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## Interview: Ernst Florian Winter

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# Development vs. geopolitics: the U.S., China, Taiwan and Eurasia's future

*Professor Winter is a well-known veteran of world diplomacy. Among other things, he was actively involved during 1970-72 in organizing the contacts which led to President Richard Nixon's visit to the China, and he was personally acquainted with the top Chinese leadership at that time. Professor Winter worked for 10 years as a high-level UN diplomat, and served for many years in the Austrian diplomatic service. He was the first postwar Director of the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna. Professor Winter is active as an academic teacher and author in Austria. The interview was conducted by Jonathan Tennenbaum on Aug. 24.*

**EIR:** I understand that you recently participated in a high-level symposium in Hong Kong, on July 9-11, which dealt with reunification of China. Just around the same time, Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui made his provocative statement on "two states," which has practically started a new Taiwan crisis. What is your sense of the situation?

**Winter:** The Taiwan Strait Peaceful Reunification Association, which is a Taiwanese organization, organized in Hong Kong a symposium entitled, "Symposium on the Peaceful Reunification of China." The president of this conference is the former head of the Taiwanese Parliament, Liang Su Yung, and the co-chairman is a very high-ranking Beijing official named Shu Bai. That was very interesting, because nothing like this had occurred previously. . . .

**EIR:** In the whole history?

**Winter:** That's right. One has to recall, of course, that the formal dialogue between Beijing and Taipei had been suspended in 1995, and it has only recently been taken up again, in October of last year, when the Chairman of the Taiwan Straits Exchange Foundation, which is a Taipei organization, Mr. Koo Chen Fu, met with [China's President] Jiang Zemin. That was the highest-level contact between Beijing and Taipei since 1949. There was agreement on a number of points, but one of the important points was that Wang Dachan, the counterpart head of the mainland Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits, was to have a return visit in the fall of 1999. That was supposed to take place now, but was recently

called off, as you may remember. This symposium was an integral part of the preparation for that upcoming meeting. There was also to be a high-level meeting with the President of Taiwan. As was repeated many times during the symposium, this was to help work on a compromise solution between all sides concerned for the sake, as Jiang Zemin said, of peace, military security, and economic development in the Far East.

So it was a policy decision on the part of mainland China to advance a policy toward Taiwan in a peaceful and rather rapid manner. For that reason they invited close to 200 experts from all over the world—two of us came from Europe—to present about 80 papers. The results worked out at that meeting were unexpectedly positive. People from the United States, from Taiwan, from Japan, from Europe, everyone who was there was surprised how peaceful, constructive, and positive the discussions went, although the participants belonged to quite different factions. A very positive resolution was passed and spread by the news media who were present from many countries. But, within hours of this widespread media coverage of the symposium's resolution, a political *bomb* was dropped by Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui, when he announced that the relationship between Beijing and Taipei is no longer that of the one-China policy, but that of two states. . . .

**EIR:** And do you think this was aimed directly at the conference?

**Winter:** Well, we got news of this at the farewell dinner—and you know how farewell dinners are in China, people enjoy meeting around the tables and making toasts and taking photographs. The immediate reaction by many participants was, "This must have been organized by the United States." Can you imagine that? It was quite a shock.

**EIR:** Afterwards the course of events took a very different direction.

**Winter:** Right. A very unexpected one. There were military men from Beijing there who were not very vocal at the symposium, but they became immediately vocal at that last dinner. . . .

I think we need to look at the reason why Lee did this. It

was apparently premeditated, planned in advance, and was not necessarily only instigated or even encouraged by the United States. At the end of this year, there are new elections for the Presidency of Taiwan. He will not stand again for the office. He has a protégé, Lien Chen, who is for separation. Besides that, there are two more separatist candidates, Hsu Hsin-liang and Chen Shui-pien, and these three are wooing those Taiwanese who object to the “One-China/two-systems” policy. It is hard to say, and it was very hotly debated at the symposium, what the majority of Taiwanese think. One does not really have any figures on this, but it seems to me from the comments, even by those Taiwanese who were very much in favor of working out a new relationship, that it is probably a 50-50 proposition. And the fourth candidate, Sung Tsu-yu, is a mainland Chinese who was very young when he came to Taiwan. He advocates working out the “One-China/two-systems” solution and avoiding any confrontation. He is a non-confrontationist, but certainly not a separatist. I think this is important, because he feels that the Taiwanese self-interest does not lie in the direction of a growing Taiwanese identity. That was quite clear from some of the comments at the symposium.

But, a very important factor in this, is the growth of a new Chinese identity among the Taiwanese population. That surprised me to some degree. And in the discussions, I learned some interesting facts. There is something in Taiwan which never existed before, namely, a new *Chinese* identity. There are young people, business people, intellectuals, all parts of the population, people who think they are Chinese, but in a new way. The figures I received were that in 1998, some 1.7 million Taiwanese visited the mainland. They visited not only graves and birthplaces of their relatives, but they made new kinships by new marriages, and that mainly in Fujian province, the province right across from Taiwan. So, that is important for the Chinese mentality especially.

And, at the end of the same year, trade with the mainland had reached a total of \$23 billion. Taiwanese industry is, after the United States and Japan, the third-largest trade partner of China. Taiwanese investment in the mainland has exceeded now more than \$30 billion, with more than 30,000 Taiwanese firms having invested. The mainland companies, where they invested, employ 3 million Chinese workers directly. This kind of kinship and economic relationship is connected to the fact that there are 200,000 Taiwanese people, mainly business people, living in mainland China now. So, there is indeed a new Chinese-Taiwanese identity developing. . . .

**EIR:** Then, who is Lee Teng-hui speaking for?

**Winter:** Taking the least critical view, he is probably toeing the line of the one group in the U.S. which has been slowly but surely encouraging Taiwan to become an independent state. That, indeed, is the great stumbling-block. You remember that the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972, which the U.S. and the People’s Republic of China agreed upon, and which

was signed by President Nixon, stated clearly the “One-China” policy. And, the State Department and public opinion in the United States accepted this without any afterthoughts. They really thought that that was the new way to continue what has always been a good relationship.

The American people and Chinese people have always had a good relationship—different from the Europeans, particularly the British and French—and they thought that the differences over this Taiwan issue and the nationalist issue, the Kuomintang issue, would fade away under this new policy of “One China.” But, I think with the breakdown of the Soviet Union, a new multipolar world developed, and there is now what you might call a double-pronged policy in the U.S. This is legitimate in the sense that the one is traditional pro-Chinese, trying to make a new cooperative venture, and the other is traditionally anti-Communist. And, I think the second one is growing in importance insofar as the United States has, sociologically speaking, been trying to be a schoolmaster of China, trying to teach them to respect human rights, to open up markets, to allow democratic and free trade rights, the WTO [World Trade Organization] discussion and so forth. That group is in the ascendance, there is no doubt about that.

**EIR:** But, isn’t the group pushing Lee Teng-hui now really acting against fundamental U.S. interests?

**Winter:** I wanted to explain Lee’s position. Lee is not inventing anything. Lee is riding on this wave, period. In the opinion of the people participating at the symposium, there was a great unanimity, a fear of a war. Because they met in the shadow of Kosovo. And, there was a real, almost traumatized attitude: What will happen if either China acts to liberate Taiwan, or the U.S. acts to protect Taiwan from the Chinese? In both cases, there would be shambles left of the small island. And, therefore, the main emotion was to avoid conflict.

But as some papers at the symposium stated quite clearly, I think the issue is indeed an ideological one in the United States. There was a military commitment on the part of the U.S., quite some years ago, when the Taiwan Relations Act was passed—you might say an irrational policy. You cannot establish peace vis-à-vis a large continental power like mainland China by saying to them: “You and I, the U.S. and China, have a wonderful relationship, a good One-China policy,” and then to say to Taiwan, “Look, you cannot trust mainland China, we will give you all the arms to defend yourself against them,” but also to say, “We have a One-China policy.” The Taiwanese misinterpreted this as saying the U.S. was supporting the Kuomintang reconquest of the mainland! When they began to realize that that was not the case, the armament process had progressed to such a degree, that it is a very well-armed country. Thus, Taiwan has received from the U.S. F-16s, Knox-class frigates, helicopters, tanks, and a variety of air-to-air, surface-to-air, and anti-ship missiles. This clearly

ignores the spirit, if not the letter, of the terms of the three successive U.S.-China communiqués. And, the consequences of this Taiwan Relations Act has been Taiwan growing militarily, insofar as it has always been given the excuse to introduce new strategies, new weapons systems, new maneuvers. And now, at the end, it has even come to the point where I personally believe that a real alliance between South Korea and Japan, possibly the Philippines, but certainly including Taiwan, could be formed—a *cordon sanitaire* one would call it in Europe—against Communist China.

The American public, I don't think, is eager to have a war there: they are more eager to have trade. But, the famous TIFA, the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement between the U.S. and Taiwan, in a sense contains military hardware as part of the investment, so, it is not a purely a peaceful economic act. . . .

**EIR:** Nowadays the hard-line crazies in the U.S. Congress are all screaming that the West has to protect Taiwan. But, if there were no such a military backup of Taiwan, the danger of a mainland Chinese attack would fade into zero, wouldn't it? Who is in a rush?

**Winter:** Exactly. The time-frame is getting out of hand. What is happening here is, that, in a sense, both sides, in the last few years, have seen this island become an aircraft carrier. The U.S. and China want to have it. Nobody has proposed a neutralization of this aircraft carrier. One of the interesting things at the symposium was, that there was no discussion of this. I raised it as a neutral Austrian, but it was totally neglected. I also raised the question of what used to be very useful in Europe in the last century, the idea of a "*Zollunion*"—a tariff union. I also suggested, why not discuss what would be the Chinese equivalent of a confederation. But this concept is unknown. Both sides, the Taiwanese and mainland, were disinterested; both are centralized states, and they have no concept of confederation and of constitutionality. So, instead of this, they are both eyeing this island as their aircraft carrier.

The pressure is now, in a sense, on the Chinese to do something about this. This aircraft carrier is too well equipped. And now, this embarrassing statement [by Lee Teng-hui] that this aircraft carrier is a *state*, not a property of China, but a state. The owner of it is now saying, "We are well-equipped, we have allies behind us, we are going to do our own thing." And that, the Chinese cannot accept. This is the problem. The Chinese, simply from their geopolitical point of the view, cannot accept a Taiwan that is not owned by them. . . .

**EIR:** So what was the conclusion of the symposium?

**Winter:** There was a political proposal, an economic, and a cultural one. I think the emphasis was on the cultural aspect, because that is working very well. The new Chinese identity in Taiwan is a cultural fact. It is being wonderfully promoted

by the mainland Chinese, and it is well accepted by the Taiwanese. The political aspect is a total deadlock, even before Lee's statement about the two states, for the simple reason that one cannot imagine, constitutionally, what it implies to have "One-China/two-systems." It is one thing with a little city like Hong Kong, but another thing for a country like Taiwan.

So, the emphasis now was on economics. And I belong to the group which very strongly emphasized the proposal to have a special economic relationship, a zone, or region; a *Zollunion* between Taiwan and Fujian, and maybe Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Fujin, or maybe whole provinces along the coast—but, anyhow, the provinces across from Taiwan, where the major investments are, to facilitate the founding of more companies, transport of goods back and forth, people moving back and forth. And that was very much welcomed, because in the Chinese way of thinking, the Chinese always make little steps to have a long trip. This is a long trip, and who knows how long it will take. So, now, they need the next step. And they are all good, economically-minded people. The new China since Deng Xiaoping is economic-minded. They are economic realists, they are succeeding, they are getting someplace. So, this turned out to be a very hopeful, major portion of the resolution.

**EIR:** So there would be an evolution of the situation which would be *open* toward the future. As long as this were permitted to develop, there would not really be any danger of a military confrontation?

**Winter:** Correct. I think that if that is permitted, there is no big danger. But, if it is not permitted, if there are hawks and war-mongers on both sides getting the upper hand in this whole debate, then, unfortunately, clashes are very popular in the 20th century. . . .

**EIR:** And now, to make things worse, the whole Theater Missile Defense (TMD) issue has been injected into this.

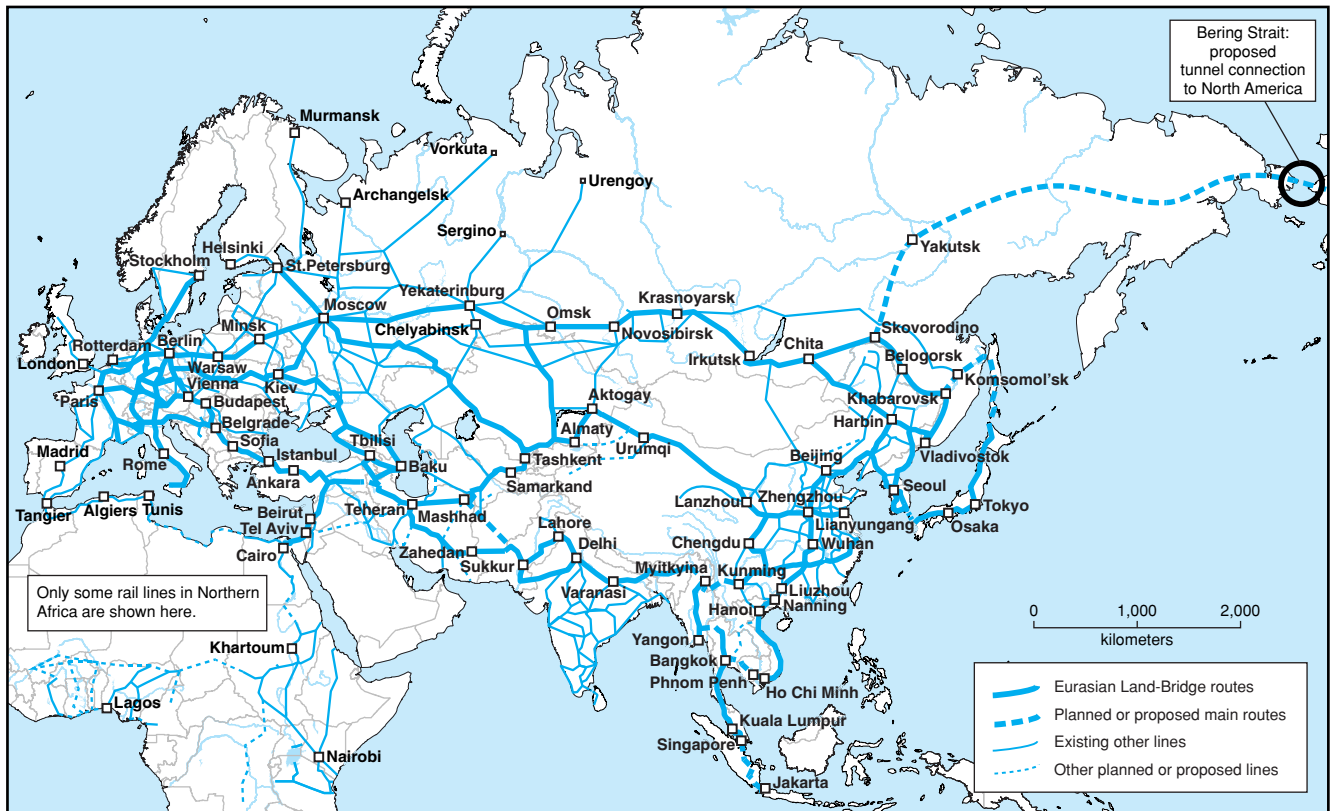
**Winter:** The TMD I take very seriously. I think this is the major development pressuring the Chinese military. They have a grace period, maybe two years at the most, where there is a military option. There was no talk about that in this meeting, but in my previous trips to China, it was always in the background. [Thus one hears that] China can afford any kind of war, it is no problem, they have millions and hundreds of millions of people they can sacrifice. They have underground cities. And any invasion of China would be too costly, nobody wants to invade. There is this, partly a realistic, and partly an illusory position of the Chinese military. But, this is now being pushed into a real strategy by the threat to deploy missile defenses on Taiwan.

**EIR:** Far from stabilizing the situation, TMD is destabilizing it.

**Winter:** Absolutely right.

FIGURE 1

**Eurasia: main routes and selected secondary routes of the Eurasian Land-Bridge**



**EIR:** And all this coming just six weeks before the 50th anniversary of the founding of the new China.

**Winter:** Well, my political instinct always tells me, what is the purpose in raising such provocative issues before anniversaries? This is really being engineered. There are interests who would like to have a terrible condition in the Far East, which would make Kosovo look like a picnic.

All my experience in China, having been in and out since 1970, is that the Chinese are a proud people, the oldest civilization on Earth, that despite the ups and downs in their history, they have maintained, over 2,000 years, an ethical system—I mean ethical also in the political sense, the Confucian morality is even working under the Communists. And, their experiences in the 19th century were so humiliating, that you cannot expect them to continue that kind of thing. They are now economically growing, they are conscious of their progress, of their victories. And now to *manhandle* that, those over 1 billion people, is totally suicidal on the part of anybody who would do that. I think the Europeans are taking a much more careful stance than the North Americans are.

**EIR:** Looking positively toward the future, one of the crucial ideas emphasized by Lyndon LaRouche, for China and the whole world, is the Eurasian Land-Bridge: developing the

entire Eurasian land-mass through networks of modern infrastructure corridors.

**Winter:** Personally, I am not only fully in agreement with it, I named my very first company, for which I worked with China already in the 1950s, “Eurasia Consulting.” Having been such a fanatic almost all my life for the Eurasian Land-Bridge concept, which in those days looked at more like the Silk Road experience between Europe and China, I was struck that nothing like this was mentioned at the symposium. I raised it a number of times, but there was no conceptualization. People did not understand. These people who came from United States, from Japan, from Australia, from this whole rim area, always thought in *Pacific terms*. So, I made a very strong recommendation that anyone interested in peace, security, and prosperity in China and in the Pacific, has to look at it from the dimension of the Eurasian Land-Bridge.

**EIR:** Just today, Jiang Zemin is to meet with Russian President Boris Yeltsin in Kyrgyzstan.

**Winter:** The Eurasian Land-Bridge is a real peace alternative, giving a chance for development to billions of people who are still at the edge of poverty. And, there is no other project—industrial, economic project in the world, that can accomplish that. Of course, Jiang Zemin knows it, and Yeltsin

does, and the people meeting in Kyrgyzstan today—a meeting about which I am very optimistic and hopeful that something comes of it. Because, remember, Jiang Zemin last year made a very statesman-like statement that all these issues—I think he even implied Tibet—must be solved by economic development.

**EIR:** You mentioned the problem of internal U.S. policy. President Clinton has tried to realize a positive policy toward China, but there is obviously a powerful group which is doing everything to push the U.S. and China, step-by-step, into an adversary position.

**Winter:** Sadly enough, democracies need issues, and among these are often aggressive and warlike issues. Democracies don't vote on peaceful issues, they vote over some conflict. And the U.S. people—many don't go to elections anymore—but the media, who regard themselves as the protectors of democracy for the people who don't vote—they are almost unconsciously searching for some kind of conflict. But, there is a definite, strong group, the so-called “anti-Communists,” at work here. All of us who have been involved in Chinese affairs and have been consultants for many, many years, run afoul of this accusation all the time: “Well, you are essentially supporting a Communist venture.” Here, again, it is a substitute for religious fervor. People don't really believe much in God, but they believe in something good, and the good is to be anti-Communist. That is a very sad situation, because this sentiment can be misused by a handful of people who have completely ulterior motives.

**EIR:** These people claiming to act in the interest of the United States are actually destroying it.

**Winter:** Exactly. I am sure it's a small group. I am not so sure that, in this respect, Clinton really knows what he is doing, consciously. I think Clinton belongs more to the post-Kennedy generation that grew up with certain assumptions, and among these assumptions was to be friendly to China. Rather than to be a student of that situation, and to have really thought it out. Because, if he had, he would take a much clearer policy line than he is doing. That is my opinion.

**EIR:** Well, he is very much under the gun. You see the kinds of attacks Mr. LaRouche, who has just now applied as one of the three Democratic Presidential candidates for matching funds in the U.S., and who represents a rigorous policy for world development, has been suffering.

**Winter:** Exactly.

**EIR:** And, he and Clinton have common enemies, in terms of the people going after them. LaRouche was the victim of a very violent slander in the British press just recently. Do you have any reflections on the geopolitical background of that? You were talking about U.S.-China relations, but there is also the big problem of British geopolitics.

**Winter:** The history of that is quite contrary to U.S.-China relations. The American tradition of open doors tried to keep aloof from the Boxer Rebellion and the British geopolitical tradition, which had in mind, of course, preventing Tsarist Russia from getting down to India and into China. In other words, the British policy had a completely different political purpose behind it than the American one.

The American position was really that of a potential partner, of manifest destiny: you get across the continent, and you get across the ocean, and the next neighbor you meet is this wonderful Chinese neighbor. And there were the missionaries, and the enormous efforts and sacrifices of so many ordinary Americans, spending money to build up colleges and hospitals and schools in China, which, for many generations, was a morally very elevating experience.

The British never had that. If you talk to a taxi driver in London, which I recently did, he spits on the Chinese. He has absolutely no respect whatsoever, because he doesn't come from a tradition that respected these people. But, the Americans always had a respect. And in fact, if you read Pearl Buck, they even had, you might say, a misguided love, but it was love anyway!

The Americans don't have a global view. The British always had one.

So, this is the big difference, while, of course, the attacks in Great Britain are more sophisticated against anybody who is proposing a global alternative view, like LaRouche is. Because they are very sensitive to that. They feel somebody is trespassing on their ground! They think they are the experts on geopolitics—and to some degree they are. They are the one nation which has done the most in this field in the last 400 years. They have gathered most of the experiences, and so on.

The fate of LaRouche needs to be seen, you see, in global terms. He is not just an American, not just from a certain region in America. He is, because of his intellect, involved in a philosophical debate that has been going on in the Western world for 400-500 years. Americans are not involved in that debate. There are great commentaries, university professors there put out great books, surveys, and summaries, but they are not involved in the *debate*. Not even if you look back at the great President Adams, and that generation. If you look at the Founding Fathers, they were involved in the *Federalist Papers*, they were discussing the rights of man, the citizens, and the Constitution, and so on. They did not really look at the *world* as such. They looked at themselves.

That is very sympathetic, and is a great accomplishment, and makes Americans very likable, but at the same time they have missed, you might say, the hard intellectual schooling of hundreds of years that everybody has had at Oxford and Cambridge, because you didn't go there without having behind you either some shipping line or some bank or some landed interest. . . .

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**EIR:** But in China and other nations, people often don't take this British problem very seriously. And yet, if you look at the key regions for the Eurasian Land-Bridge, and you see how these are targetted as hot-spots, you can clearly see the geopolitics at work.

**Winter:** Why does the world look at the British as such great examples of tolerance and of good will and democracy, when in reality they are not? This is one of the most interesting historical questions of our time. Here, possibly, the schizophrenic attitude on the part of the British is at fault. The fact that they have only conventions, and not a constitution, is an extremely inspiring concept. What does that mean? It means people know what is to be done, and what is not to be done. A convention is really how a family, a neighborhood, lives together. They don't write down their constitution, how a family is supposed to function. But, this has been very inspiring, and many nations have tried to imitate this, a convention type of thinking instead of constitutional thinking. The judge makes law, rather than the paragraph, law. So, we have a number of practices in the British society which are inspiring, and which have been inspiring for new nations and people coming out of colonialism and so forth.

That prevents, I suppose, most modern citizens from going and studying deeper. Because, in my opinion, the paradox is that the British were able to do this precisely because they have always been run by the oligarchy. The British have never had a revolution, even Cromwell did not come close to it. Over a thousand years the oligarchy, which has changed, of course, has been perpetuating itself through peerage, and has been able to run things behind the scenes. When you go to India, you will be surprised how pro-British certain classes in India are. But they learned this attitude, this behavior. That is why they are pro-British.

**EIR:** Certainly, LaRouche sees the sharp British reaction now, as related to the crisis of financial system.

**Winter:** In my personal opinion, I think that much of what happens in history is not done consciously. It is done unconsciously, because we are spread over generations. We are not inventors of our own time. We inherit a time, we inherit problems, we inherit attitudes toward solving these problems. So, there is a continuum, a kind of continuity which we are almost a subject to. This is why I think the conspiracy theory is too simple. It is the continuity of history which is at fault here. We cannot escape from that. Of course, we have had terrible interruptions of history, like the French Revolution, or the Russian Revolution, but underneath, the continuity is there.

**EIR:** Those cultural attitudes come out strongly when there is a crisis.

**Winter:** Absolutely. People hold onto them even more so, even if they have caused the crisis.