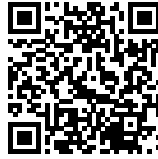




OUR INTERVIEW WITH SEYMOUR HERSH

Posted on April 1, 2023 by Seymour Hersh



Recently, Patrik Baab had the occasion to speak with award-winning investigative journalist and writer, Seymour Hersh. We are so very pleased to bring you this interview. [The views expressed remain those of Mr. Hersh and do not necessarily reflect those of the *Postill*].

Patrik Baab (PB): Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed. In your Nord Stream story, you named Mr. Biden as the official who ordered the destruction, but now you're facing a massive cover up. What's behind that? *The New York Times* and German publication [*Die Zeit*] published the same story about a sailing yacht and named the Ukrainian crew as being completely independent from governments. Can this be?

Seymour Hersh (SH): I really don't know how, but if I were either at *The New York Times* or *Die Zeit* I would wonder why two entities 3000-3500 miles away across an ocean had the same idea that Ukrainians did it. I don't quite understand why. I did ask one of the reporters: if there were traces of dynamite on the yacht, why didn't they try and find out what happened to the one mine? It's a mine, not really a bomb. It's a mine with the plastic to blow it up, but it's a mining device on the water—so why didn't they try and find it? And he said, well, because we did. The Swedes and the Danes were there within days. But the Americans had already come and taken the unexploded bomb way and I said, 'Why do you think they did that?' And he said, "You know how Americans are."

They like to be first. What can I do with that? There's another answer for why they did it. Now everybody's chasing a piece of pipe that absolutely has nothing to do with anything. And they write stories and stories about that and not about the elephant in the room. The story I wrote, it's not the way I would run a newspaper. But maybe that's why I'm not editor of a newspaper or ever wanted to be. So, the answer to your question is, you're asking the wrong person about that question. All I could do is offer speculation. And you have the same speculation I do. I'm sure it's the same reason you can sell that story of a yacht. I don't want to ruin anybody's day, but it's a 49-foot yacht. And let's say it could go out into the Baltic Sea. It could find a pipeline and secondly, it could drop an anchor 260-feet to the bottom so they could secure the boat so divers could dive off from the back end of a boat. You can't get a ladder on it because that's where the engines are. And there's other stuff on the yacht. How do you get past that?

If a yacht had anchors that go 260-feet, it would probably sink, or at least one side would be in the water. But anyway, so there you are. I can't answer anybody not trying to deal with reality—they are so eager to have a counter story, but this is part of the business. But for each newspaper not to say, how does the other guy get this? And then wonder why I accept the reporter in Germany, who's a very decent guy, who did come and see me to say that he never talked to the intelligence community. And I said, I changed my story to indicate that he did not talk to the intelligence community. And *The New York Times* people only talk to people who had access to the intelligence community. But that doesn't change the fact that something happened that clearly has something to do with the American intelligence community on both sides of the ocean. But I can't explain why either newspaper, they are two wonderful newspapers, and the reporters in question are perfectly competent. I mean, I know one of them well. Excellent reporter in Germany. I've known him for years.

I don't know why they can't sit back and say, well, maybe we should do some more reporting on this. But no, it's not going to happen.

PB: Probably the reason is that the press is not part of the investigation. They are part of the cover-up.

SH: Well, but that's making an implication that I don't think exists. I don't think they have any notion they're part of a cover-up. That's the point. I don't think the whole purpose of having a good intelligence service like you guys certainly do, and you know how closely they work with us. If you don't, you probably can guess. We're allies, particularly after 9/11, strong allies. But I don't think they're part of the cover-up in the sense that they know they are. There's something in the world called critical thinking. And I just don't know why we don't have more critical thinking on this story than we've had so far.

PB: In Germany the Russians were lately blamed for the explosion. Is this possible? Would they destroy their own pipeline?

SH: Well, you have the same answer I do, which is, of course not. First of all, Mr. Putin had already stopped Nord Stream I, which, as you know, has been going since 2011, and making Germany industry great, combine the largest chemical company in the world, BASF, and the great automobile makers. And you're making Germany warm and wealthy and able to also share the wealth with the rest of Europe. Much of the gas they were getting from North Stream I was far more than they needed.

And by the way, Nord Stream II, the one that was blown up, had so much gas in it, and it had just been built and been approved. And then your Chancellor sanctioned it, I think obviously at the request of America a year and a half ago. So, it was less filled, with 750 miles of methane gas, which is why there was such an explosion.

I had a story which, when they eventually triggered the mines, they had to do with a low frequency sonar because anything high frequency gets burned up in the water. Low frequency can go, and it's just a series of knocks. It's not a complicated signal— anyway, the open-source intelligence people, who only see signals not photographs, in the beginning, all made it clear that there was no such airplane. But it didn't explain why something blew up, because all you have to do is turn off the transponder, the IFF (Identification Friend or Foe System).

When you can turn it off, nobody can see you. It's a safety mechanism. And certainly, I assure you, the people running the mission for the American president out of Norway, as I wrote earlier, knew all about how to put all the signals they wanted anywhere, and they went away in the Baltic Sea. I joke they could have recreated the Japanese armada sailing towards Pearl Harbor in 1941 to start the war right there.

I spent three months on that story. It wasn't something I did yesterday. And the fact that they didn't use sources—you're talking to a man who's been doing stories against the intelligence community and other things, let's see, for 50 years. I think in seven or eight years I worked at *The New York Times*, I must have written 800 or so stories, maybe five, had a source named. Most of them were just unnamed, of course, and the two stories in *The New York Times* had no named sources either.

So that's the irony of all of this. But you're asking the right sort of metaphysical questions about what is going on here. I can't answer what is going on here. There's some collective panic in the West.

PB: It's very interesting to me that the cover-up started a few days after a visit of German chancellor Olaf Scholz in Washington in early March. Do you find this interesting?

SH: The cover-up started well before Scholz's visit—it started right away. The bombs went off in late September of last year, and the sanctioning well before the war began in February. This all started in December of 2021 with the meetings I wrote about in that first article; started in the White House or in

the building next to the Executive Office Building. They all started these secret meetings looking for options to give the President to maybe get Putin to step down. And the one that came out was the bombing of the pipelines. And President Biden did say that in February 19, 2020, about 13-14 months ago, before the war with Scholz there. And at that point, I was asked immediately, did he know? I don't know what he knew.

I don't know whether the President told Scholz, but I know at that conversation that time, he was there, and he was asked afterwards what he thought, and he was complimentary. He said, I'm with the Americans. He didn't say, "I hope, of course, the pipeline will not be blown up." That's for sure. He didn't say anything like that, and he said nothing else.

And, yes, you're right. A month ago, he did come and visit the president; a very strange visit. He flew over on the chancellor's plane with no press—that's unusual. Also, he had no public events except a 10-minute event with President Biden, where they both told each other how wonderful they were, no questions asked, and then a private 80-minutes meeting. He was treated like somebody who just walked. He's the German Chancellor. He had no news conference with the president, no dinner. He just slunk in and slunk out. You and your guys in Germany need to worry about him. But at that point you could say, if he didn't know, he has certainly been a collaborator in the cover-up.

You can't ask me to guess what was is in his mind. I have no idea. But he certainly knew what the President wanted, even though I have no idea what they talked about privately. I wrote a story the other day for my Substack subscribers. I wouldn't go to the newspapers with this because I just know the American newspapers don't want me to write stories. The liberal ones are adverse. They're so frightened of another Trump coming in, another Republican lunatic, that they can't look at Biden objectively. That's my view. But I'll tell you when I do my reporting. Now, I've been around a long time. I've hired one of the best editors I work with here in Washington, New York, and also in the *London Review*. And I have a fact checker. *The New Yorker* had superb fact checkers. Every line was checked. I hired the very best fact checker that worked with me ten years ago when I worked at *The New Yorker*.

But that's a good standard. The media in America has gone haywire. Trump did that. You're either for Fox News or you're against Fox News. So, it's just irrational. What can I tell you?

PB: Could you imagine that German chancellor was blackmailed by US. Secret Services?

SH: You are very metaphysical. I don't imagine anything; that's my life. No, I think if anything, I don't think he's a dupe. I think at this point we have to assume that he's aware what happened or certainly has a suspicion. And he's certainly going along now with the American story that we don't know anything.

I've been in Washington a long time, and Joe Biden was somebody who had a lot of experience. He's the reason we have Clarence Thomas; he was chairman of the Judiciary Committee and ignored the complaints made against him. He also supported his chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in the Senate. These are big jobs. You don't get this far by necessarily being wonderful. You get there by staying and being reelected. You outlive others and you get seniority. And he was one of those people who supported the American decision to respond to a Sunni extreme position that Osama bin Laden took: Sunni fanaticism.

We responded to a Sunni attack by bombing and attacking Iraq, which was run by an awful man, Saddam Hussein, who happened to also be as hostile to Sunni radicalisms as we were. And then we went and attacked Syria, under Bashar Assad, who also was someone who had no use for Sunni radicalism. So, you can't explain this is a pattern. I'm sorry that Joe Biden and his immediate team fits so nicely into—we all hate Communism and we all hate Putin. We all hate Xi and we all hate, hate, hate, hate. We hate, hate, hate. That's what we get out of America these days. We hate this and hate this. But he was putting pressure on Germany, which, as you know, since World War II has been not interested in rearming.

As much as I have had problems with German leaders, Willy Brandt in particular, the whole idea of German politics towards the East was a fantastic idea. We know we bombed you and did what German armies do, but now we're going to be good allies. We're going to be trading partners. We're going to build ourselves up as an industrial base, and we're going to prove to you we can be in NATO and we can join Western Europe, and the French can maybe pull back on their hatred of us. And he did that. Egon Bahr, I remember, used to come to Washington. I was a reporter then, I think, with *The New York Times*. I used to meet with him. There was really good stuff done with Kissinger, too. As awful and as immoral as he was, the whole rebuilding of Europe and putting Germany back in the picture was done very brilliantly in the 1970s and 1980s. And this guy now, my president is so fearful that the independence Germany has had and NATO with the beginning of indifference towards our commitment to the war in Iraq. I think by the time in late September, it was clear, the best America was going to get in that war with Zelensky and the corruption at the top of the military in his office, too, was

going to be a stalemate. And we've now put \$120 Billion into it in a time of inflation.

And look at you guys. Your inflation is going out of sight. It won't get better. So, what if he told you he killed your pipeline because he was so afraid, as America has been for five generations of Russian gas and oil becoming a weapon, a political weapon in Europe for Russia. That's been the underlying fear. Biden has given speeches about that when he was Vice-President. Jack Kennedy gave speeches about it. I've also written about this. And so the position we had is, well, maybe Germany and even NATO might not go all the way with us in the next six months as this war goes on and costs more money and doesn't go anywhere. So, I'm not going to give them a chance to do that, to walk away, because I'm going to take away their gas, I'm going to blow up their pipeline. And why Germany to this point is still going along. You got through the winter because it was mild and you had reserves; but look out, it's going to be a very bad next year for your industry. You could buy alternative gas, but there was nothing like the sweet methane gas you got from Russia.

And you don't have as much. It doesn't come as cheaply. You're going to end up with liquefied natural gas. You're going to look at renewables a little bit. Your country, BASF, is looking into China, so I understand, talking to them about maybe moving some facilities there where they can be assured of gas. And you have bakeries shutting down—six, eight, if they have a dozen ovens shutting down half of them or eight of them because they don't have enough gas to produce the bread that they could sell. It's going to be bad and it's going to fall on Biden, and I think it's going to be a disaster for him politically by the middle of this year. So, I'm content to wait. Why aren't you?

PB: Was there a disruption in the security apparatus in America between the neocons around Biden and the CIA?

SH: Well, watch this space, as they say. I'm writing more about it right now. Not so much about that specific point, but there's clearly a distinction between what some of the people in the intelligence community think and what the White House does. I don't think anybody's in support of the constant White House screaming at Russia and China and constantly exaggerating what's going on in the war, which is there's an extreme difference of opinion between the President and the Foreign Secretary, Tony Blinken. I mean, it's the first time we've had an American Foreign Secretary of State refusing to meet with his Chinese counterpart because of a balloon. Tell me about that. What does that mean, a balloon? You're not going to go because of a balloon that's been flying around forever? Come on. Come on. I'm an American. I love my country as much as anybody. I've had every reason to. Nobody

bothers me. I do my job, and I just don't know why others in the press... I guess it's because I only can think of it. It has to be some sort of political thing because of what the horrors we all went through with Trump.

There's the irrational Trump. I think nobody wants that again. And so, Biden becomes the only one that can hold. I don't understand. I don't understand why the American Senate, which was so critical when I wrote about the Vietnam War critically, I wrote about the My Lai massacre 50 years ago. And nobody believed it then. So, the idea that the stories I write aren't believed is not a new idea for me. I've been there before. It'll all come out.

Look, it happened. What I said happened did happen, and they can't get off it. The White House can commission a new study tomorrow that will come out in two weeks and say we've looked at the problem, and we and certain elements of the CIA say that we don't know what happened; but no sign that America did it. I'm sure that's going to be the next lie coming. Why not? But why not? But you're not going to tell me Putin did that. I've read Putin's speeches. I don't agree with him. You can never support a man who chose war when there were other options. I know he was squeezed, but it was the bloodiest war in Europe since World War II. And we had the Balkans and we had Chechnya but this is nothing like what's going on in the Ukraine. And Russia and Ukraine. It goes back to so many generations. But in the 1930s, remember, harvests were bad, there was starvation, and we took all of the weeds from the Ukraine and brought it into Mother Russia. Ukrainians died in 1932 while the Russians stood by, taking their food away from them. But anyway, that's another story.

PB: Who was directly involved in the planning team for destroying the pipeline?

SH: Oh, come on, come on. Human beings. How's that? Is that a good enough answer? No. I could just tell you on general principles, and I have been as I say, I've been writing about this stuff for a long time. In many ways. No, the way you do something like this is as few people as possible know, and nobody in the White House. You have a head of the CIA, and he may know whatever you want to tell him. And if he's smart, he doesn't want to know much; but you tell him the minimum. But he's the one that says the President says, yes, go. The president says, no, don't go. But how they do it is never committed. You can never trust the leadership to write a memoir and start revealing secrets. The professionals that do this stuff, it's the very minimum. The big point that everybody misses is Norway was very important. It was Norwegian ships, Norwegian training, Norwegian involvement. We don't know the Baltic Sea. And you're suddenly going to have a bunch of divers jumping around the Baltic Sea where there's been no

oil or gas below the surface, ever. What? And the Russians certainly have surveillance.

There's underwater surveillance, submarines. Everybody watches the Baltic Sea because it's so close to the good and the bad in the world, the dirty commies and the rest of us. And so, it's a huge sea. People forget that pipeline, that the two pipelines—one blown up and one stopped—all blown up by now was actually 760 miles long. One straight pipeline from Russia, from right near Leningrad or St. Petersburg now, from that corner of Russia, all the way down into Germany; an amazing production. It must have cost hundreds of millions, if not billions, to build, and to be all blown away. And the law on this is very interesting. I did a lot of work on the law of the sea because there were treaties signed by America and the world in the 1980s, 1984, when the first telegraph lines were made.

And we also signed both treaties. Since then, there's no specific law saying if an oil pipeline underwater was cut, it's a criminal act. I mean, it's clear if a case ever arose, a court would find it to be criminal. But there's no law. Although, beginning with coaxial cables and the TV cables and the underground cables, we now run, for everything. A lot of stuff is in the air now, too; but 30 years ago, they were cables with communication devices. I'm sure the early 19th century laws applied; but now the one thing that's sure, if it is found that the United States did it, they're liable to the companies. Gazprom and another group. One of the pipelines is owned by a consortium that involves the Russian oligarchs—51% oligarchs and 49% Western Europe companies that supply natural gas. I don't know what the makeup of the second pipeline is, but we're talking about potential billions in damages and lawsuits. And then you also have the question of whether or not it's a violation of international law. All those issues are to be decided. And so, I can imagine that wouldn't be something this White House wants to deal with, particularly when Biden wants to run again in 2024.

PB: Will it destroy the German American relationship?

SH: I don't think it will. It clearly has it poisoned it on an official basis. And so far, there's no sign that the average German is convinced that the average American is against them, because that's absolutely not so. But it does cause diplomatic issues for NATO, too. I mean, NATO countries. This cost and this inflation that you're now having in Germany is not going to get better. And the lack of gas, I don't know Western Europe, Germany in particular, but air conditioning is widespread, but not as widespread here. But all of the energy for air conditioning, all of the energy to produce heat, largely the turbines are charged by natural gas because you had it, so you didn't use coal. Gas was cleaner. Some people in France I know, friends, that are paying five times as much for electricity because it's powered by

turbines powered by natural gas, and the gas is costing more. Same in Italy. With natural gas, it's three, four times more expensive. And so, they're talking now in France of putting back two nuclear energy plants into business, which were shut down because of all the problems there are with not so much the mechanics of a nuclear plant, but the people who run it.

They just can't seem to get it straight. What happened in Chernobyl? What happened in Three Mile Island in America? So, I think we're going to start going back to, more the issue is, will West Germany go back to more renewables? The Chinese are way ahead of us on that, and that may happen; but that would be a good sign. We go back into renewables with more enthusiasm. But still, to get it done in time to mitigate the cost of not having the gas you did is not going to happen.

In Germany we have how many American troops there right now? We've got what, dozens of bases still, don't we? In Germany? It's not an occupation. I don't think we're going to lose person to person friendship and economic relationships. But politically, I don't know.

I don't do politics. I've never gone and testified to Congress. I just don't do it. I'm talking to you in a political way because you're asking me the questions. But if you're asking different questions, I talk to you, too, about it. But you're asking the kind of questions that the newspapers should be asking but they're not.

PB: Why did the United States involve Norway? Was this a kind of plausible deniability?

SH: No. Norway has been our pet. They've been our little pet dog. Norwegian secret services were involved with us in operations in North Vietnam before the war was declared. Norway has always been terrific. Very competent seamen. They have the best PT (Patrol Torpedo) boats in the world. They have the most advanced PT boats after World War II and they were used by us, by the American CIA and the American Seals to run covert operations in North Vietnam. So, we've had a long relationship. But don't forget it's a border that's 1400 miles from Oslo all the way to the North Pole where they meet Russia. And we have put probably hundreds of millions into Norway—it's more in the last decade. We've built an amazing synthetic aperture radar—the most advanced radar that can monitor up and near the Arctic Circle.

There's Kola Peninsula on the other side of it about 220 miles as the bird flies where there is one of the

largest Russian missile sites. And we monitor that with the radar. There was a shutdown of a Norwegian submarine base that was used in World War II. We rebuilt it, way up north. This is way up north in Norway. Sweden is very close to the border there. And we built a new submarine-base, state of the art. There's a major Norwegian air base and navy base we've also put money into and have share facilities with. So, they've become our boys, our pets. And they were very important. We couldn't have done this operation without them.

It was the Norwegian ships that did drop the miners off. And so, it's just a relationship that's very secure and nobody talks about it. Most of the exercising was done near Norway in the waterways of the Baltic narrow area where there's a major island, and at various times the pipelines were in a twelve miles limit of waters of both Denmark and Sweden. And I think both of those countries have not been very straightforward about what they know, and what they knew all along. I've written about it because I don't have a piece of paper saying that. But two and two usually is four. Even if nobody counts.

If nobody's counting, it's nothing. There's all this clown game going about investigating the bottom of the sea because of a rusty pipe. I mean, it's all very silly.

PB: The Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre visited the United States in mid-September 2022 and he met the Secretary of the Navy, Carlos del Toro and the speaker of the White House (at the time), Nancy Pelosi.

SH: None of those; Nancy Pelosi, the speaker, they don't know about these missions. They wouldn't know about a secret mission, even if it was going then, which I don't think it was that early in 2022. Maybe it was. I don't know. No, of course not. No, the circle is very small. No, you would tell Congress? Are you kidding?

I think the reason that it was so secretive is that so few people knew. That's the only way you can run an operation. You know how many divers we used for four pipelines? Two. Two very highly skilled American Navy divers. Not from the Seals, not from Special Forces. Because if you use Special Forces, you have to make a different kind of reporting. You have to report it up to Congress. But the Navy, even if the CIA is involved and they bring in the Navy, you don't have to do that. Just a military mission. Congress doesn't have to know about it. And they don't want to tell Congress anyway, anything. No, it's very few people. The Norwegians had the boats and they had the expertise.

They knew the bottom of the sea. They knew the currents. The Baltic empties every year; there's a tremendous flow in and out. It's pretty corrupted now because of pollution. It used to be great cod fishing.

PB: So, the Americans used the Norwegian P8-A Poseidon to verify the explosion after the attack.

SH: No, they didn't have to verify anything. No. There was a plane used. It was a P8-A plane. It did not have its IFF on. It did not have its transponder on. So, there was no way to see it. The problem, as I said earlier, with all the people who say there was no plane, we couldn't track a plane, is, of course, they weren't thinking about the fact there were no transponders. And I remember within days what they called open-source intelligence, people were talking about, there was no such plane. I wrote about a plane dropping a sonar in September to trigger the bombs. But the problem was, they would all report about what they couldn't find. But then the problem was, something blew up. How did it blow up, if they couldn't see a plane? Well, but that wasn't an issue. They would just write about the fact that they couldn't find a plane, not acknowledging that it's very easy to hide a plane. You can hide ships, too, by the same thing. They have electronic stuff they can shut down. They have emergency frequencies.

Anyway, even yachts have what they call an AIS system. A yacht of the kind of stature that allegedly was used to do it, as we've been reading, would have to have in case you get in trouble, you have to have some way of knowing where you are to tell the Coast Guard. So, they have to have a system that tells them where they are. It's an electronic system that can be monitored. You can turn it off, too. But anyway, the plane could have been flown by anybody. Whatever I wrote is due to what the information I had. I think it was a P8-A, flown by Americans; in an American P8-A. And somebody said there were no such planes in Norway. Well, not to their knowledge, maybe; but there were. So, there you are. What happened, happened, period.

PB: What will happen in the next weeks? What do you think? Do you have a new aspect of the story, or do you think about new reactions in the press?

SH: Well, no, I don't worry about the press. I can't worry about them. Why would I worry about them? I've been writing stories that the press ignored all my life. They either come true or they don't. No, I'm writing more about the whole issue, of course, because it's my White House and my President, our policy. I'm entitled to do that. I'm surprised you're so focused on the press, because it is not going to be a friend of this story.

It's just not going to be; they just have drawn a line that a yacht did it. Or now, what was the other thing? That there was one story in London the other day, a trawler did it. Or they had all these boats doing it. And that's much more fun for them, than to deal with a story somebody else wrote. I know that when I worked at *The New York Times*, you wouldn't dare ask me to chase somebody else's story. I would say, oh, no, that's not for me. So, the good reporters at *The Times*, the reporters that actually do have sources, don't want to do somebody else's story. That's beneath them; so, it just gets done. Some kid will be assigned to check it, and he calls the White House and they say it's not so. You got a story. In fact, they actually ran the same story two or three times. The White House initially said it wasn't so, and then two weeks later, another press spokesman who happened to be retired, credible, said the same thing, and they wrote the story just as if the White House had first announced it.

I liked your point of view on this, which is what's going on here with the rest of the media and the government. Why isn't anybody talking? That should be the question, but it's not new to me. When I first wrote my story about a massacre of 500 civilians who were raped and maimed and brutalized, half the country not only didn't want to believe it, they were calling me. My phone was listed, like I still do. You can still find my house phone. Guys would get in the officer's clubs, have four or five whiskeys and call me up at three in the morning and tell me what they were going to do to my private parts. I had that for months. So, this is nothing.

PB: Thank you very much.

