

Beijing making new bid to seize Taiwan

by Our Special Correspondent

Increasingly severe pressure is being brought to bear upon the Republic of China on Taiwan to compromise its political and economic sovereignty. A few months ago, Communist Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping announced that the People's Republic of China is considering resorting to force, should the R.O.C. continue endlessly to refuse to come to the negotiating table.

Until now, the P.R.C. had made it clear that it would not hesitate to use forceful means to take over the island, were the R.O.C. to turn to the Soviets, were the R.O.C. to declare itself independent and sovereign, were the R.O.C. to develop its own nuclear weapons capability, and were serious uprisings or other social disturbances to occur on the island.

Deng's latest announcement only makes the threat of invasion by mainland Chinese forces more immediate, and is perceived by Taiwan as a sword of Damocles. From the standpoint of Deng, one can understand that he is getting on in years, and the question of unifying the "two Chinas" has become for him an obsession which he would like to see resolved within his lifetime.

China watchers, however, interpret his recent threatening announcement as a sign of weakness on the part of Beijing. It reflects the failure of their diplomatic offensive, should Taiwan ignore all threats and continue its present policy.

The 'Three No's' policy

Ever since the end of World War II, in order to counter encroachment by the Beijing government and in a fight for sheer survival, the Taipei government has been very adamant about adhering to its "Three No's" policy: 1) that there will be no negotiation between the two governments on any official level; 2) that there will be no economic relations between the P.R.C. and Taiwan; and 3) that there will be no cross-channel travel between the P.R.C. and Taiwan.

The "Three No's" policy was designed to let the world know that Taiwan stands firm and will not be absorbed into the Communist orbit. It cannot be denied that these three assertions have served in the past as a very effective way to maintain its political integrity.

Until the end of 1987, the Taipei government stood firmly by its "Three No's" policy. However, on the question of cross-channel travel, the R.O.C. has had to slacken somewhat, as many who had followed Gen. Chiang Kai-shek and

retreated to Taiwan from the mainland in 1949, now at retirement age, were longing to visit their homeland and relatives for the last time, as in accordance with Chinese tradition, "an old leaf must return to its roots." The Taiwan government proceeded with caution, however, and only non-government and non-military personnel were allowed to benefit from the new policy.

As a result, hundreds of thousands flocked home to mainland China. Preliminary fears were allayed when, after one year, the new policy seemed to have benefited the R.O.C. more than it did harm. Taiwanese going back to villages where they were born, saw for themselves how backward and miserable mainland China had remained. On the other hand, news of Taiwan's prosperity spread to virtually every corner of the mainland.

On the question of negotiating with the P.R.C. on a government-to-government level, the R.O.C., on the contrary, has remained and will have to continue to remain intransigent. Were it to agree to go to the negotiating table with the P.R.C., the first hint of such a trend would give an unmistakable impression to all Taiwanese that the ship is drawing closer to the Communist orbit, which would inevitably cause panic on the economic front, undermining the foundations of the government.

What is most disturbing, however, is that certain Western media have been giving the false impression that the two sides are moving closer to the negotiating table, that Taiwan is willing to compromise. Even to allow the world to toy with the idea that one day the P.R.C. would annex Taiwan as its province, would totally jeopardize the island's political existence.

Flexible diplomacy

Taiwan's determination to survive persistent attempts by the P.R.C. to take it over has transformed it into one of the most successful models of an Oriental society in the world. Several infrastructure, industrial, and construction projects were launched to boost both the productivity level and the export capacity of the island, resulting in an economy of extraordinary dynamism.

Today, the Republic of China can boast of an economic growth rate of 11% and a positive trade balance of US\$19 billion in 1987. Its foreign exchange reserves doubled from \$46 billion in 1986 to \$77 billion in 1987, far exceeding the foreign exchange reserves of the People's Republic of China.

Although officially isolated on the diplomatic front, the R.O.C. adopted the policy of *Su Chia Uay Chiao*, or "substance diplomacy," which consists of multiplying economic and commercial relations with as many countries as possible, especially with those that have recognized the P.R.C.

The recent March visit to Singapore of Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui sparked a hysterical reaction from the Beijing government, to the effect that Taiwan is pursuing a "two-China policy." Even though the People's Republic of

China enjoys diplomatic representation in Singapore, President Lee Teng-hui was received as an official state guest. With the Singapore visit, President Lee launched Taiwan's new offensive, which he called "flexible diplomacy."

At a press conference on March 27, P.R.C. Foreign Minister Qian Qichen commented angrily: "There is no flexibility about the one China policy. Flexible diplomacy is a new term. In our view, it means using economic and commercial relations to create two Chinas. This kind of policy goes against the Kuomintang's own declaration in favor of one China and against the Chinese people's belief in one China. We have to be clear. We cannot be flexible. I want to point out that we are not against Taiwan's pursuing economic relations with other countries, but we will not tolerate her establishing official diplomatic relations with other nations. . . . That the Philippine Parliament is preparing to pass a bill concerning economic and commercial relations with Taiwan, is against the common communiqué signed between the P.R.C. and the Philippines, against the Presidential Decree 313 of President Corazon Aquino herself."

Pressure on the R.O.C., however, is not only coming from the Beijing government. The United States is also involved, putting pressure on the R.O.C. to liberalize its economy, to float the Taiwanese dollar, and to relax foreign exchange controls. The United States has also forced a sharp

appreciation of the Taiwanese dollar against the U.S. dollar, up 46% since January 1986, which has had the net effect of pushing up production costs in Taiwan, making exports more expensive and less competitive on the international markets.

Collusion between the United States and mainland China with the aim of selling out Taiwan is nothing new. The secret trip made by Henry A. Kissinger to Beijing in mid-1971, while he was national security adviser, which led to President Nixon's own trip to China of Feb. 21-28, 1972, triggered the beginning of a long and hard struggle by the R.O.C. to represent China internationally, in circumstances of increasing diplomatic isolation.

Collusion on the part of the United States is even a necessary factor in mainland China's plan to subjugate Taiwan by any means possible. With the return of Henry Kissinger and his protégés to influence in the Bush administration, one could say that this is the return of the "China card" group, and the R.O.C. is once again caught in the same pincer movement that it was almost 20 years ago. The aim of the Beijing leadership is to socially and economically fragment Taiwan, and then walk right in.

The fate and freedom of 20 million Chinese in Taiwan are at stake, and a successful model of an Asian country's effort to free itself from economic backwardness must not be allowed to be destroyed.

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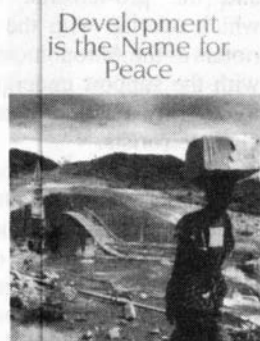
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