

# Ray McGovern: Putin Under Pressure to Retaliate Against NATO

Ray McGovern was a CIA officer for 27 years, he chaired the National Intelligence Estimates and prepared the CIA's Presidential Daily Briefs. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: [https://x.com/Glenn\\_Diesen](https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen) Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennDiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennDiesen> Buy me a Coffee: [buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng](https://buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng) Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

## #Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined again by Ray McGovern, a CIA analyst for 27 years who chaired National Intelligence Estimates and prepared the CIA's daily briefs for the president. So yeah, thank you for coming back on.

## #Ray McGovern

You're most welcome, Glenn. Glad to be with you.

## #Glenn

Well, you and I, we did some communication back and forth and also talked to other people on this topic as well, which is the pressure that President Putin is currently under. Again, I'm not sure from where — the public, the military, the security services — essentially, a lot of pressure to retaliate more forcefully, not just against Ukraine, but also possibly against its Western backers who appear to have, well, crossed that line between a proxy war and a direct war. I was wondering how you are assessing the information or the situation. What are the dilemmas now for Putin and Ukraine? Which way do you think it's going to go? Well, I guess in some regards, we've already seen the attacks on Ukraine becoming much more fierce. But will Ukraine be the only one who essentially pays the price for these attacks on Russia? Or will Russia go after the Western backers as well?

## #Ray McGovern

That is the question, Glenn. I'm glad you set it up that way. This all depends on my concept of what a cautious person Vladimir Putin is. I don't see that he would take extraordinary risks, even if there's only a small chance that NATO would make good on that Article 5 protection, whereby if one state is hit by Russia or anybody else, the others are pledged to come to their aid. The way I look at it is this: the Russian advance in Ukraine has been slowed down. That's undeniable. If you look at the

map and you look at the history of the last year, I infer that the slowdown is temporary. It's due to something called drones, okay?

Now, drones have been very effective against troop concentrations and everything else, and the Ukrainians have lots of them. So this came to the fore at a little-noticed meeting. Perhaps you did, because you follow these things closely. But I think it was on Russia Day — Putin arrayed about 20 non-commissioned officers, people who were in the infantry or the assault forces, you know — and it reminded me, when I was an infantry officer, everyone bragged, “Look, it's the infantry that wins the war. You know, all these guys that fly in these airplanes and tanks — no, it's the infantry that wins the war.” Well, that was all infantry around him, okay? And what was remarkable about that?

Well, it was Putin and Sergei Shoigu, the defense minister, and then all these sergeants and privates, and some of them were pretty middle-aged, okay? And Putin said, okay, now, thanks for coming here. I thought this is the way I'd like to celebrate this special day. Now, tell me what you need. Tell me how it's going on the front. Did you see this, Glenn? I'm just wondering. No? Oh, okay. I missed the other one. It was very little noticed. Anyhow, these sergeants, you know, they're ramrod straight, and no one would volunteer to be the first. So Shoigu said, why don't you do it? So then they got going. And the first one said, you know, Starlink is a real problem. I mean, these damn drones, they're hitting us and they're guided by this Starlink and stuff.

## **#Glenn**

And we don't have anything like that.

## **#Ray McGovern**

And Putin says, well, the good news is we do have something like it. But we don't have it employed yet at the front. But it's coming. And please, just be patient. We're working on this. We know it's Starlink, but we have—please. Next one says, you know, they have night vision goggles, and they have a lot of other special stuff that we don't have. So Putin turns to Belousov and says, hey, what is this? And Belousov says, look, they're on their way. We know about this. We're developing it. And then Putin says to this group of non-commissioned officers, look, this is the guy I made Secretary of Defense, or Defense Minister, because he knows all this stuff.

He's worked in the military industries, and if anybody can get this done, he can get it done, and he's going to get it done, okay? So anyhow, it was so frank and they eased up. So what's my take here? My take is that drones are a real problem. They have slowed down the Russian offense, but the inexorable movement toward Kramatorsk and the others—I guess, what's it, Konstantinovka—is right now being occupied by the Russians. It's just a matter of time before the Russians develop those kinds of countermeasures that make their attrit, attrit, attrit. I'm not talking weeks. I'm probably talking months. But I am talking this year, okay?

So with that as the backdrop—in other words, Russia continuing to have the upper hand, no matter how many drones the West throws at Russia—how does Putin look at the general situation where these embarrassing drones come into St. Petersburg and other places, even while he's having the economic summit? Well, they hit nowhere near the economic summit. They were embarrassing, but you had to look way on the horizon to see what they were. And this most recent wave of drones that were arrayed against Moscow, they turned out to be fueled by kerosene. Have you seen this? It's really interesting. I was watching this one night. I was on live with some other interviewer, and it looked terrible.

It was going to Moscow. And then we learned the next day that, yeah, these drones were specifically designed to have kerosene. So when they dropped them, when they were shot down, you got a real effect such as Hollywood needs, right? So the other side of it is that there is pressure on Putin to wind this damn thing up. The Russian successor to the KGB in its foreign outreach, the SVR, they put out a statement from their public relations department. I didn't know they had one. But it said, look, we want to call your attention to the fact that the Latvians have been persuaded by the Ukrainians that they can make five airfields available to the Ukrainians to come in and fire their drones and their missiles from. And they assured the Latvians that they could do this and no one would ever, ever know where they came from.

So the SVR says, you know, this is a combination of Russophobia and naivete. I mean, we know exactly where these five... You want the coordinates? We also have the coordinates of Riga and other decision-making centers. So, bottom line, membership in NATO will not protect you from appropriate retaliation for use of territorial space against Russia. Whoa, a very specific warning. Now, I have not noticed any drones or missiles being fired from Latvia, although some come from that general direction, the Baltic area. And I dare say I'll be surprised if the Latvians make those airfields available to the Ukrainians, because then it will be a question of, well, what do the Russians do? Do they automatically strike Riga or strike any one of those launch pads? Not automatically.

This is high-stakes stuff. And the way I perceive Putin, consummate politician and gradualist, is he's got his people arrayed around his desk here, and he says, okay, now... You guys want me to strike Riga, or somebody says just those launch pads that the Ukrainians are using or threatened to use. So, okay. Now, is Latvia a NATO country? Well, yes, it is. Well, is there a NATO treaty that would compel the other members to come to its defense and make war, you ask this? Oh, yeah, but it doesn't mean anything. Okay, Putin. Doesn't mean anything. Oh, you mean because NATO's falling apart? Yeah, because NATO's falling apart. Well, what are the chances that Donald Trump might invoke Article 5 if we hit Riga or if we hit one of those bases? Oh, 10%. What do you say? 15%, 20%. Too high. Yeah.

## **#Ray McGovern**

Much too high. You want me to risk everything we've achieved since 2000? Everything we've achieved in Russia by depending on an unpredictable president not to invoke Article 5 when we don't

need that kind of thing? Forget about it. We're going to completely just kind of attrit, attrit, attrit. If the Latvians do let, if the Ukrainians do fire missiles or drones from Latvia, we'll deal with that. It won't be automatic. That SVR thing was a warning, okay? We can retaliate, and maybe we will, but not just now. We're winning. For God's sake, have a little patience. Now, on the political side, there's also some heat that you can see.

Finally, over the last couple of months, we've learned what the agreements will reach — the Anchorage agreements, okay? And they have to do with Trump giving up the idea of an immediate ceasefire, and Trump promising to use his influence with Zelensky and the Europeans to kind of knock it off and come to an agreement, a sensible negotiated settlement here, maybe giving some flexibility on their territorial demands and so forth, okay? And for Putin, well, that was enough to say, okay, we will make concessions as well. I mean, the Russians use that word, concessions. They don't spell them out.

I have some guesses, but that doesn't really matter. OK, so that was the deal. Now, what happened? Well, clearly, I was misled three days after Anchorage when Trump, in his royalty, convened the—I call them the seven dwarfs from Europe there—and read them the riot act. In the middle of it, he said, oh, pardon me, I promised to call Vladimir, just now Vladimir Putin. So, could you guys just have some coffee or something for a while and leave the room? And I'll call you. I'll let you know when—I'll tell my people to let you know when you can come back. I mean, that's the tone of the thing, I thought.

And I thought Zelensky had been read the riot act and the Europeans got the message. But I'm kind of not so embarrassed that I didn't predict this, because neither did the Russians. They thought that Trump not only would be able and willing, but that the Europeans would be bent into shape and say, look, this is a lost thing, let's cut the best deal we can. But the Europeans didn't do that. The Europeans, for whatever reason, decided they were encouraged. So let's give them \$90 billion more, and they just keep going. OK, so from the political aspect now, Lavrov, Ushakov, all the main people are saying, look, this was the deal. It came at the Americans' initiative, OK?

And they haven't been able to, or they haven't been willing to, bring the Europeans and the Ukrainians into shape. And so... so, you know, there's only one side, as Ushakov said this two days ago, there's only one side adhering to the Anchorage Agreement. And so what we'll do is we'll just go for victory. And that's inevitable. It's coming. Just kind of be patient, will you? We have these people renege. Forgive us for being a little naive, because every now and then it does appear that Trump has some influence over this guy, Zelensky. After all, when he was threatening to throw drones at St. Petersburg during our—or when he was threatening to ruin the May Day Parade—we couldn't get him to stop until we called my friend Donald Trump.

And in that case, he came through. He persuaded Zelensky, as was admitted by Zelensky, to have a four-day pause. And so the parade went ahead. So that's how it gets kind of fuzzy. The U.S. has certain leverage on Zelensky to do some things. It doesn't have enough leverage, or it's unwilling to

use it, to do what Trump promised in Anchorage. And there was one other point here that I wanted to make, and it'll probably come to my mind a little bit later, but I've been talking too long as it is, Glenn, so feel free to stop me when I become too Irish and too extroverted.

## **#Glenn**

No, well, I think that probably the Russians got less faith in Trump's diplomacy after Iran, because there as well you saw the first initiative for the ceasefire, which was on the U.S. side, when they accepted the 10-point plan of the Iranians, but then walked it back right away. And overall, their trust in his diplomacy has diminished. But about the risks, though, I mean, you mentioned the 10–15% chance of ending up in a direct war with NATO, and that is a big risk. But if the alternative was status quo, I would see it. The problem, though, is status quo is not available. The escalations only continue.

And, well, essentially, my thought, though, when I watched this massive attack on Moscow was that someone would have to pay a very big price for this, but that someone would likely be Ukraine. And it does seem a bit unfair because the Ukrainians, well, the majority of Ukrainians, they did not want the regime change that NATO instigated in 2014. Most Ukrainians voted for a peace platform in 2019, and then the NATO countries essentially reversed it. And most Ukrainians want immediate negotiations. The Europeans are boycotting diplomacy. So most of the Ukrainians also want Zelensky gone.

It's NATO that's pumping billions of dollars to fund the corruption to keep Zelensky and his henchmen in power. And it's NATO that's offering or providing all the weapons and intelligence and working on these attacks on Russia. It does seem unfair that it's Ukrainian cities that will burn as a result of this. I know politics shouldn't be about what is fair — I mean, what is strategically sound. But nonetheless, it does sound cruel that the Europeans... sorry, the Ukrainians always have to pay the price for what the NATO countries are doing. Do you see, though, the escalation? When does it essentially become too risky for Russia not to essentially ignore those 15%?

## **#Ray McGovern**

Well, we're human beings, and we should look askance at the kind of cruelty that is being visited on the Ukrainians, that's for sure. But the Ukrainian rulers, Zelensky — look what he's done in exhuming the bodies of Nazis and giving them full honors. You know, whether he's been bought into this Nazi sort of attitude toward things or whether he feels constrained by the only viable divisions in the Ukrainian army that are left, the Nazi-led divisions, I don't know. But he does seem beholden to these people. And so the Ukrainian people don't really have a chance here. Yeah. See, what else, Glenn? You had a more interesting question that I didn't really ask.

## **#Glenn**

No, when does Russia essentially reach the conclusion that doing nothing is more risky than retaliating against NATO? Because the collapse, I would say, of its deterrent is seen now in Moscow as being a key problem. Otherwise, I'd just like to add, I agree with you. I don't think Zelensky — what he's doing, the reason why the Poles are so angry with him — he's become quite a horrible character. But that's not how he was elected, though. So I think that, well, if it was up to the Ukrainians, he would be gone. But in the NATO countries, we're paying very big bills to make sure that he stays exactly where he is, that he continues to kidnap his own citizens and ship them to the front. So... I don't think — yeah, essentially, well, back to my question.

## **#Ray McGovern**

Yeah, no, I remember the question now. Now, I don't know if you knew this, but there is an analysis now that those — as we watched all those drones going into Moscow and the whole area — well, it wasn't the whole area of Moscow, it was on the outskirts, okay, where nothing much was happening, and they were full of kerosene. In other words, they weren't really... they weren't really bona fide drones, if that's the way to put it, okay? And the reason they were set that way is so that the Ukrainians and others could take photos, and people like me had to watch that live, talking to another interviewer, saying, oh my God, what's going on here?

The next day, we found out what these things really were. So a lot of this is showmanship, a lot of this is Hollywood. But your point is quite valid. Most people phrase it the way you did: how much can Putin withstand in all of this? Well, my notion really derives from my appreciation of Putin, as he's atypical of all the Soviet and Russian leaders that I've watched over six decades now, okay? He's unique. He's not going to be provoked, okay? When he has the upper hand, he recognizes it. He's willing and not bashful about letting these sergeants complain about these drones that Ukraine and the West are using and hurting their advance.

He holds that open, and it's videographed and so forth. In other words, I see a confidence in Putin that believes that the notion that he feels he has to trim his sails to those who say, "Aren't you tired? We've got to go faster." The other thing is that, as you know, because you've been in Russia probably more recently than I have, life goes on there. I mean, life hardly recognizes the special military operation. That, of course, was the deliberate objective of Putin — not to get a big war going with conscription and all that kind of stuff. So the last thing I'll say on that is there is retaliation. There is escalation.

The Russians have fired so many missiles and drones at Ukraine that they can whittle down what's left of Ukraine's ability to assemble some of these drones and so forth. In my view, Putin does not have a real hard time in saying, look, we've come this way pretty far. We were disappointed by what Trump thought he could promise. We know that sometimes he can come through, but he didn't come through on this big one. He wasn't able to restrain Putin. The Europeans, and that's a constant theme now. He was unable or unwilling, but mostly unable, to restrain the Europeans. Are the Europeans a threat? For God's sake, no. Scholz is gone now. Macron is in line for going.

Macron will be gone next year. Just be patient. We've got it made in Ukraine. There's no need for us to do anything drastic. And if we find out that the Latvians have been persuaded to actually let the Ukrainians use their bases, we'll deal with that. OK, we've already threatened them. We don't think they're going to do that. But if they do, well, we'll deal with that. And we've got lots of other ways. After all, it was the SVR that warned about this. It wasn't Lavrov or Ushakov. Though there are plenty of ways to deal with the Latvians without risking, even if it's only a 10% risk, getting into a war under Article 5 of the NATO Charter. So I may be wrong. I'm sort of an outlier on this.

Most people see a lot of pressure on Putin. Sure, there's Karaganov, and you've interviewed Karaganov. I'm not impressed by Karaganov. I thought Mearsheimer pretty much asked him all the right questions, pretty much did him in by exposing the loopholes or the lacunae in his arguments. So I think that Medvedev and Karaganov are useful. They're the bad cops. They remind people from time to time that there is this change in the nuclear doctrine that came about as—wow, what was it, about two years ago that some Ukrainian drones hit a strategic bomber site well inside Russia? My God. I remember everybody at that time said, oh, my God, that's it. That's the triad. That triggers the new Russian nuclear policy.

Oh, my God. What happened? Nothing. And then they drone the president's residence in Valdai. And what happens then? Oh, my God. Well, nothing, except they get a piece of the drone and they ceremoniously give it to the U.S. military attaché in Moscow and say, take a look at this, okay? This is what you sent. Take a look. See about the guidance system and where it comes from and so forth. And they did. What came of that? I don't know. I don't think the U.S. ever responded, but Russia didn't make a big deal of it either. So there are people, and again, they may be proven right, that say, oh, my God, when they went after Putin's residence near Valdai, they thought he was there.

As a matter of fact, they told him, hold the phone while they got the missiles ready. I don't know about that. But even if they did, the calm reaction under these provocations—and let's face it, they are provocations—persuades me that this is Cool Hand Luke. This is a guy who's not going to be provoked. He's got a winning hand. The U.S. has discredited itself in Iran and elsewhere, running out of missiles and stuff. And the Ukrainians, sure, they get \$90 billion worth of weapons. Where are they going to get them from? Oh, well, the U.S. has got a lot of them that they need. Oh, and the Europeans are going to have to pay for them. And so where's that \$90 billion going to go? Well, it'll probably go right into the pockets of the notoriously corrupt Ukrainians.

So... it chalked me up to being more relaxed than the others. It depends on one's view of Putin, what kinds of pressures he's under. And I may be completely wrong, but I think he's pretty much in charge. And Lavrov and Ushakov are able to say these things. But Shoigu, the defense minister, is able to say, yeah, those drones are a real problem, but we're working on it. We're going to have our own Starlink. Just be patient. Maybe it's partly a hope, but I think that we can expect a cautious and

perspicacious Putin. And I'll just say that he probably stands out in those qualities among all Soviet and Russian leaders that I have observed. I don't go back to Ivan the Terrible, but I know a lot about what happened after Stalin.

## **#Glenn**

Well, earlier on you said that either Trump is unwilling or unable to rein in Zelensky and the Europeans. And this seems like an important distinction—whether he's unwilling or incapable too. Because, you know, for some, they kind of took Trump at his word that he wants to put this war to an end. On the other hand, the weapons keep flowing. U.S. intelligence is still present in Ukraine. And if you read the speeches of Elbridge Colby, one gets more the impression that the goal here is not so much to put an end to the war as to outsource it—just handing it over to the Europeans. That way the Europeans can keep weakening a U.S. rival while paying the U.S. for the privilege of doing its dirty work for it. Again, I'm not saying necessarily that it's unwilling, but how do you, I guess, chime in on this debate? Is the U.S. trying to put an end to this war or simply outsourcing it to the Europeans, making them the next Ukrainians essentially?

## **#Ray McGovern**

Well, I think in this case, one has to look at the White House. I think Trump wants to put an end to this war. I don't know about those other guys. Maybe they'd just as soon go after the terrible Russians. So that's one thing. And can Russia live with this? Well, it's really amazing to me that Western journalists are saying the Russian economy is going to hell, that Russia is losing the war in Ukraine.

## **#Glenn**

Why are they saying all that?

## **#Ray McGovern**

And why is it that the Ukrainians insist on firing all these missiles? Well, I guess they just want to have the appearance of, if not winning, at least being able to damage the Russians. But I don't think it's any more than that. Again, if you get down to hardware, okay, here's the deal. The Europeans are going to buy weapons from the United States that, well, the U.S. is trying to produce here, but they'll come online in a couple of years, okay? And then the Europeans will not be able to pay them right away, but they'll pay the United States. And then they'll get them into Ukraine. I mean, it just doesn't—if I'm Putin and I'm looking at this, I'll say, you know, they really don't have any weaponry left. They've expended most of it against Iran, of all places.

And they've shown themselves to be very weak and not really have the industrial base, not only in the U.S., but so far in Europe, to meet the problem. Now, it could come to, you know, I was thinking

today or yesterday was the anniversary, the 85th anniversary of the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union. And this is a big deal. You may have been in Russia. I was there for the 75th, right, in 2016. I was in Yalta. We were the first American delegation to come to Crimea since the coup in Kiev in February of 2014. We were an unofficial delegation of citizens. But we had quite an experience there. And I was lucky enough to be asked to speak at the main ceremony in Yalta to mark the 75th anniversary of what Putin has called the day when one gets a lump in one's throat.

And so they asked me to speak. We were Americans, right? And most people were older than I was, right? And they were widows, they were widowers, they were children and grandchildren of the 27 million that got killed during the years following that particular day. And my colleagues said, "Ray, you talk." And the only thing that could occur to me was to try to empathize with what happened in a way that would be appropriate. And I chose a poem from Nikolai Nekrasov, the poet of Russian sorrow, and it was appropriately called *\*Paying Attention to the Horrors of War.\** Glenn, it takes about a minute to recite. I'd be happy to recite it and translate it unless you want to move on.

## **#Glenn**

No, please, go ahead.

## **#Ray McGovern**

Okay. Well, that's the title and the first line. Okay.

## **#Ray McGovern**

I'm sorry not so much for the hero himself. Alas, the wife will be consoled, and the best friend will forget his friend. But somewhere there is one soul. She will remember to the grave. In the hypocrisy of our bodies and all the vulgarity and prose, I have seen in the world only one thing — holy, sincere tears. Those are the tears of poor mothers who do not forget their children who died on the bloody field, as they do not understand their poor children who died on the bloody field. Okay, paying attention to the horrors of war. At every new victim of the war, I feel sorry not so much for the victim's wife or for his best friend, or even for the victim himself. Wives will be consoled, and best friends will forget their best friends. But somewhere there is one soul. One soul. She will remember to the grave.

## **#Ray McGovern**

Those are the tears, those are the tears of poor mothers. They don't forget the children who perished on that bloody battlefield, just as a weeping willow tree can never, never, never raise up its branches. I was so happy that that professor made me memorize that poem way back in 1959. It was poignant, and I could tell that the people ten years ago were moved by it, that some American could feel this close to the horrors of war and realize what the Russians had gone through. Twenty-

seven million of them killed. Okay, on our side, the Americans, four hundred thousand. Big difference, okay? And yet, we Americans in our delegation thought enough to come to Crimea, help them celebrate that thing. Now, the reason I mention that is that just yesterday, on the 85th anniversary, Putin very ceremoniously laid a wreath and stood in sorrow and contemplation.

The point is that the Russians don't forget that. Now, there are many fewer widows and wives and widowers, but there are a lot of children, and they don't forget. The Russians don't forget, and the Russian rulers, first and foremost Putin, don't forget that the American people have very little sense of what real war is like. Now, instead of holding that against Americans, Putin is perspicacious enough to say, oh my God, they don't know what war is like? J.D. Vance yesterday in Switzerland says, I'm part of the millennials. I'm part of the millennials. Well, I looked up what that meant. That means you were born like '83, '84. So what does he know about real war? I mean real war, okay? So the Russians and Putin, when they say, gee, I had a copy of that business... oh yeah, here it is. This is what Putin wrote about 10 years ago.

Why does life almost come to a halt on June 22nd? And why does one feel a lump in the throat? And he goes through the whole World War I, World War II, and how the Soviets were able to prevail. Now, the other side of it, of course, is that a lot of people think they would not have been able to prevail without a lot of Western help. And that is true. And let me just put a little more color in here. I was celebrating the meeting on the Elbe with Russian forces in Moscow, gosh, it must be 10 years ago. And it was really very, very poignant. What was I going to say? Oh, yeah, yeah. I recited the same poem. There's no better poem than that. And then this great big six-foot-four general, I could still tell what he was, okay, comes up to me, doesn't say a word after I'm finished saying this poem, and he says to me, "Studebaker!"

## **#Glenn**

Studebaker! Studebaker!

## **#Ray McGovern**

Studebaker, and then he gives me a terrific big Russian bear hug, right? I'll bet that J.D. Vance doesn't know what that was all about, okay? But you know what it's all about. Studebaker Car Manufacturing, Truck Manufacturing Company was completely devoted to making trucks and cars, these famous deuce-and-a-halves that could go over mountains and through rivers and stuff. And they went through Iran, about 750,000 of them, and what General Abramov—that was the guy's name—was saying to me was, look, I don't know any English, okay, but I was moved by your poem, and I remember saying, because they hauled my artillery, they hauled my men, and they really helped in the central front when we had finished at Stalingrad. They were just as important as those tanks, okay?

So that was very moving to me, and it indicated to me that there is this big gulf between what Americans know about European history and what Putin—last thing, you know, he had a big brother, right? Yeah. And he was born during the siege of Leningrad. Now, I don't want to read into Putin's frame of mind, but I lost my big brother, but that was to spinal meningitis. Nobody to blame for that except the lack of penicillin in those days. He lost his big brother because there was nothing to eat, and his mother had to give Vitya over to a kind of hospice where they had some claim to get something to eat. And she did that. Can you imagine how wrenching that is? Tears of mothers again, okay? She did that, and, of course, she never saw him again. And so if there were one big celebration in Petersburg or in old Leningrad, Putin was making a little speech.

After the speech, one of the questions was, well, your big brother died here, Vitya, right? Yeah, that's right. Where is he? And he looked over this—you've seen it probably—this mound, enormous mound where 750,000 people who perished in Leningrad lie. And Putin said, well, he's over there. So it was after the war that Vladimir was born, and he was only born because his mother had been left among the dead bodies, and his father finally came home and saw that she was still breathing and rescued her. And so they had little Vladimir later on. So these are experiences that—well, I lost two uncles in World War II, but they don't come near to losing a big brother. I mean, his mother never had the solace of visiting his grave or knowing exactly what happened to him. She was forced.

That, I think, accounts for a little bit why there's a little edge when Vladimir talks about the Finns who enforced that damn blockade, killing 900 and some thousand Russians in Leningrad—the Finns and, of course, the Germans. So these are just little things that, on the anniversary of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, I think reflect what actually perdures in the minds of people like Putin, who were old enough to—not quite as old as I am, but old enough to remember things and to have had his brother die and lots of other stuff that his parents told him about as part of his kind of makeup now, I think. And part of the rest of it is he's not going to do anything so dangerous as to risk an outbreak of another major war. I hope I'm right on that. I think it's a big deal. I hope he stays around for a while.

## **#Glenn**

Well, listen, let me just ask one last question. We almost touched on it earlier, which is the issue of the problems now between Poland and Ukraine. I mean, Poland, on one hand, has been one of the key sponsors in this war. They're not just the key logistics center, but they also sent a lot of their own troops as well. And again, they've been cheering the war since the beginning. But at the same time, of course, the Poles are quite critical about having Ukraine in the European Union, for example, because of some agricultural disputes and a lot of issues. However, we haven't seen anything like this before.

That is, in Europe at least, as well as the U.S., since 2014, we had to pretend as if the regime change had nothing to do with any fascist elements. But now, with Zelensky essentially revering

fascists from World War II, giving them the full honor of the government, it has also created some annoyance among the Poles, because, you know, they slaughtered 100,000 Polish civilians as well. And, well, this seems to be really derailing the relationship. Zelensky and his crew, they refuse to walk this back. And for Poland, this is, yeah, too much to accept. So how do you see the significance of this?

## **#Ray McGovern**

Well, the way I look at it is the Poles acted out of conviction and out of some historical memory. A hundred thousand Poles met their death at the hands of these guys, these Nazis. And to have them exhumed and buried with high honors, that's an affront that needed some kind of reaction. Now, why? Why would Zelensky feel that that's a good thing to do? Well, that's, I think, the real question. And the answer, I think, is that he's either thrown his complete lot in with the Nazis, the neo-Nazis, if you will, or he feels like he's under their wing, or he's not free from them. In other words, they are his last resort, and he's got to depend on them.

He's got to mollify them by gratuitous things like this. So another question that I had would be, well, now most of that military aid comes through Poland, right? Why is it that the Russians haven't bombed those railroad tunnels and all the places where the Poles send that? Well, I think that that's coming. You know, that's coming. That's Ukraine. They can do that. And it just kind of illustrates that Zelensky has either lost it, picking a fight with the Belarusians now as well, or he's just trying to show that he's a tough guy and that these guys, the Azov types, or the descendants of these Nazis that did that work during World War II, that's where he's got to curry favor.

And, you know, the weakness of what I call the three blind mice. Well, now Scholz is going out, but you have Merz and you have Macron. I mean, the three blind mice get all the attention, right? Because they meet every other Thursday for a men's group, you know. Yeah. And sometimes they have Giorgia Meloni come around. Yeah. But the Poles don't count. The Poles are never in the pictures. What if I were a Pole? I'd say we're a Pole apart, I guess, you know, so to speak. So, you know, the Poles have a certain, well, Poles, I know, have a lot of dignity, so to speak. So.

Yeah, I think it's a kerfuffle, but I think the main lesson to be taken from it is that Zelensky feels he has to do these things to curry favor, stay in the good graces of these Nazis that the Russians have to remove and have pledged to remove. And that's going to take a while. But my notion is that once the battle on the battlefield is won, and the Russians can deal with the Azov battalions or regiments or divisions or whatever they've got now, then without any real military support, the Nazis are going to go flee to Argentina again, and there may be a prospect for some calming down there in Ukraine. That's my best guess, but in answer to your question, that's how I interpret it, Clinton.

## **#Glenn**

Absolutely. Well, it is interesting. It's a difficult one to explain across Europe because we've been spoon-fed that there were no fascists, that this is Russian propaganda, until the Poles had to push back. But no, yeah, it doesn't seem that it's going to put a dent in Europe's enthusiasm for the war, though. Although Poland, of course, is a bit more shaky as a result of this. Anyway, I've taken an hour out of your day, so thank you very much for the time.

## **#Ray McGovern**

Well, thank you for indulging me in my poem and other recollections of my experiences there. So, thank you, Glenn.