

## **TAIWAN GETS EVEN LESS RESPECT FROM U.N. THIS YEAR**

**By Don Feder**

In mid-September, Taiwan will again attempt to join the United Nations, as it has since 1993. This time, it will probably get even less respect than it has in years past, due to the imperious action of Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

Taiwan's diplomatic dance with the international body had become routine. In mid-September, the U.N. General Committee would meet to devise an agenda for the General Assembly. Taiwan's allies would press the committee to include an item on the status of the Republic of China (Taiwan's official name) – a motion that would be quickly crushed by Beijing's allies.

This year, Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian wrote to the secretary general, asking that his country's application for membership be submitted directly to the Security Council. For the first time, the application was made in the name of Taiwan, not the Republic of China.

Ban not only refused, but returned Chen's letter with the curt observation that under Resolution 2758, it is "the position of the United Nations that Taiwan is a part of China." That's not what Res. 2758 says. Adopted in 1971, it transferred China's U.N. seat from Taipei to Beijing. It says nothing about Taiwan's status.

Despite Ban's unilateral action, which violates the U.N.'s rules, Taiwan will press ahead. Sixteen nations will request that the General Committee include consideration of Taiwan's membership in the agenda for the General Assembly, which goes into session on September 18.

With the outcome foreordained, why bother? Because Taiwan must. Its annual applications for UN membership are the only opportunities it has to put the international community on notice that it exists as an independent entity whose exclusion from the world body is a gross injustice.

By asking for what should be its by right, Taiwan is saying:

- We're independent in all but name. It's been more than a century since Taiwan was governed directly by the mainland.
- We meet all of the attributes of statehood set forth in the 1933 Montevideo Convention -- a permanent population (with 23 million people, we're larger than 60% of UN member states), a defined territory and the ability to enter into relations with other states. Article 4 of the convention provides, "The political existence of the state is independent of recognition by other states."
- Not only are we the 48<sup>th</sup> largest nation (in terms of population), we also have the 16<sup>th</sup> largest economy. We're the 10<sup>th</sup> largest trading nation and the third largest holder of foreign-exchange reserves.
- We have a fully functioning democracy, with free elections and representative government. Freedom House consistently rates Taiwan among the three freest nations in Asia. The regime that's single-handedly keeping us out of the U.N. is habitually rated among ten worst tyrannies.
- We respect all of the rights enunciated in the 1948 U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, which many U.N. member states routinely violate. Still, they're members in good standing and we're not.
- The U.N. Charter says membership is "open to all peace-loving states." The people of Taiwan yearn for peace. We've never employed force or the threat of force to get

our way – unlike our neighbor across the Taiwan Strait, which has 1,000 short-range missiles targeting our people.

- The U.N. maintains its mission is the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Yet, by refusing to admit Taiwan, it encourages China in the deluded belief that our destiny is in its hands. In so doing, it not only endangers our people, but world peace.
- Our exclusion from the community of nations has nothing to do with legality, morality or the norms of international relations. It's all about the exercise of raw power. In an effort to advance its spurious claims, China bribes and intimidates other U.N. members to endorse the absurdity that it represents the Taiwanese. In reality, it doesn't even legitimately represent the Chinese.

Whatever happens this month, the Chen government is moving ahead with a referendum (planned to coincide with Taiwan's presidential election next spring) asking the people if Taipei should apply for U.N. membership under the name Taiwan?

Washington opposes the move. Besides reiterating our one-China policy, when asked about the plebiscite in June, State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack claimed the referendum "would increase tensions in the Taiwan Strait."

We're fighting for democracy in Iraq, but we're opposed to the people of Taiwan exercising their democratic franchise? No wonder so many, here and abroad, find this administration's policies maddeningly inconsistent.

What's the point of a move that affirms the obvious -- that citizens of Taiwan want the same recognition and respect as any other sovereign people?

Sometimes it's necessary to stress the obvious to make a point: that the Taiwanese won't settle for having their homeland treated as an international nonentity.

More than justice for the Taiwanese, their security and freedom could ride on the outcome of this contest.