

Bush Restates One-China Policy, Riles Neo-Cons

by William Jones

Like a gaggle of hens suddenly caught in the farm's sprinkler system, the neo-conservative armchair warriors from the Cheney-Rumsfeld stable furiously scolded President George Bush for his restatement of the one-China policy of the United States on Dec. 9. The President, sitting with Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao in Washington, warned in no uncertain comments against the attempts by Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian—a virtual creature of the neo-con crowd—to hold a referendum which would move the island toward independence.

Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office, during Prime Minister Wen's first official visit since assuming his post, Bush made a point of reprimanding President Chen. Asked if he wanted Chen to cancel his referendum plan, Bush replied, "Let me tell you what I've just told the Premier on this issue. The United States government's policy is one China, based upon the three communiqués and the Taiwan Relations Act. We oppose any unilateral decision by either China or Taiwan to change the status quo. And the comments and actions made by the leader of Taiwan indicate that he may be willing to make decisions unilaterally to change the status quo, which we oppose."

While Bush was simply reiterating what has been U.S. policy since relations with China were re-established in 1979, there was an immediate outcry from the neo-con "cowboys" on Capitol Hill, led by the fire-breathing dragon Rep. Dan Burton (R-Ind.), and backed up by the scribblers of the "New American Empire" such as the *Weekly Standard's* William Kristol and Robert Kagan, and Gary Schmitt of the Project for a New American Century. These "three stooges" issued a statement before Dec. 9 was over, that "standing with democratic Taiwan would secure stability in East Asia. Seeming to reward Beijing's bullying will not."

Only hours after President Bush's statement, President Chen said that he intends to go ahead with his referendum. He was speaking to a delegation of U.S. lawmakers, led by none other than the arch-conservative Burton, one of the prime movers of the so-called Congressional Taiwan Caucus. Chen is waxing desperate, running in a very tight election against Lien Chen, the candidate of the Kuomintang, and desiring to mobilize his base by some dramatic moves such as the referendum. But President Chen's independence cause has always been championed by the talking heads at the neo-con American Enterprise Institute and Heritage

Foundation, and he has been encouraged at each step by the Cheney-Rumsfeld crowd, to "push the outside of the envelope" closer to independence for Taiwan. Their attempt to create a crisis across the Taiwan Straits further proves the oft-repeated warning of U.S. Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche that the neo-con attempts at "splendid little wars" in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and so on are pointed toward a general military conflict with Russia and China during 2004. The rapidity with which the referendum crisis reached a boiling point indicates how, under present international conditions of war mobilization, such a major war may emerge.

A Real War Danger

The Administration was given due warning. Both privately and publicly, the Chinese authorities, including leading military figures, reiterated again and again that the Chen referendum would provoke decisive counter-measures by China which would not accept such a development. One Chinese general warned that Chen Shui-bian was pushing the region into the "abyss of war," making clear that no threat of economic sanctions, diplomatic reprisals, or possible loss of the 2008 Olympics would deter China from doing what it had to do to prevent separatism from gaining the day in Taiwan.

From the time he arrived in the United States, the Chinese Premier was issuing his own very clear warnings. Speaking after meeting UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in New York on Dec. 8, Wen said, "We understand the aspiration of people in Taiwan for democracy. However, the essence of the problem now is that the separatist forces within the Taiwan authorities attempt to use democracy only as a cover to split Taiwan away from China. This is what we will never tolerate." It was rumored prior to Wen's visit that he was primarily looking for an unequivocal U.S. statement which would prevent President Chen from taking such a measure.

President Bush had deployed James Moriarty, the NSC's Senior Director for Asia, to inform President Chen of Bush's opposition to the proposed referendum. Moriarty was, according to reports, delivering a letter from Bush in which he personally expressed his disapproval.

On the eve of Wen meeting with Bush, a senior Administration official held a briefing with reporters in which he indicated that the White House would drop the "strategic ambiguity" on the Taiwan independence issue. "I will tell you that we are giving the Taiwanese the message very clearly and very authoritatively that we don't want to see steps toward independence, and we don't want to see moves taken, proposals made, that a logical outsider would conclude are really geared primarily toward moving the island in that direction." In a briefing following the Bush-Wen meeting, a senior Administration official reiterated that point. "Were either side moving unilaterally to change the status quo, we oppose that, we don't want to see it, we think



President George W. Bush showing the White House to Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao before their Dec. 9 meeting. Bush's restatement of the American commitment to one China, and his warning against a Taiwan "independence" referendum, set neo-cons off like firecrackers in Washington.

it's dangerous. I'm like the robot going off, 'Danger, danger, Will Robinson!' " the official said (an allusion to the 1950s movie *Lost in Space*).

And yet there is no sign that President Chen or his neo-con backers are prepared to heed these warnings. Speaking at a dinner arranged by the U.S.-China Business Council before leaving Washington, Prime Minister Wen again underlined the overriding importance of the Taiwan issue. Citing his visit to the White House room where Abraham Lincoln had his office, Wen referred to Lincoln's "House Divided" speech—underlining the Chinese wish for reunification. "The separatist activities aimed at Taiwan independence carried out by the Taiwan authorities are seri-

ously undermining the political basis of China-U.S. cooperation, and our common interests, and putting peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region in jeopardy," Wen said. "We hope that the U.S. government will handle the Taiwan question appropriately and support China's peaceful reunification."

Cheney-Rumsfeld Problem Remains

While the Bush comments may have averted war for the time being in the Taiwan Straits, the neo-cons still reign supreme on the issues of the Korean Peninsula. While Bush thanked the Prime Minister Wen for the valuable help China has given in trying to advance the diplomatic talks on the North Korean nuclear program, there is little leeway being given on the demand of the neo-cons that North Korea must dismantle its nuclear program unconditionally. Recent revelations in the *Washington Post* also indicated that the State Department point-man on the critical six-party talks among China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, North Korea, and the United States, Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly, has been hamstrung by the restrictions imposed on the entire negotiating procedure by Richard Perle-protégé Robert Joseph, the senior director for nonproliferation at the National Security Council. This highly unusual diplomatic straightjacket has even been imposed on Kelly, a senior U.S. diplomat and retired admiral, in his talks with U.S. allies Japan and South Korea, whenever it is a question of the North Korean program.

This tug-of-war has been endemic ever since the beginning of the Bush Administration, when Secretary of State Colin Powell was forced to "eat his words" after he had remarked that the Bush Administration would build on the gains made with regard to Korea during the Clinton Administration—an Administration which was virtually anathema to the Cheniacs who were intent on "regime change" even in the heavily armed North Korea. At a certain point there was a freeze put on all contacts with North Korean officials. The "coincidental" meeting of Colin Powell with the North Korean foreign minister in July 2003, during an Asian forum in Brunei, was the result of an end-run by State around the neo-cons.

The hard-line attitude on the part of the Bush Administration has served to harden the positions of the North Korean leadership, convinced that Bush is out to conquer them rather than to negotiate with them. Those infamous interagency memos of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who has made North Korea one of his pet themes, have also served to disrupt any progress in the talks.

Bush's major problem is in his own ranks. Reading the riot act to Chen Shui-ban, while well-deserved, will not solve the fundamental problem. Bush will have to send a clear-cut message to those right-wing fanatics eagerly looking for new wars to launch, by putting out to pasture the Godfather of them all, Vice President Dick Cheney.