



The long nose

CLAUS GEORG STADTLER is Hauni's man out in the Far East. His personality combines Chinese composure with the industrious, pragmatic mindset typical of a Hanseatic trader.

Claus Stadler arrives on the dot wearing a matter-of-fact expression that tells you this is all just part of a day's work. Hauni's Far East Sales Manager knows what is waiting for him when he returns to Germany for a few days: a diary full of appointments that keep him permanently on the go. But Stadler doesn't even sneak a glance at his watch as we talk. There he sits, listening attentively and radiating a calmness that fills the room.

Navy suit, light tie, grey hair, blue eyes behind rimless glasses: Claus Stadler has all the outward attributes of a respectable Hanseatic trader. Yet he certainly doesn't seem reserved or uncommunicative. Are Europeans who spend long periods in Asia more likely to find inner composure? "The Chinese have quite a laid-back attitude to life," replies Stadler. "If there's something they can't achieve in the life they're living now, they know they can leave it till the next. Things left undone by one generation are finished by the one that follows."

The Hamburg-born sales manager has been back in Asia for over five years now, this time in the Hong Kong Special Administration Zone. His first period in Asia was spent in Taiwan. The 55-year-old is familiar with the different aspects of life in China: the capitalist camp, the communist camp, and the shifting boundaries that divide them. Even as a young lad he felt attracted to the giant kingdom. However, soon after embarking on a university course in sinology, with theatre studies and German as subsidiaries, he decided to change track. "I thought it was an interesting combination but didn't have the imagination to work out how I could make a living with it," explains Stadler. The ghost of a smile crosses his face. He lights a cigarette –

one of those light Davidoffs he says he has been smoking for years. So he opted for something more concrete and took up business studies instead.

And then China entered his life once more, in the shape of a woman. Stadler has now been married to Wei Feng for nearly thirty years. Shortly after the wedding he was asked by Fee C. Illies, the trading company he was working for at the time, if he would be willing to go to China. Stadler didn't need to be asked twice. And so their daughter Kim Yue Ling grew up with two cultural backgrounds. "We never put pressure on her to decide one way or the other," says Claus Stadler of his daughter who is now 25. "She didn't always find it easy, but she has derived a lot from both of our cultures."

No, he says, his bonds with China are not the strong ones you have with the country where you were born and bred. But even after all these years, Chinese culture and people still fascinate him. Stadler has managed to immerse himself in the Chinese mentality without losing his identity. He doesn't feel offended when people refer to him as a "long nose" or a "round eye". "They don't mean it as an insult. We do have round eyes and long noses."

"Being abroad has helped me to see many things in a different light. It has made me more tolerant," he reflects. Stadler is nearly always abroad. "Spending my holidays somewhere quite different helps me unwind,"

is his explanation for an insatiable urge to travel.

Chinese books are not items he tends to take with him on his travels, though. Stadler loves English literature and reads everything from William Shakespeare to John Irving. ■

TRAVEL NECESSARIES

Some cash, his light Davidoffs and – absolutely indispensable in China – business cards are the essentials Claus Stadler carries with him on his many travels.

