

CHINA WANTS A SURRENDER CEREMONY WITH TAIWAN

By Don Feder

China's idea of negotiations with Taiwan is dictating terms of surrender. Events of the past week bring this reality into stark relief.

On Tuesday, Lien Chan – leader of the Nationalist Party -- who lost the last two presidential elections – ended his historic 8-day visit to China. It was the first time since the end of the civil war that a Nationalist leader set foot on the Mainland.

A gentle, scholarly man, doubtless, Lien had the best of intentions. Unfortunately, his visit strengthened Beijing's position – by allowing it to deal with the leader of party, rather than the representatives of a duly constituted government.

As Lien departed, Wang Zaixi of the Communist Party's Taiwan Affairs Office, announced that there would be no talks with the party of Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian, until the DPP removes references to the island's independence from its constitution.

“For the time being, we have no *party-to-party* exchanges with the Democratic Progressive Party, for the key reason that its party constitution advocates Taiwan independence,” Wang explained. *Advocates?* Say rather it recognizes the reality that Taiwan is self-governing, as it has been for almost 60 years, and its people have a right to keep it that way.

Beijing also demanded that Chen stop his “separatist activities.”

Presumably, this includes Taipei's annual bids for United Nations and WHO membership (which started under the Nationalists). The communists want Taiwan to stop trying to represent its people in international forums – to stop acting like what it is: a sovereign state (which has more people than almost two-thirds of the UN's member states, as well as the world's 18th largest economy).

Next, the communists probably will demand that Taiwan close its embassies in 27 nations and its representative offices in 122 foreign cities -- all “separatist activities,” from China’s perspective.

Beijing insists on unilateral concessions before it will conduct “party-to-party” exchanges with the DPP – not negotiations with the elected representatives of the Taiwanese. For 13 years, Taiwan’s leaders have been chosen by the people. China’s rulers are selected by an oligarchy oblivious to popular demands.

And here we come to the heart of the matter: As far as China is concerned, there is no government on Taiwan.

The PRC’s position (stated *ad nauseam*) is this: 1) There is one China 2) This China is ruled by the communists, and, therefore, 3) Because it refuses to acknowledge communist rule, Taiwan is a “province in rebellion.”

To get Taiwan back in the fold, China alternately cajoles and bullies: It offers the Taiwanese limited autonomy for 50 years. Then it threatens invasion. It facilitates cross-straits trade. Then it augments the missile arsenal targeting Taiwan (currently close to 700). It calls Taiwan’s elected president a criminal and a provocateur. Then it says it will send the Taiwanese pandas, in lieu of missiles -- for the time being

These are perilous times for the people of Taiwan. Their parties are deeply divided on the best way to deal with the Mainland menace. The Nationalists urge that Taipei do nothing to antagonize China. The DPP fluctuates between assertions of Taiwan’s sovereignty and appeals to Beijing to come to the bargaining table.

In the meantime, America – which is pledged to support the island’s defense -- warns the Taiwanese not to upset the status quo by asserting their rights. The low point came last November, when then-Secretary of State Colin Powell declared that China and Taiwan should “move forward towards the day when we will see a peaceful unification” -- of a free people with totalitarian thugs.

Taiwan’s leaders should recall the words of Rabbi Hillel, “If I am not for myself, who will be?” America should remember Churchill’s warning about feeding the crocodile “in the hope that he will eat you last.”

Taiwan can ill afford to just sit quietly and wait to be devoured – worse, to invite the tiger to the dinner table.