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Interview with Jill Stein

INTRO: Jill Stein was the US Green Party's candidate in 2012 and 2016. She is an organizer, physician and an environmental health advocate. During the 2016 election she was the only candidate to call for an emergency jobs program to jointly solve the climate and economic crises and for demilitarization through a foreign policy based on international law, diplomacy and human rights. She was the only candidate to be arrested for supporting the Dakota Sioux Nation in resisting the DAPL pipeline project. Ladies and Gentlemen: Jill Stein.

Zain Raza: It's so wonderful to have you here in Munich. I thought the CIA is going to kidnap you when you were coming this way. So, my first question pertains to the Green Party, and I was at a bar a couple of weeks ago – and I'm not an alcoholic, just to put that out there... because I'm talking about beer and stuff – but I was at a bar and then I told somebody about this event and then they were like: "What? There is a Green Party in the United States? I just thought there are Democrats and Republicans," i.e. The Clintons or The Bushes, with the exception of Obama. So, for our young viewers, for the people that are curious, can you introduce the Green Party for us?

Jill Stein: So, the Green Party is the one national-scale party in the US that is not funded by predatory banks or fossil fuel giants or war profiteers. It is the one party that actually has the ability to respond to the desperate, urgent and growing needs of everyday Americans and in a nutshell that's why they don't want you to hear about it. With 45% of Americans declining to vote because neither the democratic nor republican parties speak to them and their needs. You know, the political establishment does not want people to know about the competitors. I was tricked into running for office many years ago. I had been apolitical for my first 50 years of life, didn't trust the political system or parties because I only knew about the major two and then Ralph Nader ran and that was a big awakening for a lot of people.

Zain Raza: Ralph Nader being?

Jill Stein: So, Ralph Nader is a consumer advocate. He's the guy who invented safety belts, who established agencies for the environment, the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency)...

Zain Raza: ...he wrote a book called "Unsafe at Any Speeds" and the funny part about the story – sorry that I break you off – is that when he was writing this book, all of the big car companies, and I want to quote Henry Ford here, he said: "If we get a seat belt in the car, the entire auto industry is going to collapse". I mean, think about that...

Jill Stein: Yes...

Zain Raza: ...that's the thinking. So, he came out with this great book that brought congressional hearings and created the first national agency that takes into account safety for driving. Sorry. So, you can continue.

Jill Stein: Also workers safety... he basically established the first national bureau to protect workers, safety on the job. Just really an amazing thinker and activist who then ran for office and actually became vilified because he dared to challenge this system. He was running as a Green Party member and that was the first political campaign that I actually, you know, got interested in... you know, in being involved with because it was different from the Democrats and Republicans who basically want to sell you a bill of goods in order to maintain their stranglehold, which is the stranglehold of big corporate America, the war profiteers and banks and fossil fuel giants. That's who they're serving.

So, the Green Party is sort of the opposite of that, and I was tricked into running for office back in 2002 and discovered that there's really a very vigorous and exciting public conversation, that the public is really desperate to have and since then I've continued building the Green Party as a vehicle for challenging power. It's very important that we have social movements and at the end of the day, it really is our social movements that are the engine of change but we have to challenge power at the same time and our social movements have to work together, and to me that's what the Green Party makes possible, is for us to challenge power on many fronts otherwise we are divided and conquered but if we are working together across issues, across geography, across borders, across time as a political movement that's when things really begin to change.

Zain Raza: So, I was thinking about a quote and I do not know who it was from but that person said anonymous that if people who didn't vote had a vote then all parliaments would be empty, you know? Most of them. Think about it, 45% of people didn't vote in the United States and this is where I get to my next point. There's a Princeton study that came out a couple of years ago talking about the United States being an oligarchy, then there's this political scientist Thomas Ferguson from the Institute for New Economic Thinking who in congressional elections pointed out that there's a strong correlation between money and

votes. You've been in this system. You are a candidate, you were a candidate in 2016 and 2012. Can you tell us about your experience of how you encountered the system?

Jill Stein: When I first ran for office it was out of absolute desperation as someone who was working in the movement to create health-care as a human right, to enact campaign finance reform and get the big money out of politics so we can get the people back in. Working for the environment as a critical issue for our economy and our health and our survival. I was seeing each movement get beaten back and when I got asked to run for office, my thought was, might as well try that, nothing else is working, might as well try politics, and what I discovered was to the extent that we were able to be heard, there's enormous resonance out there.

People are ready to throw the bums out which is why the corporate media works overtime to silence us, to disappear the principled opposition, because that's exactly what people are looking for. Bernie Sanders' campaign was able to reach a lot of people because they were working within the system but at the same time that system turned around and sabotaged them and really used that campaign to suppress a real revolt, So it's clear that the power is there, it's just a question of our organizing to make it happen and that's why I'm so grateful to acTVism and to Abby and to independent journalism because that is how we get the word out and we empower ourselves to actually make that change that people are hungry for.

Zain Raza: You talked about the media and I did some research last night and I found out that the Tyndall report – and that analyzes major network news coverage. And they did an analysis in 2015 of 1,000 minutes of broadcast time that was aired during that time and they came out with the following numbers: Trump received 327 minutes, Clinton 121 minutes, Sanders 20 minutes. You didn't make the list unfortunately but it's not an award ceremony. It speaks more for independent media, but I mean, what would be very interesting is: how did you react in the moment? Did you campaign, try to reach out to journalists, did you guys try to... we tried really hard and our press director Chris, we worked day and night to try to get the press to come here today, you know? I know if Hillary Clinton was here, I know if Bernie Sanders even was here, they would be here en masse. Some journalists have come, so I give credit due where it is due, but getting back to your campaign... Did you guys do anything? Did you guys think about strategies of how to reach the press? And how was their response?

Jill Stein: Yes... and I first ran for office in 2002 and the strategy of the press, which is essentially to create a complete media blackout on political alternatives at a time in the last election when 75% of Americans were screaming for open debates, because Clinton and Trump were the most untrusted, disliked candidates in modern history ever on record. So, people were screaming for something else, so, you know, the press has to work very hard in order to suppress that revolt. That revolt has already begun, that revolt is happening and it's growing every day and over the many years that I've been running for office and seeking to build a politics of integrity to challenge that hegemony...

I must say, you know, the movement is growing, the system is self-destructing, the empire is doubling down because it has lost its grip. We have an empire that is teetering on the brink, so it's only a question of when not whether that empire will essentially fall apart and in my view the more we do to organize, the more we do to encourage groups like yourself, like acTVism, the faster we will break through and the greater the odds are that we will break through in time, because we're working against a ticking clock, whether you're looking at the climate, at nuclear weapons, at endless war, at austerity, at globalization and the financialization, the hollowing out of our economies, racial disparities, the war on immigrants, you name it! This is the final act. On many fronts, this is the final act. So, there's no question that the predatory system that we know is in its final stages.

So it's really important for us to do everything we can to prepare for the next stage, knowing that we have on our side the climate, the economy, basically advocates or shall we say witness to the unsustainability and immorality of this system. This system is a sinking ship, it's up to us to build that lifeboat as fast as we can. In the campaign we did everything we could from, you know, your routine press releases, press conferences etc. The time that we really got attention was generally when I got arrested or at threat of being arrested and over the two campaigns I was arrested four times for very important causes on behalf of people who were being thrown out of their homes, homeowners, on behalf of Standing Rock, on behalf of the Keystone Pipeline blockade, these were very important issues and getting arrested for them was both an act of principle and that it was also a public relations strategy was a good thing.

Zain Raza: You know, we're all landing on some sort of list, Chomsky landed on Nixon's enemy list, Abby was on a list that I mentioned today, you're landing on some list, and I'm wondering when I'm going to land on some list, it's really easy because I'm brown. So, I think it won't be really hard for the Americans to conjure up some terrorist sort of label. But getting to the next point, in the fall and here we get to your list, in the fall of 2017 the senate intelligence committee accused or alleged your campaign for Russian collusion. You submitted your documents that they asked for this April. So, give us number one, what is the senate intelligence committee for our German viewers, secondly give us some background and also the reason why they are after you now.

Jill Stein: So, you know the senate like any congressional body has various committees, foreign policy, finance, labour etc. And one committee is dedicated to intelligence, so sort of matters of strategy that aren't obvious that you have to sort of look into, that you need your FBI and your NSA in order to find out about. And as I think you mentioned in your discussion with Abby the intelligence committee or community had put out this report that both Abby and I had the honor to be in. And we were both honored with these absurdities that made us out to be very important people and you know I appreciate the compliment. But it was completely unsubstantiated. It named for example the fact that my trip to Russia for a

conference, a ten-year anniversary conference held by RT, a substantive and very interesting conference on media and foreign relations.

It said that my trip was paid for by the Kremlin and that essentially I was a Kremlin tool speaking Kremlin talking points and implying that I was in collusion and that the Green Party also was. Which is absurd, and I had very concrete proof that this was wrong because I have my receipts that show that I paid for everything about that trip. Which told you right off the bat that their intelligence was not correct. They said that I was paid for but in fact I had the proof that it was not paid for by Russia. This was paid for by my campaign. So anyhow, that was used essentially then as part of an ongoing smear to vilify, to criminalize me as a Russian tool and as you and Abby were discussing to make the point that all criticism about militarism or the climate crisis, protests for Black Lives Matter, these are all Russian tools and these ideas are purely Russian talking points. Which tells you what's really going on here, this is a very stupid strategy to try to distract people from the real issues that are going on in our lives.

And so I was essentially accused of being in collusion and I turned over really all of our campaign information that they requested except where it intruded on our civil liberties. Their request for basically internal political information which is a part of the bill of rights that government cannot spy on political organizations. You can't do that. So it's not like I had some special material I couldn't turn over but rather that we were standing up on principle, we were not going to be a party to this assault on our civil liberties which is actually taking place across the board. Whether you look at the assault on privacy with the recent Facebook, Cambridge Analytica scandal, with 87 million people having their private data taken, that data up to 2,000 data points per person so that they can weaponize that data and target you with this information. That's what's interfering with our elections.

The evidence that the Russians interfered with our elections is really minute and shall we say not compelling. In my view the question of interference in our elections is actually a really important question. And that's another reason why I wanted to cooperate but in fact the evidence for Russian interference is tiny compared to the evidence for interference by big media that gave 6 billion dollars in free air time to Donald Trump, twice as much as to Hillary Clinton, because he was quote "*damn good*" for corporate profits. And the president of CBS – I don't know if you've heard this quote – said in fact that "*Donald Trump might not be good for America but he sure is good for CBS*". You know, should that be what is deciding our elections?

Zain Raza: I mean he's already dividing the country by saying that, I mean, that means America is something else and his corporation which is based in the United States, I mean, isn't that interference as well?

Jill Stein: Exactly. Or interference by oligarchs like Robert Mercer who is a very right-wing billionaire investor, really a Wall Street gambler, one of the richest people in America and the world, who funded by the way the program called Citizens United which essentially opened

the floodgates to unlimited billionaire money, corporate money, to buy out our elections. So that was coming from this right-wing billionaire who basically intensified the stranglehold of big money on our political system. He is the same guy who was funding Cambridge Analytica who weaponized our stolen private data. So is that not interfering with our elections?

Zain Raza: It seems to me that the cold war, let's put the seems to me away, the cold war is back. And you see that in Syria with five nuclear states, Russia, United Kingdom, France, the US and Israel, these are nuclear states, are flying around the whole air space. Today we have around 14,175 nuclear weapons, 6,600 owned by Russia and 6,450 owned by the United States. So there's this ratchet-up of the military industrial complex and I'm not just talking about the United States, we'll touch on that, but in Germany there's a huge talk going on right now about Germany needs to increase its international presence in the eastern front and we need not just a bigger military budget but we need to place troops, we need to make new roads that lead up to this. So where is all of this militarization leading and what effects does it have on our social fabric?

Jill Stein: Yes, so militarization is immoral, unsustainable, untenable and needs to be rolled back very quickly. And let me just summarize by saying, when Pearl Harbour was bombed at the start of the second world war, the United States declared a state of emergency. It took six months to militarize our economy to a wartime footing. Well we now have a new kind of emergency, it's called a climate emergency, we need to declare a state of national and international emergency based on the climate. And we need to finally roll back that militarized economy and change it over to a green and peaceful economy. That can happen also in six months if we decided to do that. (Applause) So the bottom line is whether we are talking about the climate emergency or the nuclear weapons emergency among those weapons you mentioned there are 2,000 of them, 2,000 nuclear weapons which are on hair-trigger alert between the US and –

Zain Raza: Explain that.

Jill Stein: On hair-trigger alert means that they're ready for sending. You know all they need is the red button to be pushed.

Zain Raza: By Donald Trump.

Jill Stein: By Donald Trump or by a drunken supervisor.

Zain Raza: A drunken monkey.

Jill Stein: Yes, a drunken monkey, for example, yes. Or for a false alert to be sent. There are many ways that those weapons could be triggered. And we are really sitting at the edge of potential catastrophe with nuclear weapons being what they are. And again, the press doesn't let you know that in fact there is a new treaty, a global treaty, proposed at the United Nations

by the majority of the world's nations to ban our nuclear weapons. We could all sign that treaty right now.

What's happening on the Korean Peninsula should be happening all over the world including in Syria and far beyond. So the bottom line is we could move from a nuclear militarized lethal economy to a green and sustainable economy and address in one fell swoop not only the dangers of war, we can turn the tide on climate change and in fact we can make wars for oil obsolete, wars for oil and fossil fuel pipelines and the rest, we can make the whole war machine obsolete by essentially greening our economies and our energy supply to start with.

Zain Raza: You know I was saying drunken monkey, because I read this book on whistleblowers and they literally, the federal agencies do like this testing of how they can penetrate nuclear sites in case of terrorism exercises, and their rate at which they could enter these bases, literally a drunken monkey could have gone in these nuclear sites, and there was a whistleblower also in Great Britain that revealed how the submarine nuclear systems are completely unchecked, so we're talking about nuclear catastrophe could just come by just a drunken monkey, you know. Anyway, enough drunken monkey.

Getting to the military industrial complex, I want to make a bridge between military industrial complex and the climate change. The US military, and this I read on The Guardian, is estimated to, the US military alone as an institution, is estimated to release, in 2015, 70 million tons of carbon dioxide. This does not include the drones or their covert operations. Oil Change reported that the Iraq war itself in the first four years released 141 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions. In the first four years which was more than 139 countries. And then think about it this way, the facts I'm reading, Media matters did a study then, ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox News, they analysed their coverage, and in 2016, only 50 minutes was dedicated, sorry 2015, and although 2015 was one of the hottest years, the entire media network gives it 50 minutes of coverage. I don't want to just paint a bad picture, could you comment on these things briefly and also talk about how we can break the silence on this?

Jill Stein: I think it's really important to understand what it means, why it is that media has to black out the reality of climate change or nuclear weapons or the war in Yemen, they have to black it out because public resistance is so strong. How many polls have we seen showing public support for example for these recent air strikes in Syria? There's no discussion of public opinion here because they know if they ask they are not going to like what they hear. One poll was done, only one that I have seen that was in the United Kingdom just before the Syria strikes. And support for those strikes was running at 22 percent. Opposition was twice as much and most people were saying what's going on here and why do you want to go to war anyhow? So there is enormous public opposition that can be mobilized.

The fact that they have to blank us out, that they have to disappear us, should be taken as testimony to how very powerful our movement is, for people, for the planet and for peace over profit. We have a very powerful movement on each of those fronts and if we join them together we are absolutely unstoppable. So I think the point is, you know, for us to not allow

them to discourage us. That is their most powerful weapon, to try to convince us that we are powerless and to make us hopeless. But in fact by recognizing we have the power, we do have the power, we can use that power and the role of media here is so critical so I really urge people to support this incredible organisation acTVism and to become involved with it, and to become involved with the grassroots movements for each of these issues because by doing that we will reach critical mass. The only question is when. And the empire will continue to stumble and provide us openings to make that happen. So it's important for us to be in touch and to work together going forward.

Zain Raza: Chris, get ready to receive a lot of emails tomorrow, we will be working over time, processing new applicants, but let's see how it goes after this evening. Anyways, the other aspect I wanted to talk to you about is the solutions to climate change. And in particular, I don't want to demonize the Greens, they are good on the communal level, on foreign policy and other issues, they are not that great I would say. They do believe in this Russia demonizing thing and have... in the war in the former Yugoslavia supported that. And also the solutions that they propose is just tax the big corporations, let's put up some signs to ban cars coming here and stuff like that. You know, Exxon and Shell recently were exposed, and they did their own research, dating decades back, and now explosive revelations have come out that they knew about climate change, they knew about the consequences of it. So, are you proposing, or what is your take on this? Should we employ the solutions based on these corporations, let them trade with each other and decide how the market will decide the outcome of the climate or is there another way that we can find our solution that is sustainable and will change the course of climate change?

Jill Stein: Absolutely, we need systemic changes and that means we have to challenge the whole framework of neoliberalism, capitalism, predatory capitalism, and we really need system change here. Changes along the margins, changing the window dressing isn't going to do it. And I want to acknowledge that the German Greens played a very important role decades ago in launching the green movement. And Petra Kelly was played a major role in articulating the green agenda. And a foremost part of that agenda was grassroots democracy, that is from the bottom up and social and economic justice from the bottom up. And unfortunately, in becoming part of the power system here in Germany, the German green party has gone in a so much different direction and I'll say that there's—

And let me say I know people within the German green party who are not seeing eye to eye with the leadership. So I encourage people not to consider this a lost cause. That our political party should be responsive to their grassroots and we as activists can change what those grassroots look like. But within the green parties around the world there's been a very strong shift to the left that the German green party has not been a part of. So you see for example the left greens in the Netherlands which are now the number one party in the urban areas, the left greens in Iceland which the President is now a member of that coalition.

So over time we are seeing the movements for social and economic justice and for climate, radical climate action, really come together because you cannot get climate justice unless you

also have economic and social and racial and immigrant justice. As Martin Luther King said, a threat to justice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. And the party has to represent all of those issues of justice and as Martin Luther King also said you cannot get to justice if we have a perpetual state of war, which is why we must dismantle the war machine. So I think green parties all over the world are moving in that direction and I hope that the German green party will also.

In terms of specific solutions, many of the green parties in the US, well the US Green party and many other areas around the world are calling for a green new deal which is essentially an emergency program, it's an emergency jobs program, to create the jobs which will simultaneously solve the climate crisis, the economic crisis and the crisis of war. And it will green our energy system with one hundred percent clean renewable energy, no nuclear, no fossil fuels, no unnatural gas and so on. A green food system, one hundred percent organic and also a so called climate farming which helps sequester carbon dioxide so that too is part of our agricultural system. And public transportation which is run on one hundred percent renewable power.

So that can be achieved within 15 years if we put our mind to it. If we could militarize our economy in six months, we can demilitarize and green our economy and put an end to these endless, devastating, catastrophic wars for oil within the next 15 years.

Zain Raza: If you could look in the future or if you had a crystal ball in front of you, what do you see?

Jill Stein: What I clearly see are coming decades of struggle. We are in that struggle right now, I mean certainly in the US, where half of the population is in or near poverty, where people are chronically sick, I mean not only do we not have healthcare but have a system of pollution and stress and unemployment that makes chronic disease really prevalent, like almost one out of two Americans have some form of chronic disease and they don't have healthcare to go with it. You know, we have a generation locked in debt. I think America is pointing to where we're going on the neoliberal agenda that has unfortunately been adopted by much of the Western world.

So, what's happening in America, the kind of devastation that has hit us, you know, is following as we see the social safety net being rolled back in Germany and elsewhere in the European Union. So, struggle has come home, there's devastation where we are conducting our wars and we have mass refugee migrations that have been created by these wars and, you know, if you think that what is it now, it's about 63 million migrants on the move either internally or externally displaced. If you think it's bad now, wait 15 years with the climate. Let alone, what may happen with the wars.

So, struggle is coming to us, it's very important that we meet it head-on. There is nowhere else to go. But the minute you begin to struggle with it, it's an extremely empowering and uplifting struggle. I myself, you know, became political out of desperation, seeing as a physician really what was happening to our health in America, the richest nation in the world.

These epidemics of chronic disease, you know, I became politically active once I realized that just fighting on the issues is a hopeless proposition because they will sabotage you at every step. Whether it's about the climate, or jobs or healthcare, it's a bait-and-switch kind of system. The system itself has to be switched. The bums have to be thrown out. We need to get together because the minute we do get together across issues we are very powerful. And to me that's what a political movement is. It is a coalition across issues, across time and across geography that reaches critical mass so we can get the change we need.

In the words of Alice Walker, the famous American poet and novelist, the biggest way people give up power is by not knowing we have it to start with. So, the inverse of that is by recognizing that we do have power, we can then begin to use that power and to create an America, a Europe, a world, an Africa, an Asia and so on, a world that works for all of us, that puts people, planet and peace over profit. The minute we get together to make that happen, we're on our way. So, let's make it so.

Zain Raza: Jill Stein, thank you so much for coming today. It was a pleasure to have you. And I'll see you soon.

Jill Stein: Thank you. Thank you all so much.

END OF TRANSCRIPT