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SUBJECT Interview With Claire Sterling

LARRY KING: We have a return visit tonight from this world's finest reporters, Claire Sterling. Her previous book --her previous visit was the reason for the previous book. The Terror Network was a major seller. And now Miss Sterling is the author of The Time of the Assassins, published by Holt Rinehart Winston, billed as under -- the underbilling is "The journalist who first brought the plot to kill the Pope into the open now brings us the inside story she alone is qualified to tell." The Time of the Assassins: Anatomy of an Investigation....

We welcome to our microphones Claire Sterling, the veteran journalist. Her previous work, The Terror Network was -- that was a major seller.

CLAIRE STERLING: Yes, it was.

KING: What I mean, you really did well with that book.

STERLING: Yeah.

KING: Did you expect to? Do authors ever...

STERLING: No. I thought I was going -- I had a big fight on my hands, but in the end it did very well.

KING: How did you -- let's go back a little -- get into this particular niche you got into? Not just a foreign correspondent, but a foreign correspondent who is interested in terrorism, a foreign correspondent who uncovers things, a kind of, you

know, investigative foreign correspondent. There aren't many.

STERLING: Yeah. Well, of course, any foreign correspondent is supposed to be investigative, but it's not how it really works out.

KING: Any reporter is, I guess.

STERLING: That's right. But I was trained to be investigative from the very beginning because soon after getting out of the Columbia Journalism School, a very long time ago, I went to work for The Reporter magazine, which some here may remember. And I worked for it from the beginning to the end, for 20 years. And The Reporter magazine had one of the world's most difficult publishers to get along with, but he was a brilliant man who understood the need to go behind the news and to know --you had to know ten times more than you could write when you were writing a background story on world affairs. And I was based in Rome for him for 20 years and I covered 50 countries, and I learned that I had to know ten times more than I could write. And that was just my whole formation.

And then I, of course, was living in Italy. I've lived in Italy now over 30 years. And I was there in the '70s, watching the rise of terrorism in Italy. And for years I thought that was just something that was happening in Italy, with little bits and pieces of news that something like it was happening elsewhere. But by 1978, when the Red Brigades kidnapped the Christian Democratic statesman Aldo Moro and held him 55 days and then killed him, it just seemed to me the time had come to look a little further into this. It was too big, too big to be just a local phenomenon, I thought.

And so I moved a little bit out into Europe to look for connections, and I found a lot more than I had bargained for.

KING: I would imagine undercover kind of finding out what really happened, who's behind this is difficult enough on this soil, is, I would guess, even more difficult overseas.

STERLING: Very difficult. But if you can just get one thread and you have a lot of countries to work in, you find -- or I found that if I could get one thread in one country, where people then could tell me a lot about that one thing, they might know nothing about what was happening in a country next door, but then I'd move on to the country next door and get a thread and again find out a great deal about that country. And I found -- I went to ten countries, in all, before I wrote that book on the terror network. And when I sat down and put together what I had learned in ten countries, I was amazed to see how much I knew,

because I was simply knitting together information that existed in different places.

And it wasn't so hard to get the information in each country. What was hard was to get an overview. And I when I sat down and cross-indexed everything and saw the interlocks that came out, then there was a design there that seemed to me absolutely stupendous.

KING: Now, The Terror Network contended, in essence -- it contended many things -- that the Soviet Union was behind a lot of the terrorist actions in the world that may not appear was linked to them. And you provided that linkage.

And some of your critics said that you began with that premise, that you were out to prove a premise rather than "I don't know anything. Let me learn anything."

Was that a fair criticism?

STERLING: No, that was an unfair criticism. Anybody who read the book could have seen it was an unfair criticism. When I set out to look for the first links, I set out to look for a link between the Italian and German terrorists because the Aldo Moro case, the kidnapping of Aldo Moro was done with exactly the same scenario as the kidnapping in Germany by the Baader-Meinhof Gang of the industrialist Hans Martin Schleier (?) six months before Moro was taken, exactly the same way of blocking the cars, killing the guards, getting the man out, whipping him away, holding him -- 47 days in Germany, 55 in Italy -- but the scenario was exact. And it seemed to me impossible that this could have happened by chance.

So I set out first to look for a link between the Italians and the Germans. And I was directed by the Ministry of Interior for the only piece of hard proof they knew about to Vienna. And in Vienna I found a link between the Germans and the Italians through a holdup, a kidnapping for ransom, and the ransom money went partly to Germany and partly to Italy, Red Brigades/Baader-Meinhof. And while I was in Vienna I began to pick up more strings, and that pointed to a group functioning in Switzerland providing weapons for all of Western Europe. And that pointed to the IRA and the Spanish Basques in ETA, and then to Carlos in Paris.

And before I knew it, one was leading to the other. I couldn't see a pattern until I finished.

KING: So there was certainly no premise intended.

STERLING: Certainly no premise.

KING: Because that would -- a good investigative reporter wouldn't start with that, right?

STERLING: No. I absolutely -- I just think it's all wrong, first of all, to start with a who-gains idea. Now, I think that's one of the poisonous formulas that are used in what's called advocacy journalism.

Just as in the book about the Pope, a lot of people started out by saying, "Well, who stood to gain by trying to kill the Pope? It had to be the Russians because of Solidarity in Poland." That, to me, is just no way an investigative reporter can operate.

First you see what evidence you can find of conspiracy or of the interlock, in the case of the terrorists. And then you can say, "Well, who -- I mean does that really gain for the people who seem to be gaining?"

KING: Claire Sterling, the veteran journalist. The new book, The Time of the Assassins. Miss Sterling usually causes a stir and is usually right on the mark. And if you have any questions....

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KING: The advanced publicity on this book I will read to you from -- very often we take the audience behind the scenes. This is what a publicity letter says: "On May 13th, 1981 in St." -- and Claire may never have heard this because...

STERLING: I haven't.

KING: ...very often they don't hear the letter that goes out.

"On May 13th, 1981 in St. Peter's Square in Rome, an attempt was made on the life of Pope John Paul II. Moments later, Mehmet Ali Agca" -- am I pronouncing...

STERLING: Agca.

KING: "Agca, a young Turk, was seized and imprisoned. And within two days, indisputable evidence of an organized plot to kill the Pope emerged. At the very same time, American officials and the American press denied the evidence. 'There was no plot,' they declared. 'Agca was merely a crazy Turk, a lone mad killer, an unstable fanatic.' And so began a singular Western effort to discredit Agca and downplay any possibility of an organized conspiracy.

"Claire Sterling, a veteran journalist of 30 years, was determined to find out what in truth happened. She interviewed informants, anti-terrorist police, Agca's mother, brother and sister in Turkey, senior officers of West Germany's famed criminal police in Wiesbaden, the Mosad in Israel. She was the first journalist to bring the plot to kill the Pope into the open. Her article in the Reader's Digest in September 1982 revealing the Bulgarian and Soviet connection behind the attempted assassination had international repercussions.

"In her new book, The Time of the Assassins, Sterling brings us the inside story which she alone is qualified to tell. She goes beyond her earlier investigations to a most frightening disclosure, the role of our Western leaders and our press in withholding known information. She charges that the Western public was deliberately and continually misled to believe there was no conspiracy. 'Why,' she asks, 'were our leaders so anxious to protect the Soviet Union?'"

Needless to say, Claire Sterling is an extraordinary guest. They did not have to say that to us. We already knew that. We didn't need the last paragraph.

STERLING: I apologize.

KING: ...in small towns, we understand.

When did you latch on, when did you think there's something beyond just the single assassin thing?

STERLING: Well, it was clear in 48 hours that there was something funny going on about this fellow.

KING: Were you in Rome at the time, by the way?

STERLING: Yes. Well, no. I was in California, just finishing my last bit of the tour on the last book, The Terror Network. In fact, I was in Los Angeles when the Pope was shot. And then I was on the air a lot because I had a chapter on Turkish terrorism at that time, which nobody else seemed to know anything about.

But this Turkish terrorist didn't fit any pattern I could understand. I mean he was presented as a right-wing neo-Nazi terrorist of the Turkish Gray Wolves. And indeed, he's moved in those circles. There's no question. But it didn't make sense for a right-wing Turkish terrorist to come to Rome to shoot the Pope. He was not a religious fanatic. The Gray Wolves are political; they're not fundamentalist Moslem. And I couldn't figure out how that worked.

When I got back to Rome and looked at what the papers had said, I saw that within 48 hours of this attack on the Pope we had the attorney general in Rome announcing the formal warrant of arrest for Mehmet Ali Agca, and it said, "For Mehmet Ali Agca and other persons as yet unknown." And the first magistrate who interrogated Agca said in the same article in the Italian press, "We have documentary evidence that Agca did not act alone."

And on that same morning, the New York Times reported from Italian police and government sources, they said, "According to authoritative government sources, Agca acted alone."

Now, something was wrong there. It wasn't that The Time -- I mean I'm not blaming this on The Times. It was obviously a correspondent who had flocked to Rome for the attack on the Pope for The Times and had been told clearly by an authoritative source that Agca had acted alone, when the attorney general had just said the same day that he had not acted alone.

So I thought, "Here is a very strange attempt to let the waters close over this case before we know anything more about it."

And two months later, when Agca went on trial, he was tried simply for shooting the gun, firing the gun in St. Peter's Square. Nothing was said in the courtroom about where did he get \$50,000 to travel around Europe for the previous nine months, or about rumors that he had stayed in Bulgaria, or about where did get his gun, how did he learn how to use a Browning, which is not an easy gun for an amateur to use, and so on.

And the prosecutor for the state at this trial was saying, yes, he was a delirious fanatic, he was a loner, he had come from nowhere, he was a psychopathic killer, he was a Moslem fanatic. I mean he threw it all into the basket, everything but that he might have come there as a result of a plot with accomplices.

But after that trial was over and he was sentenced to life imprisonment, the presiding judge at that trial, who was one of the most eminent jurists in Italy, wrote a written opinion in which he said Agca was not alone, he was absolutely not crazy, he showed full psychic maturity, showed exceptional mental equilibrium -- these were the judge's words -- he is unusually intelligent, not a shred of evidence existed to indicate that he was a religious fanatic, he had shown no hostility toward the Pope.

KING: Had he taken the stand?

STERLING: What?

KING: Had he taken...

STERLING: No, he had not testified in court.

So this was the first time -- we were now getting it from the judge, who had access to the court proceedings that did not come into the courtroom and who had read all of the texts of Agca's interrogation and the reports of the prison doctors, and so on. And he said, "He is just the tip of an iceberg. He is a professional hit man who shows every sign of having worked with a conspiratorial underground group. He has been sent by a conspiratorial band bent on destabilizing the West. In the court's efforts to find out who sent him, we have run into an impenetrable wall of silence."

Well, I read that document, and it seemed to me that if the court was not going to investigate what this judge was talking about, somebody should.

KING: Why didn't the judge's remarks get widespread attention here?

STERLING: Well, we were running, right then, starting at the beginning, into this unwillingness on the part of the West to uncover what promised to be a very dirty story, one which could create...

KING: Now, given the nature of reporters, why would the West, why would anybody, any reporter, why would a reporter from Pravda, even though he may be prevented, not want to find out a story? I mean I can't -- and I don't know any reporter who doesn't want to print a story.

STERLING: Well, why did a lot of people -- why -- when President Kennedy was shot, why did so many people not want to find out the story? Now, I don't really know what the truth of the story is in President Kennedy. But there certainly were an enormous quantity of unanswered questions in that case. But the first reaction was to say, "This was a loner." And then you had that peculiar situation with Jack Ruby killing this fellow before he had a chance to open his mouth.

KING: Now, you do not think there is a plot to prevent us from hearing about the plot, or do you?

STERLING: Well, "plot" is too strong a word. I believe that there has been an instinctive reaction by the Western governments, Western intelligence agencies, Western spokesmen not to encourage the public to believe that the Russians or the Eastern Bloc could have anything to do with his attack, because...

KING: Including...

STERLING: You are helping to so destabilize the balance of East-West relations, to make it so impossible for anybody to ever negotiate with anybody, that we're going to end up with World War III."

Well, of course, I think that is totally ridiculous. I mean the Poles, for example, they assumed the minute they heard the Pope was shot that it had to be the Russians, 'cause all they were thinking about was the Solidarity movement in Poland. And it just seemed to them very clear -- I mean they had no evidence, but that's what they thought. They did not go rioting into the streets. They did not go touch off the Third World War.

Many Italians believed very soon on in this game, and certainly many more of them believe now, that there was a Soviet-Bulgarian plot, and they're not rioting in the streets.

KING: But reporters have always never shown much of an interest in whether things affect the East-West or not. They see a story, they run and get it.

STERLING: Ah, they see a story and they run and get it when it's in the United States. And alas, for the last 10 or 15 years, the story they run to get in this field has to do with the wickedness of the CIA. They see a story that suggests that the CIA might have done something bad, and they run and get that story. But they do not run with the same alacrity when the KGB is involved.

I have just seen that to be the case in this whole story. I've been working on it for two years, and that's how it runs.

KING: We're going to get into it.

President Reagan and this Administration also has not shown much interest.

STERLING: Not a single member of this Administration has conceded publicly -- not one has conceded publicly that just possibly there could be a Bulgarian connection in the plot to kill the Pope.

We have had former heads of the CIA, former National Security Advisers -- Brzezinski, for example -- Brzezinski told me it takes an act of faith not to believe the Bulgarians did this. Richard Helms said, "Of course it has all the earmarks of a KGB operation." Henry Kissinger said he agreed. But we have not had anybody in the present Administration conceding that

perhaps the Italians were gathering evidence that could be valid to indicate the Bulgarian connection.

KING: You broke this story first in the Reader's Digest, wasn't it?

STERLING: Yes.

KING: And then Marvin Kalb went over with NBC...

STERLING: That's right.

KING: ...and they did a major thing on it. And Kalb certainly became a proponent of your theory.

STERLING: Yes.

KING: Other than that, not many journalists. Kalb may be the only...

STERLING: That's just about it. That was the beginning and end, just about, of the proponents of our theory in the United States in the press. I don't know of any other serious network or newspaper commentator who took up this cause.

KING: Can you -- we'll get into the interworkings of it. Can you trace it beyond Bulgaria to the Soviet Union, or does it stop at Bulgaria?

STERLING: Well, you know, I...

KING: And because they're a puppet doesn't mean that every decision they make was made by another country.

STERLING: No. But if you know anything at all, if you begin to learn a little bit about how the Eastern European security services, security police work, they are all very closely dependent on the KGB for their day-to-day operations.

Now, in the case of the Bulgarians, there are 400 KGB agents stationed in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, to directly oversee the work of the Bulgarian DS, the security service. Of these, 300 are stationed in a department dealing with operations outside of Bulgarian borders. Plus that, in every Bulgarian embassy abroad there is one member of the security services, Bulgarian security services, who reports directly to Moscow, to the KGB.

KING: Let me hold you right there and we'll pick right up.

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KING: When the arrestee and the accused doesn't speak, where does one begin to find the plot?

STERLING: You know, it was surprisingly easy to find the leads to this plot. When the trial of this Turkish gunman was over, in July of '81, all the documentation that never appeared in the courtroom was available to anybody who asked for it at the courthouse. It was public.

KING: The documentation gained in investigating?

STERLING: That's right. Anybody could come in representing the public to ask for these documents attached to the court proceedings because the case was closed. The fellow didn't -- he was sentenced to life imprisonment, he didn't appeal, the case was closed.

So I went and I got the text of several -- I don't know if they were all, but they were several of his first, earliest interrogations; the first reports that went out from the Italian anti-terrorist police to a dozen countries, the first answers that came in over the first couple of weeks from Germany, Turkey, Austria, Tunisia, and so on. And especially the text of his interrogation seemed to me extremely interesting.

In my first meeting with police who were acting as detectives for the judges in this case, they assured me that it was impossible; nobody could ever get -- follow these leads to any useful conclusion. This case was never going to be solved. It was a hopeless case.

But everybody was going on the assumption that this young Turk was a pathological liar who just never told the truth. As I had been told by the magistrates examining him, interrogating him, he had been coached of how to behave under interrogation, and therefore he was throwing out a lot of lies. There's no question. But they were deliberate lies.

And I went on the assumption, well, since I have nothing else to go on here and everybody is saying this case is unsolvable, let's just suppose he didn't -- that not everything he said was a lie. Supposing some of the things he said were true.

There were some things he said that seemed to me extremely interesting. He'd said, for example, that he had gone for training in a Palestinian camp in 1977, when he was 17 years old; and that shortly after returning to Turkey, someone had begun to finance him, and he wouldn't say who.

Then, he also names a Turk in Germany. Now, the passport he was carrying just showed that he passed through Bulgaria in one day. But he gave, provided a witness who could prove he'd been there all summer long.

So I went to Turkey and found that it was true he was being financed. And also I got the police reports on that Turk in Germany who was picked up and who did say that he'd been there in the early summer of 1980. Then that Turk turned out to work for a huge contraband ring operating out of Sofia of Turks called the Turkish Arms Mafia that was smuggling guns into Turkey and heroin out into Western Europe through Bulgaria.

By the time these leads -- these leads came from him. And by the time I began to work on those in Turkey and in West Germany, they just opened up a whole area of exploration. And it wasn't -- I mean I can't stand to sound like a hotshot reporter. It isn't that I was doing anything that was a work of genius. I was simply deciding let us just not assume that this is a hopeless case, and let's just go after what looks like an interesting lead and see if it gets anywhere. And it wasn't all that hard once you did that.

KING: And you were the only -- in other words, this fell into your lap, in a sense?

STERLING: Well, it fell into my lap. I was lucky because it took money. I mean this mystery of the conspiracy to kill the Pope could never be solved in any one country. There were parts of it, indispensable parts, that had to be found in Turkey, in Bulgaria, and in West Germany, smaller parts in Switzerland, Austria and Tunisia. But the big parts had to be done by going back and forth to West Germany, Bulgaria and Turkey. And to do that, you needed money.

The Reader's Digest said to me, since I had written about terrorism in Turkey, I lived in Rome, I had covered terrorism for years, I was in an excellent position to start the investigation, they said, "Will you go and look and just see where the investigation leads you. Take as long as you like. Go wherever you think you have to go. And when you think you have a story that will stand up, give it to us." They didn't press, they didn't breathe down my neck. I took nine months before the article was published. And it's true that's a reporter's dream. Not many reporters could have had that much...

KING: And they were going to publish no matter what you found.

STERLING: Well, they would publish if they thought I had a story that would stand up. And in fact, at a certain point, around that May, of '82, I went to their Paris editor and

said, "I think I have enough." And he looked at the story and he said, "You don't. Go back to Turkey. That's not enough. That won't stand up."

And back I went to Turkey and back I went to West Germany. I took another couple of months. He was right. And I got a right more, and then it did stand up. And then everybody was satisfied, and in it went.

KING: Why did Agca perform this, knowing he'd have to get caught? I mean how was he going to get away?

STERLING: He didn't know he would have to get caught. You know, I have covered -- I mean I've studied a lot of terrorist operations all over Western Europe and elsewhere, and I know that the terrorists in these operations have always spent a great deal of time and taken a great deal of care to plan their getaway. They kidnapped Aldo Moro in broad daylight on a busy street in Rome. They killed five of his guards.

KING: But how was Agca going to get away?

STERLING: Right. He had worked it out with -- he says now in his confession he'd worked it out with these three Bulgarian agents. They'd had dress rehearsals in St. Peter's Square. They picked a spot where he'd be within 20 feet of the Pope's jeep as the Pope passed, and also within less than a 20-seconds run to get past the colonnades of St. Peter's Square, where he'd be away from the crowd, and a car could take him away. Of course the car was going to take him away and then they were going to bump him off, as it turned out later. But the fact is that he could have gotten away, as other terrorists in other situa -- other crowd situations have gotten away.

And by a fluke, there was a little nun standing behind him who saw him fire that Browning over the heads of the crowd, and she just grabbed his arm before he had a chance to move away, and hung on until the Carabinieri got him.

KING: Our guest is the veteran foreign correspondent Claire Sterling.

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KING: Do you think you have in your head the whole story?

STERLING: Me.

KING: Yeah, the whole story.

STERLING: Well, I think the judge -- judge who has just completed a two-year investigation in Italy, Judge Martella, has a great deal more of the story, surely, than I have. We can't know what the evidence is until he publishes his report when he sends this Bulgarian he has under arrest for trial, which he...

KING: There's a question in my mind when -- when is this trial supposed to...

STERLING: Well, he has now turned over all of his evidence, several thousand pages of evidence, to the attorney general's office in Rome. That was in the middle of December. Sometime within the next week or ten days we'll have a ruling from the attorney general recommending trial. We know he is going to recommend trial, from what has happened in the last few weeks. And a month after that, Judge Martella, himself, will issue the final ruling for trial. And then he'll publish a thousand-page report with evidence, all the evidence, the major evidence he's collected.

Well, obviously, he's collected a lot more evidence than any reporter could do. He had access to sources that I couldn't possibly have. But I do believe I know how the machinery worked, the general lines of it.

KING: Can you give us a brief outline? I know the book details it.

STERLING: Agca, in 1979, was a student at the University of Istanbul. An anonymous tip had him picked up for the murder of a prominent newspaper editor in Istanbul. He confessed at once. It was clear he was taking the fall for other people and probably had been paid, although he could have involved in the murder. He was in an impregnable military prison. He stood up in the courtroom and said at his trial, "I did not really kill this man, but I know who did, and I will announce his name at the next hearing of the court." And before the next hearing of the court, somebody had arranged his escape from prison.

It is possible now to trace his movements from then on, to know who got him out of prison and where he went and what for. And he was gotten out of prison by these Turkish terrorist Gray Wolves, who worked for this Turkish Arms Mafia based in Bulgaria. And I have their names and their connections. They got him false documents, false passports which were perfectly counterfeited for his travels in Europe, and they got him installed in Bulgaria for the summer of 1980.

There, he met the two godfathers, the two top bosses of the Turkish Arms Mafia in Sofia, who set him up for special

training, gave him the money, the front money to move on, set up his contacts around Europe. And one of the two godfathers offered him a million-point-three hundred thousand dollars to shoot the Pope.

There, too, he was presented to three Bulgarian agents of the security service under assumed names, whom he later met and identified in Rome as agents of the Bulgarian service, who took him through the dress rehearsals in St. Peter's Square and showed him where to stand and arranged for his getaway, brought him to the square the day of the hit, and said they would pick him up afterwards. Probably they hoped to kill him in the square if they could get away with it. That couldn't be done. If they had got him away, they would have killed him outside.

But the trouble was that instead of being killed, he was arrested. And then he was a time bomb ticking. And sooner or later, when he -- he waited a year for them to get him out of prison. But he was in solitary confinement and there was no way they could get at him. So after a year, he began to talk. And then he identified the three Bulgarians as agents who had been his accomplices. The judge arrested one of the three and ordered the arrest of the other two, but they had beat it to Sofia. The judge also arrested two more Turks and issued arrest warrants for two other Turks, one of whom has also found sanctuary in Bulgaria.

So that the judge has now identified seven people as direct accomplices in this plot, and he has said that all of them, the four Turks and the three Bulgarians, all of them had operated in Bulgaria. This much the judge has told us.

KING: And how do you trace that to the Soviet Union, other than the fact that the KGB is an information supplier in all cases?

STERLING: Well, the fact is that, first of all, Bulgaria has no motive for attacking the Pope, for trying to kill the Pope. They don't have a solidarity problem, they don't have a Catholic-minority problem. They have no personal national quarrel with this Pope.

Secondly, they are the most pro-Moscow, the most inflexibly pro-Moscow, the most loyal of all the East European states.

Thirdly, we know from defectors from the KGB that starting from the mid-'60s, in what is called whit work, dirty work assignments of this kind, the KGB has ceased, or practically ceased, to do this work itself. It farms out this kind of work to surrogates in Eastern Europe, so that it shouldn't be involved

directly. And Bulgaria has traditionally gotten the dirtiest jobs.

We also know that the secret service of Bulgaria is just directly under the personal, personal direct supervision of KGB agents in Sofia.

KING: Do you think that Agca was aware that it went this far?

STERLING: Well, at first I didn't think so. But I think it's pretty clear now that he's a smart fellow and he knew from the time he went to Bulgaria that he was under the Bulgarians' wing.

KING: Do you think he knows it stretches to the Soviets?

STERLING: Oh, by now he surely does.

KING: What, or why would the Soviets want to kill the Pope?

STERLING: Well, you know, people say, "Well, the Pope was supporting the Solidarity movement in Poland." That's really awfully simple. The Pope was the heart and soul of the Solidarity movement in Poland. When this Pope was chosen, this Pole became the Pope, his choice stunned the leaders of the Kremlin. Because, first of all, like all Poles, he is a terrific nationalist. He is a worker. He feels very close to the Polish working class. He not only believes that the workers should have a free trade union, but he believes that Poland should have national sovereignty, that its regime should not be under the control of the Soviet Union, which imposed it by military force.

The Poles believe that God sent him to save Poland.

The Russians believe that Carter, President Carter's National Security Adviser Brzezinski, a Polish-American, had actually maneuvered, engineered his election in the College of Cardinals so as to break Poland away from the rest of the Soviet Bloc and cause the disintegration of the Soviet empire.

His holds on Catholics, not just of Poland, but of all Eastern Europe and inside the Soviet Union, has been extraordinary. His first words, almost, after becoming Pope were to the Catholics of Eastern Europe, "You will have just as much freedom of worship as you fight for." And this was published in the underground press, the Catholic press, all over Latvia, Lithuania, the Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and so on, giving rise to the most extraordinary resurgence of militant

Catholicism that the Russians have seen since the last world war. And he was just becoming an alternative Pole of authority, political as well as spiritual, to the tightly structured authority of Soviet leaders.

And I'd just like to read you just one example of what they were saying about him just a couple of months before he was shot in this political journal Polemya (?) in Moscow. This is how they described him in March of 1981. He was shot in May. Quote: "A cunning and dangerous ideological enemy, a militant anti-Communist, a malicious, lowly, perfidious and backward toady of the American militarists, fighting socialism in the interest of his overseas accomplices and his new boss in the White House.

Now, I've been a correspondent in Italy for 30 years. I have never seen the Soviet press use language like this to talk about any other Pope. Clearly, they felt this man was an intolerable threat to their security.

KING: My guest is Claire Sterling. The book is The Time of the Assassins: Anatomy of an Investigation.

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KING: But still, the Soviets aren't dumb. And if they had successfully killed the Pope, and trained reporters such as yourself had successfully brought that link, there would be irreparable damage to them, whether we could do anything to them except condemn them in the world courts. But I think their stature among other nations would decrease incredibly, nations that are Catholic in origin that may be in their domain; even Cuba, at its core, would be revulsed by that. That would be a very dumb thing for the Soviets to do. And I don't think they're dumb.

STERLING: I don't think they're dumb, but I don't think they were taking that much of a risk.

For one thing, if Agca had been killed, as planned, nobody would ever have discovered anything about this plot. It would have been totally impossible.

For another, if they had succeeded in eliminating this Pope physically, there would never be another Pope like this one. He is a one-time phenomenon, this man.

And memories are short. The Poles believed the Russians were behind this as soon as they heard the news, but they did not...

KING: But that was a natural gut reaction.

STERLING: Natural reaction. But they did not come out and riot in the streets.

The Italians, after all, are a 99 percent Catholic nation. By now, practically all of them believe the Russians were behind this. They are not rioting in the streets. They're not demanding a break, a rupture of diplomatic relations.

I don't find, in touring this country, talking about this book, that the Catholics who call in are demanding that we go to war with the Russians about a thing like this.

I think that they might have risked exposure. I mean it was a mere fluke, a pure fluke that Agca survived so that he could talk. Otherwise they would have had no risk at all. As it was, they were not exposed, there was no hint of exposure for a year and a half. They practically got away with it.

The second fluke was that the Italian judge appointed to investigate the case happened to be a stubborn, pigheaded man who would not give up. Nobody believed that he would ever get anywhere either, but he kept going until he did. And even when, by the time he is coming out with his report, which will be in the next six weeks or so, so much has been done by the Russians and the Bulgarians, on the one hand, and by the West along parallel lines to discredit Agca and deny his credibility, so as to shield the Russians in this effort, that their risk has not been very great. They counted on the West's indulgence in this case as they have been able to have it when Hungary had its uprising in '56, when the Prague Spring came and they overran Prague with Warsaw Pact tanks, when they invaded Afghanistan, when they put down Solidarity in Poland. What, really, has the West done in reaction to those outrages? It has had a lot of rhetoric, but it hasn't really done anything to make the Russians suffer for this.

KING: Does this tell you there might be another plot on the Pope's life?

STERLING: Well, no. I think by now -- there may be, but I think by now the degree of public awareness of where this came from makes it much more difficult to try again. I mean public knowledge, public knowledge is really a very important force of dissuasion.

Up until now, the Russians have not really risked public knowledge, because in all of the years of international terrorism, for the last 15 years, they have been covered time and time and time again by Western governments who would not let -- would not confirm to the public what the governments themselves knew about Soviet responsibility for helping to arm and train

these terrorists. And I think they were just counting on their continuing indulgence. And they've had it.

KING: So, they would have gotten away with it.

STERLING: Yeah. Or close enough, close enough so that they weren't really taking a terrible chance.

KING: And if the Pope had been killed, another Pope selected, naturally...

STERLING: Never be a Pope like that, will not be another Pole, will not be another East European. It will be many, many decades or centuries before anything like that happens again.

KING: Boy!

What reaction have you had now with publication? I mean has the -- how has the major American press treated you now? What is the Administration saying? There's a trial coming up.

STERLING: There's a trial coming up. It's only because I've been insisting, insisting and insisting for the last six weeks that the trial is coming up that people who refused to face the reality are going to have egg on their face before very long. The showdown time is coming when the evidence from a courtroom is going to be presented. It's not a reporter talking about this anymore. This is an Italian court, backed by the entire Italian judiciary, which is going to come out publicly with a formal trial, and we will have the evidence. And if our own government spokesmen refuse to concede this possibility, when it happens the evidence is just going to go against them.

So, there's got to be a change in this position, and you can see it happening already.

KING: Claire Sterling is our guest.

* * *

KING: We're ready to go to your phone calls for Claire Sterling.

Plainsfield, New Jersey. Hello.

WOMAN: I've read both The Terror Network, as well as The Time of the Assassins. They're really both outstanding books which I think everyone should read.

In your book, you mentioned two other investigations

occurring in Italy by separate investigators related to, one, drug-running and, the other, gun-running. Both of these which led back to Kintex (?) in Bulgaria?

STERLING: Yes.

WOMAN: Okay. From what I understand, approximately 16 months ago, in Italy -- I believe it was Venice -- a subpoena was issued for obtaining testimony from Yasser Arafat concerning drug-running and gun-running. And approximately two weeks ago, a warrant was issued for his arrest concerning gun-running, and it -- with the Red Brigade. And they stated that they would even try him in absentia.

STERLING: Yes.

WOMAN: In both these cases, the U.S. press has not covered it, the TV has not covered it. I'd like your comments...

KING: How do you know about it? How does the caller know about it?

WOMAN: Okay. I read it in a small paper, not a major paper like the New York Times or anything like that.

KING: You didn't read about any warrant for Arafat. You read it in a small paper.

WOMAN: In a small paper, the Jewish press.

KING: All right, Claire.

STERLING: Yes. Well, of course, it is perfectly true. It created a lot of political embarrassment. But it's an example of the extraordinary independence of the Italian magistracy. They have been getting -- in the last year and a half, they have gotten about 450 voluminous confessions from members -- former terrorists of the Red Brigades and allied terrorist groups. And these confessions have included a great deal of information about connections among Red Brigades, other terrorist groups operating in Western Europe, and factions of the PLO, in which Arafat's own Fatah group has been involved...

KING: And there is a warrant for Arafat now?

STERLING: There certainly is. Yes.

KING: Thank you very much. That is a correct story.

Dover, Delaware. Hello.

MAN: I'd like to get into the aspect of nuclear blackmail. And I'd like to know, concerning terrorism, what

would prevent -- two questions, if I may -- what would prevent any small, little conspiracy trying to gain control of, let's say, for instance, B-52 bombers and using that as a threat to destroy cities in America?

And also, I'd like to -- I've heard reports and I've talked to some people who have already said that the Soviet Union has put nuclear missiles, small nuclear missiles inside the United States, they have built them for use of terrorist organizations against the United States in the future.

STERLING: I'm not aware of that sort of Soviet preparation. I am aware of discussions, lengthy and repeated discussions, of possible nuclear blackmail by the Red Brigades in Italy. I got this from the judges who have handled the Red Brigades trials. The form of nuclear blackmail that they discussed has to do either with capturing tactical nuclear weapons, which lie around in considerable numbers in Italy and West Germany and are not very heavily guarded and are not difficult to get, or of occupying a nuclear power plant, with the proper kind of technical advice and assistance as to how to use that as a threat to release radioactivity.

KING: Do you envision terrorists and nuclear weapons?

STERLING: Oh, I think that it's one of the things that's certainly under consideration. This decade is a decade of much higher technology for terrorists.

KING: Ladislav Farrago forecast that in the early -- the major problem of the '80s would be terrorism.

What can one do if a terrorist has a nuclear weapon?

STERLING: Well, I think, first of all, the most important thing to do is preventive. We need much better intelligence-gathering than we have had up until now, and pooling of this intelligence among all the threatened target nations.

KING: Silver Spring, Maryland. Hello.

MAN: You've got me again. A guest that I can't resist.

STERLING: [Laughter] Well, what do you mean?

MAN: Well, I was on my way to bed and I heard Claire Sterling, and now I'm up.

Listen, I'm a great admirer, Claire. I have a question and then a follow-up question. If you were to decide that it was possible to start a worldwide movement to fight international

terrorism, how would you start?

STERLING: I would start with trying to educate the public. I don't think we need a movement to combat terrorism. I think we need a higher level of public awareness. That's the first thing, an understanding of what these terrorist groups have as their objective, which is to exacerbate grievances, to make a situation worse, what the Italians call [Italina expression], "the worst it is, the better it is," to block the democratic political process, to force a democratic country to behave like a police state, to create the kind of hysterical panic that can make a country ungovernable and bring it to its knees.

When the public understands this, it is far better able to cope. And if that is combined with careful police work -- and I don't mean by that turning the police loose to be absolutely free-wheeling; always holding them accountable to elected authorities, but giving them enough power to do preventive intelligence-gathering, which means, up to a point, infiltration, where they can justify that to an elected authority -- I think the combination of that kind of police work with a higher level of public awareness with the final thing, which is holding accountable those states now providing, known to provide arms, training and sanctuary, and making that accountability part of our bargaining in all of our negotiations in dealing with these states -- and by that I mean the Soviet Union, several Eastern European states, like Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, South Yemen, which is a Soviet military colony, Syria, Iran, Libya -- these three elements, public awareness, better coordinated preventive police intelligence-gathering, and public accountability for the states providing the wherewithal to these terrorists, are the three items.

KING: What's the follow-up, quickly?

MAN: Well, the question still is, how does it start?

STERLING: Well, what I'm doing is part of starting it. There are other -- for example, we've just had a report from the Pentagon Commission talking about the attack on our Marines in Beirut in which, for the first time, we have had an official admission that we are the targets, the primary targets of a form of surrogate warfare which is increasingly lethal. At least we are getting public admissions of this from high levels of government. And that's very important.

KING: Right back with Claire Sterling.

* * *

KING: Before we take the next call, we were talking

during the news break, during the commercial break, and I asked Claire if she was as opposed to right-wing terrorists as she is to left-wing, and could there be a right-wing fanatic somewhere who blows up a Russian embassy in some country, and should we be opposed to terrorism on all counts?

STERLING: Well, I am opposed to terrorism on all counts. I think that there is no such thing as a good killer and a bad killer. I think that right-wing terrorists and left-wing terrorists are equally to be fought with every kind of -- with all our energy, and that also they must be understood to have common objectives, although they may see to be at the opposite poles, politically. They have been known in several countries to collaborate operationally. They have shared medical facilities, arms procurement facilities, money-raising facilities. They have gone on raids together.

In Turkey, for example, which had the worst case of terrorism in the world until the Army takeover in 1980, we have seen cases of weapons delivered by Bulgaria, through the Turkish Mafia, to right-wing terrorists with the labels of the Bulgarian state firm Kintex still on them, and then the right-wing terrorists have turned them over to the left-wing terrorists.

And so that we have to recognize that neither side can be isolated from the other. This is a phenomenon that has to be fought in all of its aspects.

KING: If a country, if any country's embassy, let's say, is blown up, that's a threat to all countries.

STERLING: To all. To all. One of the great tragic errors we made under the Carter Administration was to allow the world to believe that our hostages in Teheran were an American problem. They were not an American problem. They were the problem of the entire civilized world.

KING: New York City, for Claire Sterling.

MAN: Miss Sterling, I can't wait to get my hands on your book.

STERLING: Good.

MAN: And I'll be in touch with you if I have some comments regarding it.

The question is this -- first I have another comment, Larry. In Brooklyn, New York we know of a safehouse that the Bulgarians have, and we've had it under surveillance for over two years.

23

Miss Sterling, did you by any chance attend the New School?

STERLING: No.

MAN: Did you know Mr. Scali?

STERLING: No.

MAN: You haven't. Well, thank you very much.

STERLING: [Laughter]

KING: With Claire Sterling, Toronto.

MAN: I'd like to ask three quick questions in rapid fire. Let me just get this in.

First of all, do I understand, Miss Sterling, that what you're saying is that because of the fact that the Pope was Polish, and the situation with martial law and Solidarity in Poland, that that was one of the main reasons why the Soviets might want to have eliminated him? Can you tell me if there is any other reasons or any tangible, concrete reasons that the Soviets had to fear from Pope John?

The second question is, I've always felt that regarding the Sadat assassination, that that was an act of international terrorism. I was wondering if you believe that that could have been Soviet-backed or whether that probably stems from the radical Arab states, such as Libya, Syria and Iran, in wanting to get rid of Sadat.

And the final question is regarding the JFK assassination. Do you believe, let's say, if someone such as yourself would have undertaken -- undertaken the task of investigating it with this type of zealotness and thoroughness at the time, in the years right afterwards, do you believe that you would have been able to uncover the men who were in all probability behind the JFK assassination?

KING: Okay. Let's run them down quickly, one, two, three.

Other fears the Soviet Union had of the Pope.

STERLING: Of the Pope. They were not just afraid of him because he was Polish, but because he has had this enormous charismatic hold for Catholics all over Eastern Europe and the Soviet world. He has given them new fight, and they are fighting back.

Under Andropov as the head of the KGB, Andropov had set up a whole Fifth Directorate designed to tighten the screws on the Catholic population, to further suppress freedom of worship in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe, to further hound the Jews of the Soviet Union, and to suppress the dissidents. And this Pope represented the challenge, the total challenge to all of that, not just to the freedom of worship of the Catholics, because he is for national sovereignty, national liberation, as well as the freedom of worship. And therefore he became a rival Pole of authority to the Polish -- to the Kremlin's authority.

KING: Sadat.

STERLING: On Sadat. I have no evidence of direct Soviet participation in the assassination. I think, surely, it was combined -- the result of combined efforts of the radical Arab states, including Libya and Moslem fundamentalists in several countries.

KING: A pretty thorough trial, though, wasn't it?

STERLING: Yes, it was a thorough trial. The Moslem fundamentalists were surely the executors of this plot.

KING: In retrospect, do you think you could have done a job on the Oswald thing?

STERLING: I would have loved to try, but I have no guaranty that I'd have gotten further than anybody else.

KING: Akron, Ohio. Hello.

MAN: Well, I assume that it has occurred to you that events taking place now are similar to the events taking place as described by William Stevenson on his book on Intrepid, which was on Larry's show recently. Has somewhat of a parallel occurred to you [unintelligible] and all that sort of thing?

STERLING: I don't know the book, unfortunately.

MAN: Well, I mean they that Chamberlain appeased Hitler. Various people in America and other countries tried to appease him. And when Russian defectors -- that was Hitler. And then later...

KING: His newest book on Intrepid deals with the Russian defectors, who nobody listened to.

STERLING: Oh, right, right. Oh, yes. Yes.

Well, of course, this whole situation of not listening

to the Russian defectors is, to me, one of the tragedies of our time. I cannot understand how the defector somehow becomes the enemy, the person who is looked on with scorn and contempt and dismissed as necessarily a liar. I don't understand how this can happen time after time after time, when they come out with the hope of being able at last to reveal the truth they have seen. It's, to me, an extraordinary will to disbelieve.

KING: Grands Rapid, Michigan. Hello.

MAN: ...Say, Claire, I wanted to ask you, do you know on JFK when he died, he was elected in 1960, you know. And many of our Presidents -- in 1940 also. And they had the same fate, you know, as JFK did. What I wanted to ask you was, do you believe in what they call the 20-year curse, that every 20 years we lose a President?

STERLING: No, I don't believe in that. I don't think you can see a pattern that clearly.

KING: Mr. Roosevelt died of a cerebral brain hemorrhage and was reelected '44.

Medina, Ohio. Hello.

MAN: There are some former CIA officials, like Marchetti and Agee and others, who have pointed out that the CIA has penetrated the American media. William Colby, at the Pike Committee hearings, said as much. He admitted that they had. He wasn't going to name numbers or names. And I think we're seeing an instance right here, that this program is probably a reenactment of the great Goebbels' Nazi Reichstag fire hoax in which a Bulgarian, Giorgi Dimitrov, was used as the patsy and the frame-up patsy to justify the rise of German Naziism, militarism and expansionism.

And I think it's an indication of the total lack of morals and conscience of the American media that it accepts this kind of obvious frame-up between American and NATO intelligence.

KING: Hold on a second. I would just say, except Miss Sterling is a staunch critic of the American media. The American media has not bought the Bulgarian story.

STERLING: I should say not.

KING: The Reagan Administration would deny it if you called them.

STERLING: The CIA denies it.

KING: Who's hatching the plot?

MAN: This is a very effective little device to make it look like it's reluctantly, somehow, not taking a position on it.

KING: Oh, you mean you're going beyond that. In other words, if they don't agree with it, then you extend it to that's part of the plot.

MAN: This is a very effective cover to...

KING: All right. How do you know? Let's respond to the story. The man arrested in Bulgaria is -- you know he did not participate.

STERLING: Is that what you mean?

MAN: Well, you know, the proof -- Mr. Ali Agca has been connected to the Central Intelligence Agency. It's interesting...

STERLING: Where's your proof for that? Excuse me. Where did you get that information. Who told you that?

MAN: I get it from the protocol of Enkarion (?), in which he was tried. And the Gray Wolves nationalist organization was brought out, very detailed, the connections to the Central Intelligence Agency.

STERLING: Well, there's never been any evidence of the connection of the Gray Wolves to the Central Intelligence Agency. Furthermore -- just a second. A Turkish martial law court has just issued a new indictment for Mehmet Ali Agca for the previous murder he'd confessed to in 1979, in which the Turkish martial law court has indicted 11 people and Agca for that killing, not as a terrorist killing, but as a killing ordered by the Turkish Arms Mafia because that editor who was murdered was exposed -- he was writing a series of articles exposing the connections between the Turkish Arms Mafia and the Bulgarian Secret Service.

Now, this is a matter of a judicial investigation in Turkey confirming everything that has come out in a judicial investigation in Rome. Now, if you think that I have been able to manipulate the Turkish martial law court and the entire judiciary system of Italy, you are giving me a really great deal of credit as a superwoman. Thank you very much, but it just can't be.

MAN: Let me make this point. People such as Wilfred Burchett, the...

STERLING: Yes, I'm familiar with him.

MAN: I know you're very vicious and...

STERLING: I'm not very vicious. He's the one who called be the would-be 20th Century annihilator of the Bulgarian people.

MAN: Here's what I'm saying. You're very amiable and you chuckle a lot, but he pointed out that you were recruited for the Central Intelligence Agency covert and proppaganda operations.

STERLING: Yes. On what basis did he point that out?

MAN: In the late 1950s.

STERLING: Yes.

MAN: And I think people ought to realize that in this country we better not go looking for the KGB. This is a very effective technique of the preemptive Big Lie, to blame, exactly what the Central Intelligence Agency is doing in the way of disinformation, Big Lie, and terrorism...

KING: And we've got -- sir, we got the Italians to participate in arresting this Bulgarian.

MAN: Right.

KING: We did.

MAN: ...the NATO countries, and Mr. Martella...

KING: By the way, I'd ask you a question. Do you think -- if I accept what you say, would you say that the KGB also does, occasionally, bad things?

MAN: The point right here...

STERLING: Answer.

KING: Okay. Excellent answer.

Natick, Massachusetts. Hello -- that showed the balance of the caller. Hello.

MAN: Before I start, you know, just to sound a bit more amiable, I'll way that maybe Burchett would know you're in the CIA because he has links to the KGB, and helped interrogate American prisoners during the Korean War.

STERLING: That's correct. Yes.

MAN: But be that as it may, my good woman, in your book The Terror Network, first off I'd have to say is that you give a rather disturbing impression to me. I can't find the quote exactly, but it's something to the effect that while terrorism, you know, in the Middle East is understandable, in Europe it is not.

STERLING: No, I don't think I say anything like that.

KING: Sir, can you hold on? I've got to break for the headlines.

* * *

KING: Back to Natick, Massachusetts.

MAN: Miss Sterling, I wonder if -- do you think that the acts carried out by the Palestine resistance in Israel are justified, as opposed -- or understandable, as opposed to the acts carried out by them in Europe?

STERLING: No. I don't think that any acts of killing women and children and children in schoolbuses are understandable under any circumstances. I think that if the Palestine Liberation Organization would recognize the existence, the right of the state of Israel to exist, it would then be possible to have diplomatic and political negotiations, in which case the use of violence would not be necessary.

I don't -- I believe that, furthermore, in addition to the acts of terrorism carried out against civilians in the state of Israel, what the Palestinian resistance has done, in extending its cause, or in winning world support for its cause by extending logistic and training support to terrorist groups all over the world, is absolutely to be condemned without conditions, unequivocally.

MAN: One more thing, Miss Sterling. Would you please, for my benefit, comment on the pressure that the Western governments, particularly the United States, had in letting Chairman Arafat escape from Tripoli and from the hands of the Israelis?

STERLING: Well, I certainly think it would have been indecent to leave Arafat to the hands of the Israelis in that situation. Just as I condemn what the PLO has done as acts of terrorism, I think that it was a threat of terrorism on the part of the Israeli government to say, "Leave Arafat here so that he can get killed." I could no sooner approve of that than I could of the other.

29

KING: All right. Thank you very much.

She certainly is consistent.

If you've just joined us, by the way, we're talking with Claire Sterling....

We continue with the phone calls and Philadelphia.

MAN: Miss Sterling, I'm glad you mentioned the report on the bombing in Beirut, because they gave a very strong statement about terrorism, state-supported terrorism in the form of war.

STERLING: Yes. Exactly.

MAN: And to make a statement like that would seem to go -- let me address your approach to this: public education, understanding. I think there's no problem there. It'll take time. Better intelligence-gathering and infiltration. My question on that point is, does this really mean covert operations against these parties, not simply gathering information? In other words, the Washington Post today says the Administration is considering the morality of striking back in a very more direct and aggressive form, not just gathering intelligence.

STERLING: Well, it depends on striking back where. I mean in a case like an attack on the Marines, I think we should have struck back, and much sooner than we did and much harder than we did. I think it's the only possible answer in that kind of situation.

But I don't mean that, generally, speaking, intelligence -- preemptive intelligence is what I call it -- necessarily requires striking back in covert action. What I mean is that it is much more intelligent to try to know what plans are for a terrorist attempt before the attempt is carried out, rather than wait for the people to be killed and then look for the perpetrators. And the only way you can do that -- and I have seen it done in Europe very successfully without sacrificing the basic civil liberties of the population -- if you have certain carefully circumscribed laws which permit agencies to infiltrate groups which -- when they can show good reason and be held accountable for this to the magistracy or to the elected authorities -- you have to have a certain amount of that to know what these groups are planning. And that has been essential to breaking the threat, for example, in Italy. It has been part of the essential plan that has made it possible to free Italy from the nightmare of ten years of escalating terrorism. And they have done it without throwing away the Bill of Rights.

MAN: They have been spectacularly successful, at least so far.

Let me pursue this. In the international arena -- this gets to your third point, which is that we're going to try to include it on our diplomatic agenda when we talk with Libya, Syria, Iran, Bulgaria, and North Korea.

STERLING: Yes.

MAN: We don't talk -- Cuba. We don't talk with these people a whole lot anyway, and we have trouble getting even more obvious on their part discussed and made accountable on their part.

So I guess my question is, relating to your second point, which was the intelligence activity or covert action -- you said not necessarily. But in the international side -- not domestically, but internationally -- you almost have to take a more active means, covert action, you know, rather than simply watch and observe.

I think, in any case, how do you expect -- internationally, not in a situation of terrorism within the national borders, but when you've got a state-supported group emerging or developing in some of these other national entities, what can you do or what should you do, especially if they don't -- they say, "Oh, well. We're not doing that at all"?

STERLING: Well, let's take the state of South Yemen, which is a military colony of the Soviet Union and which has been providing graduate training, you might say, for the more sophisticated forms of terrorist attack all over Europe.

KING: And what do you do? You're not speaking to South Yemen. What do you do?

STERLING: Well, supposing we say that we are just going to throw a surveillance line in the sea and at the airports with any airline that is carrying passengers to South Yemen, that we're going to screen these passengers, in cooperation with all of the countries, all the target countries concerned, and we're going to screen all the nationals who are flying to South Yemen, whichever way they're flying. Supposing we say that we're going to discuss with the Soviet Union whether or not we will have a certain degree of trade or technical exchange or the sales of wheat, depending on a series of conditions which include the closing of the training camps in South Yemen and the island of Sakatra (?).

This is not -- I mean, after all, we are the -- as the Pentagon has said, this is a form of surrogate warfare being

waged against us. And we have to meet that challenge.

KING: We're talking with Claire Sterling.

* * *

KING: St. Louis. Hello.

MAN: ...Why did the Pope go see Agca in jail? And why does the West show such reluctance to do anything about this or to have any opinion?

STERLING: The Pope went to see Agca in jail, certainly, for spiritual reasons, to display the quality of Christian mercy. But he also went for political reasons, I believe, because it was at just this time that all the pressures were being brought to bear on the Italian court to bury this case before it came out, to close it before the evidence became public and before these people went to trial.

And what he said when he left Agca after that 20-minute conversation was, "I have full confidence in this penitent, Agca." Which meant, "I believe him to be sincerely repentant. And therefore, his confession to the Italian judge, involving the Bulgarians, has credibility. He is believable. I believe him to be sincere." I think that was the burden of his message.

KING: And the second part, on this country and...

STERLING: On this country -- why did this coun -- I think a lot of it is political cowardice, the unwillingness to have to deal with a country when you face all the implications of the underside of its policy as well as the official side. It's too difficult. We would rather limp along the way we're doing. Whereas I believe that unless the public is given to understand the truth about the underside of this policy, we can never reach an understanding that has any meaning. So long as we assume that the Russians are going to play it straight with us, and don't understand what the other side of their policy is capable of doing, what kind of bargain can we make that will stick?

KING: Madison, Wisconsin. Hello.

MAN: I have two questions. If Miss Sterling could elaborate on why the Western press is, on the whole, reluctant to expose more of Soviet covert activities and atrocities, like yellow rain and other covert activities. And secondly, which magazines or journals would she recommend to read to learn more about these covert activities and our counterintelligence operations to counter those?

STERLING: Well, I don't really know any publications. I just don't know which publications will give you serious information on this. I'm finding it very difficult to find any, myself.

I can't explain, either, why intelligent members of the press are willing to believe any evil of the CIA and not believe the same of the KGB. This is not to say that I don't believe the CIA is capable of evil. But I do believe in looking in both directions and seeing it on both sides and being willing to give equal attention and make equal investigations of both sides. And I don't understand, really, the reluctance of so many opinion-makers in the press and media to face that reality. I just can't give you an answer.

KING: To Fargo, North Dakota. Hello.

MAN: Yes, ma'am. I have a comment and two questions. My comment is I've read the book The Terror Network. An acquaintance of mine from Turkey confirmed a lot of what you said about Turkey, even though she had never read your book or heard of you.

And my questions are, what effect will this have, if any, on the European peace movement?

Second question -- this might be too far of the mark --but the release of Grenada affect the course of international terrorism?

And the third question...

KING: No, I'm not going to permit three. I think we ought to hold it to two.

STERLING: Well, on the question of Grenada, I think that the change in Grenada will affect the penetration of Central America by Cuban forces, Soviet-backed Cuban forces. And this will, I think, improve our own -- the United States' security position in Central America. Whether that will affect the course of international terrorism, it's a bit far-reaching for me to say.

Now, what was the first question?

KING: What was the first one again, sir?

MAN: The European peace movement.

STERLING: Oh, the European peace movement. You know, I don't know how much effect the revelations about the plot against

the Pope will have politically. I think that a great many people who were not prepared before to believe that the Soviet Union is capable of such actions will continue to refuse to believe it, in spite of the evidence.

KING: Charleston, South Carolina. Hello.

MAN: My question is this: I haven't read the book, but I'm very curious to find out. How did Claire do her research? Did she have to do anything incognito?

STERLING: No, I didn't do anything incognito. And I hardly relied at all on any intelligence service on the world. I took the papers that were available at the courthouse in Rome attached to the trial of Agca. I followed those leads by going to -- five times to Turkey, five times to West Germany, to Switzerland, to Austria, to Tunisia, talking to police chiefs, to lawyers, to judges, getting the court proceedings in other court cases associated with this one, going just to government sources and ministries, and putting together what everybody said, and cross-checking, where I could, one source against another source.

The book, to me, the importance, really, is to show a reader how a reporter goes about, starting from zero, an investigation like this and step-by-step comes across, makes breakthroughs, and decides that they're worthwhile, and continues. That's really, to me, what's useful in this book.

KING: Cincinnati, Ohio. Hello.

MAN: ...A couple of questions. Is there not a level of sophistication and training and orchestration when it comes to left-wing terrorism which far exceeds and eclipses any right-wing forces? And especially when it comes to the right-wing death squads in Central America, which has been played up over and over, it's very interesting that you say that there might be an association between right-wing and left-wing terrorism.

What do you think about whether or not there might be any unseen motivation for some of the right-wing death squads in Central America?

STERLING: Well, I want to make it clear that I consider the death squads in Central America to be utterly reprehensible and every bit worthy of being fought to the hilt, as much as I think left-wing terrorism must be fought.

I think it is often difficult to understand in the Central American situation exactly who is responsible for certain deaths. I think there is a tendency -- there is such a polarized sentiment on both sides, on the right and the left, that there is

a tendency for one side to blame the other side for everything. And it is not always clear whether there is provocation going on on one side or the other.

Certainly in Turkey that has been the case. Turkey was up to a terrorist kill rate of one an hour before the Army took over, and you never could tell how many of those deaths were being caused by rightists posing as leftists and leftists posing as rightists. Certainly there was a degree of collaboration between them to keep up the level of violence. And this, I think, is a phenomenon we should look for also in Central America.

KING: Right back with Claire Sterling, author of The Time of the Assassins.

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KING: Pittsburgh, for Claire Sterling.

MAN: Claire, I was wondering -- just a couple questions. Aren't you afraid or have you ever been afraid? I mean if they could try to kill the Pope, I mean...

STERLING: Who am I?

MAN: ...why not you?

STERLING: Yes. Well, sure, I'm afraid sometimes. Who isn't? If you go in to cover a war as a reporter, or an insurgency or a riot, you can get hit. And I'm sure I have made some people very angry, and they can be very nasty people.

But there's no point -- I mean a reporter can't just pick the safe jobs to do. And I have to admit that I find this -- I have found this investigation the most extraordinarily fascinating investigation I have ever done in my professional life, and nothing could pull me off it. I'll tell you that.

MAN: Great job.

My second question is, what ever happened to the Libyan hit squads that were supposed to be after the President? Were they real? Were they actually sent? Was it just to frazzle the President's nerves? Do you know anything about that?

STERLING: I don't know. I was in Europe when that report spread through the United States, and I was never in a position to check it myself. I just don't know if they were real.

KING: Thank you very much.

KING: Tampa, Florida. Hello.

MAN: To me, it's very odd that certain people can be published and other people cannot. And from my readings, I find that the American news media is under very strict control.

Is Miss Sterling aware of the conditions under which she's operating?

STERLING: Under which I'm operating? Well, I can assure you that my own freedom of publication has been absolute.

MAN: Well, you know, the Pope, he was elected after the other one died under kind of odd circumstances. And we know that Begin had quite a few heart attacks, and then he quit having heart attacks. And when he was a terrorist, there was a 40,000 pound reward put on his head. And certain things dry up and other things get publicized, and they're said over and over and over again in this country, which is a take-off on what the Hitler regime's propaganda machine was supposed to be doing.

Have you ever heard that the Soviet Union was a super -- super-capitalism diguised as a communist come-on because of the capitalist production drives up every...

KING: I never heard of that.

STERLING: I never heard of that, either.

KING: That sounds a little farfetched.

Annapolis, Maryland. Hello.

MAN: Miss Sterling, I would like, if I can, to sort of crack the charisma of the word terrorism. And I think that you're in the process of doing that. But the word occurs so often.

I don't -- I believe that the attack on the Marines in Beirut was not terrorism, but an act of war. And I don't believe that the people who are commonly labeled as terrorists are any more irresponsible, say, than the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. in their use of nuclear blackmail for political purposes.

STERLING: Did you want me to comment on that?

MAN: Yes, please.

STERLING: Yes. Well, the terrorists, of course, that I write about and have been talking about are terrorists operating in free constitutional societies with multi-party systems and a free press, with all the facilities available to bring about

political change and the settlement of their grievances by peaceful political means. And these terrorists, as a guiding principle, attempt to prevent the solution of these problems, to exasperate the grievances, and to block the political process, rather than use it in order to settle the grievances.

The Spanish Basque terrorists are the best example. They have received more autonomy since the death of Franco than they ever had in the Spanish Republic before Franco came to power, and they have since that time constantly escalated their kill rate in an attempt to bring -- they're killing Army officers and Guardia officers in an attempt to bring the Army back after 40 years of a military dictatorship.

And those are the kind of terrorists that I'm talking about. And it seems to me that they are -- you just can't compare that to other forms of violence that are used by states in conventional warfare.

KING: Hartford, Connecticut for Claire Sterling.

MAN: ...Miss Sterling, you alluded to the hyperbole in the Soviet press vis-a-vis the Vatican and the Pope. Now, given the history of the Soviet Union, the massive loss of civilian life in World War II, the German invasion, and their memory of Pope Pius XI and his support of Adolf Hitler, don't you think the Russians are to be understood -- of course you don't agree with them -- in their feeling towards this Pope, who sits in the Vatican by the grace of a treaty with Benito Mussolini? I mean their memory of a Pope's support of Naziism is more vivid than ours is.

STERLING: Well, maybe they remember the Pope's support of Naziism. But how about the Soviet-German pact? I mean there was a period when the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany were in a pact against the Allied powers. And to my knowledge, because I have written books on this and done research on it, their own resistance fighters were betraying non-communist resistance fighters to the Nazis in Czechoslovakia and in France.

MAN: Okay. Well, Stalin isn't alive today. I was talking about the leaders of the Soviet Union and the Russians.

STERLING: Well, I mean, if the Russians of that period had resentment against a Pope who was supporting -- who was friendly to the Nazi authorities in Germany, Stalin himself was in close association with these same Nazi authorities. So I don't think the one is an excuse.

MAN: The issue -- I mean is it not a fact that they remember that a Pope was active in the elevation of the Nazis to power in Europe? I mean isn't their paranoia...

STERLING: Well, I think that goes a little far, to say that this Pope was active in the elevation of the Nazis. He was friendly to the Nazis. But I don't think it's quite...

MAN: I thought you were a historian. I think you...

STERLING: I didn't say I was a historian. I'm just...

MAN: I think you ought to research the German bishops and their support of Adolf Hilter and the fact that Pope Pius XI was the Papal Nuncio to Nazi Germany before Hitler came to power.

STERLING: Yes, I'm aware of that.

MAN: And he supported Franco.

KING: She's not a historian.

STERLING: I'm an investigative journalist. I don't pretend to know everything about contemporary history.

KING: Following the news, Claire Sterling will answer all questions on the fall of the ruble, international finance. And for those of you who are interested in a history of Bulgaria during the 19th Century, a period not often covered, Miss Sterling knows particularly the years 1860 to 1870.

STERLING: I know about Basil the Bulgar Slayer in the year 1092.

KING: A little-known fact that Abraham Lincoln was very popular in Bulgaria and a street was named after him.

Claire Sterling's book, The Time of the Assassins: Anatomy of an Investigation, is published by Holt Rinehart and Winston and is guaranteed to climb the bestseller list.

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KING: Trenton, New Jersey. Hello.

MAN: Miss Claire -- incidentally, she writes for Reader's Digest, so that it doesn't surprise me where she's coming from. On the other hand, she neglected to mention that U.S. intelligence and international terrorism, and she can find reading by John Cummings in the latest Rebel edition, if she pleases.

KING: What's the question?

MAN: Oh, the question is -- another thing she neglected to mention that when the Pope came on the throne, he said, "I'm a Slavic Pope." So I don't see how he would be anti-Russian, because the Russians are Slavs too. And the Slavs -- well, I just don't believe the Russians were involved in this whole thing.

STERLING: Well, look, before you say that, don't you think maybe we ought to invest in buying the book to read what the evidence is. And then you can make up your mind.

MAN: Well, I...

KING: Wouldn't you not want to learn the other side, and then...

MAN: Yes, I am always learning other side because I live in this country.

KING: Well, then you read the book and then you say, "Here's where I disagree with the book," or, "I don't agree with the conclusions." If you don't read the book, then all you're doing is saying, "I don't think."

MAN: I don't know where this Pope is coming from. I don't actually believe that this Pope is the kind of Pope that the Italians have been producing for the last 500 years.

STERLING: No. This is a quite different Pope. That's what I said.

MAN: That's right. And you neglected to mention that he's a Slavic Pope. That's what he said when...

KING: Well, sir, why don't you read the book and then make up an opinion?

MAN: Okay. But I...

KING: All right. Thank you.

That seems a good way to do it.

New Orleans. Hello.

MAN: I was wondering -- now, let me get this straight. Russia, indirectly, has used terrorism for its own ends. Right?

STERLING: Right.

MAN: So -- and Israel is somewhat -- well, is probably

one of the greatest threats to Russia, as far as they're concerned.

STERLING: Well, I wouldn't say it was one of the greatest threats.

KING: It's not a military threat.

MAN: Well, I mean...

KING: What is your point?

MAN: Well, do you see Russia using terrorism, directly or indirectly, to maybe blackmail Israel?

STERLING: Well, Russia has been using terrorism, indirectly, to blackmail Israel since 1968, when it began to provide massive quantities of armament and training to the PLO.

MAN: Well...

KING: All right. Thank you.

We go to Kansas City. Hello.

MAN: You know, I can't believe the -- to tell you the amount of damage you're doing here tonight. Are you aware of the number of liberals in this country who are doing their darnedest to tell us what good people the Russians are, the government?

KING: I'm a liberal, and I don't think they're good people. Do you think liberals only think they're good people? It's your President.

MAN: I think they're doing their darnedest to weaken our position.

KING: Do you think Mr. Reagan is a good conservative?

MAN: Yes.

KING: He takes the liberal position in this and denies that the Russians were involved.

MAN: Well, stating that we need better intelligence operations, I can only assume that the author here is in favor of -- is not in favor of...

KING: Why didn't you answer my Reagan query?

MAN: Pardon?

KING: Why didn't you answer my Reagan query?

MAN: Would you state it again?

KING: Mr. Reagan would deny Miss Sterling's book.

MAN: Well, I don't understand why he would.

KING: Well, because he's probably a liberal.

STERLING: Well, he does.

KING: See, that's the way we mask them, sir. We infiltrated the White House and used Reagan.

MAN: Don't be stupid.

KING: Don't you be stupid and say that liberals like the Soviet Union. That's dumb.

MAN: Well, you know, you use ridiculous analogies, and you do it all the time.

KING: Well, I gave you a question. Mr. Reagan agrees with the liberal viewpoint on this. Since you called it liberal, why don't you attack him.

MAN: ...try to tell us what good people the Russians are, like you do.

KING: Sir, have a good time.

Green Bay, Wisconsin. Hello.

MAN: I was wondering, if the Russian KGB is behind all this, how far up the chain of command would they have to go to get approval for this type of operation?

STERLING: Well, I think there's no question that it would have had to be approved by the Politburo and by Brezhnev. Andropov was the head of the KGB at the time this assassination was approved, and he would have been carrying out orders. It's just not conceivable that he would have taken it upon himself to try an initiative like this unless it was approved at the very top by the Politburo.

For example, the assassination of Hafizullah Amin, the President of Afghanistan, in '79. He had been put in by the Russians, but he was not pliant enough for their wishes. And it was then a Politburo decision to have him assassinated. And the Politburo chose an agent to go in and poison his soup. This is the God's truth, as told by defectors from the KGB. Whereas the

Soviet military intelligence sent in another hit team with machine guns. And while the one agent was poisoning his soup downstairs in the kitchen, the other was machine-gunning Hafizullah Amin and 11 other people who were running around.

But that was surely not a decision that could have been made at the KGB level. It was too important. And the Pope was more important than that.

MAN: And knowing all this -- I assume the Reagan Administration has assumed this or knows it by now -- and they have given no response.

STERLING: That's correct.

MAN: I think that speaks pretty sadly for the United States in general.

STERLING: So do I.

KING: And the last caller doesn't even understand it.

This is the Larry King Show in Washington, with Claire Sterling, author of the The Time of the Assassins: Anatomy of an Investigation, published by Holt Rinehart Winston.

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KING: Washington. Hello.

MAN: Miss Sterling, can you tell me how many times you've been sued for slander?

STERLING: Well, I've been sued eight times and I have won seven times of the eight times. The other case is still pending.

MAN: Isn't it true that you were sued by Henry Karule's family?

STERLING: Kuriel's (?) family. Yes. This is one of the things that was published in the Covert Action Bulletin. They falsely reported that I had lost that lawsuit. In fact, I won that lawsuit and I was awarded court costs.

MAN: Okay.

Also, you claim that Agca changed his story and indicted the Bulgarians for the plot. But could you tell me how did he know all this information about the telephone numbers inside of Anatov's [sic], the alleged Bulgarian assailant.

STERLING: Well, it's difficult to imagine how he could have known these things unless he was there, unless he got the phone numbers from the Bulgarians and actually visited their apartments. That is the position -- that is the position taken four times by the Italian courts when the Bulgarian's lawyers have appealed for his release on the grounds of insufficient evidence. Four times the Italian courts have ruled that the evidence against him is strong enough to warrant his continuing detention because they have credited Agca's confession. And I don't know what corroboration they have found. The judge certainly found some which we'll know about in about six weeks.

MAN: Isn't it true that Anatov didn't even have a phone?

STERLING: No, that is not true. He did have an unlisted telephone. So did Ivazov. This is what the Bulgarians have claimed, but they have proved wrong.

They also claimed that Antonov did not speak English. But I have just before leaving Italy seen the Rye (?) television film interview with Antonov's wife in Sofia in which they asked her if her husband spoke English, and she said, "Not terribly well. I speak it better than he does." But I mean it was a direct confession that the Bulgarians had been lying about this.

MAN: Okay. But could have Agca also been mistaken that Anatov had a beard, when in fact he was clean-shaven?

STERLING: Well, it's possible that Agca made several mistakes. What I'm saying is that the Italian courts have four times found enough of the core of his statement to be true to uphold the continuing detention of Antonov, who is about to be sent to trial. I'm not saying that every word that Agca says is gospel truth. I certainly don't think that it's possible to expect that. But what I say is that the courts have found that Antonov's alibi has not stood up and that the charges made by Agca in his confession have been corroborated by sufficient independent information to lead the courts to believe that Antonov will have to face trial.

This is not me talking, it's the Italian courts.

MAN: Yeah, okay. It's not you talking. But, you know, his testimony goes on and on like that. He makes, you know...

STERLING: But you don't know what his testimony is. Nor do I. None of us will know what his testimony is until the judge has published it.

MAN: ...the basis for keeping Antonov in prison has been reported.

STERLING: Pardon?

MAN: The basis for keeping Antonov in prison, some of that has been reported. And a lot of it has been completely, you know, incorrect.

STERLING: No. As a matter of fact, the information that has been given to you in many newspapers has been completely incorrect. They have -- the newspapers have reported time and again that Antonov was about to be freed, and that was untrue. And they have reported that Agca had no credibility. But as I have told you, that's what the newspapers have said. But the Italian courts have said that Agca is sufficiently credible to make it necessary to continue holding Antonov in prison and to send him to trial. And that's the test.

KING: Raleigh, North Carolina. Hello.

MAN: Miss Sterling, I wish to thank you on behalf of the American people for the corrections you are making in our information. And I wonder why -- two questions. I wonder why there is such a reluctance on the part of the press, the media to report on the side of Soviet-Cuban policy.

And second, would you say there's a kind of terrorism going on in Afghanistan, via Soviet helicopter gunships, if there are three or four million refugees? Is that true?

STERLING: Oh, certainly. I mean it's worse than terrorism. That is a total form of foreign military occupation of a once-independent country. It's, to me, one of the tragic situations that's happening in the world that is going very largely unreported. It's a tragedy.

KING: Boston. Hello.

MAN: ...I have to confess that I haven't read the book, so I can't be, whatever you want to say -- you know, I can't speak from a lot of knowledge. However, what I've heard you say and what I've read in a few accounts of what you've said, I just have a few questions.

One is, can it really be said that the Bulgarians would do something like lead Agca around by the hand around the square and show him all these things? Doesn't that show a certain amount of, well, stupidity, I mean, to do something like that?

STERLING: Wasn't it stupidity for the CIA to ask the Mafia to poison -- to kill Castro with a poisoned cigar?

MAN: I sup...

STERLING: All intelligence services commit acts of stupidity. Most of them we just don't know about. When they happen to come to light, we find out about them and we say, "Isn't that incredibly stupid?"

I don't believe it's a monopoly of any one side to commit stupid gestures.

KING: There are Clouseaus everywhere.

MAN: But I must don't see that that's -- it just doesn't seem to me like a very powerful motivation.

STERLING: Yeah. But, you know, the problem here is that people -- I understand. People find it extremely difficult to adjust their thinking to the enormity of this crime, the attempt to kill the head of the Roman Catholic Church, representing a sixth of the population of the planet. And because it is so difficult to take this in, people are saying, "But isn't it incredible? But it boggles the mind. How can it be?"

My only answer can be, don't ask if it's incredible or incredible. Look at the evidence first, and then say, "Is the evidence persuasive or not persuasive?" Then we can argue about it.

I mean I'm not blaming you for not having read the book, but what I'm saying is that we really just can't argue on the level of, "Isn't it incredible that they might have," when we do have evidence that they did.

MAN: Well, you said it was in 1979 when Agca was recruited?

STERLING: Well, I say in 1979 he was used in the murder of an editor in Turkey and put into prison. And then he escaped from this military prison.

MAN: When was he recruited to kill the Pope? What year was that?

STERLING: Well, he was recruited to serve the Bulgarian secret service in the winter of 1979, the summer of 1980.

MAN: Wasn't that before Solidarity started, even?

STERLING: No. Solidarity signed its contract as a legitimate trade union on August 31st, 1980, which happened to be exactly the day that Agca left Bulgaria, after his 50-day stay there, for his trip to Europe.

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KING: Phenix City, Alabama. Hello.

WOMAN: I just want to say that Miss Sterling certainly is a brilliant and courageous lady to expose all these things. And her evidence has certainly been corroborated. And I know --and these callers that say that the CIA is somewhat like the Nazis, I think they spend their time watching the movies and the TV. And I think all these Communist directors that were on the blacklist, somehow they've gotten back in and they're putting out so many pictures. And obviously, they go to movies instead of reading books.

And I haven't read this book about the terrorists yet, but I'm looking forward to it.

And, Miss Sterling, I wanted to ask you, do you believe that these Eastern terrorists, that are even very active in America now against our government -- their holy war, they call it -- don't they call the West the Satan, and they're out to destroy the West?

STERLING: Well, this isn't all terrorists. The terrorists you're talking about are a sect of Shiite Moslems who have a very particular fundamentalist Moslem point of view, in which all of the Western World, the Christian World is the enemy, the infidel. This is not necessarily the reasoning of many other terrorist groups who have political motivations, not religious ones.

KING: Cincinnati, Ohio for Claire Sterling.

MAN: I want to congratulate Mrs. Sterling for the fine work she's doing. And I wonder if she could comment, because of her investigations of the Soviets, on John Barron's remarks, intimated remarks in KGB Today about Dr. Caldicott and the Physicians for Social Responsibility.

STERLING: Well, I think that -- I don't remember that particular section of the book, but I do think that John Barron's book is a first-rate study, KGB Today, absolutely first rate. I think he's probably the leading authority writing on the subject in the United States today. And if he has said it, I would certainly be inclined to credit it.

KING: Troy, New York. Hello.

WOMAN: Claire, I just wanted to say I think you're great, and I am glad there are people like you around to save us from ourselves.

STERLING: Thank you.

WOMAN: I am a foreigner. And like many people who have felt the presence of the Soviets, I have always felt that the U.S. is the only -- is the last bastion of freedom and the only hope for humanity. And I just wish Americans would see just what they have, what a great country they have, and learn to value it. But what I see here is that there's a universal head-in-the-sand syndrome. Maybe it's just cowardice.

But what my question is, is there KGB disinformation in this country, and to what extent and in what form is this?

STERLING: Yes, of course there is KGB disinformation. But, you know, I don't really believe that that's our major problem. I think our major problem is self-deception on the part of our press and media and many of our public officials, an unwillingness to face a reality that is too difficult to handle. And I think that the Russians wouldn't have to spend a dime to achieve this kind of result. We're doing it to ourselves.

I think it's a lowering, a constantly lowering level of memory, of historical memory. We forget what happened ten years ago, even five years ago, even two years ago. We have instant television to tell us what the news is, and it goes in and out of our heads before it registers. And we are not -- we don't remember. We don't think and remember the way once upon a time we did. And that's, to me, a very serious danger.

And the Russians, I'm sure, contribute when they can with disinformation. But I don't consider that the major enemy. The major enemy is us.

WOMAN: It just terrifies me. Because as far as I remember, both world wars were preceded by peace movements. I just hope this country isn't going to be surprised someday.

STERLING: I agree.

KING: Buffalo, New York. Hello.

WOMAN: Two questions on the Middle East. Was there an international terrorist network operating in Lebanon before the Israelis invaded?

And my second question: Is there cooperation, if any, between the U.S. intelligence and the Mosad in the Middle East?

STERLING: Oh, well, I'm sure that there's cooperation between U.S. intelligence and Mosad, and all the other Western European intelligence agencies and Mosad. It's absolutely essential for all target countries in this situation to pool their information as much as they can.

As far as terrorism in the Middle East before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, certainly there has been terrorism emanating from -- generated in the Middle East, starting around 1968, which has been used to propagate terrorist activity throughout Western Europe and throughout all the free countries of the world. The PLO has a great deal to account for, and various factions of the PLO, particularly George Habash's group, in the degree to which they have provided the wherewithal to the terrorists of all Western Europe and Turkey and others attacking the United States directly, at home or abroad; in providing weapons, training, sanctuary, graduate training, mixed hit teams, and so on, operating throughout Europe. Carlos was a product of the PLO forces, and so on. And I think that it's really -- they have a great deal to answer for to history.

KING: Fayetteville, North Carolina. Hello.

WOMAN: I would like to know, did she ever speak with the Pope or anybody connected with the Pope in Rome before she wrote the book?

STERLING: No. I have been present at mass audiences of the Pope, but I've never had a private conversation with him.

WOMAN: Why did you write the book?

STERLING: I'm an investigative reporter, and it was the story of a lifetime, as I say at the beginning of the book. With the leads I was able to get, it seemed to me the most extraordinarily important and fascinating political mystery that I have ever come across.

WOMAN: I want to ask you one more question. How long have you been out of this country?

STERLING: Well, I've lived in Europe for 30 years, but I come back here regularly, once or twice a year.

WOMAN: You'd better believe it.

STERLING: Pardon?

WOMAN: You'd better believe it.

KING: What do you mean?

WOMAN: Let's all have a good laugh on that one.

KING: You know, we all can when we understand it, ma'am.

We're going to pause for -- that was very funny, I

thought. We're going to pause for news headlines.

* * *

KING: Johnstown, New York. Hello.

MAN: I'd like to ask you, Miss Sterling, first of all, why do you feel that a President and an Administration such as Reagan's, who seems to be so anti-communist and so anti-Russian-communist at this time, would suppress such knowledge?

STERLING: Well, I feel that there's a line that every Administration draws in this country, and all over the West, whether they're Republican or Democratic, beyond which they are unwilling to go because it too complicates their lives in having to deal with the Russians. And I think that this is one of those lines. That is, this Administration is just not willing, because of political expediency and political cowardice and fear of what the electorate might think and a sheer necessity of rethinking a whole set of policies in dealing with the Soviet Union, is just not willing to face it. And it's certainly not willing to have the public know about it.

I think that this indicates a consideration of the public as having a mental age of 12, frankly. And I think that the more the public demands, insists on the right to know, the further ahead we'll be.

KING: Brooklyn, New York, with Claire Sterling.

MAN: Miss Sterling, I believe your story about your plot to kill the Pope. But almost all strong military powers have resorted to terrorism, both overt and covert, whenever it was in their interest and they thought they could get away with it. And the United States, since World War II, has taken second place to no one.

But my question is, have you investigated the plot to kill the Pope which succeeded? I'm referring to the fact that the present Pope, John Paul II, was installed in the papacy as a tool of the Opus Dei, the holy Mafia, who poisoned his predecessor, Pope John Paul I.

KING: How do you know that, sir?

MAN: Well, there's a whole story of it here in the...

KING: What publication?

STERLING: I know the book.

MAN: In the publication the Covert Action Information

Bulletin.

STERLING: Right. Now, do you consider that a really very serious source of information, the Covert Action Bulletin?

MAN: Just as serious as yours, ma'am.

STERLING: Well, I think the Covert Action Bulletin suffers from serious inaccuracies.

KING: There were a lot of stories about the poisoning of that previous Pope.

STERLING: There were. There has never been any serious evidence presented to that effect.

KING: Was there an autopsy?

STERLING: I don't know.

KING: Because those were rumors before...

STERLING: There were rumors. I've never been a serious -- I've never seen a serious documented story to that effect.

KING: Kearney, Nebraska. Hello.

MAN: I was wondering if the lady thinks that the security around President Reagan is tight enough right now.

STERLING: I think that there's no amount of security that can be tight enough.

KING: They have sand bags at the White House.

STERLING: You know, if -- long ago I learned, in the situation in terrorism in Italy, if a terrorist group is really resolute, determined, and willing to risk its life at whatever cost to get at a target, it will eventually get at the target.

KING: If you want to kill someone at the risk of your own life, we could kill almost anyone.

STERLING: That's right. That's right. And every President is exposed, every public figure is exposed. There is no way that there can be total perfect security.

KING: Miami, Florida. Hello.

MAN: Miss Sterling, for the personal benefit of the big historian from Connecticut, Pope Pius XI was never in Germany in his life, much less was he Papal Nuncio there. And he died in

1939. The big historian had better study his Latin too.

STERLING: Thank you.

MAN: Now, to get to the subject at hand. Are you at all familiar with the death of the close personal friend of the Pope, John Chostek (?), who was credited at the White House and who died, allegedly, a suicide in the city of Arlington, where you are now?

STERLING: No. I'm sorry to say I know nothing about this.

KING: Nor am I.

MAN: Well, it's very curious and has raised questions in the minds of many high churchmen, I can tell you.

KING: When did this happen?

MAN: Two years ago, Mr. King. Within the last two years. And you might want to check, if you have time while you're there, with the local authorities, as well...

KING: What was his name?

MAN: ...the former bishop there, Bishop Welch, who has been transferred...

KING: What was the name of the man who committed suicide?

MAN: Chostek. It's a Polish name. He was a Polish national whom the Pope personally visited in his apartment on two occasions while he was in this country. He escorted the Pope on a goodly part of the tour here. And he dined privately in Rome, on a subsequent visit, with the Pope. There were several other clerics there, but he was the only layman. And I could tell you that I'm in a position to assure you that there are very few lay people who dine privately with the Pope.

KING: I would imagine.

What's the question of Claire?

MAN: And I want to know whether she is aware of this, of his death. And if not, if she has the opportunity, she might look into it while she's in Arlington.

STERLING: Unfortunately, I haven't the time. But I'm sorry to say that I have not heard about this case, and I would like to know more.

KING: Thank you very much. That's interesting.

Springfield, Illinois.. Hello.

MAN: I would like to follow up a little bit on the question about why the Reagan Administration doesn't deal with this question. And I was wondering if perhaps it's -- you know, it seems like every time President Reagan brings up sort of the dark side of the Soviet Union, he gets a real bad shot in the press, and then he sort of backs off, you know. And I agree that it's political cowardice and it shouldn't be, you know, excused. But I was wondering if that might be part of it, you know, just fear of bringing that up and being...

STERLING: Well, but I think also there's political expediency. He certainly, I think, hoped to have a summit meeting with Andropov before a presidential election year. And, of course, that didn't work out.

I should point out the consistency of that kind of position in that jumbo, the Korean jumbo story. When the President first announced that jumbo case -- I live in Europe and I saw for the first time in years and years total consensus. Everybody believed that -- for once, everybody believed the United States was telling the truth and the Russians had really done something very bad. Then, ten days later, the Defense Department leaked a story to the New York Times, which appeared on the front page of the New York Times and was repeated in every headline, front-page headline in Western Europe, which said it was a mistake, after all, that the Russian surveillance plane flew underneath the jumbo, never saw the hump, the characteristic shape, never saw the length, and really thought it was a spy plane.

Well, of course, that is really not possible, not after two and a half hours of surveillance. But that was the story, evidently, that the Administration wanted to end this episode with, and that was the story that remained in the minds of the Western public.

KING: We'll be right back with Claire Sterling, author of The Time of the Assassins.

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KING: Springfield, New Jersey. Hello.

MAN: I too was incensed by the man from Connecticut, because I don't know what difference it makes whether it's Pius XI or Pius XII, it doesn't justify killing John Paul II.

STERLING: Right.

52

MAN: But I wanted to ask you just a short question first. Did you get a piece of the action from NBC and Marvin Kalb, who seemed to take a lot of credit for what you did?

STERLING: Oh, I wouldn't say that. I was a consultant on Marvin Kalb's show.

MAN: Were you?

STERLING: Yes, I was.

MAN: Well...

KING: I don't think Kalb ever said that he was the first. The first, certainly, of the television journalists.

STERLING: That's right.

KING: Maybe the only television...

MAN: You know, I read the Reader's Digest article first, and then I saw the programs, and I felt that it was almost word-for-word.

STERLING: Well, we did work together after my piece was finished and went to press.

MAN: I'm not trying to knock Marvin Kalb. I don't mean it that way. I was hoping...

KING: Well, Claire was a consultant on it.

Did you get credit on the show?

STERLING: Yes, I did.

KING: All right.

MAN: This whole thing with Reagan and our country and what we should do. I don't know what we can do. Assuming that in six weeks it all comes out -- and I believe that it is true, that the Russians were behind it, and the Bulgarian connection and all like that -- what are we to do? What are we supposed to do?

STERLING: I don't know what we are supposed to do. But I think that it is just morally unacceptable to pretend it's not there.

MAN: I agree with that.

STERLING: And I just feel that we -- once this is established in a courtroom, we have got to stop trying to fudge it and wiggle out of it and say, "Well, there's no smoking gun. And maybe the Bulgarians did it, but that doesn't prove that the Russians did it. Or maybe this Bulgarian did it, but he wasn't authorized by his bosses." I mean that's just going to be a lot of wiggling, and I know we're going to get it. And I think at least that much we have a right to demand, that we put a stop to that and face the fact that this is what happened.

The minute -- by the time we do that, we will at least have let the Russians know, for once in these 15 years in which they have used all forms of surrogate warfare against Western targets, we will have let them know that we know -- that is, we, the public, know. And that is a deterrent, for what it's worth.

I don't mean that the Russians will then decide to go straight simply because the public is made aware, at last, of some of the darker side of their activities. But it certainly should be a dissuasive force, because they have been able until now to count on the continuing indulgence of Western governments in shielding them from the public view. And the one thing we can achieve is to have public knowledge, public awareness.

From that must come a whole rethinking of how we deal with it. I'm not a statesman. I can't pretend to give the answers to that. My feeling is -- the side I'm on is the side of the public being given to understand, so that they don't panic and overreact when things are suddenly thrown at them and they're not prepared for them.

MAN: I agree with that wholeheartedly.

And Reagan did make a statement at a press conference when one question was asked about this, and he said, "Well, we have to wait. That's in the hands of the Italian courts."

STERLING: Yes. Well, that...

MAN: I hope the newsman, after the Italian courts do make their findings public, that Mr. Reagan will then make a statement.

STERLING: Well, I would like to think -- I mean the correct position for the American government is to say, "We have to wait for the Italian courts."

MAN: I don't -- you know, I don't deny that.

STERLING: Right. If that was all we did, I would have no complaint. But what we did is we said we'd wait for the Italian courts, and then we had all these leaks to the press from

Washington saying, "But the Italians have no evidence. But Agca was crazy."

KING: In other words, we'd like to see the Italian courts free the Bulgarian and forget the whole thing.

STERLING: That's really what was meant.

KING: Now it's gone beyond that.

Gaithersburg, Maryland. Hello.

MAN: I was wondering what Miss Sterling thinks. Why would the press keep their head in the sand when it comes to information like...

KING: I still do not understand that. I can't buy it, that the whole press is not willing to break a story like this? I mean it's just beyond me.

STERLING: But the fact remains that the press -- not a single investigative team went out from any major newspaper or television network, apart from the one job by NBC, either in this country or in Britain or in Germany or in Italy, or anywhere else.

KING: Since we know it's not an international plot, why?

STERLING: Well, I think partly this can be explained starting in Vietnam. I think that the reporters who were formed in the Vietnam War saw a great deal of wickedness on the American side and did not look elsewhere to see any other kind. They were totally focused on what they saw coming from Washington and the White House.

MAN: Miss Sterling, one more question, please. There's a series in the Washington Post on terrorism.

STERLING: Yes, I've read it.

MAN: And tell me whether you think it's adequate or what you think of it.

STERLING: Well, I think, as far as it goes, it's very -- parts of it are very useful, indeed, in discussing the terrorist scene in the Middle East. Of course, that does not really cover the larger scene. And a good many problems involve state support for terrorism.

Also, it had a hooker at the end that rather stumped me. In the very last paragraph, quoting a State Department authority

who did not wish to be named, the article said -- this is the one on the 21st. The article said, "It looks now as if, in the Pope's case, this Bulgarian is really going to go to trial and that there is going to be evidence introduced against him. But, of course, this will not mean that the Russians were involved. It will only mean the Bulgarians were involved."

And I thought, "Well, here we go again." We have made an effort in these articles to begin to come closer to the reality. But when you get right down to it, we're getting these same statements from officials in this Administration saying, "Well, now hold it, boys. We can't really pin anything, we don't want to pin anything, really, on the Russians."

I continue to be baffled.

KING: My guest is the famed international journalist, investigative reporter Claire Sterling. He earlier book, The Terror Network, was a major bestseller. This promises the same. It is titled The Time of the Assassins: Anatomy of an Investigation. It is published by Holt Rinehart & Winston.

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KING: Miami. Hello.

MAN: I want to ask you about an Italian girl that was kidnapped in Rome.

STERLING: Yes. Emanuella Orlandi. Yes.

KING: What about her. What about her, sir?

MAN: Well, could you tell me what happened to her?

STERLING: Well, I'm afraid we all think she's dead. There has never been any evidence that the people who are making all the claims, demands for her swap with Agca in prison, that they had her. They never provided evidence they had her. I think she's dead.

KING: Houston, Texas. Hello.

MAN: First off, I'd like to commend Miss Sterling for the very brilliant and courageous work, which I think is clearly remarkable and it needs to get more dissemination, although it appears that the media is going to continue to try to suppress this type of information because it doesn't conform to their preconceived notions of what is acceptable.

KING: Wait a minute. Hold on. You're listening to the media and she's on. She's a nationwide tour. Don't lambaste

everybody, sir.

STERLING: Not everybody. I've had some problems, but I'm also getting some attention.

KING: Have you been on national television networks?

STERLING: Yes, I have been on several televisions.

MAN: Okay, Larry. To be precise, I do not mean all the media. Okay. I mean the great majority of the national print and broadcast media. That's what I mean, to be precise.

KING: All right.

MAN: Have you, Mrs. Sterling, considered investigating the death of Princess Grace, which was caused by, supposedly a stroke, despite the fact that she was an extremely healthy woman with no vices?

STERLING: No, I haven't.

KING: Why would terrorists want to kill Princess Grace?

MAN: Well, the Soviets like to eliminate prominent leaders of opposition societies, especially when they are people of outstanding character and reputation, Larry. They like to corrupt...

KING: Well, then, why not take the credit? Why do it as if she had a stroke, and then you don't get the credit? Who cares?

MAN: Well, they don't want those things to come out, Larry.

KING: In other words, you mean they just kill influential people? Well, maybe we killed Andropov.

STERLING: The whole purpose of terrorist activity is to frighten the audience, more than to punish the victim. That's the whole idea.

KING: That's right. If you're going to fake a stroke, who are you frightening? Right? There's no fright.

Tampa. Hello.

WOMAN: Miss Sterling, boy, I have great admiration for you. I've seen you in different shows on television.

STERLING: Yes. Thank you.

WOMAN: You have a lot of, you know, courage.

STERLING: Thank you.

WOMAN: I come from a country -- you know, I was under communism. So I know what it's all about.

And I understand President Reagan never wanted, you know, to talk about this issue. Because every time he talks about, you know, against the communists, they go after him, you know, like mad dogs. So he's probably trying to avoid the issue.

Could you tell me, do you think, you know, they're going to be able to prove, you know, that the Russians were involved in this?

STERLING: Well, the purpose of the Italian judge is not to prove that the Russians were involved. His job is to establish the guilt of specific individuals. Now, he has arrested one Bulgarian and ordered the arrest of two other Bulgarians who have fled to Sofia. And they will be tried in absentia when this Bulgarian is tried.

The most, the furthest he can go -- that's his job -- is to prove that these three Bulgarians were directly involved in working out the plot and in controlling Agca in the whole operation.

Beyond that, it is up to the public and the press and the media to draw conclusions that come from this. That is, if these three Bulgarians were working for the Bulgarian secret service, the rest is up to us. It's not up to the judge to prove that the Russians told the Bulgarians what to do. That is not his job. It's the job of an educated public to reach this conclusion.

WOMAN: ...this kind of investigative reporter, you're wonderful.

STERLING: Thank you.

WOMAN: I wish you the best.

STERLING: Thank you.

KING: Claire Sterling is our guest. And we go to San Diego.

MAN: Miss Sterling, I wish to dig into a little bit of history. Did the Romans, in your assessment, have any legal

manipulation with Pontius Pilate to assassinate Jesus, or is that the wrong term?

STERLING: Well, I really don't -- I can't claim to be that kind of historian.

KING: That would be some story.

STERLING: That really would be a story.

KING: Our guest is Claire Sterling. The book is The Time of the Assassins. Miss Sterling first broke this story with an article in the Reader's Digest. And this now, for the first time, is the total inside story that she has investigated almost from the start. The title, The Time of the Assassins, has a subtitle, and the subtitle is Anatomy of an Investigation.

Alexandria, Virginia. Hello.

MAN: Miss Sterling, I'm looking forward to reading your book.

STERLING: Good.

MAN: I wanted to ask one question. I'm sorry I missed the first part of your show, so if it came up, forgive me. Is there any evidence that the KGB was involved in the Kennedy assassination?

STERLING: Well, you know, I've never done a personal investigation of the Kennedy assassination. I'm just a newspaper reader. I have theories, but they're not anything that I would like to say publicly, 'cause they're just a newspaper reader's opinion.

KING: All right. As a veteran reporter and as someone who's been around, and knowing that that is 20 years old now.

STERLING: As a veteran reporter, I have to say that I really don't -- I find it impossible to believe that Oswald acted entirely on his own.

KING: What I was going to ask is, will we ever know the whole story?

STERLING: No, I don't think we'll ever know the whole story.

KING: Too many people dead, too much time.

STERLING: Too many people dead. Too many people dead.

To must time passed. Too much confusion. So, I don't think -- I think it's impossible now to find that whole story.

KING: What next, Claire? You go back to Italy when?

STERLING: Oh, I go back at the end of February. I'm waiting for the state prosectuor's ruling in Rome on the trial of this Bulgarian so that I can...

KING: Will you cover the trial?

STERLING: Oh, I'll absolutely cover the trial. I wouldn't miss that for anything. And then I guess I'll go on to other things, but I can't think of anything as exciting as this story for a reporter, I must say.

KING: Planning any more -- you don't write regularly for anyone, do you? I mean you're not under contract.

STERLING: No. I'm absolutely -- I'm not under contract. I'm absolutely free, no bosses. Do what I please, write what I please.

KING: Have you ever thought about -- I imagine it would be in demand, with the books -- a weekly column from Rome, etcetera?

STERLING: I used to do a weekly column, or a monthly column, twice a month, for the Herald-Tribune in Paris. Much of it was picked up by the Washington Post op-ed page here. But I think that was about Italy. It's too limiting for me now. I really like to move around, travel, see what I can find, and write about it when I find it.

KING: The book published in Europe, as well?

STERLING: Oh, yes. Yes. It's already come out in Britain. It's coming out in France next month, in Italy next month, and a series of other countries.

KING: Did The Terror Network sell well in Europe too?

STERLING: It sold in 20 countries. It sold very well.

KING: Thank you very much. Always great seeing you.