

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

While eating dinner with Bo-Bo, my froglike husband, the other night, I complained that he was eating too much pork, pork fat and maan tao (Shanghainese bread buns). He snarled at me and said: 'Shanghainese food is still better than horrible English food!' And, with that retort, he took another maan tao and woofed it down with some kao yuk (stewed pork). That evening, I brought up the matter of different foods from different countries, especially the ones that we had visited. When we went to Holland, for instance, we discovered that this country has no national dish, at all. In England, of course, the country has wonderful fresh produce, but very few decent cooks. In Germany, to some extent, the cuisine is similar to Shanghainese, with oodles of meat and fat, devoured at nearly every meal, and with Germans, seeming to be in love with breads and cakes of all kinds. In France, you do have good cuisine, but French cooks rely, to a very great extent, on their sauces. Insufficient consideration is given to the preparation of meat/foul/fish, which is often prepared in the simplest of ways, such as boiling or sautéing. In Japan, of course, this Asian race does not care too much about cooking food, but prefers to eat raw fish and raw vegetables, with meat, eaten half-cooked. In Thailand and India, spices are the mainstay of food preparation and a great deal of consideration is given to mixing and matching different foods with different exotic spices. All these things, The Frog and I discussed ... until the conversation led in the direction of The Philippines. According to The Frog, this country of 98 million people does not export its cuisine – because it, as with Holland, actually does not have a national dish of any note. Over the years, The Philippines has adopted the food from the countries that conquered it. Alternatively, The Philippines accepted the cuisines of the many different peoples who settled in the country. Today, the largest single export from The Philippines are maids. The entire country has become a service industry and much of the country's income is obtained from the cash remittances of its 5 million or so maids, who work in nearly every country of the world and who, by law, must remit a goodly part of their incomes to The Philippines – via Philippine-Government banks, for the most part. In Thailand, this country specialises in making certain that its population is, always, polite to all foreigners in the country; and, the government encourages the exports of its many and varied foods. That is the reason that Thai cuisine is very popular all over the world.

Now, in Italy, this is a Mecca for design of just about everything, especially haute couture. Italy, also, is famous for its cuisine, especially its many types of pasta. Italian shoes are, also, considered among the best in the world and are exported to just about every country. The Philippines, which has a plethora of handicraftsmen and handicraftswomen, does not export much in the way of good shoes and one recalls that Mrs Imelda Marcos, the former First Lady when Ferdinand Marcos was President, had more than 3,000 pairs of shoes in her closet. These were discovered during countless police raids on her home when the country was looking for the tens of billions of US dollars that had gone missing during the time that President Ferdinand Marcos was in power. The Frog maintains that the only thing that The Philippines has managed to accomplish over the past half a century is to create a country of maids. If it is true that you are what you eat, then, in The Philippines, it must be true that you are what your country trains you to become. In Thailand, in contrast to The Philippines, the culture is to be polite to all people, especially foreigners. That is the reason that Thailand is known as The Land of Smiles – you see, you are what you are trained to

become in adulthood.

In Japan, there is a work ethic, today, whereby employees must be loyal to management. This is the result of centuries of a culture where the class system prevailed. In that class system, a person, who is not born to a certain class, was required to be subservient to a person of a higher class. If a person did not show sufficient respect to a samurai, an aristocratic Japanese warrior of a class that dominated the military aristocracy from the 11th Century to the 19th Century, as an example, it could well result in that person, losing his life at the hands of a samurai's sword. Even in World War II, when Japan captured most of Asia, officers of the Imperial Army all carried razor-sharp swords; and, they knew how to use them, too. They practiced killing with their swords, especially at The Rape of Nanking of 1937, records show. The Japanese soldiers were very cruel, during World War II, and, probably, they still are a very cruel race of people although they mask their innate propensity to be violent to a great extent. It is in their character, you know, because a single life has never been considered very important in centuries past ... when killing with swords and killing indiscriminately was the accepted way to kill one's enemies. You are that which you are trained to be, you see. Japan, today, is the third-largest economy of the world. It used to be the second-largest economy, but China took that place of honour in December 2008. Japan exports just about everything to just about everywhere in the world; most of its goods are exceptional. Strange, isn't it, that a country that encouraged murder most foul, between 1929 until 1945, has the ability to produce wonderful products at the highest levels of quality. It is a wonder, also, that the government of this country does not admit to the horrors that it perpetrated in the past, as did, for instance, Germany admit its cruelty when it slaughtered some 50 million people between 1939 and 1945 when Chancellor Adolf Hitler was running the country.

It seems that, in Asia, only The Philippines is a complete and absolute dud at just about everything, The Frog maintains. 'Without the cash remittances from the 5 million or so Filipina maids, working abroad, that money, going directly into the Philippine Government's coffers, the country would be broke, today,' The Frog joked. I told him to be careful how he spoke because, otherwise, Gloria, our Filipina maid, might hear, take offense, and report us to The Equal Opportunities something or other. Filipinas and Filipinos know what they are and what they have become because their government encourages them to be what they are. They often get upset about their bittersweet life, but, at the same time, they do not have the mental foresight to try to improve their lot. As a result, for the most part, they stay maids for their entire lives and never break the mental shackles, locked in place by their government's brainwashing programmes. I wonder whether or not they have inculcated into their genome a maid chromosome. After all, the survival of the fittest is a fact, isn't it? All this talk depresses me.

I, really, have to go now. Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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