

Julian Assange Interview
with
David Horowitz and Slavoj Zizek

[JA Voiceover] I'm Julian Assange. Editor of Wikileaks. We have exposed the worlds secrets, attacked by the powerful. For 500 days now I have been detained without charge, but that hasn't stopped us. Today we are on a quest for revolutionary ideas that can change the world tomorrow.

00.33

Today, I am joined by an intellectual superstar, the Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Zizec. A former anti-communist dissident now turned self-described communist. Together we call David Horowitz, a former left-wing radical and Black-Panther ally, now a fiery right-wing Zionist. I want to know what they think about the future of Europe and the United States. The conversation becomes heated. Zizec has to be physically restrained. We shout, rant, and talk calmly about Nazis and Palestinians, Black Panthers and Israelis. About Obama, Romney and Stalin.

01.15

JA

David you describe yourself as a conservative and, Slavoj, you have described yourself as a communist. But, nonetheless both of you have had a picture of Stalin...

[phone rings - interruption]

01.48

JA

David, can you tell me, what do you mean by conservative, and why do you have a picture of Stalin?

DH

Well, the picture of Stalin that was on my office wall was of his death. And, I'm a conservative because the...Leftists, Utopians, have no idea of what human nature is, and therefore when they get the power they are faced with a big problem, which is that people don't go along with their programme and so they kill them and put them in gulags and er, they... the problem with the Utopian idea is the idea...

JA

Slavoj?

02.30

SZ

Ok first, why Stalin? Precisely to remind me - and here maybe we at some marginal level even agree - precisely to remind me of the risks / dangers of radical, political experiments, and so on.

DH

Um... I.. you know, I don't know what to make of what Slavoj is saying when he says that Stalin is there to remind him of the dangers of totalitarian, of a totalitarian strain in the Left, or the dangers of... that Utopian ideas can lead to... because he supports all the totalitarian movements in the world that I can see. Um, you're a supporter of the closest thing we have to Nazism - which was a Utopian idea - in the Middle East...er... you know, you support the Palestinians. I don't see anything to distinguish the Palestinians, who want to kill the Jews, uh, from the Nazis.

03:30

SZ

Listen, did you ever visit the West Bank? It's totally safe for Jews.

SZ

No, what I'm saying... I went there with my Jewish friends. It is safe and I can tell you what I... its... I am not saying - I must emphasise this, I find tasteless this idea - oh, what Nazis were doing to the Jews, the Jews are now doing to Palestinians, I agree this is tasteless, but sorry, Palestinians are there screwed up... pretty strongly.

04:01

DH

Yeah, they're screwed by Hamas, they're screwed by the PLO, they're screwed by Saudi Arabia...

SZ

No. No. No, here I disagree. Here I disagree, with the way Israelis...

DH

They are screwed by Egypt, of course, but not by the Jews.

SZ

... humiliated Arafat and so on, Israeli policy opened up the space for Hamas influence there.

JA

Yep.

04:17

SZ

Second thing....

DH

Oh, we are going to blame the Jews for Hamas, great.

SZ

Oh my God. You see, this is what I don't like about you. My god, whatever I say, I blame the Jews. You know why... No, no, no... You see what he wants? Seriously, look at the situation of women now in Iraq. Horrible as it sounds, it is worse than under...

04:37

DH

Slavoj - Who is responsible for this? It is the international.... listen...

SZ

United States with their... with their three points intervention....

DH

... It is the international Left and the Democratic Party in the United States that went to war for Saddam and against George Bush when he went into Iraq. We should have settled their hash, we should not have, you know... We should've occupied them for several years....

05:04

JA

David, I mean, this is an incredible statement though, it's....

DH

...We should've stuck it to Syria, then we should have stuck it to Iran, but Bush came under such attack from the Democrats... there's never been such a seditious movement by a major American party. They all supported the war, not all them, but the leadership supported the war...They voted in their majority.....in the Senate for the war and then they turned against it and they lied, saying that Bush lied. Bush couldn't have lied about the intelligence because Kerry and Rockefeller and Feinstein, all the Democrats sat on the intelligence committees. They had better intelligence than Julian.

05:44

JA

In the work that we do, the work that WikiLeaks does, we are pushing forwards the boundaries of a certain type of liberty that is we say protected by the First Amendment, that is, the liberty to reveal the truth about the world, to protect the historical record from interference and so on. I saw this incredible poster that the US army produced, which is a poster of Jefferson saying... with a big statue of Jefferson saying 'the cost of liberty is eternal vigilance' - that is the price of liberty - and it had giant interception systems, people with guns and the coastguard and people looking out over the sea with spy glasses. They had interpreted Jefferson's statement, which was that to stop a strong State we must be eternally vigilant, into 'we must have a strong State, an aggressive State, a surveillance State, in order to keep liberty',

06:46

DH

I think it's regrettable that the State is so big, that our defence has to be so big - it is absolutely regrettable, but it's a reality and... you know, I would like to go back to your thing about liberty and equality... Of course, if people are unequal, if people have unequal talents, unequal intelligence, then the only way to make them equal is to take away liberty. That is the only way you can do it, there's no other way. So of course there is an inherent conflict between liberty and equality,

07:26

SZ

Listen, I am not an idealist here in contrast to what you think. I am not for total freedom, everything should be made public, but I think this - WikiLeaks are not doing this. All I am saying is, when... the way great powers structure, a certain level of hypocrisy is reached, then selectively, when simply - how should I put it? - er, of course we are always called to trust the state power in the sense of sorry, we have to do certain things discreetly, better that you don't know about it - and I agree, we have to play this game. I am not a stupid... and... but when obviously this trust is misused, things like WikiLeaks can play a very positive role. Sorry, I don't hear any danger of...

08:20

JA

Slavoj, if the revolution... if we had a new revolutionary government, and Wikileaks managed to get hold of the internal discussions of that government and we were going to publish it...

SZ

I will answer your question... Now, ...

JA

Would I be... would I be against the wall?

08:37

SZ

You would agree with me. I cannot resist a joke here. You know what? It is too difficult for me to answer this question now when I will part of this revolutionary government. I will send you my answer to your gulag cell in Siberia [laughs]

JA

Quite possibly.

DH

The idea is... It has got to be ordered liberty. It can't be...

SZ

But every liberty is ordered in some sense.

08:59

JA

David, on the front of Guantanamo Bay the slogan there is 'honour bound to defend freedom'. In Iraq there is a prison camp, Camp Liberty. These to me seem to be abuses of the word freedom and I want to know from you, do you really think this tremendous state that is growing up in the United States, is that entirely necessary to combat the rival... this competition that the United States has from China, from Europe, or is this now a self-feeding system?

09:43

DH

You know, it's... People are the problem, people are the problem. They're greedy, they lie, they're deceitful, they manipulate... um, you know, they're egocentric. We understand that, and people in government are just the same dangerous people with more power, so that's why we have the checks and balances and I'm... I'm all for, you know, more scrutiny and this and that. However, we live in a context. United States and Israel are under attack from the international Left, which is very powerful, from all these dictators in South America that Slavoj seems to get along with... um, from the Islamo-fascists, er, and we live in an age where they have nuclear weapons and chemical and biological. I think there is going to be a catastrophe that will dwarf everything that happened in the 20th century in the 21st because of this.

10:41

JA

Don't you see the creation of an enormous secretive bureaucracy, doing each other favours, involved in rotating door contracts etc. Don't you see that perhaps can be similar to what occurred in the Soviet Union, and that we need a strong Soviet Union...?

11:00

DH

It can. It can if we eliminate the competition, but the fact of it... Look, you've got a Leftist in the White House, a guy that was brought up and trained by communists, whose whole political career was in the communist Left. You have these competitions, you know, you can't have what you think of this monolith, you know the secret that controls everything. You have, if you prefer think of it as many

mafias, and they are all at each other's throats and that's what keeps us somewhat safe.

11:33

SZ

Very briefly, you know... First, let me state something without any anti-Americanism....

DH

The problem is countries like Russia where you can shut down the opposition...

JA

David... David...

SZ

Yeah, I know, Russia. You mean Putin, I know whom you mean - Russia, Putin. Isn't this the guy whom when he met Bush, Bush said, you remember, 'I looked into Putin's eyes and I knew I can trust that guy'. But this is just a footnote. What I'm saying is that look, look...

12:00

DH

That is one of the stupidest things that Bush said, and I thought it was at the time.

12:04

SZ

Ok, so let me go on. So, listen, I'm... unfortunately....

DH

You're showing this on Russian TV?

SZ

First I must say you use communist... you know that communists like to blur the true opposition to them - democracy - you must know this. Communists like to call everyone who opposes them fascists. If you did a modest democratic... 'oh, a fascist counter-revolution'. What I'm afraid is that you use the word 'communist' in a slightly similar way. Whoever is a little bit critical of American conservative establishment, he is a communist. Then, of course, Obama is a communist...they're all communi...

12:44

DH

Stop! You're not referring... you are not referring to Barack Obama? Because....

SZ

Yeah. In what meaningful sense of the word he is a communist...?

DH

Then you have no idea of Barack Obama's background, who he actually is, if you say that. Because this is not just about my own criticism.

13:01

SZ

Well, I don't care about backgrounds. Stalin's background was a religious poet who wrote poems, I have some of them as we both know. Let me go briefly on. Er, but don't you think that nonetheless, I think, and this is a tragedy, it is not even good thing.

DH

And you think the show trials had nothing to do with the inquisition, huh?

SZ

But don't you think that nonetheless, for me, the great failure of Bush presidency was that with his non-... I wouldn't use the word aggressive... fuck it, sometimes you need it - non- intelligent politics, that he... the result of his decade was that the United States effectively came close to losing the position of universal world

power, under Bush. You, United States, lost effectively control over Latin America and so on and so on. And I think, and this is not - I don't say it with some Leftist-gee - oh oh - finally we got United States, but I think we are entering - I even tend to agree with you - a very dangerous, multi-centre world. All these dreams that America will somehow regain control are, for me, over and again, I'm not saying this with any, you know what I mean, of this Left...

14:19

DH

Very dangerous - I agree. The natural state of mankind is war...

SZ

It is a dangerous world, I agree. Point two: You know, Europe is not so bad. Listen, let's face it, and for this many Leftists will accuse me of Eurocentricism or whatever, European welfare state dream, more than - if you permit me this European love - more than, I think, even United States' dream - wasn't this maybe the unique period in human history after WWII, the welfare state, where so many people live in such safety... er, freedom, and so on. Don't make too much fun of Europe. It was a great thing as far as it lasted.

15:03

DH

Oh, it was disastrous period. Europe is a cultural theme park, it's insignificant. That's what happened. That is what your welfare state did. It just took Europe out of the picture.

15:16

JA

I have had personal experience with the socialist dream paradise of Sweden and I can tell you it is nothing like the advertising.

SZ

But it wasn't 20/30 years ago. I still insist on this. Something has broken there...

DH

Yeah, the Swedes have no morals.

15:32

JA

David, the striving for Utopia - the striving towards a better position - even if that position is liberty, it is more liberty, that is a striving, a direction that people wish to have. They can measure contemporary events by the direction of their hopes and ideals. Have we now abandoned that to religion? Because religion is there waiting in the gap to seize Utopian visions.

15:59

DH

People can't live with the sense - most people can't live with the sense - that their lives are meaningless, that they are just, you know, born and die and are forgotten. So, if you are a religious person, then there is a divinity who is going to make... sort it out in the afterlife, their redemption in the next life. If you are not religious, you want a redemption in this life. That is what the Left is about - it is a religious movement, and it's not an accident that all these isms - these Utopianisms, whether it's communism or fascism or Nazism...

16:33

SZ

Or liberalism.

DH

Or what?

SZ

Or liberalism. It's also a Utopia.

16:40

DH

People have to want to make things better. It may take a lot of ambition to make a modest change, so you know, I'm trying to think of one that would fit what you want to do. What you want to do, what you do is a radical means that can have very destructive consequences.

SZ

But there are moments when you have to be...look...when you have Hitler and Holocaust...

[talking over each other]

DH

... That's not the way to do it.

SZ

... But when you have, for example, Hitler and Holocaust, you don't say 'oh, let's try to be friendly with that Nazi guy there', do it modestly... you have to...

DH

Oh, you are absolutely right.

17:14

SZ

There are moments when you have to be aggressive, I hope we agree, we agree on this. And, about all that Utopia stuff, for me, my position is a modest one. I see, as we all do, that we are approaching potential catastrophes, and all I'm saying is we should fully, consciously confront these catastrophes - no easy Utopian bullshitting, communist or liberal or whatsoever.

DH

Let me try to tie up these discussions.

SZ

He wants to be General Secretary - Stalin, who at the end made a résumé. He still is a communist! He's a communist here.

17:52

DH

I forgot what I was going to say. War is the natural... war is the natural condition of mankind. There has always been wars, right, from the beginning, ok, and many of them. Peace occurs only when there is a concert of powers, or a single power, that can intimidate would-be aggressors. Now I ask you, who would you like that power to be, other than the United States?

SZ

I don't know, but United States is no longer even the candidate for me.

DH

And the United States... Well, that's why we are facing such catastrophe, but you're contributing to it by encouraging Leftists.

19:32

JA

Isn't the way to keep the State accountable is to have a free market in states?

SZ

You mean, different political options...

JA

...different political options, and then people who don't like the conditions in one state can move to another state. They can move their businesses, they can move their assets, they can move their families.

18:45

DH

The United States is not equipped... as we showed in Iraq. We can't even occupy a country. We can barely conduct a four-day war, that was a six-week one. America is...it's a country where people are so... there is so much opportunity... People are so busy having fun... er... I don't want to go to war, Americans don't want to go to war.

19:12

JA

America has to be lied into war.

DH

No, actually it was Tony Blair that did that.

United States is crippled - in part because its Commander in Chief is a Leftist

19:28

SZ

It is here that I respectfully disagree and I am serious. If the United States still have a certain attraction and so on to the world, I am sorry to inform you, it is because of people like Obama who can succeed there.

JA

Four days into Obama's administration he authorised his first drone strike in Pakistan. Who do you think Obama really is?

19:49

DH

When he came into office, and actually when he was running, he knew that his weak flank was the military so he picked Pakistan. He has killed more civilians and the Left lets him get away with it, because the Left is a religious force, it has nothing to do with principle. The Left doesn't care about, er, Asians being, you know, being killed by drones, you know...

[JA INTERRUPTS]

JA

but what does he want to do?

DH

... out in the streets protesting what Obama is doing in Pakistan and Afghanistan? You know, it's beyond... I don't have any respect for Leftists any more because I don't think they're principled.

20:32

SZ

You see, here is our difference. We are both critical towards Obama. You are critical towards him.

[DH talking over SZ]

SZ

You are critical towards Obama because you think he is a communist, Leftist. I am critical towards Obama because, quite on the contrary, I think that he is not a secret closet Leftist. He is not. He pretends to be a Leftist, he is not, that's the problem.

20:55

DH

You don't know what you are talking about, Slavoj.

SZ

Ok, who knows...?

DH

You know, I mean, I've listened to Tariq Ali... I mean, he hates what Obama's doing but that... just because you are a Leftist to the left of him...

SZ

These are your old Leftist friends, but Tariq Ali is not my friend.

21:10

SZ

I don't buy this Democratic Left bullshit of, you know, local grassroots democracy blah blah blah. All I'm saying is that the problem that gave rise to communism is still here with us. I'm afraid what happens if we don't find a solution.

DH

No, no it isn't. Yeah. The problems are going to be here forever.

SZ

Yeah but, you know, there are problems and problems.

DH

That's the realistic view. Because the solution that we exchange them for...

21:37

JA

Ok, let's... Gentlemen, gentlemen, we have a lot of ground to....

SZ

That's the point...

JA

[laughing] We have a lot of ground to ...

SZ

We are two fanatics and he's a liberal trying to... we should maybe, old-school totalitarians, come together to get rid of this liberal here.

21:54

JA

We have a lot of ground to cover and I do want to cover it, ok. So, David you were in the Black Panthers and you stayed in the Black Panthers post-Hughie...

DH

No, I was never a member. I raised money for it.

22:09

JA

You helped them. You were involved in their activities and you supported them, er...

DH

Yes. Yes.

22:15

SZ

You were like those bankers who helped Hitler... you know, if I may use that metaphor.

22:20

JA

...and you bought in a bookkeeper from the then Ramparts magazine, which you were editing - Betty Van Patter - and I just want to draw your attention to a letter

that was sent to you in a ... erm, 'In my mind you were the person responsible for Betty's death, sending her in to order the Panther's books at this particular time was tantamount to dressing her in a Ku Klux Klan white sheet and sending her up the..."

DH

Julian, this isn't... this isn't... That was just a slanderous letter by a bitter guy, you know, who actually was involved in the Panthers before I was and never said anything to me.

The Left will defend the cause and will sacrifice any individual, in this case it was me.

23:12

JA

David, do you think this tragedy... I mean, you were involved in a murder - I mean, a murder was around you. This is something of great personal importance to you and it must have affected your outlook on the world, but do you think that you... Did this open your eyes to the reality, or rather it coloured your perceptions

23:36

DH

Well I was very aware of that. So, Betty was killed in... or her body was discovered in February 1975, um, I didn't do anything politically after that for the next... er, nine years. I voted for Reagan in 1984 and that is when I emerged as a conservative. Of course, I came under tremendous attack from the Left, but I hadn't said anything... .. I was going to say I hadn't said anything neg... I hadn't done any political activity attacking the Left in all those nine years, because I was very aware that I was... I was... you know, I felt I had been betrayed by the movement, I felt guilty at what I had supported, er, so I waited till I was relatively cool. You know, it's in your character if you're passionate or not, but err...

24:45

JA

David, you started writing biographies after Betty Van Patter's death - into Rockefellers and other big American families...

DH

That's right, right...

JA

I mean, when you started writing all those biographies did you interview members of those well-connected families?

DH

Yes.

JA

you moved into a new social orbit as a result of your biography...

25:06

DH

No, no, no. I really remained pretty much the same all my life. I didn't move into any new orbits... I mean, I did. I had to. I lost nearly every friend that I ever had as a Leftist, and that was at mid-life, so I reconstituted my friendships. I think that's a big factor that keeps people in the Left is that they know if they cross the line they are going to lose all their friends...

[PHONE INTERRUPTS AGAIN]

25:53

SZ

No problem... I am for communism with a human face where you will be allowed to do this... [laughs]

SZ

No, seriously - just to finish -

DH

Not to put down activism or what you do at all. I have to go to universities with bodyguards because of the fascist Left in this country.

JA

I have assassination threats all over...

SZ

I am the only guy in this room who was physically assaulted by right-wingers to be a communist, and by communists to be a traitor to nationalism...

DH

Come on, come on.

SZ

No, no, I'm not kidding.

26:25

JA

David, who will you be voting for in the upcoming election?

DH

Well, we don't have a candidate yet, but if you want...

JA

Well, I mean amongst the candidates.

DH

I think Romney has the best chance to beat this guy.

JA

To beat Obama?

DH

Yeah, I'm not happy with anybody.

26:42

SZ

I agree here with you. It is very tragic and really maybe even bad in the long term for the vitality of the United States that Republican Party, it looks to me like this, simply wasn't able to produce a candidate which would have enough drawing force and so on.

DH

I agree.

SZ

It's very sad. I don't, I am not happy about this.

DH

I agree. It's too BAD.

27:06

JA

Thank you, David Horowitz.

SZ

Sorry.

he's a secret...he is even worse than a communist, he's a socialist with a human face, this is the lowest form of existence.

DH

I don't know anything about the....

SZ:

Socialism with a human face is the lowest form, it's like frogs crawling there.

27:25

JA

Ok, thank you gentlemen. Bye, bye...

27:30

SZ

Ok, my God, let's... but, you know, you have to do a little bit of Stalinist work. This was madness.

END MUSIC/CREDITS

27:50

SZ

My idea is they put you on the plane. Fuck it. The unions should say we will not fly if you are... or something like this...you know. I think it's time to raise the stakes.