

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I have been giving a great deal of thought to the material differences between the First Chief Executive of Hongkong, Mr Tung Chee Hwa () – just in case you have forgotten his name – , and his successor, the present Chief Executive, Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen () – just in case you are trying to forget his name. In a tête-à-tête

with Bo-Bo, my froglike husband, the differences between the 2 men – both of whom had ambitions to become politicians, by the way – have become very apparent. The bottom line, however, is that the First Chief Executive, probably, could have metamorphosed into the better man, but it would have taken a few decades for him to have matured, sufficiently. Disregarding the fact that Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen is a practising Catholic, owing his allegiance to the Bishop of Rome, while Mr Tung Chee Hwa is a follower of tenets of Confucianism, being particularly concerned with the principles of good conduct, statecraft, practical wisdom, and proper social relationships, we, that is The Frog and I, have both determined that, as far as we can deduce, both men are pretty honest ... as men go, that is. Both men are, also, quite clever. Also, both men meant well when they agreed with Beijing to become the head of Government of Hongkong. The major differences, however, were, in the case of Mr Tung Chee Hwa, he did not know what to do, how to do it (even when he had an inkling that something should be done), and, further, he, invariably, bungled most of that which he attempted to accomplish. In the case of Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen, having a background of having been a former member of the Hongkong Civil Service, he knew what should be done, how it should be done, when it had the appearance of having been done, but in truth, it had not been done, at all ... but his first priority was to avoid, stepping on political landmines, strewn in his path. As a civil servant, he did well because he was, always, very quiet, he did not have to initiate very much that was new, and, he did not have to think too much, at any time. And, when he was forced to think, instead of just employing the Government stroke, which most civil servants employ, his thinking was, always, when he was comfortably seated. But, as Chief Executive of Hongkong, he had to think, standing up – and that, the poor man soon discovered, was very different from trying to think while being seated. Also, there was a big problem in mastering the art of thinking while in the upright position. This made it extremely difficult in the Legislative Council Chamber, where he did not have his favourite chair, because he was forced to stand for the entire time that he attempted to deliver a speech. And, when it came to giving answers – or non-answers – to questions on the spot, without having had his minions, write out suggested replies, he was, completely, lost. When bananas were hurled in his general direction by Legislative Councillors, he was so terribly shocked that he was unable to think, at all. As a result, he learned to do nothing and to love it. Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen is a clever, little man, to be sure, and he is, also, very calculating and tricky. However, again, due to his priorities, shoe-polishing in Beijing was considered more important than careful deliberations in respect of governing these 416 square miles which is home to a little more than 7 million, mainly Chinese residents. Walking after the heads of government of China with a pad of paper in one hand and a ballpoint pen in the other, scribbling down notes about what these great men were stating, something akin to a duckling, waddling after its mother duck, is hardly the way for the head of a government to act. This is the type of thing that a child in school might do, but it is not the actions of a leader of men. Mr Tung

Chee Hwa never acted in that manner and he, certainly, never kowtowed to anybody in Beijing – even when they were very outwardly rude to him, accusing him of being inept and lacking in statesmanship due to his obvious ignorance of most things that he was supposed to understand. But he was wrongly accused, in my opinion, when he made his numerous mistakes because nobody had properly instructed him as to his true role as head of the new Government of Hongkong. I maintain that there should have been at least a decade-long learning process for this gentle man of Shanghai. He was never given a chance to learn. He was just thrown into the job without even having had the opportunity to become the Mayor of Shanghai! To his lasting credit, Mr Tung Chee Hwa did do something quite extraordinary while in office: He quit the job as First Chief Executive, on the spot, and went from the Legislative Council Chamber, directly to his home in Mid-Levels, never to enter the Legislative Council Chamber, again. Now, do you think that Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen could top that action? I challenge him to try.

Well, I have to go, now. I am writing my memoirs, you know. Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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