cannot allow this matter to go unchallenged, you understand, otherwise I do not know where it could lead. There is no way that my government is going to think of me as being anything but a person of good character and manners and not the type of person to corrupt the ladies of my country.

While I would never permit the perfidious action(s) of a single person to colour the good name of a government, or a government department, at the same time, if Ricky Chen can do what he did to me, and then tell lies and spread malicious slander in order to try to cover up his laziness, he could do it to other tourists. He refused to take us anywhere but in the surrounds of the city limits because he claimed that other places would take upwards of 4 hours, one way. Shanghai is only 3 hours from Hangzhou by bus, you know!

So, beware when you travel in China, using a Chinese Government tour agency! And beware what you say: You are being watched! Big brother is there! Yuk!

Talk to you next week.

Chief Lady

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