

II. Interviews

Interview: *General Fabio Mini*

Why Ukraine's War Propaganda Is Failing

Nov. 7—*The following is an edited transcript of EIR's Nov. 9, 2024 interview with General Fabio Mini. General Mini served in the Italian Army for 38 years, retiring in 2003 at the rank of three-star general. During his career, he served as Chief of Staff of the NATO Southern European Command (now Joint Force Command Naples) and as commander of the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) mission in the Balkans.*

General Mini, along with other influential military-intelligence officers from eight EU/NATO countries, were recently targeted in a [report](#) issued by the Ukrainian Center for Defense Reforms, accusing them of being "Russian agents." The Center for Defense Reform is financed and controlled by NATO/EU countries—primarily the U.S. and UK.

A section of the report dedicated specifically to Italy, besides General Mini, includes: General Roberto Vannacci (retired Special Forces, now a member of the EU Parliament), Antonio Maria Rinaldi (former member of the European Parliament and reserve officer of the Guardia di Finanza), Lt. Col. Fabio Filomeni (retired Special Forces), General Piero Laporta (retired combat engineer, writer and blogger), General Leonardo Tricarico (former Air Force Chief of Staff and current president of the ICSA Foundation), General Marco Ber-



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Gen. Fabio Mini, a three-star Italian General, who served as Chief of Staff of NATO Southern European Command.

tolini (retired Special Forces, former Chief of Defense Operations and now president of the Paratrooper Association), and Pasquale Tarantino (retired Air Force officer). They are described as "dangerous" because they are "qualified, authoritative, and listened to experts in warfare and geopolitics."

General Mini was asked about his thoughts concerning the Ukrainian report. The interview was conducted by EIR's Claudio Celani.

EIR: General, what do you think about the report?

General Mini: The text is written in a mix of Anglo-American-Slavic English/machine translation, and the information for some countries is taken from identical information compiled by natives of those countries on behalf of Ukraine. The publication supplements the previous filing edited by the Center for Countering Disinformation (CCD) and the kill list compiled by neo-Nazi "volunteers" from Myrotvorets ("Peacemakers") already published by Kyiv.

It is of course disinformation, and even a clumsy one. A rule of those who publish disinformation is that every action and "active measure" should use arguments, concepts, words and methods that cannot, in turn, be used against themselves. The authors of the report ignored this rule, out of ignorance or arro-

gance typical of those who think the “target audience” is stupid.

EIR: Can you explain this better?

Mini: From the title of the self-styled “study” to the last footnote, everything can be turned around by replacing references to Russia with references to Ukraine. The result even makes more sense and would have more correspondence to reality. For example:

1) The title “Toy Soldiers: NATO Military and Intelligence Officers in Russian Active Measures” can also be read as “Tough Soldiers: NATO Military and Intelligence Officers Against Ukrainian Active Measures.”

2) The introduction on the motives, purposes and methods of the “study” can be easily inverted to [give] a quite different narrative:

[Here, Gen. Mini postulates a different, more truthful depiction of events in Ukraine, by inverting the narrative used to smear him by pro-Ukraine/pro-NATO disinformation warriors—ed.]

After eight years of unsuccessful attempts to massacre all Russophiles in Donbas, Ukraine decided to attack the Russians in Crimea with the support of NATO and the United States. Unfortunately, Russia pre-empted this operation by invading Ukraine, which immediately began labeling the preemptive and limited Russian operation as “the largest military aggression in Europe since World War II: a large-scale, illegal, and unprovoked invasion.”

While the international community’s attention was largely focused on the actions of the Russian Armed Forces in Ukraine, Kyiv implemented its disinformation and defamation plan which had been carefully prepared long before the invasion, according to the methodology learned when Ukraine was a pillar of the Soviet Union. Ukraine has not abandoned these practices and, with the help of the United States, Britain, NATO and the European Union, has significantly increased the intensity of the subversive operations and active measures by its intelligence agents in the West, including NATO and the European Union. Paradoxical as it may seem, the goal of these operations is to destabilize the EU and NATO, undermine the internal unity of these organizations, radicalize certain social groups and influence the politics of these countries, including through the support of political proxies. In addition, they aim to obtain

military and financial support for Ukraine and to impede Russia’s ability to subsist, among which economic measures are particularly important.

To carry out such operations, Kyiv’s intelligence services use agents of influence who carry significant weight in their societies: they are political, public, cultural, and religious figures, well-known media personalities, experts, journalists, and scientists. The cooperation of these agents of influence with Ukraine is carefully concealed, as its revelation would significantly undermine the trust of the public—both the general population and politicians—over whom Kyiv seeks to exert influence. Moreover, revelation of such collaboration may disrupt operations and lead to unintended consequences for Ukraine and its agents, including official investigations, financial audits, proscription of front organizations, and potentially even criminal prosecution. To protect its agents and delegitimize individuals who do not follow its war narrative, Ukraine has fueled a smear campaign against the individuals and organizations opposed to its propaganda.

This study explores all views that differ or diverge from the Ukrainian narrative expressed by retired high-ranking military officers and heads of EU intelligence and security agencies. It presents these views as if they were active engagements in exerting influence beneficial to Russia. It creates a phony network directly or indirectly linked to the Russian Federation.

This group of people is of particular importance in the current landscape of a major conflict in Europe, given the inherently high level of trust they enjoy within society and among political leaders as experts in security, defense and international relations. Moreover, European nations are showing a growing demand for politicians with such backgrounds, allowing these individuals not only to indirectly influence government decision-making, but also to participate directly as members of parliaments and government structures.

It is therefore critical that Ukraine shut them up, or at least erode their credibility.

In establishing the links between these individuals and the Russian Federation, as well as other entities involved in activities beneficial to Russia, we had to invent out of thin air most of the connections to be able to use the Methodology for Risk-Based Assessment of Covert Malignant Influence of Russian Intelligence. This methodology was developed by the Center for

Defense Reforms under the auspices of the NATO-Ukraine Platform for Early Detection and Countering Hybrid Threats.

EIR: The report expresses worry that half of Italian society does not want to take sides in the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Mini: As for the fact sheet on Italy, the study, on the one hand, captures many aspects of the complexity and ambiguity of Italian politics, and on the other hand crosses the line of the ridiculous by making accusations that in reality strengthen critical positions toward Ukraine. The organizations listed among the alleged pro-Russia agents include major Italian geopolitical journals, *Limes* and *Geopolitica*, for their publishing and educational activities that also give voice to Russian scholars, both favorable as well as critical of Russia itself—as if one could talk about geopolitics while ignoring its main actors. Popular movements for the cessation of the war are singled out, as if Ukraine does not want the war to end. In fact, judging the positions of such organizations, disinformation does not consider the final effect of peace, but the method that is suggested to achieve it; a method that in Italy has never included the annihilation of the Ukrainian people. And, in fact, the logical inference is that Ukraine wants no peace, but seeks a permanent war between the West and Russia fought at home and in Europe.

According to the authors, these individuals would be a “group that, in addition to participating in events in favor of the Kremlin, speaks with a single voice, at the expert level, insisting that the war against Russia lacks perspective”—a real compliment for a concept that the Americans, British and even Ukrainians themselves are just now beginning to realize. One might say “better late than never” if it were not for the thousands of deaths each delay this understanding produces.

EIR: Are you worried about being listed on top of a Black List?

Mini: Personally, I am sorry for occupying the first place in the “prominent” category. I assure my other colleagues that I have not paid or even been paid for this honor, just as I consider it an honor to be counted among them at this juncture. Moreover, I am truly grat-

ified by the compliments, the high regard given to me and even what is attributed to me in this defamatory attempt.

EIR: You are accused of being a member of the *Limes* Scientific Committee.

Mini: True, I have been a member of the *Limes* Scientific board for more than 20 years, and in its magazine, I analyzed many geopolitical issues and publicly criticized NATO. I did it before, during, and after my time as a leading military official, in the effort of bringing NATO back into its original legal framework. In a mature and democratic forum, this was much appreciated; in times of illiteracy, less so.

Regarding Ukraine, I lived through the whole Cold War period when the threat of invasion of my country and of Europe came from the Kyiv Military District, when I knew by heart the names of the units and commanders who would attack us. I was therefore pleased when, in 1998, I led officers from the ISSMI [Italian Joint Service Staff Institute] course, taught by me, to Kyiv rather than to the Maldives. And there I met and appreciated the Ukrainian officers of our counterpart course, the commanders of the Kyiv Armored Forces and Air Defense. I hoped that Ukraine would get back on its feet, that it would not be forced to export its best youth and rent its land for our tanks to run around. It did not, and today every part of it is a firing range, a battlefield, and a war cemetery.

EIR: You are also “accused” of being part of the *Geopolitica* magazine, of the ICSA Foundation and of the radical Fronte del Dissenso group.

Mini: It is true, I agreed to be part of the scientific board of *Geopolitica* when it broke away from *Eurasia* magazine and I never had anything to regret. In fact, I learned a lot, and for that I thank Tiberio Graziani.

True, I am on the scientific board of the ICSA Foundation, and noting that the list of the hundred or so other members includes the elite of the military and civilian world, I cannot but consider myself honored.

It is not true that I spoke at the International Peace Conference organized by the Fronte del Dissenso in Rome on Oct. 24, 2023, nor did I contribute to the final communiqué (as the report erroneously states), but

I wished the conference and the organizers good luck with a somewhat skeptical article in the *Il Fatto Quotidiano* daily. I should have gone there. That will be for another time.

EIR: What is your real position on the Russia-Ukraine war?

Mini: Before the Chinese peace proposal, also in the daily *Il Fatto*, I had formulated a proposal for the solution of the Ukrainian conflict that included five principles and ten concrete actions. Although it was already too late to avoid the conflict, I bet on the importance of a security perspective for Europe that respected Ukrainian sovereignty, the peoples' right to self-determination, and the resumption of relations with Russia. In this regard, I recalled Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's election platform and the three points of his 2019 inauguration speech: end the war in Donbas, talk to the Russians, and Ukrainian neutrality. That was before the extremists threatened him and the British and Americans bamboozled him with promises, sounding like the pied piper, offering billions of dollars. It was before a million war casualties.

EIR: The Ukrainian report accuses you of another crime: having participated in Pugwash Conferences.

Mini: It is true, I have been a member of the Pugwash Conferences since 1983, when it was enough to attend one to become a member forever; when it was the only international forum of experts dedicated to nuclear détente and nuclear risk mitigation. I was a lieutenant colonel and I was sent by the Chief of Staff of the Army, to whom I was a close associate. I will never cease to thank my superiors for their foresight and trust. Born in 1957 from the input given two years earlier by Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell, the conferences were a cradle of passionate discussions and proposals by the best scientists of the century.

Chairing the 1983 conference were all Nobel Laureates, none of them for peace. At the 1984 Geneva conference, I had Robert McNamara seated next to me, who showed me the slip of paper on which he had scribbled his proposal, "global comprehensive nuclear freeze." When he pronounced the four words, two interpreters, one in each ear, translated them to the Soviet representative, a Central Committee member, who winced.

He and McNamara were still in shock over the risk of nuclear war which occurred the year before due to the U.S. naval exercise FleetEx 83, when the U.S. fleet aimed for Kamchatka; with the shooting down of the Korean jumbo jet in the same area; and the highest nuclear alert (Defcon 1) during the Able Archer exercise. I would like to think that that slip of paper and the shocks of 1983 contributed to bringing about détente. Maybe McNamara didn't give a damn if the CIA then, like Ukraine today, said that Pugwash was a KGB tool. "Bob" had had his say and the enemy had listened to him. NATO then was there and had listened. Today everyone chatters, shouts, and threatens, and no one listens.

For their contribution to world security, the Pugwash Conference in 1995 received the Nobel Peace Prize. The authors of the report on the "Soldiers," the new "Strangeloves" of Ukrainian disinformation, will never get it.

EIR: Do you think Ukrainian propaganda works?

Mini: In addition to the practice of delegitimizing and defaming anyone who does not follow the Ukrainian narrative, a series of elementary but fundamental mistakes were made in the information war, which Ukraine had been winning two years ago—mistakes which now prevent an honorable turn of their narrative.

In particular: the progressive boldness, to the point of arrogance, of the report; the media overexposure of the Ukrainian leader and his Western supporters; the adoption of a Western lexicon which calls for "democracy" and "respect for the rights and opinions of others"—just as the conflict and the attitudes of Ukrainian and Euro-Atlantic communication show an increasingly less democratic and transparent picture. There was the pretense of passing off as "public diplomacy" the disinformation war and intelligence activities (entirely legitimate in war and among combatants), including covert operations and assassinations (illegal and illegitimate even in war, especially if to the detriment of non-belligerent individuals and organizations); and finally, the fundamental error: believing in one's own propaganda. It was not all Ukraine's fault. The propaganda plans were devised by Western experts and multinational commands and organizations that wanted to insert various and different arguments and methods in search of the "masterstroke."

Ukraine defines its disinformation campaigns not as propaganda or psychological warfare, but as *public diplomacy*, thus showing that it does not really understand its meaning. This activity is far from benign: depending on the case and the country, public diplomacy develops into actions ranging from soft power with completely lawful and non-coercive activities, to impositions, intimidation, blackmail, and assassinations. These methods were probably promoted by NATO itself, which entrusted relations with Ukraine concerning disinformation to the Information Environment Assessment (IAEA) unit of its Public Diplomacy Division. Ukrainian activities being called “public and diplomatic” is, at minimum, euphemistic.

EIR: What did Ukrainian activities consist of?

Mini: Since 2022, the Ukrainian Center for Countering Disinformation (CCD), operating within the framework of the Security and Defense Council of the Ukrainian Presidency, has been targeting anyone and any organization that does not boisterously follow Ukrainian propaganda. With the cooperation of various

information and media workers from the various countries, it has drawn up proscription lists which includes personalities from politics, governments, and civil and military society from European countries deemed to be “information terrorists” to be eliminated, politically or physically, or at least to be intimidated and silenced.

In recent years, Ukraine has penetrated NATO structures more than it appears, and while it has adopted Western methods and narratives, it has also brought with it the enormous baggage of Soviet propaganda of which it was master during the communist regime, and of which it is still an expert teacher today. NATO itself in its war communication is using methods and arguments from that period and that world, if only to make itself understood by the majority of member countries that were essential parts of that world.

Finally, if believing in one’s own propaganda is a common fact among fanatics and a fact sought after by those who want to indoctrinate their pawns on the chessboard of war, it is a deleterious fact for rulers, political and military officials, and leaders in general. Propaganda, with its inherent distortion of reality, induces irrational and counterproductive decisions.

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