



Germany's "Wiretapping Scandal", CIA bases in Ukraine & the recent Massacre in Gaza

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Zain Raza (ZR): Thank you for tuning in today, and welcome back to another episode of The Source. I'm your host, Zain Raza. Today I'll be talking with Dimitri Lascaris about the latest developments around the war in Ukraine and Israel's assault in Gaza. Dimitri Lascaris is an independent journalist and lawyer who specializes in class actions, human rights and international law. Dimitri Lascaris also ran for the Green Party leadership in Canada in 2020, finishing second. Dimitri, welcome back.

Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Hi Zain. Thank you for having me.

ZR: Let's start this interview with a breaking development in connection with the war in Ukraine that is currently dominating headlines in Germany. In the German media, it is being referred to as, quote, "the wire tapping affair", unquote, in which the Russian state media, Russia Today, released an audio recording that revealed how high ranking German air officers discussed the hypothetical deployment and use of long range Taurus cruise missiles against Russia by Ukraine, including on the Kerch Bridge, which connects Russia to Crimea. The Taurus cruise missiles [inaudible] technology and a range of up to 500km, which could enable Ukraine to strike deep into Russian territory if Ukraine were to receive it from its Western backers. Germany so far has refused to supply these missiles to Ukraine, stating that it could escalate the conflict into a major war. France and the UK, on the other hand, have approved these missiles, but instead of Ukraine, their own soldiers control them. The political establishment and large parts of the media in Germany have focused more on the internal military security video, as well as on Russian surveillance, than on the impact this revelation has on international security. They have portrayed the whole issue as Russian information warfare, disinformation aimed at driving the German political system apart, sowing discord between Western allies and undermining support for Ukraine at a time when it needs it most. This leak also comes at a time when French President Emmanuel Macron recently openly discussed the possibility of sending European troops to Ukraine to fight against Russia. Can you talk about the significance of these leaks, as well as how the media is framing this scandal?

DL: There's so much to say about this Zain, it's really hard to know where to begin. But I just want to clarify a few things that you mentioned in your question, because this context is very important. You indicated that France and Britain have provided these missiles, they provided cruise missiles. But my understanding is that the Taurus have about twice the range of these missiles, number one. And number two, so that means they could strike Moscow – 500km. And that is a serious matter. Now, let us also focus on examining the significance of this revelation that Ukraine is losing. It's lost. It's over. Ukraine's army is collapsing. And so if you hand it in already, by the way, we've seen that this military, the Ukrainian military was prepared to launch attacks on Moscow, if they feel that all they have left is cruise missile attacks on Moscow, we should not assume that they will not do that. It's entirely possible that they will do it. And Putin just gave a speech after this Macron debacle where Macron said, you know, maybe we should put our troops into Ukraine, he gave a speech in which he was quite clear that if you do that, it's war, it's open warfare between NATO and Russia. And we could be looking at a nuclear war. I mean, he didn't use this word, but very clearly he talked about the extermination of humanity. And then we get this, we get a revelation, first of all, that the British have forces in there to some degree controlling the targeting, maybe even actually operating the weapons – who knows? Secondly, we get a revelation that the Germans, notwithstanding Olaf Scholz's clear and unequivocal statement; I thought it was quite clear that they weren't going to provide these missiles. Pistorius's general, Gerhartz, is openly talking about doing so nonetheless, and potentially providing some level of control or targeting, with respect to the missiles, the way the British are apparently doing. This is all adding up to an extraordinarily dangerous situation. I mean, we are reaching a moment where I think the Russians have had it. They've won this war, on the ground. They've defeated Ukraine. And I've been predicting it, as others predicted, we were all called Putin apologists, but it was obvious that the Ukrainian military, for all of its courage, all of its determination, all of its sacrifice, did not have the means. It didn't have the manpower, and it didn't have the industrial capacity to defeat Russia, and this was inevitable. And now that we've reached the moment of truth, where you can no longer deny that Ukraine has lost this war, the West is looking at escalating this to an absolutely obscene degree, even after Putin gave a speech where he talked about the potential of nuclear Armageddon. This is sheer insanity, Zain.

And the other thing I want to say, this bears an eerie similarity to the release in 2014 of a recording between Victoria Nuland, who's currently the deputy Secretary of State of the United States, and Geoffrey Pyatt, who at the time was the US ambassador to Ukraine, where they were openly plotting the removal of Viktor Yanukovich, the democratically elected president of Ukraine at the time, who was trying to maintain good relations with Russia, which is a sensible thing to do if you're Ukraine, if you ask me. And they actually picked in that phone call, who would be the next prime minister of Ukraine, a fellow by the name of Yatsenyuk. And when that happened, there was a phrase that Victoria Nuland used because Pyatt said to her, you know, the Europeans don't want Yatsenyuk. They want, you know, the fellow who is now the mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko, I believe his name is, the former professional boxer. And Victoria Nuland said F**** the EU. And the entire story was about that; the Western media was fixated on the fact that Victoria Nuland had used an expletive with respect to the supposed allies of the United States government and also the fact that

there had been a leak. They're doing exactly the same thing again here, but the stakes this time are much higher. Now we're talking about the potential for nuclear war. So people need to give their heads a shake very quickly. And I've been very critical of Olaf Scholz. But if there's one thing the man deserves to be commended for, not attacked for, is that he's put his foot down, at least, at least cosmetically, superficially put his foot down and said, we're not going to send those cruise missiles to Ukraine. That is the sensible thing to do. Anything else is complete insanity.

ZR: What do you make of the argument that is being presented in the German media, that it is the job of military officers to hypothesize different war scenarios and be prepared in case the government gives the order. This is standard procedure and hence the scandal is being blown out of proportion.

DL: Well, see, I think that that would be a plausible position to take, if there was some wiggle room in what the Chancellor said. But there was none. He was absolutely unequivocal. And this is not just a political issue, this is an existential issue. And that's exactly why the Chancellor was unequivocal, because he understood, especially after that speech that Putin gave, that we were talking about a high potential for nuclear war. In that scenario, they shouldn't, these German generals and Luftwaffe officers should not be running around trying to hatch schemes for the delivery of Taurus missiles to Ukraine, especially a scenario which involves, in some sense, the German military to some degree controlling how those Taurus missiles are used. And they were talking about attacks on the Kerch Bridge, okay?! They themselves were, as I understand it, plotting the possibility of using those missiles to attack the Kerch Bridge. I just, again, this is not a scenario where they should have been weighing alternative hypotheses, where they should have been considering Plan B's. There's no plan B here. There should only be one plan. And that is no Taurus missiles to Ukraine.

ZR: On the 25th of February, The New York Times published an article titled, quote: *The Spy War: How the CIA Secretly Helps Ukraine Fight Putin*, Unquote. In this article, The New York Times claims to provide, for the very first time, details on the closely guarded intelligence partnership between the CIA and Ukraine. Some of the details include that the CIA funded, developed and/or operated a network of spy bases in the past eight years in Ukraine that included 12 secret locations along the Russian border. The CIA also trained an elite Ukraine commando force, known as Unit 2245, which captured Russian drones and communications gear so the CIA technicians could reverse engineer them and crack Moscow's encryption systems. It also states that the CIA trained a new generation of Ukrainian spies who operate inside Russia, across Europe and in Cuba and other places where the Russians have a large presence. I searched the online website and archives of Germany's leading primetime news channel called the Tagesschau, which reaches millions of people every day and could not find any mention of this revelation. In your view, what is the significance of this?

DL: I'm trying to understand and try to understand from the moment this story came out, what the people who leaked this information to the New York Times were thinking. Let's

assume that it's all true. What are they trying to accomplish exactly? Are they trying to aggravate the Russian government even more? Are they trying to provoke the situation to an even greater degree than they already have? Why would you want to advertise that to the entire world; that the CIA was so firmly ensconced in Ukraine. Doesn't this reinforce the Russian government's narrative from the very beginning, that this was a CIA orchestrated coup d'etat, and that the CIA has been in this war up to its neck from day one? I think it does. I think it reinforces that narrative. So, again, people in the halls of power in the West seem to have lost their sanity, Zain. And I have to say, it's not just this. It's not just the way they're handling the defeat of the Ukrainian military, that boggles the mind. At the very same time that they're doing that, they are not only allowing, but facilitating and enabling a genocide in Gaza. The whole world can see that. Certainly outside of the West, which constitutes the vast majority of the world today. They can see that the West is facilitating, enabling, promoting, protecting a genocide in Gaza. And the whole of the Middle East is on fire at this moment and could explode to the point where even reliable US allies like the Egyptian dictatorship or the Jordanian monarchy are overthrown by rebellion in their own streets. That's the point we've reached at this stage. There just seems to have been a complete – I mean, there are no adults in the room in the halls of Western power.

ZR: Let us move to another topic. In February, Britain's High Court finished two days of court hearings on the question whether to grant the WikiLeaks founder and journalist Julian Assange an appeal against his extradition to the United States, where he is set to face espionage charges. These charges are based on the Espionage Act of 1917, which was enacted after the United States entered into World War One. In a surprising development yesterday, the German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, showed support for Assange, making the following remarks during a question and answer session at a vocational school in southern Germany. Quote: "I am of the opinion that it would be good if the British courts granted him the necessary protection because he has to expect prosecution in the USA, given the fact that he has betrayed American state secrets", unquote. We can expect a decision on Assange at any time in the coming weeks or months. This case comes at the same time when the fiercest critic of Russian President Putin, Alexei Navalny, died of mysterious circumstances in a prison in the Arctic. Like Assange, Navalny also published material about corruption in Russia, and was very vocal on social media, openly criticizing the Russian establishment. In the case of Navalny, however, the media and political uproar was humungous. So far so that the United States and the European Union implemented hundreds of new sanctions, with the US adding 600 by themselves alone. White House national security Spokesman John Kirby stated that this is just the start and more actions would be undertaken soon. Can you comment on these two cases and in your view, should they be condemned and treated equally in our political and media landscape?

DL: Well, let me start with Navalny, okay? I don't know, frankly, I don't think anybody in the halls of power in the West actually knows what happened to Alexei Navalny. Is it plausible that Putin ordered his murder? Yes, it's plausible. However, I would first of all point out that the head of Ukrainian military intelligence, Kyrylo Budanov, a virulently hostile opponent of Vladimir Putin and his government, told the Ukrainian media and the Western media a few

days ago that, according to his sources, Alexei Navalny actually did die of a blood clot. And the Kremlin told the truth. I would imagine that the sources that Budanov has in Russia, are at least as good, if not better than the sources that Western intelligence have because of the strong links between the Ukrainian elite and the Russian elite, and the fact that there are so many Ukrainians living in Russia, they know that country much better than Westerners do. And that's his opinion, for what it's worth. He wasn't saying, I believe, he said that's what happened. He actually died of a blood clot. Secondly, the timing of this, if in fact, I mean, let's think for a moment, why would Vladimir Putin have ordered the murder of Navalny at this particular moment? At the very moment when Russia was on the verge of taking Avdiivka, which is a major defeat for the Ukrainian military several weeks before Vladimir Putin goes to the polls seeking reelection. And by all accounts, he's going to win. Nobody was paying any attention in Russia to Alexei Navalny. Nobody. I mean, at the point that he died, tragically, he had an approval rating or a popularity rating of less than 1%, whereas Putin's is in the range of 80%. It makes absolutely no sense for Vladimir Putin to have ordered the murder of Navalny at this particular point in time. And I should also note that, at this particular moment when he died, the Munich Security Conference was happening and there was a huge debate going on about how we are going to continue to sustain the Ukrainian military. Again, killing Navalny at that moment would have worked to the disadvantage of Putin and his government. So, frankly, I'm skeptical. I acknowledge it's plausible, but I'm skeptical. Now, as you pointed out, that despite that there are perfectly logical reasons, including the statement by Kyrylo Budanov, the head of Ukrainian military intelligence, reasons to believe that Putin did not order his killing, [inaudible] in the various neoconservative voices in the Western media, definitively, definitively that Vladimir Putin ordered his execution.

With respect to Julian Assange; there's no speculation here. We all know what happened. There's no question. Julian Assange published information that was provided to him by whistleblowers. He himself [inaudible] the United States at the time, he wasn't working for any US intelligence agency. He simply took information which whistleblowers provided to him, people who had access to classified information and published it, and in so doing, revealed to the world that the United States government had committed war crimes and various other improprieties, severe improprieties. And for this, what have they done? We know what happened. This is not speculation. The Americans charged him under that legislation, that draconian legislation you mentioned. They got their lapdogs in London to arrest Assange, to drag him out of the Ecuadorian embassy, where he had been given political asylum by Rafael Correa. And he was basically betrayed by the successor of Rafael Correa, the president of Ecuador. They dragged him out, they put him into a maximum security facility and then began basically to slowly psychologically torture him to death. How do we know this? Because a UN expert on torture examined Julian Assange, looked very carefully at this case and said this constitutes torture, what you're doing to this man. This is not speculation. [Inaudible] complete silence, total complicity in the country that I come from, Canada, I should say, not a word of criticism, not even the modest request for compassion that Olaf Scholz just articulated. And, you know, as far as the Chancellor is concerned, I regret to say that given the current state of relations with the United Kingdom, in particularly

these revelations in as a result of a leaked conversation involving German military officers, I doubt that the word of Chancellor Scholz is going to carry a lot of weight with the British elite at this particular moment in time. But at the end of the day, it was just a really sort of soft ball, very, very meek request that compassion be shown to somebody who is, by any reasonable measure, one of the greatest journalists of our time.

ZR: Let us switch gears here and talk about what you already mentioned, the situation in Israel and Gaza. Let me first recap the latest developments for our viewers. Since the October 7th attacks of Hamas that killed at least 1200 Israelis, that included 370 military personnel, Israel launched an air and ground assault in Gaza, first in the north and then towards Khan Yunis in the south, which thus far has killed at least 30,500 Palestinians, most of them being women and children. Despite international condemnation, it is expected that Israel will start a ground offensive in Rafah. The Israeli Defense Force also recently presented a plan to the War Cabinet to evacuate Palestinian civilians from Rafah and to militarily destroy what they claim are some of the last Hamas battalions. Around 1.4 million people who fled the north are currently trapped there and have nowhere to go. However, I want to focus with you on a particular development in Gaza, that occurred on February 29th, which made headlines around the world, including in Germany. On this day, 118 Palestinian civilians were killed and at least 760 were injured. The German media, by and large, referred to this as, quote, "an incident" unquote, and acted very objectively by citing both version; the one by Hamas, which states that Israel opened fire on civilians, and the other of Israel, which states that many of the dead were trampled in a chaotic rush for food aid, and that its troops only fired when they felt endangered by the crowd. By and large, the media here also stated that no independent verification was possible to attain. Another note is that whenever the Gaza Health Ministry is quoted, it is always mentioned that it is controlled by, quote, "terror organization Hamas", unquote. Can you provide your perspectives on this unfortunate event and share what your research has uncovered?

DL: Well, I'm going to rely upon the doctors who examined the victims. The doctors who examined the victims found that 80% or more of them had bullet wounds or shrapnel wounds, because it wasn't just that they were fired upon with automatic weapons, there were tank shells fired at them. So this whole narrative, Zain, that this was some kind of stampeding mob and that the Israeli military force was simply trying to protect itself, does not comport with the medical evidence. It is flatly contradicted by the medical evidence. Furthermore, this is consistent with Israel's behavior. It has repeatedly attacked aid convoys. This is not the first time, it's just the most shocking example of that. And thirdly, the Israeli military has a long and sordid record of lying through its teeth. So we know, for example, that it claimed last year when an Israeli sniper murdered the Al Jazeera journalist who, by the way, happened also to be an American citizen, Shireen Abu Akleh, they claimed that it was Palestinians who had killed her. That there was a [inaudible] bullet fired by Palestinian terrorists. But they later admitted, no, it was an Israeli sniper who shot her in the neck. So we know they lied. And I'm just giving you one example. There are many, many examples. And finally, we just had the International Court of Justice say, by a margin of 15 to 2, including every single Western judge, the German judge, the American judge, the French judge, the Japanese judge,

Slovakian judge, Australian judge, all agreed that it was plausible that Israel is committing genocide or violating the Genocide Convention. They all agreed with this. How can you trust an entity, a state actor that has just been judged by an overwhelming margin, including with the concurrence of all the Western judges, to be plausibly committing genocide?! This makes absolutely no sense to me whatsoever. It is completely indefensible. Israel should be assumed at this stage to be lying until evidence to the contrary is adduced. That should be the operating assumption. Instead, we assume that Israel is telling the truth even when there's overwhelming evidence that it's lying.

ZR: The International Court of Justice, ICJ on February 26th concluded six days of arguments made by 52 countries on Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories that include the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and occupied East Jerusalem. These hearings came at a time, while South Africa's genocide case is also happening at the ICJ against Israel, which you and I have already talked about in great detail. Returning to this occupation trial, Israel not only called this a media circus, but just as with the South African case, it stated that this trial is fostering terrorism and promoting anti-Semitism. Israel backers such as the United States argued for Israel by stating, quote, "any movement towards Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza requires consideration of Israel's very security needs", unquote. As a lawyer for international law and human rights, can you provide your assessment of this trial, as well as what outcome you expect from it?

DL: Well, I expect just as I expected in the case of the request for provisional measures by South Africa in the genocide case that Israel is going to lose and it's going to lose badly. Why? Not because the International Court of Justice is biased against Israel. In fact, if anything, because of the presence of a significant contingent of Western judges, it tends to be too kind to Israel. It's going to lose because the evidence is overwhelming and the law is decidedly against it. I would point out that in 2004, 20 years ago the International Court of Justice ruled unanimously, with the concurrence of the American judge, that the settlements in the West Bank violate the Fourth Geneva Convention and other aspects of international law. For 20 years, Israel has thumbed its nose at that decision and continued to expand its settlements. And how have Western governments reacted to that? They've effectively rewarded Israel. They continued to give Israel – the United States almost \$4 billion a year in military aid. They deepened their trade relations with Israel. They fought for Israel to normalize relations with Gulf Arab states, even though the Palestinian people had been thrown under the bus. That's how Western states responded. And so what happened to Israel? Israel, because of that, and also for a whole decades long impunity that it's had for a variety of violations of human rights, it has now the leadership of Israel, and frankly, much of the population have developed a sense of impunity. They feel that they can get away with anything. And this is an inevitable consequence of what we're now seeing: a genocide in Gaza. They are convinced that no matter what they do, they will never be held accountable. I also want to point out that before these hearings began, every major, just about every major Western human rights organization and Israeli human rights organization documented that Israel is committing the crime of apartheid. Amnesty International did it. Human Rights Watch did it. The Israeli human rights groups B'Tselem and Yesh Din did it. The UN special

rapporteur for the human rights situation in Palestine, Michael Lynk, did it. Richard Falk, an American law professor, an international jurist of the highest repute who happened to himself to be Jewish, co-authored a report in 2017 with another American academic, Virginia Tilley, in which they concluded with these words, the evidence that Israel is committing apartheid is overwhelming – overwhelming. How much jurisprudence do we need? How much evidence do we need that Israel is violating international law egregiously and complete impunity, before we stop hearing this endless, obnoxious refrain that this is all about anti-Semitism. Our brothers and sisters in the Jewish community are speaking out in greater and greater numbers. Even they are being called anti-Semites. This is the height of absurdity that members of the Jewish community who are acting in their own, out of a crisis of conscience and out of their profound sense of decency, and in a manner which they passionately believe to be dictated by Jewish values, are themselves being smeared as anti-Semites. This is insanity. Again, I can only come back to what I said, Zain, there are no adults in the room in the halls of Western power.

ZR: Let me make a counter argument that usually floats in the mainstream media. Don't you think there is some credence to the argument being put forward by Israel, as well as the United States, that lifting the occupation could endanger Israeli civilians? Like you mentioned, many, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, have stated that Palestinians are living in a system of apartheid. They also have suffered so much from losing their homes and loved ones, due to Israel's settlement expansion. And just lifting the occupation from one day to the other would cause many Palestinians that have suffered to attack Israeli civilians out of revenge or out of everything that they have suffered, similar to what we saw on October 7th. So don't you think, lifting the siege from one day to the other would not give Israel the security that it needs?

DL: I mean, this is standing reality on its head. The violence is coming from a narrow faction of Palestinian society, because most Palestinians, for decades, have resisted the occupation peacefully or frankly, not at all, just out of terror. They were terrorized into submission. Only a small proportion of Palestinian society [inaudible]. And why? Because of the oppression. So we are being told, and this is profoundly racist, we are being told by the defenders of Israel that the reason that this has happened is because Palestinian people are inherently violent. That's really what they're telling us, that they're inherently anti-Semitic. They're inherently racist. They're hateful people. They want to murder Jews. It's in their nature. This is a profoundly racist narrative. They're doing what just about anybody in their position would do. They're lashing out. Sometimes in ways, yes, that are a violation of international law, as happened on October 7th. There were violations of the laws of war on that day. But to the extent that they targeted military assets and to a large extent they did – it wasn't simply civilians, in fact, it was primarily military targets that they went after – this is legitimate resistance under international law. The UN General Assembly has recognized that this right to self-determination may be pursued through the use of armed resistance that is consistent with the laws of war. And it is inevitable that they're going to resort to this because the international community has given them no other option. All peaceful options have been extinguished. The Israeli government today doesn't even pretend to be interested in a two

state solution, not even down the road. They're no longer saying, well, eventually we'll get there. Netanyahu and virtually the entire so-called mainstream of the Israeli political elite have ruled out categorically the Palestinians ever having a state. So what do you expect them to do? To disappear quietly into the night, to passively submit to their own annihilation? They are human beings like us, and we wouldn't put up with it. We shouldn't imagine that they will do that either.

ZR: Dimitri Lascaris, independent journalist and lawyer for international law and human rights. Thank you so much for your time today.

DL: Thank you, Zain, always a pleasure.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. If you're watching our channel on a regular basis, please make sure to take into account that our journalism, which provides you with an independent perspective on a daily basis, has a lot of costs associated with it. This includes, for example, tax advising, insurance, website maintenance, video editing, translation, voiceover, and many others. If all of our 145,000 subscribers would just donate a few euros a month on a regular basis, via bank account, Patreon or PayPal, we would be able to cover our costs for the next four to five years. Since it's our core principle to not take any money from corporations or governments, we only depend on you, on our viewers. We thank you for your generosity and for tuning in today. My name is Zain Raza, see you next time.

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