Dimitri Lascaris from Moscow: Are the Sanctions Working?

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Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Good day, this is Dimitri Lascaris coming to you from Red Square in Moscow for Reason2Resist on September 17th, 2026. I arrived in Moscow this morning at about 7am and after passing through passport control with no difficulty I took the train into central Moscow. And then I checked into my hotel, which is near the Foreign Ministry, where I happened actually to attend a meeting back in 2023 – I'll come back to that in a minute. And then I began walking the streets and I've been out in the streets of central Moscow now for about five hours; I've probably walked already about ten kilometres and I ended up here in Red Square before I start walking back to my hotel. And for what it's worth in the several hours that I've out here walking the street to central Moscow, it doesn't appear to have changed at all since I was last here in early 2023. That happened also to be my very first trip to Russia. It is, by all appearances, continues to be an orderly city, quite a beautiful city, and I walked through some boutiques, some shops, the shelves are full, the produce seems to be plentiful. I didn't see any evidence whatsoever that this country is at war. In the time I've been walking out here I saw one soldier in military fatigues and he was not armed which was a bit of a surprise to me. So on the surface at least it doesn't appear as though life has changed and you certainly can't tell just by walking around central Moscow that this is a country that is locked in an existential war, which I mean, let's be candid, I think the government of Russia deserves some credit for that when you consider the multifaceted war that has been waged upon it and the people of Russia for the past five years or more.

In any case, during the next several days, I will gather more information about how the circumstances here might have changed since I came in 2023 and I'll certainly share that with you. The purpose in my coming here however was not to do journalism. I came here because I was invited to attend something called the World People's Assembly. This is the second annual gathering of the World Peoples' Assembly here in Moscow. The organisers say that the mission of the assembly is to promote unity across different cultures and states. It says

representatives of over 150 countries are converging on Moscow for this assembly and they want to place particular focus on what they say are human values and respect for cultural diversity in addition to the principle of unity. So I had never heard of the assembly before I received an invitation to come here from the organisers. And when I did receive it, I consulted with some friends of mine in Canada who know Russia very well. And they recommended to me that I accept the invitation. They thought that it would be an informative experience. And so I did that. And the event's going to begin tomorrow. It will take place over two days. If I can do some reporting during that period, I will, it'll probably be more focused on Russia and the Ukraine war than what is happening in West Asia, but I'm certainly keeping a close eye on those events as well, given their dramatic importance to us all, and particularly the peoples of the region of West Asia.

Now, I mentioned a moment ago that the first time I came to Russia was in 2023, early 2023, and the reason why I came, I was not invited on occasion by anybody, I simply wanted to understand this country better because we were locked in a war with Russia, we being the West, that could very easily spin into a nuclear conflagration. And I was also convinced by that point in time that the war had been provoked by Western powers for the purpose of destabilising the country, subjugating the country and ultimately gaining access to its resources, not for the benefit of Western citizens but for the benefit of the Western-based oligarchy. So I came here to find out for myself what was happening, hear the Russian point of view on the war, and I reported extensively from both Moscow and Crimea on that trip. I spent about two weeks here in Moscow and I took a train in the middle of that month that I spent here to Crimea from Moscow that took me about 24 hours or more as I recall, and I spent two weeks in Crimea. I was guided around by US documentary filmmaker Regis Tremblay, who lives there, and his lovely partner Tanya. And they took me all around, including to Sebastopol, where there were drone attacks while I was there. And they also accompanied me up to the border of Crimea and the oblast of Kherson. And we were pretty much at that point in the hot war zone. And we saw a lot of military activity during the brief time that we were there.

And at the end of my two weeks in Crimea, I took a train back to Moscow and crossed over the bridge between Crimea and mainland Russia, which had just recently been attacked and had been repaired, attacked by the Ukrainians, of course. And during that voyage back to Moscow by train, I was assigned a cabin that was occupied by three Russian soldiers. They were heading back to Moscow from the battlefield. There were four bunks in that cabin. I reported on that extensively as well. That was quite a train ride. I had a lot of interactions with Russian soldiers, some of them not particularly pleasant, I might add. But if you wanna know more about that trip, that reporting can be found on our channel all the way back in early 2023. And as I say, my purpose in coming was to understand better the Russian perspective and the Russian people. And when I returned to Canada after that trip, I was invited by some peace activists in Canada to embark on a cross-country speaking tour about my trip to Russia and about the ways in which I thought we should approach this proxy war of citizens of conscience. I accepted the invitation, agreed to speak in eleven cities from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast of Canada over a period of about a month. By the way, I

did that for no compensation, I thought it was just the right thing to do. And along the way, we were constantly harassed by Ukrainian nationalists and neocons who did everything they could to shut down the speaking tour. And they actually did manage in three different cities to cancel our venues and forced us at the last second to scramble and find a new venue. And we managed to do that in every case. In one instance, the venue was one that I had handpicked myself in Montreal, my home city. And, they put so much pressure on the business that agreed to allow me to speak at its facility that they had to cancel at the last second because they thought that their business was going to be destroyed by these people. They were actually threatening to destroy their business. And so we had to go out into a park in Montreal, just a few blocks from my home in order for me to speak to the audience that had assembled. And as I was speaking to them in the park, there was a group of about 40 rabidly nationalist Ukrainians standing about 50 metres away. They were separated from us by a group of cops and they were basically screaming obscenities at me the entire time. I had to shout over them in order to be heard by the audience in the park.

Anyways, that was the kind of atmosphere in which we were functioning at that particular point in time. It was extremely difficult to express any kind of criticism whatsoever of this heinous proxy war. I think my sense is that now the people living in the West are much more receptive to criticism of the proxy war than they were then. They understand to a greater degree than they did then the complicity of our governments and the suffering of the Ukrainian people and just how much money this is costing at a time when money is desperately needed in the West to shore up our social welfare systems, our infrastructure, our education and health care systems. But nonetheless I also believe that there's far too much complacency in the West even today towards this proxy war. And I hope that through our reporting, we can inspire more and more people to take a stand against it before this thing actually blows up into a nuclear war. But even if it doesn't, the death and destruction, the suffering that it is causing is extraordinary. And all of this was avoidable and can be resolved on terms that are just and fair and sustainable for everybody. So to the extent I can, I will continue to report on the Ukraine war while I'm here. And I'm also going to be paying close attention to the events in West Asia because of the primordial importance of what is happening there too. But as I say, my priority during the next three days is going to attend the conference and not to report to the same degree that I normally do.

A couple of other observations about this square: I happen to associate Red Square with the struggle of workers and the overthrow of the capitalist oligarchy, but right across from the tomb of Lenin, over here, this ornate building is actually now filled with luxury boutiques. The big names in high fashion are all there, at least the ones who've managed to remain after the sanctions were imposed upon Russia and I can imagine that only the wealthiest of Russians are able to actually shop there. I just went for a stroll in there and had a had a coffee and you know it reminded me that like all major Western countries Russia is a highly unequal society today and I hope that over time the Russian government will come to understand that the capitalist system is fundamentally unjust, profoundly anti-democratic, and that it needs to move back towards a much more socialist model of governance than it currently practises today.

One other point I want to make about current events is that today, just by chance when I returned to Moscow the Senate and Congress passed legislation imposing what they hope will be crushing sanctions on Russia, another round of crushing sanctions. And they've actually named this sanctions legislation after the murderous psychopath Lindsey Graham. So he continues to haunt us from the grave, continues to inspire policies that are profoundly destructive and utterly hypocritical. Under this legislation, the US government is required to impose tariffs of 100 percent on any country that buys significant quantities of Russian energy. The legislation also bars Americans from investing in Russia and makes it all but impossible for anybody to import Russian goods into the United States. Now the legislation also confers upon the President the discretion to waive its requirements if he deems it to be in the national interest to do so. And this is the reason, actually, that some Democrats opposed it. The vast majority of the members of Congress and the Senate actually supported the legislation, but some opposed it, they weren't opposed to the fact that it was belligerent, that it was going to antagonise Russia even more, make it even harder for there to be a peace deal, they opposed it on the basis that Trump might abuse his discretion, which, by the way, is a legitimate concern. But it isn't, I think, the most important concern in this context. The most important concern is that it's making it even harder to achieve peace and it is wildly hypocritical. I mean, we're to believe that they're sanctioning Russia again because of alleged violations of international law and human rights by the Russian government?! These same people who are trotting out this pretext for this latest sanctions legislation, which by the way violates international law because it hasn't been approved by the UN Security Council, we are supposed to believe they care about international law and human rights?! The same people who are waging a war of aggression on Iran, who are facilitating the genocidal Saudi war on Yemen, who are enabling in every imaginable way a genocide in occupied Palestine and in South Lebanon, and who kidnapped the elected President of Venezuela and are now in the process of looting the country, who are imposing a criminal, outright genocidal blockade on the fine people of Cuba? These clowns, these psychopaths, these depraved monsters expect us to believe that they're sanctioning Russia because of concern for human rights and international law? Just an insult to intelligence and nothing more, that's what that is, folks. Every time those monsters invoke international law and human rights, the press gallery in the capitals of the West should fall over in uproarious laughter. So I'm gonna be heading back to my hotel now, which is about five kilometres away and if I see things along the way that I think might be of interest to you I will share them with you.

So I've just exited Red Square, which is over there. And I'm going to walk alongside the Kremlin, and we're going to go by in just a second what I believe to be the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. I suppose President Putin is up there somewhere. This is a famous library in central Moscow dedicated to the legendary Russian author Dostoevsky and that is a statue of the legend himself. I'm now on a famous pedestrian street in central Moscow called Arbat Street. Behind me there you can see a mural dedicated to a famous Russian general from the Second World War. I believe that is Zhukov himself, reputed to be perhaps the greatest Russian general of all time. But there's so much more here to see on Arbat street. Have a look. These are two robotic vehicles. Right now they're stationary for some reason. But one of them scooted by me, stopped, and actually paused. I think it thought it was going to have a

collision with me or something, and then moved on. I don't know exactly what purpose these things serve. Obviously, the kids are entertained by them. But maybe they're there just to keep an eye on things, maybe they pick up litter, your guess is as good as mine.

Well, my friends, I'm approaching the hotel. It's been a long day. I hope to be back to you tomorrow with more information, insights about what is happening in Russia today. In the interim, thank you for listening in and please stay safe out there, my friend.

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