

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

If the world does not know of the power of China and the Chinese people, then, myopia must have reached pandemic proportions. When Ms Wendi Deng, also known as Mrs Rupert Murdoch, defended her husband from an attacker at a Parliamentary Hearing in London, England, on Tuesday, July 19, 2011, the sound of her slap on the face of the attacker should have been heard, round the world. So powerful was that slap that it broke the nose of the attacker. One should refer to this little woman as 'The Mighty Atom'. For those who viewed the attack, either at the Hearing or on television, it was noted that this brave woman was the first to the defence of her 80, year-old husband. Where were the security people? They were late off their marks. Not so for Wendi. My heroine! Wendi could be likened to the personification of China, today. She, like the country in which she was born, is brave, daring, loyal, loving, intelligent, and attractive, not just to her sex and the opposite sex, but also to any and all who admire her many attributes. Bo-Bo, my froglike husband, does not appreciate my many attributes, but I know, put to the test, I would come out in his defence. It is in my bones. I cannot deny my genetic makeup. But, let's take a look at the rest of the world, My Dear Grandchild.

Ever since China emerged from its economic chrysalis in the 1970s, from the pupa came the neophytic beginnings of my new, historic country. The Western World completely miscalculated that which China was about to become as it struggled to free itself of yesteryear's perception of it. The United States, at first, looked to China as an example of just another communist state and, like the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, it was thought that it would sink into the abyss of its self-destructive political regime. Nothing could have been further from the truth. The West did not understand very much about the way in which China was about to mature into a world power. Today, China is the world's second-largest economy. It is the world's most-populous country and its peoples are among the most-energetic. Unlike the lazy and indolent populations of other countries – especially in Europe – where they want to live off the dole rather than working for a living, most of the people of China are struggling to improve their lot – as quickly as possible. What the world did not understand and, probably, still does not understand, was that China had, in 1949, gigantic problems. Many people were starving. The country was divided, with one warring faction, intent of seizing power from another warring faction. There was little unity in the country. The Government under Chairman Mao Tse Tung (), for all of its many faults, sank the pilings deeply for the foundations for what is, today, a great country. I am proud to be a part of it. Within 62 years, China has achieved world dominance in many spheres – and the United States has awoken to view the shock of all shocks: The Middle Kingdom is, quite likely, to achieve the status of the largest and most-powerful economic power in the world in due course. Watch out!

The challenges of today and tomorrow for the Government of China are many and varied. It is unlikely that the Western World can appreciate the immense tasks that face the Politbureau, the executive and policymaking committee of a governing Communist Party that claims more than 80 million members. Things go wrong in China all too often: Corruption is a major problem throughout the country and is likely to remain a major problem for some time; train, aeroplane and mining accidents occur far too frequently and

the existing rules and regulations with regard to safety fail to meet the requirements of the day, in many cases. For the West, China is viewed as being barbaric in its handling of criminals and the rigid enforcement of capital punishment. Most of all, and this is a thorn in the side of many Westerners, China is not democratic and this, to countries, such as the United States, is a pity. While I embrace democracy, I question whether or not democracy, as it is practiced in the United States and in most parts of Europe, could succeed in the Middle Kingdom at this time in its history. In the future, the country may well be able to accept this form of government, but one must realise that China is the fourth-largest country in the world in terms of its land mass – about 9,569,901 square kilometres – and it is the world's most-populous country, claiming a human population of about 1.30 billion people, speaking some 10 major, different Chinese dialects.

One of the problems that is seen in any city in China is the lack of decorum of the man-in-the-street. He is in a hurry and has little time for the social niceties that are taken for granted in the West. Due to the rapid economic dynamism of the people of China since 1949, social responsibility has been put on the back burner – sadly. It is something that the Government of China will have to tackle in due course, no doubt, but feeding the people, housing them, and supplying sufficient daily necessities are the main priorities of the day. In order to achieve these priorities, the Chinese Government appreciates that it must put in place the necessary infrastructure so that the people of the country are able to take full advantage of them and, by so doing, they are able to help themselves. In short, the Chinese Government must teach the population to pull up their own socks and not expect their leaders to do it for them. The West must learn to realise that China and its large population are, still, emerging from the many constraints of centuries past: It is not yet fully mature.

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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