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## Interview: David Howell

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# London is working to split U.S., China

*David Howell, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee of the British House of Commons, spoke to EIR on June 21.*

**EIR:** China has recalled its U.S. ambassador.

**Howell:** We've always said that these people will happily shoot their own foot off, or hand off, to retain their power and grip, the Chinese leadership. . . . It's like all dictators, they always put their own survival first.

**EIR:** There's been some anti-China legislation in the U.S. Congress. Would Britain find this useful?

**Howell:** I've just come back from Washington and the spirit is very anti- the human rights transgressions of the communist regime which still rules in Beijing. . . . My sentiments go along with a good many things being said by the Republicans in Congress. . . .

The big play was that if China got what they wanted on trade [i.e., U.S. Most Favored Nation trade status], they'd come good on human rights. But, of course, the Chinese don't work like that. They just grabbed what they wanted, and carried on. . . . I do think this is going to cause a lot of problems for Clinton. The umbilical cord's been cut! Now you've [United States] not got proper diplomatic relations with the biggest republic on earth!

**EIR:** I can understand, given Hongkong, that Britain might want to be a bit cautious, but do you find it useful that Mr. Bush and the Republicans here could go out front where Britain can't be so forthright?

**Howell:** There is no doubt, that there is a limited amount of apoplexy and anger from Beijing—and it's all being directed at the U.S., the present flood of vituperation. Maybe that diverts some of the heat and fire from Britain, and allows us to proceed undercover. . . .

It's a question of cat and mouse: To what extent can we assert the principles of human rights, rejection of barbarity, and repression in Tibet, and the right of Taiwan to do its own thing, while maintaining some *modus vivendi* with China?

**EIR:** Dr. Kissinger gave a speech at the London Royal Institute for International Affairs in March, saying we must get tougher with China.

**Howell:** Yes. . . . The general analysis he made is certainly

one that we share. We've noted that the Chinese are getting more strident, over Taiwan and over Tibet, and are getting more possessive about the Spratly's, and some other islands they've got their eye on. There's considerable nervousness among their Asian neighbors, particularly Japan, that China's path is toward being a more aggressive military power. And that's mirrored on the other side by the Chinese getting increasingly anti-American, and convinced that the U.S. is trying to block China's path to being a serious world power. . . . And meanwhile we have our Hongkong play . . . and there, too, we're on very delicate grounds with them. They're very, very touchy, sensitive, prickly people. But we're going to mend fences with China over Hongkong. . . .

We're just in a slightly different relationship with China now. We have a direct practical problem with Hongkong. Although one argues publicly that it's China which suffers if Hongkong goes wrong, the truth is: *We've* got a lot of interests in a minimum disruption. . . .

**EIR:** What do you think we should do vis-à-vis the growing power of China?

**Howell:** We push where we can. We don't take these lectures on Taiwan, we do continue to develop relations with Taiwan. . . . We're not taking lectures from China either on Hongkong, although they've got the whip hand. And we do speak out on Tibet, and on human rights. But one is never happy to see real extreme ideology take over in international relations. One extreme attitude breeds another. When the U.S. cut Japan off in the 1930s from its oil supply, Japan responded with fascism, saying, "We're not putting up with this; let's attack everyone in sight." That's not clever foreign policy.

**EIR:** Yet there is in-fighting in Beijing, and the International Institute of Strategic Studies report of a year ago says we might wish to have two, three, or four Chinas to deal with.

**Howell:** Yes, that's a possibility. . . . First there was a school here of China hands who thought the best thing to do with Beijing was kowtow and give in. But then Parliament and opinion here began to get a bit cross. . . .

The trick with China, which is one-fifth of the world's population, may be, to play it a bit Oriental ourselves: kowtow and smile and agree with one hand—and carry on with what you want to do, with the other!

I'm afraid that sounds very devious, but we've learned over a couple of hundred years of dealing with the Chinese—ever since the McCartney mission of 1793—that there are various ways of handling the Chinese. And, frontal boycott politics isn't necessarily the best. We could politely bow, as we do, and say: "We quite understand. It's One China, and Taiwan's a rebel state"—and meanwhile get on and develop our own ties with Taiwan. And say: "We quite understand that you're doing wonderful work in Tibet, suppressing all these wicked people," but meanwhile we actually get on and build our own Tibetan re-inforcement policy.