

Gaslit Nation Transcript

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“Under the Red Sky”

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/under-red-sky-70948427>

[opening clip]

Barack Obama (00:00):

Governor Romney, I'm glad that you recognize that Al Qaeda's a threat because a few months ago, when you were asked, “What's the biggest geopolitical threat facing America?”, you said Russia, not Al Qaeda. You said Russia. And the 1980s are now calling to ask for their foreign policy back because, you know, the Cold War's been over for 20 years.

[intro - theme music]

Sarah Kendzior:

I'm Sarah Kendzior, the author of the best sellers, *The View from Flyover Country* and *Hiding in Plain Sight* and of the upcoming book, *They Knew: How a Culture of Conspiracy Keeps America Complacent*, which is out on September 13 and available for our pre-order now.

Andrea Chalupa (00:45):

I'm Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker and the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*, about Stalin's genocide famine in Ukraine, a movie that the Kremlin literally does not want you to see (because they keep shutting down screenings).

Sarah Kendzior (01:02):

And this is *Gaslit Nation*, a podcast covering corruption in the United States and rising autocracy around the world.

Andrea Chalupa (01:11):

Our opening clip was Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama in the 2012 presidential election, where Romney, who was a terrible candidate for that entire election, just like a laughably bad non-person politician stuffed into a suit candidate, came out of nowhere and had a rare, intriguing, odd moment at the time, where he called out Russia. As a Ukrainian American even I found it odd. It came outta left field. And he turned out to be vindicated, not because of anything Mitt Romney did or by his very nature. His track record ever since then has been pathetic, right? Cozying up to Trump after Trump stole the election in 2016 with the Kremlin's help. So how did Mitt Romney get that one now-shining moment in that 2012 presidential debate? Well, as I always understood it since way back in the day, Romney was helped by an American Latvian Jewish really outspoken Putin critic, kind of an eccentric, colorful character that I happened to have the great privilege of knowing by the name of Dan Rapoport.

Andrea Chalupa (02:35):

Dan Rapoport is, in my little circles, always credited as, “Oh, he's the guy that got Romney to call out Russia. That was Dan.” And I believe it, knowing Dan and how connected he is, especially in the finance world, which Romney and his team obviously circulated in, and given how passionate he was and fearless, I absolutely believe it. And unfortunately, Dan was found dead on a street in Washington, DC

and the alleged cause of death was by suicide. He allegedly threw himself out of his building. And as the reports have said, his dog was wandering a nearby park with a suicide note attached. Now, Dan Rapport's widow—who I do not know, I've never met—claims that Dan did not die by suicide, that there was no suicide note and I believe her. I believe that this was an extremely suspicious death. I stayed with Dan for several days in Kyiv back in June of 2017 at a time when the Kremlin and the Trump regime were harassing my sister, Alexandra Chalupa, the former independent consultant for the Democratic Party (the DNC) that risked her life and career to warn everybody, both Democrats and Republicans and the media, that the Kremlin was attacking our democracy in 2016.

Andrea Chalupa (04:05):

And she was just pointing out the obvious, right? Because Paul Manafort was the smoking gun. If Paul Manafort is managing your campaign, he's obviously doing that on behalf of the Kremlin because Paul Manafort is a longtime Kremlin operative. So when things were extremely tense, when her situation was very dangerous and I had to go to Ukraine at the time which was not a safe place to be, all things considered, because of the attacks and threats against my sister. But I had to go to Ukraine because we were producing *Mr. Jones* and we were going to film there so I had no choice. I had to go. So for an extra layer of security, instead of staying in a hotel like I usually would, or with any of my hipster Ukrainian friends, I stayed with Dan Rapoport because I just got a sense that that guy was tough as nails and fearless.

Andrea Chalupa (04:48):

Plus, he had security. Dan had a big, roomy apartment in the heart of Kyiv just steps from the presidential building, steps from Maidan, the main square of Kyiv where over a hundred protestors gave their lives protesting, fighting for a free and independent Ukraine in a popular uprising known as Euromaidan that overthrew the Kremlin's puppet, Yanukovich. He had a lovable dog that would bark when you came to the door and he referred to his lovable, spoiled dog as his guard dog. Dan also had a handgun. When I was staying with him, he kept his handgun right there on the coffee table. When we went out to dinner, he kept his handgun tucked into some holster in the back of his pants. I don't know. He kept a handgun on him.

Andrea Chalupa (05:44):

So that made me feel a bit safer, given everything that I was feeling up against at that time. And he had this sort of street smartness to him where we'd go into a restaurant and he would sit with his back against the wall so he would face the restaurant. That was important for him. You know, just little things like that. I know Dan is seen as a colorful character. He was one of countless young bucks that came from the West and made notorious names for themselves living in Russia in the early years after the collapse of communism. These were just these wild, young Western bucks that got off on all the young, hot, extremely poor—and unfortunately incredibly desperate and vulnerable—gorgeous Russian women. He was part of that filthy, disgusting, immoral generation. When I crossed paths with him, he was a lot more mature [laughs]. But the time I spent with him, even, you know, hardly even knowing him really—he was an acquaintance—I felt perfectly safe.

Andrea Chalupa (06:43):

I felt perfectly at ease. We had a lot of interesting discussions and heart to hearts and we stayed in touch all that time. When I was staying with him as happens, because obviously anybody that depends on the kindness of strangers and does couch surfing and all those things, you do tend to fall into these slumber

party, deep talks. And Dan did open up to me that he had a moment of crisis in his divorce from his previous marriage, but he overcame it. When I asked him about his house being sold to Ivanka and Jared—that's something that gets repeated a lot in the news coverage of Dan Rapoport—when I asked him about it, he shrugged it off. It was just something that happened. It's just a coincidence, like it was like nothing to him. He was like, "It happened. Whatever."

Andrea Chalupa (07:29):

I would advise everyone, that's a dumb little footnote in another otherwise interesting life. So I bring all this up basically because I'm processing what happened. I'm shocked. Dan is someone I always, always thought I would see again, that we'd cross paths again. I know that when the war broke out, I reached out to him. He had posted on Facebook that he was going to leave his dog in the care of some friends and then leave the country to make sure he got his family out. And I wrote to him, you know, messaged about various things and I mentioned, "For the love of God, take your dog with you. Take your dog with you." And he wrote that, he's like, "Oh, I don't think I can. It's too hard. It's impossible." But he ended up taking the dog with him. He made sure that he went through all the bureaucracy of bringing an animal from a warzone into the United States, which is not easy.

Andrea Chalupa (08:17):

He went through all that trouble. He cared about that dog. And the reason why I'm pointing that out is because I don't believe he would've died by suicide and I'll tell you why in a second. I also don't believe the reports that he would let his dog wander around, after all the work he put into saving that dog and taking him out of a warzone to safety in the United States. He cared about that dog deeply. He would not have killed himself and then allowed his dog to just go wandering around. That's not Dan. He would not have done that, I don't believe at all. And the second thing is Dan is living for this moment. This is what Dan lived for, was finally holding Putin's corruption accountable. He was an early supporter in Russia of the Russian opposition. He was outspoken and he spent some time in DC trying to drum up support for the Russian resistance, Russian opposition, as well as Ukraine, and in his final days on earth he was taking meetings in Washington, DC, trying to get all this support for Ukraine. And Ukraine has been doing extraordinarily well, which would just energize Dan further.

Andrea Chalupa (09:25):

So what I'm saying is that Dan Rapoport that I witnessed in action that I knew would be living for this moment. This is his moment. He posted a selfie of himself recently, as in the last six months when the war first broke out, of how he was in Warsaw going to the US embassy. He was called, as he wrote on Facebook, he was called to the US embassy to basically sit down and talk to the US government about the war obviously. That was Dan. As colorful and as eccentric as he was, which is one thing to love about him, he was somebody that was very forthcoming. He had a lot of interesting insights. He had a lot of connections. He knew a lot of connected, interesting people. And as I said, he's fearless. He was fearless. He was fighting some business deal gone wrong that involved some Russians.

Andrea Chalupa (10:17):

Obviously I don't wanna put forward my own theory. All I wanna do is just raise Dan I knew and point out that this was a mysterious death and as such, it must be investigated. It must not be forgotten. Journalists must look into this. Local authorities must pursue this to the very end and we have to remind everyone that every person who does this work out in the open of taking on the Kremlin in any way, shape or form makes themselves vulnerable, makes their family vulnerable. So every death by suicide,

every heart attack, every untimely death needs to be examined. It needs to be treated like a suspicious death just by the very nature of the work we're doing, right? Because that's how the enemy operates. And I know people might shrug this off as, "Oh, why was Dan such a big target?" There's a lot of reasons why Dan was a target because one is Dan could have been seen as somebody that had an impactful track record. He was able to get to Romney.

Andrea Chalupa (11:15):

That was his reputation in some circles. Dan also, you know, he was pursuing these people that screwed him over in some business deal so these people could have been afraid of being exposed to a possible US sanctions list. And maybe they got rid of Dan with the blessing of the local thuggish Russian government represented by the thugs at the Russian embassy and the Russian press office here in Washington, DC that like to destroy the sunflowers that activists like to plant near the embassy. Dan was somebody that certainly lived with a target on his head. And I saw the lengths he went to to live that way. I saw the steps he took for his own personal security. I saw how hypervigilant he was as a person and I saw how passionate he was. But he's somebody that I know was resilient.

Andrea Chalupa (12:04):

He was tough as nails and he would be thriving right now and galvanizing as much support as possible for Ukraine. So I just want to call on everybody to understand him and his story better. He's not a perfect person by any means. He's quite colorful. There needs to be a thorough investigation into this. And especially people need to look at those that were involved in that business deal that went south for him because he was being relentless there and trying to expose those guys. So, that's why I just wanted to open the show on that because it's a tragedy. A lot of us that knew him, even in passing as I did, I was an acquaintance and he was still generous enough to open up his home to me at a time when I was feeling particularly vulnerable and that's the kind of person he was. And I want people to know that about him and I just want as much help as possible for his case and for those who cared about him.

Sarah Kendzior (12:55):

Yeah. Everything you said is very important, first of all because I think a lot of us have become so used to this culture of political violence and threats that we've come to expect it. A lot of times it's sensationalized. A lot of times, aren't thinking of the person who died in their family and their loved ones and just the horror of how casually a human life is taken. And I just wanna reaffirm your point that it is not baseless, it's not conspiracy mongering or anything like that to assume that if somebody has had dealings that have to do with the Kremlin, which of course is connected to the Russian mafia or with Trump, who of course is connected to the Russian mafia, or any of these intermediaries, they meet a mysterious end.

Sarah Kendzior (13:51):

After the death of Ivana Trump, for example, we did an episode where I just was listing not even all of the people who've met strange and untimely deaths, but just kind of, you know, highlight among them going all the way back into the early '90s; Robert Maxwell, the father of Ghislaine Maxwell, who was the partner of Jeffrey Epstein who, of course, Maxwell "fell off a yacht", Epstein "committed suicide". There were the people handling finances. As you mentioned, that's a huge area of risk. We've had multiple employees at Deutsche Bank, including those handling Trump finances and Russian mafia finances dying under mysterious circumstances. You had GOP operatives like Peter Smith, obviously Jamal Khashoggi. And then of course there are the dozens of Russian operatives, including high level diplomats, people like

Vitaly Churkin who died in February, 2017 and who the result of the autopsy for that was never released—

Sarah Kendzior (14:50):

we don't officially know the cause of death—who was involved in the illicit campaign negotiations between Kushner, Flynn and the Kremlin. He's just among many high level Russian diplomats or operatives who died at that time. There was also the death of an RT journalist in DC. I mean, this is common. So it is sensible when somebody in a position like Dan Rapoport, with a history of contacts in the midst of a Russian reinvasion, heightened invasion, of Ukraine, to question, Well, how did this happen? What did he witness? How did this come about? And it's not saying that we conclusively know anything one way or the other, but that it's absolutely worth asking questions. And a lot of times people are afraid to ask questions about this because they don't wanna be labeled as, you know, conspiratorial or sensationalist.

Sarah Kendzior (15:51):

This is the opposite. This is asking questions out of concern for that person's wellbeing and also all the other people who are in similar positions who are also witnesses and for all the journalists and for all the public officials and for everybody who has been dragged into this conflict which, years ago, Andrea called the election of Trump the meeting of the Western branch of the Russian mafia and the Eastern branch of the Russian mafia. And of course it goes well beyond Russia and encapsulates a number of countries; Saudi Arabia, Israel, Brexit UK, and of course corruption within the United States itself. But it means that threats and acts of politically motivated violence have become incredibly common. We see them going all the time now. After the raid of Mar-a-Lago, that was one of the first things he did. Trump leveled threats at the DOJ and then FBI officials were threatened and harmed. And so all of this is, I mean, I don't know... It's a disaster. We're gonna get into another mysterious death in a second of Darya Dugina. Do you wanna get into that now? Yeah.

Andrea Chalupa (17:08):

Yeah. I just wanna first say, you know, Dan Rapoport took a lot of meetings in Washington, DC in his final days and anybody who met with him, pay very close attention to everything he told you because somewhere in that orbit is going to be information leading to who would've wanted to kill him and why. There's somebody that was clearly afraid of being exposed by Dan. They saw him as influential, effective and powerful. And that he was in his own way. You know, he was energized especially by the latest resistance of Ukraine. He'd been following the war closely since the start and his whole journey in leaving Russia after being a financier there, owning a popular nightclub there, his whole journey of leaving Russia when Putin was consolidating power and cracking down is a reminder to us that the Russian people, what they've been suffering under Putin for so long. They were the canary in the coal mine.

Andrea Chalupa (18:09):

Dan was one of the many early voices trying to warn saying, "Look at what Putin is doing to his own people. Look at what Putin is doing to his own people. Wake up, he's coming for us next. This is gonna get worse and worse." Dan was early in ringing the alarm over the canary in the coal mine, which was the Russian people and how much they've suffered. And the latest story is this absolutely absurd murder of Darya Dugina, the daughter of Aleksandr Dugin. This is just such a troubling story on a lot of levels, which we're going to unpack now. One of the many layers of irony here is that Putin came to power

promising Russians end to the violence and instability of the 1990s, the car bomb 1990s. Now, there's just been a high profile murder in Russia by a car bomb during a time of great instability in Russia.

Andrea Chalupa (19:06):

So, one of the factors that had been protecting Putin from an uprising by his own people is unraveling because Russia is suffering once again. So Aleksandr Dugin, for those that don't know, he is the human equivalent of Steve Bannon's stained undershirt. His daughter Darya Dugina was Dugin's fascist mini-me. She was a propagandist just like her father. She would go on Russian propaganda TV and say all sorts of hateful, genocidal things against Ukrainians and their right to exist. And she was killed just the other day in a car bomb clearly meant for her, and one that likely targeted him as well. The bomb was reportedly put underneath the driver's seat. It was a car registered to her. The father had been in the car and in the last minute switched to another car when they were leaving some event and the security cameras were turned off, not working for something like two weeks in the building where they were.

Andrea Chalupa (20:12):

So this was clearly something that was targeting both of them. Just a little background on why anyone would target them: like her father, Dugina championed Russia's genocide of Ukraine. Dugin and his daughter are mascots of Russian genocidal imperialism. People in the West like to refer to Dugin as "Putin's brain" which overstates the influence he actually had over Putin and the Kremlin. Dugin was more instrumental in being an international face for glorifying Russian genocidal imperialism, which includes so-called hyper-masculine traditional patriarchy, the kind of dark fascism that America's Supreme Court—packed by the now billion dollar political operative Leonard Leo—would love. Right. <laugh> anyway. So Dugin was like a harrier, nuttier version of Steve Bannon and he's somebody who united on the international stage the global far right. He would give these speeches across the EU promoting fascism and glorifying Russian history, Russian genocidal imperialism. His actual influence over the Kremlin was very limited.

Andrea Chalupa (21:26):

What's most important for people to understand and accept is that Dugin and Putin are both products of this long history, this deeply embedded culture of Russian genocidal imperialism that will outlive them, unfortunately. To put that all in American terms, think of how some idiots in the US cling to the Confederate flag in statues of Robert E. Lee. That's who they are, basically. Dugin openly hated Ukrainians, called them subhumans and called for their extermination. Does this mean that Ukrainians killed him? No, absolutely not. And people in the West, Western media, need to stop repeating this. It's an FSB talking point. Guys like Dugin are a dime a dozen in Russia, as far as Ukrainians are concerned. So who would want Dugin and his fascist propaganda daughter dead? Well, given that the FSB has claimed to solve the murder so quickly, blaming it on Ukraine in this whole elaborate production—they full on produced video of an alleged Russian, who of course they claim is attached to the Azov battalion, which is the fierce battalion that outlasted the massive shelling of Mariupol, the besieged city that was once a jewel of Ukraine.

Andrea Chalupa (22:47):

It's now in ruins, thanks to Russia's siege. And the Ukrainian fighters that held out against that for a very long time, which forced Russia to spread itself thin in the early days of the war, that battalion was known as Azov. And they were of course taken hostage. Many of them were killed in a war crime when their prison was deliberately exploded by the Russian military. Exploding prisons is something that Stalin

would do back in the day, even against his own people. And a lot of the Azov battalion's records were taken, personal papers and other things were taken. So that's why, you know, you have the FSB now claiming they've solved this murder so quickly and claiming that it's attached Ukraine's Azov battalion and producing some stupid documentation and ID to prove it all

Andrea Chalupa (23:41):

The whole thing is just pageantry. It's just a reality TV Mark Burnett production and the fact that the FSB had all this ready so quickly is also a clear sign that this was just fabricated nonsense to put it on Ukraine. So why would the FSB, the most likely culprit by far, why would they want Dugin dead? What motivation would they have? Well, there's a number of possible reasons. One is that Dugin, being an extremist who just really wanted this genocide in Ukraine and had been calling for it for so long, Dugin was putting pressure, saying that there needed to be mass mobilization, there needed to be more Russian troops taken and forced into Ukraine as cannon fodder. Russia, for those who aren't paying attention, just to catch you up, Russia's getting slapped around in Ukraine. We all thought that Russia was the second most powerful military in the world.

Andrea Chalupa (24:37):

It turns out Ukraine is the second most powerful military in the world. You know how when the war first broke out, you had all of these people coming out of nowhere who had never even heard about Ukraine before suddenly voicing all these opinions on the war, saying, "Oh, we can't support Ukraine. We've got to back down. Putin's gonna kill us. There's gonna be nuclear war"? Well, guess what? Putin's getting his ass handed to him and he still hasn't pulled the switch on a nuclear Armageddon. Remember he made a big deal of NATO expansion? Sweden and Finland are now in NATO and he was crickets about that. Remember he was like, "Don't go into Crimea. Crimea is the red line"? Well, guess what? Crimea's getting shut up right now. The military targets across Crimea are getting bombed. Russian occupiers are fleeing the peninsula and desperate to get back into Russia.

Andrea Chalupa (25:24):

You have young women driving through Crimea blasting Ukrainian patriotic music. You have some karaoke bar playing some song and dedicating it to the Azov battalion. Things are changing across Crimea right now. And this was one of Putin's many red lines that all these dumb idiots on Twitter swore were going to lead to nuclear annihilation, so therefore they justify there should be no support for Ukraine. Those guys are now oddly quiet. So my point is that Russia's losing the war—and badly—and it's only going to get worse for Russia here on out because the sanctions are gonna continue to bite. Because as long as the US keeps up its support for Ukraine by sending all the HIMARs and other long range missiles that Ukraine needs, Russia is done for. And this is a great frustration for Dugin whose dumb solution is to mobilize the troops and force Russians to go to Ukraine and fight.

Andrea Chalupa (26:20):

If you're Putin and the Kremlin, that would backfire. The average Russian can tolerate Russia's genocidal war. The average Russian has no problem dancing the night away to a DJ in St. Petersburg or Moscow. They could just shrug off the genocide in Ukraine. The average Russian doesn't care about the war as long as it doesn't impact them. And if you force a mass mobilization, it's going to have the same sort of impact that the draft had during Vietnam. And you're gonna radicalize a lot of people that weren't radicalized before and it would backfire against Putin and the Kremlin. Putin and the Kremlin know this, which is why they're desperately going to prisons—prisons—to recruit prisoners and pull them out and

send them to Ukraine to fight. Putin's henchmen are kissing ass to North Korea, trying to beg North Korea for troops. Whatever happened to the Syrian soldiers that were supposed to come from Assad, right?

Andrea Chalupa (27:16):

Did Assad basically use Putin for protection and now he's not returning the favor? My point is that Russia is desperate for more cannon fodder. Morale is low among Russian soldiers. There have been intercepted phone calls where Russian soldiers are miserable in the war. You have Russian soldiers shooting at Russian soldiers. The chaos. It's not a professional army. It's a shit army. And on top of that, these poor bastards can't even desert because just like in the Soviet days, there are these terror squads threatening to hunt down anybody that dares to desert the army. Despite all that, you still have a legion of Russian soldiers who are now fighting alongside with the Ukrainians and doing an amazing job. So all of this spells very bad news for the Kremlin. And so they need to shut up someone like Dugin, who is frustrated over the war, who's an extremist who wants mass mobilization.

Andrea Chalupa (28:09):

So that's one of the reasons. That's one potential. Another is that he reportedly was complaining loudly about the failures of the FSB in Ukraine, right? The FSB sold Putin all this false intelligence claiming that grain will fall in a matter of days, they've paid off all the right people, let's go in. And that turned out to be false. As a result, we've seen all these purges going on at the FSB and Dugin was reportedly outspoken against the FSB. The FSB is a likely culprit. The reasons are still unclear, but those are some potential reasons. All of this needs to play out. And one could say, "Okay, they wanted a high profile assassination to justify some greater escalation and cruelty against Ukrainians." Sure, but the Kremlin doesn't need any justification for cruelty.

Andrea Chalupa (29:01):

The cruelty they're inflicting already on Ukrainians from actual concentration camps to mass kidnapped of children to systemic rape against men, women, and children. I mean, the level of cruelty is pretty endless and Russia doesn't need any justification for any of it. They just go in and do it because this is a genocidal war. I don't see this high profile (inside Russia) assassination as something to justify anything. It might energize/galvanize some people, sure, at a time when Russia's losing. Maybe they wanted to create a martyr. Sure. Maybe. But the bottom line is that there've been a number of shocking high profile assassinations in Russia under Putin. This is a strange one. This is very odd. It's going to just further the demise of Putin and his regime. There's a lot of creepy things said about Dugin, but he does have his supporters inside Russia and maybe those guys hate Ukrainians enough that they'll buy it hook, line and sinker that it was Ukraine that did this and Putin can rest at night. But I think it just creates a cauldron and just makes an unstable situation—which is Russia right now—even more unstable. It just spells further weakness, uh, for the Russian regime in the months ahead.

Sarah Kendzior (30:19):

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, the thing with this murder is that there are so many different culprits and so many possible motivations. And I agree with you that Ukraine is a very unlikely culprit for this. You know, this is gonna sound very clinical and maybe cynical, but one of the things that Ukraine has done best throughout this horrific conflict is manage media. They were able to get a lot of Western support through displays of moral integrity and they're very keenly aware of what kind of image they're presenting to the West. And so something like killing the daughter of Aleksandr Dugin, even though she

is a neo-Nazi, through a car bombing, through something that of course evokes the car bomb '90s, I just...I think they would immediately know what the repercussions of this would be, which is exactly what they were: hat the Kremlin then uses this as their new pretext.

Sarah Kendzior (31:19):

They announce that they're going to have to retaliate extra hard. You nailed it when you said they were going to do this anyway. They don't need a pretext, but they like a pretext. They like a pretext for propaganda purposes and they're already using this murder for propaganda purposes. And in addition to the narrative you had earlier, the New York Post—the Murdoch-owned New York Post—has the story as this. They're just quoting straight out from TASS (Russian state news) saying, “Russia's counter intelligence agency on Monday claimed that the car bomb that killed the daughter of Vladimir Putin’s ally, Aleksandr Dugin, was planted by a female Ukrainian spy who then fled to Estonia.” And then it gives all of these details, you know, saying that the FSB is tracking them down. The mention of Estonia...

Sarah Kendzior (32:11):

I mean, first of all, I think this story is probably horseshit. But they're bringing up Estonia for a reason, and that is the shared imperialist colonialist goal that both Putin and Dugin have. And this is not really a case of like, you know, Dugin came up with this and Putin got on board, this sort of “Putin's brain” mantra that gets thrown around. This is the deeply held belief of two very violent, terrible, imperialist-minded people with incredible nostalgia for both the Soviet Union and for the czarist past who, for both of them, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was the great tragedy of their life. Dugin was born in '62. He was 29 years old. When he was 35, he wrote *Foundations of Geopolitics* which lays out this roadmap basically of how to get Russia its prior glory back, how to make Moscow the third Rome, as he sees in being prophesized.

Sarah Kendzior (33:19):

A lot of the things he lays out in this book are things that Russia has then tried to do, including invading former parts of the Soviet Union, former Soviet Union republics that had since become independent, that they had colonized in the past, whether that's areas of the Caucasus or Chechnya or Ukraine, which is spelled out there, breaking up Western alliances, breaking the relationship between the US and the UK apart, the relationship between EU countries. This is even before the EU was founded. He lays all this out as a game plan and a lot of it is what was followed, not necessarily because he conceived it but because these are common sense strategies if you're an imperialist dictator trying to rebuild the empire that imploded within your lifetime. So bringing up Estonia here, I think, is a little “Hey guys, we're watching you.” Because they hate Estonia.

Sarah Kendzior (34:22):

You know, Estonia's always been ahead of the game with cyber security, with joining NATO, with pushing back very hard against Russian propaganda, decoding Russian propaganda, all of these things. They're very good at it. So I feel like it's kind of a nudge in their direction. They're obviously mad about Finland and Sweden. It's a warning to the world, but the thing is this week is going to be, I think, a very scary week. We're taping this on Monday night, August 22nd. Ukraine's independence day is August 24th. Putin likes these symbolic days. They like to do really horrific things on these symbolic days. That was true at the start of this reinvasion. It's been true for things that they've done in the United States, you know, flying US traitorous representatives to Russia on 9/11, flying them there on July 4th, flying Trump to his first visit to the Soviet Union on July 4th.

Sarah Kendzior (35:19):

They like that. So on top of just the general horrific nature of the situation, there's the matter of the date. And then to top things off, just a half hour ago, the US embassy in Ukraine has said that, you know, the State Department says that they have information that Russia is stepping up efforts to launch strikes against Ukraine's civilian infrastructure and government facilities in the coming days. The US embassy is urging US citizens to leave Ukraine now, using privately available ground transportation. There is some discussion among experts on the region that government buildings in Kyiv may be a target. There's also of course ongoing discussion of the nuclear plant that Russians have held hostage for a while—you might wanna get into that—and also talk of possible missile attacks on that day, on Ukraine's independence day. So, you know, obviously we're speculating here, but we're speculating in a vortex of ongoing horror and a lot of very symbolic people—Dugin and his family—and dates and incidents that inform the speculation. So I don't know. Do you wanna take it from there? Explain the nuke situation or...?

Andrea Chalupa (36:39):

Yeah, it's just a ticking time bomb couple of weeks ahead, especially because Russia (being a terrorist state) has a nuclear reactor hostage. It's something that could be significantly worse than Chernobyl if they set it off, if they bomb it. Remember Chernobyl went all over the world. This is the kind of thing that Russia would suffer from as well, right? The radiation would blow into Russia, poison Russian people, Russian rivers. But Russia doesn't care about that. That's the problem. It's being driven into the ground by a group of extraordinarily wealthy and powerful people who are just cloistered and hidden in their bunkers. They're only thinking about their own survival. The fact that Russia's taking this nuclear reactor hostage is a reminder that Russia and Trump tried to do a deal known through the gaslighting term of the "Middle East Marshall Plan" which is basically a gaslighting term that would've allowed Russia to get greater leverage over the Middle East by building, you guessed it, nuclear power plants. And Russia (being a terrorist state) would've used this just as we're seeing now: like having a gun to someone's head. And Trump was going to allow this. Michael Flynn was all for it.

Andrea Chalupa (38:09):

Look up the Middle East Marshall Plan. You would see it was just a Trojan horse to further Russian terrorist influence across the Middle East and it was done with the blessing of the Russian, uh, sorry, the Trump regime. That's something obviously to pay attention to. The other thing I wanna point out with this whole Dugin craziness that just happened... People paying attention to this would want to know like, what do we think of this? Well, you may have seen very early on, on the heels of this shocking news, out of Ukraine media, Ukrainian independent media that is focused on the Russian opposition, like Russian resistance news, there was an interview with a Russian opposition leader by the name of Ilya Ponomarev who I happen to have met in 2016. If you listen to the first three episodes of Gaslit Nation, which look at the 2016 election like a crime scene, I believe it's in the third episode where I described this surreal scene going to an event in Washington, DC where I met a Russian GRU agent who was at the center of the Trump tower meeting.

Andrea Chalupa (39:23):

Also, this very strange night at this big party in Washington DC, I happened to meet Ilya. His claim to fame is that he was a member of the Russian Duma who voted against authorizing the right to cease Crimea. And then he fled the country and he lived abroad in Ukraine and he got Ukrainian citizenship a few years ago. And I happened to meet him this night in DC and I found him to be incredibly warm, incredibly forthcoming, sharing a lot of interesting insights. I have met Russian spies before. I've met

Kremlin agents before. I know because I've had a group of them from the Russian embassy, the Russian consulate crash an event where I was speaking and walk out in the middle of my talk, almost like a form of protest. So I've seen these guys up close. I've seen the contempt in their eyes.

Andrea Chalupa (40:13):

I've seen how rigid they can be, how tense they could be, how they could physically exude a hatred towards you. I've had them stand up in the middle of talks I've given and spat out a bunch of Kremlin talking points against me. I've seen these guys up close. Ilya did not have that. Ilya had a lot of warmth. He was very forthcoming. He struck me as somebody trying to make the most with a bad hand. And obviously Ukraine trusted him enough to give him citizenship. And he seemed like an entrepreneur, very ambitious, wanting to make something out of his life and not be stuck in a Russian prison, literally or figuratively. He said a lot of things that would come to pass. He was the one that was saying, "The US is gonna survive."

Andrea Chalupa (40:56):

"Your institutions are strong. You're greater than Trump. You'll make it through." And he was also warning that the Trump and Putin love affair would be a difficult one because Putin has a tendency of pushing deals too far. And I don't know, he may have gotten that one wrong because Putin seemed to just have his way with Trump and probably exceeded far beyond his dreams. But Ilya just had a lot of interesting things to say. So on the heels of this Dugin assassination, he came out and made a claim on Russian resistance Ukrainian TV saying that the murder of Dugin's daughter was done by a Republican national army of a group of gorilla fighters, resistance fighters across Ukraine, the Russian national...

Sarah Kendzior (41:46):

The National Republican Army, I think, is what he called it. Just to be clear, this is not like the GOP Republican. This is the translation of what he said. And this is a group that, to our knowledge, did not exist and had never been mentioned until this statement.

Andrea Chalupa (42:02):

Yeah. So this is a new group that just popped up.

Sarah Kendzior (42:05):

Conveniently called the NRA [laughs].

Andrea Chalupa (42:07):

Right. [laughs] Which is wonderful. And people were like... I mean, some people got excited over it and then wanted it to be true. And then some people that just have been following Russia for a very long time shrugged it off and were like, "No, it's the FSB." The reason why I just bring it up is because some people might have seen this and put some hope into it. I would just dismiss it outright. The most generous reading of that news of their allegedly being a National Republican Army out to kill Putin and his clan, the most generous reading of that is that it's just A++ trolling by Ilya and his friends in Ukraine, right? It's just a way to troll and spook the Russian authorities. But a more sort of troubling, interesting read of it is it's a reminder that Ilya is someone that had connections, at least certainly back in the day, to the real Putin's brain.

Andrea Chalupa (43:04):

Dugin in the West gets credit for being Putin's brain but the man who was *really* Putin's brain, who's considered the intellectual architect of Putinism, is this creep known as Vladislav Surkov. And Surkov is just like high as a kite, a wannabe beat poet of fascism, who innovated the modern art of hacking minds. He was funding opposition groups, things that appear to be opposition groups, anything to break apart the social fabric of trust across Russian society so you didn't know who to believe. Basically, his whole dark arts declared war on truth itself so that you would never know what was real, what to believe. So I wouldn't put it past this NRA, this National Republican Army being a Surkov invention. According to Ilya, Surkov was arrested back in April for his part in the disastrous war planning in Ukraine. Surkov's brainchild was the Donbas People's Republic.

Andrea Chalupa (44:09):

Those so-called breakaway regions in Eastern Ukraine that are just Russian military occupation. Surkov was involved with those guys. Money that he was allegedly supposed to be sending to them, he was pocketing or so forth and that was the reason for his arrest in April allegedly. We haven't really heard much from him since. But somebody as creepy as him, who's got his whole backstory of wanting to be this like... He's written novels. He's had a novel adapted into a play. He has a lot of fun toying with people's minds. He has a lot of fun spinning this web of different narratives. He has a lot of fun with this whole idea of inventing reality, creating different versions of reality so that the truth is meaningless, right? So Surkov is the real Putin's brain. Surkov has had a major impact on Russia as we know it far more than Dugin and a really good book for people to wrap their heads around everything that I'm saying and just drop themselves into this surreal acid trip that is Surkov and Putinism, read this book by Peter Pomerantsev. What is that book called? Sorry, we're doing this episode completely off the top of our heads.

Sarah Kendzior (45:19):

Like, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible* or something like that?

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, that's the one.

Sarah Kendzior:

Hold on, I'll look it up.

Andrea Chalupa (45:23):

It's on the Gaslit Nation Reading Guide.

Sarah Kendzior:

Hold on. It's gonna drive me mad

Andrea Chalupa (45:26):

Nothing is True and Everything is Possible.

Sarah Kendzior (45:30):

Hey, I got it right. What do you know.

Andrea Chlaupa (45:31):

That's a book that shows you the dark arts of Surkov and how he truly is Putin's brain. So all of this is to say that this whole situation is weird, but it's weird in the classic Putin way, and that this week is going to be an extraordinarily tense week. What we can count on is that Ukrainians are going to resist. They're gonna fight like hell. They're going to show moments of brilliance and creativity against the darkness. An example of that is, you know, Russians invaded with parade uniforms. They were going to seize the country in three days and have a military victory parade through the heart of Kyiv. What happened instead? Ukraine created a Russian military parade by showing burnt out Russian tanks in the center of Kyiv. And so we're gonna end this show by playing music being created by Ukrainians spontaneously gathering together on Maidan celebrating their independence day.

[clip of Ukrainians spontaneously creating music on Maidan to celebrate their independence day]

[theme music - roll outro credits]

Andrea Chalupa (01:12:33):

Our discussion continues and you can get access to that by signing up on our Patreon at the Truth-teller level or higher.

Sarah Kendzior:

The St. Louis metro region has been decimated by record floods. My area, University City, was especially hard hit. To help flood victims in University City, donate at ucityschools.org/flood relief. Another place to give aid is the St. Louis food bank at stfoodbank.org. Climate and economic crises are everywhere so continue supporting your local food bank as well.

Andrea Chalupa:

We encourage you to help support Ukraine by donating to Razom for Ukraine at razomforukraine.org. We also encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization helping refugees from Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan. Donate at rescue.org. And if you want to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry, donate to the Orangutan Project at theorangutanproject.org.

Gaslit Nation is produced by Sarah Wilbury and Andrea Wilbury. If you like what we do, leave us a review on iTunes. It helps us reach more listeners. And check out our Patreon, it keeps us going.

Sarah Kendzior:

Our production manager is Nicholas Torres and our associate producer is Karlyn Daigle. Our episodes are edited by Nicholas Torres and our Patreon exclusive content is edited by Karlyn Daigle.

Andrea Chalupa:

Original music on Gaslit Nation is produced by David Whitehead, Martin Vissenberg, Nik Farr, Demian Arriaga, and Karlyn Daigle.

Sarah Kendzior:

Our logo design was donated to us by Hamish Smyth of the New York-based firm, Order. Thank you so much, Hamish.

Andrea Chalupa:

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