

Gaslit Nation Transcript
"American Gestapo"
22 July 2020

[begin excerpt from Hiding in Plain Sight]

Sarah Kendzior:

During the Cold War, Soviet and Soviet-adjacent intelligence services routinely created dossiers on Westerners and used this information to manipulate individuals and influence world affairs. US intelligence agencies employed similar tactics, though they deployed them in the USSR in a less aggressive, and arguably, less effective way. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, states that remained authoritarian, including Russia, gave their security services new names while employing the same brutal practices, while states that embraced democracy like the Czech Republic began reforms. Surveillance is to be expected. Kompromat is not unique. What is not typical, however, is for documents to claim that, beginning in 1977, Trump would remain completely tax exempt for the next 30 years, thanks to a mysterious arrangement between his company and the American government that he was contractually bound to have three children with Ivana, which he did, and that he was being groomed to run for president in 1988, which he nearly did.

Sarah Kendzior:

Despite repeated demands from officials, Trump has still not released his taxes to the American public. The head of the IRS has not complied with congressional requests. No member of the US government has commented on the CSSR files, despite the perplexing nature of the claims inside them. The only journalist who did a followup on the files' existence was British reporter, Luke Harding. Harding tracked down Czech officials who affirmed that the files were real and told him "it wasn't only us who paid attention to him." The first department of the STB—the Czech Security Services—were interested in him. "I don't know if the first directorate shared information on Trump with the KGB. I can't verify or deny." The question of whether Trump, in 1977, at the height of his tutelage under tax-dodger, Cohn struck up some incredible agreement where he would pay no taxes to the United States until 2007 is not just unanswered, but unexamined.

Sarah Kendzior:

The answers could be found. The IRS should know. Given the number of times Trump business dealings have fallen under investigation by federal agencies, including the Department of Justice and the Treasury, other government agencies may know too, but the American people do not. The question of why we do not know remains as enormous, and is disconcerting, as the information in the Czech files themselves. The late 1970s ushered in an era in which the rich paid less and less to the government, and the poor worked and suffered more. Trump was introduced into the corrupt world he now inhabits and developed the tactics he now employs to evade consequences. Just as the world itself was changing to reward white collar criminals like himself. In the 1980s, he became symbolic of this era and its rapacious greed.

Sarah Kendzior:

But the extent to which he showcases wealth as raw power is distressingly literal. He was not merely an outcome of the economic restructuring ushered in by Reagan's union busting and trickle-down economics, and he was not merely a brazen player in the corporate raiding and glitzy rebuilding of New

York City. Trump may have been involved in an unparalleled and inexplicably pact with the US government to remain above the law, one that was likely buffered by criminal actors and hostile foreign states. This disturbingly parallels his present day actions as president.

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Sarah Kendzior:

I'm Sarah Kendzior, the author of the bestselling books, *The View From Flyover Country* and *Hiding in Plain Sight*.

Andrea Chalupa:

I'm Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker, and the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*, available now.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is *Gaslit Nation*, a podcast covering corruption in the Trump administration and rising autocracy around the world. Today, we are going to be discussing a new tragic case that's linked at least tangentially to Deutsche Bank, which is a nexus of corruption that we've described on the show many times in the past. On July 20th, a gunman dressed in a FedEx uniform opened fire at the family home of federal judge, Esther Salas, killing her 20-year-old son, Daniel Anderl, and seriously injuring her husband, Mark Anderl, who is a criminal defense attorney. The brutal attacks on Salas' family immediately set off speculation as to the motive of the shooter.

Sarah Kendzior:

On July 15th, Salas had been assigned to preside over the class action lawsuit against Deutsche Bank, which alleges that Deutsche Bank had poor financial reporting practices and made misleading statements to securities investors, resulting from Deutsche Bank's desire to obscure its anti-money laundering deficiencies and its poor monitoring of high-risk customers, such as Jeffrey Epstein. At the time of this recording, there is still a confusion over who the shooter was and how he allegedly died. Media outlets are saying that Salas' son was murdered by attorney Roy Den Hollander, a vicious misogynist and self-described men's rights activist with a long history of threatening violence toward women. Den Hollander also has an unusual background that includes working in high finance, in intelligence and in Russia, but we'll get to that later.

Sarah Kendzior:

Because, regardless of who was responsible, the targeting of Salas' family is emblematic of broader attacks on judges and federal officials that have been happening since Trump took office. We are living in a mafia state that has left any official investigating or prosecuting Trump, Kushner, Epstein, Manafort, or related parties, deeply vulnerable. Trump's mentor Roy Cohn, the New York mafia lawyer and GOP advisor, famously said, "I don't want to know what the law is. I want to know who the judge is." We've

seen many examples of his philosophy in practice. Here are just a few who've been threatened in connection with the heirs to Roy Cohn's crime cabal.

Sarah Kendzior:

First, there's T. S. Ellis, the judge in Paul Manafort's case, who was threatened with physical violence and had to have deputy US Marshals guarding him during the trial. The jury was also threatened, and Ellis said he feared for their safety. When Manafort returned to court following the threats, Ellis behaved like a supplicant, lowering Manafort's sentence below that recommended by federal guidelines and proclaiming Manafort, a blood money soaked career criminal, to be a person who had led a "otherwise blameless life."

Sarah Kendzior:

Then there's Amy Berman Jackson, the judge in Roger Stone's case who was threatened with death by Roger Stone. He ignored a gag order that she placed on him, and in the end, Berman Jackson, like Ellis, also gave a sentence far below that, which was recommended. Prosecutors had recommended that Stone gets seven to nine years. Berman Jackson gave him 40 months. But in the end, Trump commuted Stone's sentence anyway. Roger Stone was never punished for threatening to kill the judge in his trial and continues to walk free. Then you have other examples of federal officials, most notably the impeachment witnesses from last fall's hearings. You have Alexander Vindman, Fiona Hill and Marie Yovanovitch, among the civil servants who received a serious death threats as a result of speaking out against the Trump administration and its backers.

Sarah Kendzior:

We can go on and on from here, listing officials as well as journalists and activists, but the commonality is that all of these individuals sought to enforce consequences for the Trump crime cult and sought to bring their crimes to light. It's not unreasonable, therefore, to see the attack on Salas' family as a mafia-style warning, not only to Salas but to any federal judge. The courts are the last bulwark between democracy and autocracy, and Trump and the GOP have been eating away at them from the moment Trump was inaugurated—Trump, to protect his personal immunity from prosecution, and the GOP, to fulfill their goal of a one party state in which they wield absolute power. Salas' situation is uniquely tragic, but unfortunately, not unique.

Sarah Kendzior:

This brings us to her latest case, which is worth examining as it's likely to be the target of future attacks on lawmakers, and that is Deutsche Bank and Epstein. The Trump administration is a transnational crime syndicate masquerading as a government with operatives all over the world, but there are a few points at which they all converge, and Deutsche Bank is one of those points. To review briefly, Deutsche Bank is the only bank that would lend to Trump following his bankruptcies in the early 1990s. In 2019, the House Democrats subpoenaed Deutsche Bank for Trump's financial records, but has still not gotten them.

Sarah Kendzior:

Deutsche Bank is a primary mode of money laundering for the Russian Mafia, and was the mechanism through which operatives like Trump received and moved around their cash. Deutsche Bank was also a primary bank of Jared Kushner who was suspected of using the bank for money laundering and facilitating election interference. Bank executives at Deutsche Bank were particularly interested in

transfers that Kushner made from his companies to Russian operatives in 2016 and 2017. But the executives were told not to raise the issue with the US Treasury. We'll take this moment to remind you that the US Treasury was hijacked by Russia in 2015 and remains so today.

Sarah Kendzior:

We have discussed this on multiple past episodes of Gaslit Nation, and you could also read long reports on it at BuzzFeed. The main one published in December, 2018 by—who was it?—Anthony Cormier and Jason Leopold. Deutsche Bank was a primary lender to child rapist and trafficker, Jeffrey Epstein, with whom they worked long after his conviction in 2008, right up to his alleged death in 2019. As we've noted in prior Gaslit Nation episodes, Epstein and his partner, Ghislaine Maxwell, were very likely working for foreign intelligence—probably for multiple countries including the US, Israel and Russia—and working with the Russian Mafia and other non-state actors.

Sarah Kendzior:

It just keeps going. Deutsche Bank was where Justin Kennedy, the son of Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, worked for 12 years. Kennedy was tasked with handling Donald Trump's and Jared Kushner's finances, and he lent Trump over a billion dollars for a failed real estate venture. As we've noted, Trump's real estate ventures are fronts for money laundering, particularly for the Russian mafia. When Anthony Kennedy abruptly resigned in 2018 and then was replaced by Brett Kavanaugh, questions emerged as to the nature of the financial relationship between the Kennedy family and the Trump family. There are related questions as to the massive debt that Brett Kavanaugh had that was anonymously paid off in ways that may also reflect the actions of this inner circle.

Sarah Kendzior:

Finally, Deutsche Bank is the preferred bank of Russian oligarchs and mafia operatives, and in 2019 was revealed to be implicated in a \$20 billion money laundering scheme. The bank had already been fined for facilitating prior schemes. Deutsche Bank has a history of brutal tactics, including surveillance and threats to control those who attempt to shed light on their finances and bring criminals to justice. They have used these tactics for decades. This is a mafia bank. So, we can discuss the shooter in the case, although the information there is a bit ambivalent at this point, but Andrea, do you have things you'd like to add onto the long list of Deutsche Bank crimes?

Andrea Chalupa:

Yes. I have a lot to say about all of this. Obviously, this is still a story, this horrible tragedy in New Jersey of this federal judge being gunned down, her beloved child killed. This is a heartbreaking tragedy. This is a major loss, and our heart goes out to this family that's been destroyed by this. It makes me furious, but let's just address that it is still developing. All the connections and motives and everything isn't fully out yet, but this is a story definitely to keep our eyes on. The larger issue, of course, as Sarah discussed is... it's terrorism. It's terrorism, plain and simple, and it reminds me of the political assassination of Boris Nemtsov in Russia in the shadow of the Kremlin, when Nemtsov was on the eve of launching a nationwide March against Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

Andrea Chalupa:

Why it reminds me of that is because when Nemtsov was murdered, the conversation by Kremlin watchers was, even if the Kremlin didn't pull the trigger, even if these assassins weren't directly hired by the Kremlin to kill charismatic, hopeful pro-democracy opposition leader, Boris Nemtsov, they still

created a culture of terror. They still created the conditions to incite violence against somebody like Boris Nemtsov. That's what we're talking about here when you talk about this mafia lawlessness that we're being strangled by—not just the United States, but as we saw with the UK report, the UK, and as we discussed in a recent episode on Germany's Nazi crisis. So this autocracy that's growing and strengthening worldwide, this is a mafia culture of terrorism.

Andrea Chalupa:

Even if, with the off chances of some lone gunman that's operating out of ... He's incited to violence by some chat groups that he's a part of, he just hates women so much, he hates Brown women, especially. Women of color are the most vulnerable against rising autocracy. And he just decided to go out on his own and target her. It's all still the same crisis that we're up against, whether this was a direct hit, whether this was a deliberate assassination, whether this was an intimidation tactic, as Sarah mentioned. It doesn't matter. The culture exists. The culture is here. In 2016, when it was clear that we had a stolen election and that there was vote irregularities, and some of the country's leading computer scientists called for a vote recount, called for a vote audit because probability demanded it, and that there was suspicious numbers that they felt warranted a vote audit of key battleground states that swung last minute for Trump—Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania.

Andrea Chalupa:

States that were part of Mueller's report in terms of states that Putin's operative, Manafort, took an interest in, in terms of data in those states. Hillary Clinton did not come forward as the presidential candidate in 2016 demanding a vote audit in those states where she had standing. Hillary Clinton did not do that even though her campaign was directly asked by these computer scientists to come forward and to call a vote audit. She did not do that. Jill Stein instead did. We all know what happened. But you can't really blame Hillary for not coming forward, as frustrating as it was at the time, because Hillary had a giant target on her face.

Andrea Chalupa:

They unleashed, as part of this culture of terrorism, these mafia tactics. Michael Flynn and his son were pushing Pizzagate to incite violence against her, accusing her of essentially running a pedophile ring out of the basement of a popular pizza shop in the heart of Washington D.C. And what ended up happening? Some young, dumb kid from North Carolina drove up and shot up the place. You do not need to have some mafia kingpin having his goon squad pick up a phone and have one of their idiots go out and shoot up a judge. You don't need to be that direct anymore. It's enough to fan the flames of violence and incite this culture of terrorism.

Andrea Chalupa:

We've had this as a long part of our history. Look at Steve Bannon who is worth an estimated \$50 million. He called Trump a blunt force instrument. Racism and misogyny are the blunt force instruments of multi-millionaires like Steve Bannon to protect their interests, to protect their money, to protect their corruption. Steve Bannon, who does business with Robert Mercer, a major American oligarch. They're using guys like Trump, they're using this whole culture of corruption, they're using white supremacy, they're using misogyny, to terrorize the rest of us and keep us in check.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah, absolutely. I think the point you make that there exists these people—mostly men—who are incredibly angry, who are susceptible to propaganda and who are being weaponized by people like Bannon through online groups. What they do when they create something like Pizzagate is they create this mirror vision of a really dark and dangerous reality that's evident in people like Jeffrey Epstein and his child trafficking rape operation, which was preceded by Craig Spence and the Franklin scandal. There are all of these cases that get labeled at times. It's like, "oh, that's QAnon phenomena". Then all these people who get led into QAnon because they're searching for answers about these very real cases of child trafficking, black male threats murder involving the US federal government. They are right to be digging into this.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is the kind of thing that mainstream reporters should have been digging into for decades. What they do is create that mirror image, so that instead of Epstein's actual operation, you have Hillary Clinton in a non-existent pizza parlor basement. They're very good at what they do. It's both a coverup and it's narrative inversion, to bring out people who already have violent impulses and who could be molded and manipulated. As I said, as we've both said, it is early to say what exactly happened with Roy Den Hollander, but he fits this profile of somebody who is useful in multiple ways. He's somebody with the long track record of horrible, misogynist screeds all over the internet. He's somebody who is kind of ... I need to call him a lawyer. He's like a Michael Cohen type, like a lawyer and a fixer, and he's also somebody who, as I said, worked for private intelligence, most notably the firm Kroll Associates, and he worked in Russia for a long time.

Sarah Kendzior:

There's this kind of fatuous debate going on now: is he a misogynist, or is he just a really big fan of the Kremlin? I'm kind of like, those things often go hand in hand, and we have discussed that on the show before. Den Hollander's writings about Russia in the 1990s are very reminiscent of the kind of writing you find from people like Mark Ames or Matt Taibbi, where he is bragging about his harassment of Russian women, or comparing Russian women to American women and deeming Russian women superior because they can't resist the amazing charms of a Den Hollander. Then of course, he finds out that Russian women were desperate for money and were just using him basically as a human ATM, becomes embittered, and then has this crazy career of harassment.

Sarah Kendzior:

But there are a few connections that I think are worth looking at, not necessarily to say this is why he murdered the son of the judge but just to show how enormous this circle of mafia related operatives is. It's pretty easy to find a connection between him and Epstein and Maxwell. As I said, he worked for Kroll Associates. That was an organization that Robert Maxwell had met with shortly before his death. There's a Vanity Fair article about that. There's speculation that they had threatened him. Den Hollander also claimed that he knew numerous Russian Mafia operatives. In his writing, he reveals a clear understanding of how mafiosos, oligarchs and the Kremlin interact. He claims that he married a "Russian Mafia prostitute".

Sarah Kendzior:

That claim is not substantiated. NBC says, and I'm in a reading from them now, "On one website, he uploaded years of tax documents, marriage documentation, and correspondence with the FBI. One set of files, cryptically named, "InCaseSomethingHappensToMe.doc," and "ContactNames.doc" includes

contact information for Russian lawyers in case of his death. The files were uploaded in September, 2016. Den Hollander spent considerable time in the 1990s in Russia, where he claimed he ran a detective agency. He gave a speech to the Kremlin in 1993, which he posted on his website. Whatever you think of this, this guy falls in this category of horrible Westerners, people like Paul Manafort, for example, that went to the former Soviet Union on a pillaging spree and could easily make their way through a lawless society, abusing women, further eroding the rule of law.

Sarah Kendzior:

We, in the West, are reaping the consequences of these people who were euphemistically called lobbyists or consultants, but were mafia associates. That's what this guy was. That's what Manafort was. That's what former FBI directors, William Sessions and Louis Freeh were. There is a giant untold story here—or a partially told story, I should say, since we've been making an effort to tell it along with people like Craig Unger or Malcolm Nance and others looking into the Russian Mafia and its connection to Western institutions—but it's a story that makes people uncomfortable, because it just shows the sheer level of complicity and of Western arrogance, and the combination of incompetence and malice that also defines our modern era.

Andrea Chalupa:

I was talking to a friend of mine who's sanctioned by Russia, and this was during the early years of the Trump regime. I had to go to Ukraine and I was nervous about it. I asked him, I'm like, "Do you think I'll be safe?" He said, "Well, the rule of thumb I practice for going to Ukraine, as long as you don't mess with anyone's money, you're not going to get killed there." That's how mafia corruption cultures work. If you mess with someone's money, they'll kill you. That includes judges, that includes journalists, that includes members of parliament. Now that we have a federal judge who is dealing with sensitive cases, as Sarah pointed out, that's a chilling message to everyone else who's on the front lines, including journalists, including public officials. It's a strong message. It's a scary one. In the US, in recent history, we had the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the assassination of his brother, Robert Kennedy, and then the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Those were major assassinations that sent a huge trauma. I believe that the Progressive movement in America was carrying that trauma for decades to come.

Andrea Chalupa:

I think when you look at Obama and why didn't president Obama, as the first black president, do more to be more progressive? Why did he sort of fall into this trap of being more of a moderate? There was a lot of disappointment that Obama didn't go for the jugular as Progressives need to in order to finally move our country forward. We play too nice. There was a saying with Obama, that he was too much Hawaii and not enough Chicago when he was president. I think, being the first black president, he had a massive target on his head, a massive target on his head. All of us held our breath when he was inaugurated president and had to walk down Pennsylvania Avenue. He wore a bulletproof vest.

Andrea Chalupa:

What ended up happening? Donald Trump and Melania Trump led the birther movement, which was amplified by Kremlin propaganda, and Michelle Obama would go on to write how the birther movement put a big target on her head and how she feared for her family. A lot of those high profile assassinations of leading voices for the Left in America, in the 1960s, I think those assassinations put out a chilling warning that left a deep, enduring trauma for a very long time, that I think really prevented any real change at the highest level of government because we were told in the '60s that we had a target on our

head. I think that's something that doesn't get addressed enough, the enduring trauma of those warnings that were sent to us.

Andrea Chalupa:

If you look at Martin Luther King, one of his last public speeches was coming after people's money. He gave the speech, *The Other America*, saying, why are white farmers getting subsidized for not planting, for not doing certain things? People of color are getting held down deliberately and when we ask for you to get your knee off our neck, you're saying that we're beggars that were asking for handouts. Listen to Martin Luther King Jr's, *The Other America* speech, where he full-on declares a war on poverty. Again, it's that statement: if you come for people's money, they're going to kill you. It's not surprising that, of course, a month later, they shoot him dead, because you had this culture of corruption, this white supremacy that was being used as a blunt force instrument to protect people's money, to protect the white ruling class.

Andrea Chalupa:

When we talk about Deutsche Bank, when we talk about income inequality, when we talk about the mafia state that we're being choked by presently in the US, that our friends in the UK are being choked by, what we're talking about is standing up to white supremacist terrorism. That's why you cannot... you must always talk about white supremacy at the center of this because it's being used against us as a blunt force instrument. I'll keep saying that. I know I'm repeating that a lot, but I feel like people aren't understanding this. You know what I mean? I feel like we could have run this episode as a montage of other previous episodes, and people might not notice because—.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. No, it's true. It's one of those things like when I get interviewed about authoritarianism and people are constantly asking me to provide examples from foreign countries, which obviously I do, because that was my field of study, especially in the former Soviet Union. But the point I always make is that the US has had state-sanctioned autocratic practices and they are almost always based on racial or ethnic categories. Whether it's slavery or Jim Crow, or Japanese Internment Camps, or native American genocide, those were all legally sanctioned. Those were all things that our founding fathers and others participated in or indulged. So, when you want to look at how this is going to play out as American autocracy, as Trump moves closer and closer to full fascism, it's always going to be intertwined in white supremacy and especially in anti-blackness.

Sarah Kendzior:

That is how whiteness as a category was created in America, as an opposition to black Americans. That's how immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe became progressively known as white over time, even though they were not categorized as white upon arrival. If you don't address that original sin, you're not going to get anywhere. I've always encouraged people to look not just at foreign countries. Don't look at authoritarianism like it's a foreign import. Look at it as something that can happen absolutely anywhere, including here, and has happened here, and it's going to exploit the injustices and deep flaws that already exist in our country.

Sarah Kendzior:

There's been plenty of talk about this in a legal sense—the exploitation of the Electoral College, for example, although that itself is of course linked to slavery—but when people try to sort of act as if, oh, this is just an identity politics conversation, I mean, it is so—

Andrea Chalupa:

No, it's central.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yes.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's how they're ripping us apart. It's how they're turning us against each other. The Kremlin is a mass murdering terrorist state that's xenophobic. That's core to what it does. The Kremlin's propaganda machine is Fox News on acid. They're funding right-wing extremist groups across Europe. They're getting all of these blunt force instruments together, united. That is what is destabilizing the world right now, and guess what? A lot of us are waking up to anti-racism today and waking up to Black Lives Matter because this worldwide autocracy that's been growing with force and unified—the Kremlin and Trump and Boris Johnson and so forth—it's unified, it's growing stronger, and it's finally hurting white people.

Andrea Chalupa:

This pandemic is, of course, targeting Black people and Brown people more, but white people are dying from this pandemic. A pandemic which could have been stopped if we had a functioning government in the United States. People would be alive today if Trump and the Kremlin had never stolen the 2016 election. When white people are dying en masse because we've allowed the violence white supremacy to go unchecked for so long, that's why people are finally waking up to Black Lives Matter and what that means like, oh, so it's not about political correctness. It's about seeing people as less than human, as completely disposable, as means to an aim. As the shit we grow our money in, as the saying goes in Ukraine.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah, I think the disposability, that's the key, is that white people, most of them, I think, for the first time, are realizing how disposable they are, and they're realizing what it feels like to live under an occupying power, to live in a country where laws change on a whim, where they don't apply to you, where the government can do with you what you will. That has been the Black experience of America, that's been the experience for a lot of immigrants, particularly from Latin America. That's obviously the experience of Native Americans who had been here and went through their own genocide. But for white folks, it's much more varied and there is just intense denial, I think, about the real trauma of that and the incredible power imbalance that often was not insurmountable.

Sarah Kendzior:

We're going to talk a little bit about John Lewis in a few minutes, but he's such an important and interesting figure because, much like Martin Luther King, there's this kind of glamorous image of, “he went out and fought for civil rights and got beat up and then it turned out okay”. The hardship that he endured, and the length of time that it transpired, and the things that he witnessed in his life—not just the wins, but the losses—they're often sanitized. You get a sanitized version of the civil rights movement. That's what white people were often handed. That's certainly what I was given as a child, like on Martin

Luther King Day, it was as if Martin Luther King made a magical speech, then everyone agreed to hold hands and racism ended.

Sarah Kendzior:

That's the kind of message that was delivered in the Reagan-era public schools. It's much more complicated than that, and we should probably talk about Portland, but I'm sure you probably have other things you want to add here.

Andrea Chalupa:

White supremacy kills en masse. Okay, so we've established that yet again. Let's go back to Deutsche Bank, the Russian Mafia bank. Just to emphasize some of the points Sarah made, I want to read from this piece from ProPublica which cites the Trump, Inc., podcast: "Deutsche Bank's private wealth unit loaned Trump \$48 million after he had defaulted on a \$640 million loan and the bank's commercial unit didn't want to lend him any further funds, so that Trump could pay back another unit of Deutsche Bank. 'No one has ever seen anything like it.' said David Enrich, Finance Editor of the New York Times who wrote the book on all this called Dark Tower. Deutsche Bank loaned Trump's company \$125 million as part of the overall \$150 million purchase of the ailing world Doral golf resort in Miami in 2012. The loan's primary collateral was land and buildings that he paid only \$105 million for, county land records show."

Andrea Chalupa:

"The apparent favorable terms raise questions about whether the bank's loan was unusually risky To widespread alarm and at least one protest that Trump would not be able to pay his lease obligations, Deutsche Bank's private wealth group loaned the Trump organization an additional \$175 million to renovate the Old Post Office building in Washington and turn it into a luxury hotel. Like Trump, Deutsche Bank has been scrutinized for its dealings in Russia. The bank paid more than \$600 million to regulators in 2017 and agreed to a consent order that cited 'serious compliance deficiencies' that 'spanned Deutsche Bank's global empire.; The case focused on 'mirror trades,' which Deutsche Bank facilitated between 2011 and 2015."

Andrea Chalupa:

"The trades were sham transactions whose sole purpose appeared to be to illicitly convert rubles into pounds and dollars, some \$10 billion worth. The bank was 'laundering money for wealthy Russians and people connected to Putin and the Kremlin in a variety of ways for almost the exact time period that they were doing business with Donald Trump,' Enrich said. 'And all of that money through Deutsche Bank was being channeled through the same exact legal entity in the US that was handling the Donald Trump relationship in the US, and so there are a lot of coincidences here.'"

Andrea Chalupa:

Coincidences, indeed. You know, Sarah, I'm going to go out on a limb here and state my opinion by this question: what if Deutsche Bank is how Putin and his core of oligarchs laundered their money to Trump all these years? We have idiot son, Don Jr., saying that Trump businesses relied heavily on Russian money. During a downturn, idiot son, Eric Trump, told a reporter, "We have all the funding we need out of Russia."

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. I think we know that at least played a vital role. It was literally the only bank that would lend to him. Of course there's all this talk about Trump and his tax returns and what's going to be revealed in them. In the beginning of the show, I played a clip from my book that raises serious questions about that. One thing that limits the tax returns or documentation from Deutsche Bank is that we know that Trump dealt with a lot of dark money. We know a lot of things weren't recorded, but nonetheless, I think that any kind of paperwork we get from Deutsche Bank is going to show that. I remember there were rumors over the summer that Russian oligarchs signed off on Trump's loans, and that this was going to be revealed through Deutsche Bank.

Sarah Kendzior:

People made a very big deal out of this and I was like, "Well, yeah, duh, obviously." The thing is, the thing that bothered me is that it was yet another example of a practice that is inappropriate, illicit, but probably not illegal. Money laundering is illegal. The racketeering is illegal, whether he's linked to trafficking, terrorism or other things that people were doing with that laundered money is illegal. I was never sure whether it was going to be evident though, in those documents, but yeah, this is the thing that drives me crazy. It's like, people should be all over the Deutsche Bank story because it implicates all these actors. It implicates Trump, the Trump children, Jared Kushner, Jeffrey Epstein, and on and on and on. There are always these people or institutions that just seem to enfold everyone.

Sarah Kendzior:

Another one is the publicist Howard Rubenstein, who over his career, he represented Trump, he represented Kushner, Epstein, Rupert Murdoch, Adnan Khashoggi, who was another associate of Trump. I believe he might've represented Maxwell, either Ghislaine or her father, Robert, the Mossad agent. Then you see with Cy Vance, he had the Trump children case, in which they got off. He had Epstein, Epstein got off, and a few more—my brain is like imploding because I'm reviewing all of this. It's in my book, *Hiding in Plain Sight*. Just read it—and yet, here we are, sussing it out while folks talk about a Harper's letter or Joe Biden's poll numbers, or other things in this alternate reality that is much more tame and pleasant than the pandemic fascist empire, crumbling empire that we live in. So, yeah.

Andrea Chalupa:

There's this great scene in *Casablanca* where Rick refuses entry into his backdoor secret casino of this German banker who works for Deutsche Bank, and the German banker goes, "I am outraged. Do you know who I am?" And Rick says, "You're lucky the bar's open to you," and rips up his card and sends him away. That banker worked for Deutsche Bank in the film, in *Casablanca*. My point is that Deutsche Bank was and Deutsche Bank continues to be a Nazi bank. Putin's mass murdering, terrorist mafia state is a xenophobic regime. They're a xenophobic regime propping up Nazis across Europe, propping up our Nazis in the White House. The Trump regime is a xenophobic mass murdering regime. They're intentionally putting children in cages. Their horrendous, inhumane policies on the border has created a sex pedophile ring, a state-sanctioned sex trafficking ring.

Andrea Chalupa:

They're doing this intentionally because they're Nazis. Once again, Deutsche Bank is a Nazi bank propping up the financial crimes, the blood money, of Putin's mass murdering terrorist regime and Donald Trump's mass murdering terrorist regime, and we need to call it what it is now. Deutsche Bank is a Nazi bank. If you look at what's going on in Germany today, go read—we'll post it in the show notes of this episode—go read that deep dive into Germany's Nazi crisis, how Nazis have infiltrated some of the

highest levels of power in Germany's military. That's so telling, because over the years, we've criticized Obama of not doing enough to stand up to Putin's aggression. Well, dear God, Obama, compared to Merkel—Obama dragged the EU with him in standing up to Putin's aggression. If it weren't for Obama, I would shudder to think what Merkel and the rest of Europe would have done on their own in the face of Putin, given how deeply entrenched Russian business interests are in Germany today, how closely linked their energy industries are.

Andrea Chalupa:

Merkel flew to the White House at one point to try to coax things down and just put the brakes on things in terms of what Obama wanted to do, but Obama really led from the front when it came to standing up to Putin's regime. I don't think he did enough, and I think maybe part of the problem could have been that he had to drag the rest of Germany, he had to drag Merkel with him because they were lukewarm when it came to standing up to Russia. It's scary now because what's happening now is you have Merkel and Francis Macron—Macron who's been harassed by yellow vests, which is being investigated for its Kremlin ties in France—and they're trying to broker a peace deal with Russia and Ukraine, and Ukraine is essentially left on its own now with the Western Alliance in shambles.

Andrea Chalupa:

Everybody, if you want to know the canary in the coal mine for world events, where things are growing, look at Ukraine, because with the US in chaos under Trump, signs are pointing—given these really disturbing Russian troop movements around Ukraine—signs are pointing that Putin is going to seize Ukraine while he can, while things are in chaos. What the hell are Merkel and Macron going to do to stop him? Probably nothing. Even if Biden does miraculously manage to win this election, even if Trump and Barr fail at stealing this election and Biden comes in as the next president, Putin is probably going to seize the time that he has now to seize even more of Ukraine while things are in chaos, and then what's Biden going to be left with? We're going to lose Ukraine.

Andrea Chalupa:

Putin's going to be expanding his empire, his Eurasian Union, which he always wanted. He wanted to establish a Eurasian Union to compete with the EU. This is what happens when we ignore the warning tremors of autocracy, as the autocrats grow stronger. Once they're in, it's a big land grab, and so that's what we're up against now.

Sarah Kendzior:

Absolutely. I think we've always said on this show, kleptocracy here is kleptocracy anywhere and vice versa. When you're looking at the actions that Putin is taking across the world or other dictators are taking, because they know that there is no strong Western alliance to stand up against them and that, in fact, they have the encouragement of governments in the United States and the UK, you should look at that in conjunction with what's happening on the ground in the US. The most alarming development—or one of them anyway—of the last week has been the emergence of an American Gestapo in Portland, Oregon. We now have secret police. This is one of these things that people would call me and Andrea crazy for suggesting that this was going to happen by 2020. Now, it is here. Last week, in Portland, federal officials in unmarked vans began kidnapping protesters off the streets and whisking them away, where they were threatened and interrogated and abused, often while being denied legal counsel.

Sarah Kendzior:

Local and state officials in Oregon have spoken out against this only to be told that the Trump administration not only isn't going to stop it but is going to be expanding these unconstitutional tactics nationwide. There have been some pundits and analysts that deemed this "spectacular authoritarianism", that said Trump was doing it to appeal to Fox News for ratings. That is not the reason. That is a side effect and that's certainly a perk for him, but this is real. This is fascism, pure and simple. They are doing it because they are an aspiring fascist regime. This is not a trial balloon. This is a grenade. They are trying to eliminate the right to protest and they are harming real people in real time.

Sarah Kendzior:

That the elimination of the right to protest is the Trump administration's goal was made clear on Monday when Trump released an executive order defining support for and participation in protest involving statues and federal property as "terrorist activity". A notable aspect of this executive order is that it also labels "assisting" in the protests in any capacity as "terrorist activity", which means that those who do things or did things like donate to bail funds, but weren't actually present at the protest could also be labeled as terrorists. They refer to "recent violent acts," meaning that this order is potentially retroactive.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is extraordinarily dangerous and it mirrors the kind of legal edicts that you see in authoritarian states, where any dissident, any opponent of the government, is labeled a terrorist under a sweeping and broad definition. We warned you back in June in our Gaslit Nation episode called Reichstag Fire that this is what they're going to do, and that is why the definition of Antifa, for example, was so expansive. We warned that just the fight against fascism itself, which of course we should be fighting against, because it's fascism, was going to be labeled as anti-state activity. This is a classic authoritarian move.

Andrea Chalupa:

About a year ago or so, Trump pardoned war criminals that were using civilians as target practice in Iraq and Afghanistan. He did this intentionally, turning these disgraced US military service members into martyrs, turning them into victims—as autocrats, like to always play the victim. Autocrats, and aspiring autocrats like Trump, they need sadists to be their shields. By inflicting terror, they protect the autocrat. By inflicting terror, they intimidate their political opponents. They avoid accountability. Trump is deliberately encouraging empowering this culture of terror in order to protect himself and stay in power. All of this fascist pageantry that we're seeing in Portland, Oregon, it's a continuation of that Bible stunt that they did in front of the White House, where Ivanka comes out in her stilettos and holding a big handbag that she carried the Bible in, and Barr was there.

Andrea Chalupa:

Trump stands in front of the church and holds up the Bible, and they shot a bunch of protestors with tear gas in order to clear the area. Everyone was so shocked by that. They learned nothing from it, because that was all deliberate. When Trump said, weeks ago, "We've got to dominate the streets," he meant it. There was no remorse. They're doing this all intentionally to seize and stay in power. Everybody looking at all the polling that "Biden's ahead, Biden's ahead", the conversation we need to be having is what do we do when these autocrats create all these legal mechanisms—as Barr did with covering up the Mueller Report and burying the Mueller Report—what do we do when they try to create some legal mechanism and all this statewide terror to steal this 2020 election that they know they would lose if it was free and fair?

Andrea Chalupa:

They have all these corrupt Republican on the ground who are tasked with helping them, because they have this whole culture of stealing elections. That's how they rely on seizing and staying in power. Look at the state of Georgia. I don't know what we'd do. I really don't know what we'd do other than taking to the streets in a big way, like Ukrainians have had to do to get rid of their Putin puppets.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah, it's a frightening situation. People are always asking us what to do. We have an action guide, which applies still, mostly, during the pandemic era, although, obviously you have to take into account safety issues. But one of the very frustrating things is that there are things that Congress can do now and should have been doing the entire time to, if not stop this threat, to slow it, to expose it, to take a firm stance against it. This also applies to things that Mueller could have done to things that law enforcement or the IRS or the Treasury, or anybody could have done to stop this, and they have refused to take responsibility and they've often been acting as enablers. A lot of our frustration is we have given you concrete advice about what to do.

Sarah Kendzior:

We've told the Democrats about, this is how you handle impeachment, this is how you stand up to aspiring autocratic regimes, this is how you expose them, this is why you need a chronological timeline, this is why you need to act early and you do not surrender in advance. All of these things. They don't care. I think some of the Democrats do. You see people like Ted Lieu, for example, trying to get the house to use inherent contempt, trying to enforce subpoenas. He's swatted down by Pelosi who refuses to do anything and is holding the more active and vigorous members of the House in check and enabling Trump. I always think back about the little joke that Pelosi made with Bill Barr, where he was like, "Ooh, did you bring your handcuffs?" And they had a little laugh about the very idea that he could ever be arrested.

Sarah Kendzior:

Bill Barr's somebody with whom she had collaborated, in a sense, in the past to help people who support Trump. One of them was the Rubashkin case with Agriprocessors, which people should look at, where you see letters from a number of racist Republicans—among them Steve King—and Nancy Pelosi and Bill Barr saying that they should release an individual in Iowa who turned out to be a trafficker of migrant labor, an abuser of migrants. There are all these odd collaborations, and I think people should look at this much more clearly. I've said this all along: you need to vet your officials, even if they've been in office for a very long time. You need to look at the full scope of their actions, because people had similar complaints about Pelosi when it came to, for example, not impeaching George W. Bush.

Sarah Kendzior:

We've emphasized over and over again that the situation we're in now, where we have Trump at the helm, came because there were not consequences for prior Republican crimes. Whether Watergate, Iran-Contra, the war in Iraq, the financial crisis, you see the same people again and again. They were never punished in the first place, and now we have a situation, as Andrea just mentioned, where those who were punished can be pardoned, or in Roger Stone's case, have their sentence commuted, and there is still no accountability. So one thing that really needs to happen is for Biden and others surrounding him to take a strong stance and say, we're not going to let this go this time. The country

was hijacked. It was hijacked from within by complicit, traitorous Americans. It was hijacked from abroad by Russia, primarily, but with the support of other countries.

Sarah Kendzior:

I was heartened to see that Biden did release a statement the other day about this and about the role of the Kremlin. I hope that there are actions behind his words if he does manage to get into office. But as Andrea noted, that itself is a long shot. We just had Trump tell Fox News straight out that he's probably not going to concede, even if Biden wins. He's like, "Oh, well, we'll see what happens." That's the same thing that he said in 2016. At that time, Roger Stone followed up and said, "Yeah, and we're planning a bloodbath. If Trump is not the president, you're going to see a bloodbath." Nothing has changed except for the fact that Trump has the full might of executive force behind him, and the question mark here remains the military and what they're going to do.

Sarah Kendzior:

That's what Trump is testing in Portland, and possible scenarios for the future include, perhaps, face offs between these unidentified, sort of paramilitary/unofficial state operatives that Trump has running around there and members of the military who are honoring their oath to the Constitution and to protecting the American people.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, and I know people's minds are blown because it's springtime for Hitler and all these Nazis are in bloom, and they're doing their Nazi antics proudly on the street in Portland. The way you stay grounded in all this, as Sarah mentioned, is go to the Gaslit Nation Action Guide, gaslitnationpod.com, and go look up the section where we talk about joining a community. It's never been more important to join a community. There's two essential organizations that you could give money to right now that are doing the all important local work on the ground in turning states blue. They're responsible for turning Virginia blue, and they've flipped a lot of important state governments. They're undoing years of Karl Rove's far-right takeover of our country, state by state.

Andrea Chalupa:

Please give to these two groups. They're called EveryDistrict and Future Now. EveryDistrict and Future Now. Two essential organizations working on the all important grassroots level, state races. That's where the major fight is won. The federal government may have fallen. So, it's up to each of us to clean up our own backyard and to help our fellow citizens across the nation to clean up their own backyard by supporting these two essential groups, EveryDistrict and Future Now. Remember, as dark as things are, this is just another dark chapter in America's long history of dark chapters. Remember, America has a tendency to burn itself down and then build itself up again. We're on fire currently. To remind us to stay in the fight and to stay engaged, here are the words of the great John Lewis who stared this evil in the face throughout his entire career and we're forever grateful to him. We're going to play a wonderful tribute by NBC News now.

John Lewis:

There comes a time when you have to say something, when you have to make a little noise, when you have to move your feet, keep marching, keep sitting in, keep standing in, keep protesting until the sagging walls of segregation come tumbling down. I say to all of the young people, to all of the children, we are getting in good trouble. Set people free. We can do it. If we fail to do it, history will not be kind to

us. People have a right to inquire. They have a right to know. The people have a right to know whether they can put their faith and trust in the outcome of our election. We must cry and we all must cry together, and we want our freedom and we want it now.

John Lewis:

Our children and their children will ask us, "What did you do? What did you say?" For some, this vote may be hard, but we have a mission and a mandate to be on the right side of history. It doesn't matter whether we are Black or white, Latino, Asian-American, or Native American. It doesn't matter whether we are straight or gay. We're one people. We're one family. We all live in the same house.

Andrea Chalupa:

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:

We want to encourage you to donate to your local food bank, which is experiencing a spike in demand. We also encourage you to donate to Direct Relief at directrelief.org, which is supplying much needed protective gear to first responders working on the front lines in the US, China and other hard hit parts of the world.

Andrea Chalupa:

We encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization, helping refugees from Syria. 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 the orangutanproject.org. Gaslit Nation is produced by Sarah Kendzior and Andrea Chalupa. 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 managers are Nicholas Torres and Karlyn Daigle. Our episodes are edited by Nicholas Torres and our Patreon exclusive content is edited by Karlyn Daigle.

Andrea Chalupa:

Original music in Gaslit Nation is produced by David Whitehead, Martin Visenberg, Nick 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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