

Gaslit Nation Transcript

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"Last Night" - Live Episode

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[intro - theme music]

Sarah Kendzior (00:10):

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 available for our pre-order now. Also, I'm gonna have some more information about a special pre-order that I'm gonna post in the Patreon, a special opportunity. I'll have more about that later.

Andrea Chalupa (00:34):

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.. It is quite literally the film the Kremlin does not want you to see because they keep shutting down screenings of it, as we'll talk about in this week's show.

Sarah Kendzior (00:54):

Alright, and this is *Gaslit Nation*, a podcast covering corruption in the United States and rising autocracy around the world. And so this is our regular weekly episode, but we're recording it today live with our wonderful Patreon supporters in attendance. I just wanna thank all of you so much for listening to us for the last over four years of *Gaslit Nation*, four years that we have spent waiting for some kind of major, meaningful accountability to be taken against Trump and his crime cult. Has that action been taken? Is the Mar-a-Lago raid a significant development? That's what folks are asking and we're gonna discuss that today. So, Andrea, I'm gonna just run through some talking points that I whipped up in the dead of night during the floods. Feel free to break in with your own views on that. Trump—

Andrea Chalupa (01:54):

Got raided.

Sarah Kendzior (01:55):

Yes, Trump got raided by the FBI.

Andrea Chalupa (01:59):

The first president ever. Another first: first to be impeached twice, first to be raided by the FBI.

Sarah Kendzior (02:05):

First to be a Kremlin asset, first to be a... Well, I don't know if first to be a career criminal. Probably not. First to be an essential figure in a transnational mafia syndicate for numerous decades while our intelligence and law enforcement agencies looked the other way, which is why it is notable that they seem to *maybe* not be doing that this time, but the raid itself leads to a lot of questions. Among those questions are, Is there any valid source about what happened in this raid besides Trump himself, who is not exactly an arbiter of truth and transparency? So there are some things that I wanna go through here,

some questions I've had. The first thing is that the basis of the raid was to rescue the documents that Trump took from the White House and stored in Mar-a-Lago for the last, gosh, how long has it been now?

Sarah Kendzior (03:03):

18 months. We've known about these documents for a long time. We've known that Trump and his cohort, in particular Jared Kushner, were stealing and likely selling state secrets. We warned that that would happen before Trump got into office, we warned about it while he was in office and we warned about it after he was in office. And so this whole issue of the missing physical documents is very interesting because part of me wonders, why would Trump keep them for so long? I have no doubt that he stole them. And I do think that the FBI raid is absolutely justified. When I heard that there was a raid of Mar-a-Lago, my only question was like, for which crime? Because you're dealing with a multitude of offenses. And this one has to do with physical national property held by a private citizen illegally after their tenure in office.

Sarah Kendzior (04:04):

So yes, this is absolutely justified. Yes, in this case, the FBI and the DOJ have done the right thing. That said, I still have concerns. As I've said many times, the worst thing that you can do regarding Trump is to make this situation—this vast national security threat that we've been dealing with for so long—about one man. This is about a transnational crime syndicate. It was about a transnational crime syndicate masquerading as a government followed then by a government that continued to mask the transnational crime syndicate. They have been enablers of this elite criminal impunity that has been a blight on our nation for so long. And so you need, in this case, to take down the whole operation. If this is a first step in that, then that's a very good thing. If this actually leads to greater action and to the inability of them to harm us, because that is what is important is that the public is harmed.

Sarah Kendzior (05:06):

The American people have been harmed. We are not safe from these individuals. We see them freely confessing their crimes today, like Paul Manafort does. We see them plotting for further coups, like Stone and Bannon and Flynn do. This is what happens when you let people free. So you need to look at that. You also need to examine the institutional rot and complicity that got us to this point, that allowed Trump to get into office to begin with, and then got out that rot as well. That would be true accountability. That would be a sequel. I'm just gonna bring up a couple more points, and I'll let Andrea jump in in a sec. I just wanna get through some background in this. In July, I believe it was July 23rd, Trump issued a strange warning on his social media network, Truth Social, a dark picture of himself, you know, kind of looking away and then the date, August 8th, underneath it.

Sarah Kendzior (06:08):

And so a lot of people were wondering, well, what's he talking about regarding August 8th? A lot of folks thought maybe he was going to announce another run for president because in this country you can plan and plot a violent seditious coup against your country and then run for president again like a Cosa nostra Grover Cleveland. Anyway, eight is a symbolic day for Nazis and for white supremacists, so some folks thought that that was a little wink, wink, nudge towards that part of the Trump base. But 8/8 ended up being the day that Mar-a-Lago is raided. As I said before, there have been no videos or photos of the raid, including from Trump, so we don't really know all this played out. This stands in contrast to other FBI raids of Michael Cohen, of Giuliani, of even Epstein and others in the Trump crime cult.

Sarah Kendzior (07:04):

There's also been no comment at this point—I should say we're taping Tuesday morning—from the FBI, and that's not unusual at this stage and it's appropriate, I think, at this stage because this did just happen and it's an ongoing situation. And of course the fact that they didn't announce a raid in advance is appropriate. That's not my concern here. My concern though is that a media savvy proto-dictator demagogue incredibly skilled at media manipulation and social media manipulation is the sole source of information about the raid. And he's, of course, the guy who got raided, sooo, major grain of salt here. I'm gonna bring up one more thing and then sort of let Andrea respond to what I've been saying, which is that this is not the first raid of somebody in the Trump crime cult during the Biden administration.

Sarah Kendzior (07:59):

There was a raid of Rudy Giuliani. There was a raid of Oleg Deripaska, a major backer of associated players in the Trump crime call, in particular Paul Manafort. There was a raid on Joseph diGenova, a person who has praised Merrick Garland—who in fact wanted Merrick Garland to have a high position in government—and his wife, Victoria Toensing. Both of them are corrupt GOP operatives who worked as Trump's attorneys. We've also seen... I guess the raid of Epstein was obviously before, but anyway, we've had a long series of raids which either resulted in no meaningful action or accountability in terms of preventing these people from committing more crimes—diGenova, Deripaska, Giuliani, they're all out there running around—or they resulted in the destruction of evidence and the coverup of the crime, as you saw in the Jeffrey Epstein case.

Sarah Kendzior (08:55):

And that, of course, was facilitated by Bill Barr. This raid, the Mar-a-Lago raid, is obviously different. It matters because it's Trump. It's his home turf. He was the president. It's a bigger deal. But we need to take the long view on this. You know, the question to ask about is this meaningful, are we seeing accountability, is, Are these people being prevented from harming us further? Is the full truth of the situation coming out? Or are we focusing on minutia or on scandal? Is this being used as a vehicle for the criminals to tell partial truths to rehabilitate themselves, to cover up the greater crime, to cover up the greater attack on our national security, which was the greatest intelligence failure in US history. So I'm gonna wait and see and hope that this is the beginning of something better, but so much time has passed.

Sarah Kendzior (09:53):

The time lag is so enormous, not just since Trump left office, but since Trump started committing crimes. That time lag is literally my entire life. Like, I was born at the end of the Carter administration. Trump had already been committing crimes by that time, so there remains a lot of questions to be answered about why folks don't address the enormity of this elite criminal impunity that he has had with him his whole life. And is it really falling apart now at age 76 in a Florida compound? Alright, I have more points about Andrea, I know you're dying to comment.

Andrea Chalupa (10:32):

So obviously this can't be symbolic, as you just pointed out. It can't just be a PR move by Merrick Garland who is being called out not just by us, but a long list of former federal prosecutors who have been saying, Merrick Garland, do your job. The crime was out in the open. All the evidence is there. And then you have all these other cases, including the 400-page Mueller report, which is a charging memo, right? We'll keep repeating this because it needs to be said until something is finally done. Robert Mueller said to

Congress under oath that, yes, Trump could be indicted after he left office. Why hasn't that taken place? So we are not celebrating this because just too many of these criminals are walking free. Andrew Weissmann, who was a prosecutor working on the big Russia criminal enterprise that helped bring the Trump family to power-

Andrea Chalupa (11:28):

Andrew Weissmann made the case that Paul Manafort, who is the walking, talking, smoking gun of Russiagate, Paul Manafort was a long time hand to the king, to the Trumpian Kremlin asset Viktor Yanukovich, who ran Ukraine into the ground, tried to turn it into his own private dictatorship where he enriched himself and his family. Andrew Weissmann made the case that Paul Manafort could still be charged for various things. And that still hasn't been done. Paul Manafort is out there now on a blood money book tour, getting all this press and selling books, and he's going to sell books to the whole MAGA crowd that he, Paul Manafort, who is a longtime head of the torturers lobby, who helped some of the worst human rights abusers come into power and stay in power, the MAGA crowd is going to buy up those books because they see Paul Manafort as a political prisoner type, a martyr.

Andrea Chalupa (12:18):

So this can't just be symbolic. We're desperate for some justice here, finally, because justice is what's going to protect us and our families and our democracy from surviving the next very tight elections. I do wanna point out the fun of it, with Trump being rated on the anniversary of Nixon resigning. Nixon was another longtime resident of Florida in the winter White House in Key Biscayne. And, of course, a bunch of Nixon lackies like Trump, Stone and others worked for Trump. So that's kind of fun. And I wanna also point out another little tidbit that Eric Trump apparently was at Mar-a-Lago at that corruption compound helping the FBI and apparently may have waited before notifying his dad what was going on. Just to point out the cesspool that is Mar-a-Lago, one of Jeffrey Epstein's victims was groomed there. That's the kind of place this was. And so whatever the FBI got, I'm sure it's just the tip of the iceberg.

Sarah Kendzior (13:20):

Absolutely. Alan Dershowitz is maybe someone who should be contacted now since he's related to that case as well, serving as Trump's attorney for various federal crimes. Speaking of that, that's very interesting about the Nixon stuff. That puts another spin on the 8/8 thing. I'm nervous about what's coming this week. I'm nervous about August 10th for various reasons. I don't wanna be one of those, You can get my new book for national security secrets, like all those assholes currently peddling their stuff, but there have been a lot of strange things that have happened related to the Trump crime cult on August 10th, one of which of course was the "suicide" of Epstein. I mention some others in *They Knew*. I don't wanna have to explain it right now and waste valuable time, but the reason I'm worried is because the raid of Trump sparked an immediate, violent, hostile reaction from the right wing, which is expected.

Sarah Kendzior (14:20):

I mean, that's how they are generally, but basically this is something that they're acting like they've been waiting for this moment, like they've been waiting for this sign, which makes Trump's post that he wrote about the raid as well as the earlier July Truth Social post even more mysterious because this is potentially advantageous to a broader goal of the right wing, which is civil war and secession movements and general chaos and destruction. It's important to remember here that it is possible the FBI is actually doing its job, that it suddenly discovered some sort of competence, that Christopher Wray had an abrupt turnaround. Sure. Maybe that's what's happening. But it's also important to remember that Trump has

long had friends in the FBI, protectors in the FBI. Two former FBI heads, Freeh and Sessions, went on to work for the very Russian mafia that kept Trump in orbit for all of these decades, that backed up his properties, that used him as a money laundering machine.

Sarah Kendzior (15:29):

And that a lot of criminal elites, including those tied to this Russian mafia, have long been pushing for civil war. And so why do they want civil war? To strip the country down and sell it for parts. They've not been shy about this. You know, Bannon has admitted this. Trump has admitted this. And we've seen a steady rise in secessionist rhetoric over the last few years. Lately, this kind of rhetoric has been coming from liberal elites in the aftermath of the repeal of *Roe v. Wade*. We've seen a lot of very wealthy white people basically being, you know, to hell with you, everyone in my state, in Missouri, should die. "Everyone in Alabama deserves to die." Notably, these folks come from the north and are talking about majority Black or not majority but heavily Black, heavily Latino impoverished states held hostage by hostile COP legislatures.

Sarah Kendzior (16:25):

We've gone over that in other shows. Anyway, this rhetoric is already out there and now we're hearing it at an incredible volume from the right wing. They're now trying to get the hashtag "National Divorce" to trend. They are plotting acts of violence on their forums. So I am worried about something coming down the road this week, maybe August 10th, maybe at another time. The last time I was just worried about something happening was when I, you know, worried in 2020 about January 6th, because that date kept coming up. There's also the possibility that both the powers that be within the highest levels of law enforcement and intelligence and in the GOP and in the Trump crime cult, that they maybe wanna get rid of Trump, that maybe this is the time to move along to push Trump, as Andrea has coined the future Trump successor, most likely DeSantis, somebody who will take the broken infrastructure, the wreckage that Trump left in his wake, and break it even further, bring in an autocracy, a theocracy even further.

Sarah Kendzior (17:34):

Maybe it's just time to get him out of there. You know, he's old, he knows too much. He has a big mouth. He has a lot of evidence. He has a lot of blackmail. Maybe it's time to shut Trump up. I doubt that they will go to the extent of actually indicting... Well, I think they might indict him, of putting him in prison. I mean, you know, fingers crossed here in front of the screen... We'll see. My guess is that, like all the other many, many investigations of Trump that have gone on for the last 40 years, there will be some sort of penalty or fine. There'll be a pardon. There'll be an excuse. I hope all that changes. I mean, I wanna stress that, that I really hope I'm wrong about this and that I hope this is like the beginning of a new era.

Sarah Kendzior (18:18):

That would be wonderful, but some other things that have caused me concern about this is that as I've said for years, the ultimate litmus test of whether we are headed in the direction of justice is not Trump, but Kushner, because everything that Trump has done in terms of threats to our national security, Kushner has done in a far more severe way. And Kushner is currently active with MBS, with Netanyahu, with Russian oligarchs, with players around the world. And they treat him as untouchable. They rehabilitate him. You know, his former lawyer, Jamie Gorelick, who is helping oversee the January 6th Committee has been presenting him not as an accomplice, but as a witness for them. And even there it

fails because Kushner is so disgusting and, like, reptilian and makes your skin crawl that I think even the attempt to rehabilitate him, the American people are like, ugh, I don't need to see that.

Sarah Kendzior (19:15):

But nonetheless, this is someone who needs to be held accountable. This is someone who is a massive security threat from the minute that he got in the White House. He was not elected. There was never a reason. There's not an OLC memo for Kushner to use as a pretext. There's no reason he should have this much power. There's no reason he should have billions of dollars from Saudi Arabia that is not being looked into at all, from what I can see, and that he's using that tremendous money, power, and influence for evil aims. So if they go after Kushner, I'll actually feel somewhat better about this situation. I'll feel like the DOJ is on the right track, like America is coming back, we're in a new era of honor and integrity and accountability. Until I see a move in that direction. I'm not convinced

Andrea Chalupa (19:59):

Agreed. And I don't think anyone, especially law enforcement, should underestimate the massive appeal for Trump among the Republican base. The fascist movement, not just here in the US but around the world, the whole Nazi, actual Nazi fascist movement is being driven by accelerationism, this idea that if you just bring down the system, if you bash everything, if you just destroy it all, burn it down, then you're going to usher in the second coming and you can rebuild and everything will be better, and the only way to get to a better place is through massive destruction. The Nazi movement around the world sees Trump as their instrument for destruction, as their Messiah for ushering in accelerationism. That's what they're hooked into, this idea of like, they're so frustrated, they don't have the patience, the awareness, or any wiring of being normal people so they just wanna just tear it down.

Andrea Chalupa (21:00):

They have this authoritarian instinct. It exists in people, right? We had Dorothy Thompson write the essay during the rise of Hitler, "Who Goes Nazi?", and the conclusion of her essay is that some people have that in them. That's who we're up against now. The Nazis are back and Trump is their guy. That's a very big part of their Republican base. He's not going to go away. The January 6th hearings are not gonna get rid of him. He was the keynote speaker at CPAC and then suddenly his home gets raided. So that's what we're up against. The hooks are in, the movement is there, and they're gonna fight back. And they're gonna fight back violently, which leads us to a big summary of some good news that we've had come out, some earth changing news, which is extremely important to go down because the news I'm about to read off is going to point a big, giant red arrow to the fact that we absolutely need to do more to protect our democracy, protect our elections, protect our bodies, physically, from a fascist movement that wants to burn it all down and destroy us and imprison people.

Andrea Chalupa (22:06):

And this fascist movement, they're running for local office in droves to try to control our elections and make the Big Lie permanent, make the Big Lie law in our country, and it's gonna be extremely difficult to get out of that once they're in. So I'm gonna read off this good news and then get to the big conclusion of what this good news is telling us. The Inflation Reduction Act, which was historic, that led already to the largest inflation expectations drop ever on record for the New York City Fed's survey. The Inflation Reduction Act also includes the largest climate change investment by any country in the world, not just for the United States, but in the world. The hundreds of millions of dollars in this legislation will transform markets, not just in the United States, but around the world. If the US does something, other

countries follow because that's how big our economy is and other industries need to keep up and compete.

Andrea Chalupa (23:01):

So they're looking at this and they're going to have to make changes to be competitive in the US market. So that's big. This is going to create green new jobs. It's going to change the status quo. This cannot be overstated. It's a very big deal. Leaders in climate science are praising this and are getting emotional over it. Okay? That's how you know it's good. It buys us much-needed time to keep fighting, to keep preparing for climate resiliency. Congress also passed the CHIPS Act, which creates incentives for domestic semiconductor manufacturing in order to take on China, creating lots of jobs here in the US. This will be a big boost to our economy and strengthen American competitiveness in the world. The PACT Act was passed to provide veterans, especially victims of burn pits, the support they need. There was the bipartisan gun law, the first major gun safety legislation in decades. President Biden and his team killed the leader of Al-Qaeda.

Andrea Chalupa (23:57):

Gas prices are plummeting. Huge job numbers and low unemployment. Biden's administration resolved the baby formula shortage. And over 76% of Biden's judicial appointments have been women. Over 76%, compared to 42% for Obama and only 24% for Trump. This reminds me of when Tara Reade, who was just celebrated at some weird Soviet rally here in the US, made her claims against Biden and a *PBS News Hour* investigation interviewed nearly a hundred people who worked for Biden and found that he was actually incredibly generous and proactive in helping women get ahead in his office. That's a long record to stand on that shows up in making over 76% of judicial appointments women. That's big. Biden also just gave another massive defensive aid package to Ukraine, which has been successfully using the aid we've already given them to push back Russia's genocidal invasion.

Andrea Chalupa (24:58):

We did all that. Everything I just listed off, we did all that with our votes, with getting out the vote. We're already seeing a shift in the polls for Democrats standing a stronger chance of holding on to Congress and expanding their majority there. So that's all wonderful. That's all news that we need to bask in and pat ourselves on the back for, because we did that. We created that. So if we, Congress and President Biden can do all that, then they need to start aggressively moving on the front of securing our elections, passing election reform, and protecting our elections on the local level from the Big Lie. They also need to do whatever they can, even by executive order, the most aggressive as possible, to pass an assault weapons ban, because what is Trump's army of stormtroopers going to do? They're going to do what they've already been doing, but in bigger numbers. They're going to be turning to assault rifles to gun down people anywhere, especially Jewish communities, especially non-white communities.

Andrea Chalupa (25:58):

They're going to keep doing more of that. So Biden and the Democrats and Congress have showed us that when there's pressure, when the people are demanding it, when the poll numbers are demanding, it, when you're down in the polls, when you're against the ropes, you can fight like hell, you can succeed. You can get historic legislation done. Now they need to not just secure the economy, they need to not just give us a fighting chance against the climate crisis, they need to now protect us against Trump and the massive fascist movement that is very much alive and well and has been increasingly turning to political violence.

Sarah Kendzior (26:35):

Yeah, absolutely, and I hope that Biden isn't as reluctant to say the word "autocracy" or "mafia state" or "transnational organized crime" as he is to say the word "abortion" because this all needs to be addressed as what it is. The severity of the crisis, the roots of the crisis, which go back decades, need to be addressed for what it is. You know, it is good, obviously, that we've had these... I don't wanna call them wins because I hate even demarcating what happens to us as individuals, as human beings, as a society in those terms. We've had some progress. We've had some forward motion on things like climate change policies, gun policies. Is it enough? No. I mean, that's why you keep pushing for more. But yeah, it's good that, as Andrea said, they're finally showing some movement in the right direction, some willingness to move forward, some willingness to listen to constituent concerns.

Sarah Kendzior (27:29):

Among those constituent concerns is the coup, the kleptocracy, the constant threats to public officials. And here I'll say the threats to Merrick Garland should actually be a concern because as much as I can't stand him, when I see somebody like Kevin McCarthy using his Twitter platform as basically an open threat and a kind of call to metaphorical arms that may become literal arms, folks should take that seriously. It's obviously the sign of a mafia state. It's a sign of a party that is committed to destruction, that does not recognize the legitimacy of the vote. We've already seen that in individual states like mine, but they have never recognized the legitimacy of the federal vote, of the vote for Biden in 2020. Although interestingly, the time where they actually were wavering on this was right around in the immediate aftermath of the attempted coup and the attack on January 6th, where you did see Republicans saying, "My God, we can't have this."

Sarah Kendzior (28:35):

And the majority of Americans, including Republicans, wanted Trump convicted, wanted serious action then. And then what has happened since is so much time has passed that public memory has been marred, whether the memory of Democrats who work as cheerleaders for Garland, pretending he did things that he didn't do, or the memory of the Fox News crowd, the crowd that's getting all their information from there and really now does think it was an illegit election, even though after Biden won, only 3% of Americans believed that. It's now a much more common view. So they've had time, you know, this very violent faction has had time because there hasn't been accountability. And there hasn't been accountability for seditionists in Congress for people like Kevin McCarthy, who we'll remind you back in 2016 was saying that Trump works for Putin. Dana Rohrabacher and others did as well.

Sarah Kendzior (29:30):

This is long brewing. This is why when Andrea and I say you need urgency in addressing these crises, you know, it's not because we're impatient by nature. It's because we want to protect our democracy. And when you don't act quickly against these types of individuals, the problems get worse and worse, and more and more dire and more severe. And on that note, Andrea, I know you have a big thing prepared about Ukraine and this whole, you need to address the problem early seems to lead right into what you had planned. So do you wanna go into that?

Andrea Chalupa (30:01):

Yeah, I just wanna end by saying they all worship Viktor Orbán. They want to be Viktor Orbán's Hungary. They want that for the United States. Viktor Orbán, the Kremlin asset in the European Union, he engineered a dictatorship in Hungary. He did that through Trumpian tactics of massive oppression

against the opposition, through extreme gerrymandering, all of the fascist tactics that the Republicans are using to consolidate power and stay in power. And that's what they want for us. In Hungary, the opposition tried to unthroned, dethrone, whatever Orbán. They tried. They got together a diverse coalition and they still fell short because of the gerrymandering. Hungary's now an electoral autocracy. They have elections now for show, but Orbán is pretty much the guaranteed winner now. That is the end game. And once the autocrat is in, as we keep saying on this show, it's very difficult to get them out.

Andrea Chalupa (30:58):

Our time that we have left is very limited and that is why Congress, both parties—we see the bipartisan effort to try to take on Trump, we see that with the FBI raid—you're losing time. You need to put people in jail. You need to convict, you need to indict. You need to round them up. Why is Steve Bannon free? Why is Paul Manafort on a book tour? Why is Trump speaking at CPAC? Why is Bannon speaking at CPAC? You need to round these people up. Because we saw the crimes out in the open. They not only came to power in 2016 through illegal means that have been widely documented, not just by the Mueller report but also leading academics. We also saw what they did with the attempted fascist violent overthrow of our democracy out in the open. Why are these guys still free?

Andrea Chalupa (31:42):

You're sending a horrible message to our country that, you know, obviously the accelerationists, the fascists, the Nazis would be, well, they did a crime, they'd be in jail by now. And so when you wait too long to do an FBI raid, when you wait too long to indict, then it looks like a witch hunt. Then it looks political, right? That's why, yes, let the due process play out like every US citizen has a right to, but at the same time, these delaying tactics or this over-caution of not wanting to look political is ultimately gonna make you look political. So hurry up, get it together, pass the executive orders while you can, do everything you can to ensure your poll numbers by passing meaningful legislation, as you've been doing, and fight like hell. Fight like hell. All of us should fight like hell. I'm gonna be making hundreds of phone calls to get out the vote because I wanna pass that assault weapons ban. I wanna expand the Democratic majority in Congress so that we can pass voting rights legislation. So I'm gonna do my part and we need the Merrick Garlands of the world to do theirs.

Sarah Kendzior (32:38):

Yeah, absolutely. I'm just gonna say one final thing about the courts because just folks keep bringing it up in the comments. We're gonna address all your questions after the show, but the vision that the GOP has in terms of court proceedings, in terms of how a DOJ is supposed to work is going to be show trials. And one thing that I am worried about is that their plan, their ultimate plan, is to have Trump basically functioning as some sort of Vince McMahon for a televised reality TV-style show trial, whether of Hunter Biden or Joe Biden, whoever their target is. It doesn't matter who the individual is, really. It doesn't even matter what the crime is. It doesn't matter if there's evidence. It doesn't matter if it's real. This was the first reality TV president, and it was a successful operation.

Sarah Kendzior (33:22):

And it's the kind of thing that they're going to wanna continue in order to flaunt their power, to intimidate people, to discourage whistle blowers, to discourage private citizens from speaking out and certainly to discourage and terrify those holding the reigns of official power who have not yet been purged from doing their jobs. And that's the kind of thing that we will likely see if the GOP takes the

House and the Senate in 2023, even with Biden there. So time is of the essence for that to be prevented as well.

Andrea Chalupa (33:54):

Speaking of Kremlin assets, let's move on to Amnesty International. This next segment is called "Walter Duranty is Alive and Well". To open it up, I wanna just update everyone on that screening we had at the Russian embassy press office. The plan was to blast the *Mr. Jones* film at the Russians. The Russians parked a big white van to try to block us and instead we brought in a giant TV and played *Mr. Jones* that way and lit up their building in yellow and blue, the colors of the Ukrainian flag. So it was a successful night and I'm very grateful to my new friend, Benjamin Wittes, for working like crazy and really making this possible in such a wonderful way and bringing the community together to stand up to the Russians to their faces.

Andrea Chalupa (34:44):

So that was a nice evening. Unfortunately, that event marked a week where a bunch of Walter Durantys came back to wreak havoc. So if you wanna know what it felt like to be Gareth Jones in 1933, reading Walter Duranty writing in *The New York Times*, "There is no famine." Well, now you can. Walter Duranty this time is at Amnesty International. Amnesty International released a report claiming Ukraine was committing war crimes by placing Ukrainian soldiers in civilian areas and not getting civilians out in time. Simply put, Amnesty International claimed Ukraine's defending itself through urban warfare was a war crime. And that's just the beginning of a horrific case study of Russian disinformation and how it works. A bit about the report from Maxim Tucker, an editor at the *Times* who used to work for Amnesty. He had this to say: "When I worked at Amnesty, we took time on detailed reports, putting events in context. Amnesty's release on Ukraine today does not."

Andrea Chalupa (35:56):

"The result suggests Ukraine bears more responsibility for people killed by Russian strikes than Russia itself. It is both bizarre and misleading." This nonsense report—this is now me talking—this nonsense report got the law all wrong. Marc Garlasco, a military expert with a long career working with major organizations like the United Nations and Human Rights Watch on war crime investigations and mitigating civilian casualties, he wrote a thread on Twitter fact checking the report and all the ways it got the law wrong and he concluded, "Amnesty International got this one wrong. I fear the report will endanger Ukrainian civilians. While nothing has stopped Russia from hitting civilian areas, now they have an excuse. A respected human rights organization said the targets are there. I fear they will expand their targeting of civilian areas, at worst. At best, they can claim a defense." And Neil Hauer, a journalist who has written for several major news outlets, says he met the report's chief author, Donatella Rivera, in Ukraine.

Andrea Chalupa (37:07):

Neil wrote on Twitter, "Donatella stayed in the same hotel as us for several days in Kramatorsk in May. It was quite clear from conversations that she had an agenda already to be contrarian and 'well, actually Ukraine is just as bad' before she even began her field work there." Ukraine pointed out that they weren't given enough time to respond to the report. And Ukraine says that some of the claims that Amnesty based the report on came from Ukrainian soldiers being held as POWs in Russian prison camps and that these Ukrainian POWs were forced to speak with Amnesty International or face death. If that is true—and it has not been independently verified yet—this could amount to a war crime. This would

mean that Amnesty International may have collaborated in a war crime. The Russian mafia state is thrilled over the report. They've pumped it out on their propaganda channels.

Andrea Chalupa (38:08):

The Russians are even using Amnesty International's report against Ukraine to justify slaughtering civilians there. Here's what the Russian government wrote on Twitter: "When a civilian house is used for military purposes, it turns into a legitimate target for a precision strike. Ukraine continues to do it, but now even Amnesty can't handle it. Whenever mainstream media shows you photos of a destroyed Ukrainian school or hospital, always ask who was inside." That's disgusting. That's just chilling. So basically what the Russians are saying is that when you see all those bombed out hospitals, bombed schools, bombed theaters, the bodies of civilians in the news, a bombed shopping center, that is because Ukrainian soldiers were nearby, Ukrainian soldiers were hiding inside and so therefore the Russians had a right to slaughter civilians in Ukraine. That's what they're doing. That's what they're using this report as. So you know how Bill Barr came out with this coverup letter before the redacted Mueller report was released and Bill Barr did that press conference and it was just a big coverup job?

Andrea Chalupa (39:09):

That's what this report is basically. And even to this day you have a massive community on the far left and the far right that calls Russiagate a hoax. And they point to Bill Barr's coverup memo as justifying it as a big nothing, a big hoax, how it fell flat, "the whole Russiagate thing was Rachel Maddow chasing ratings", right? That's all thanks to Bill Barr. That's what this report is going to be like. It's gonna have a very long legacy in justifying Russian war crimes in Ukraine. It's going to be used by the extremes on the left and the right. That's why we're having this big breakdown of the anatomy of a Russian disinformation crime. Amnesty International did not just muddle the truth, creating disinformation and confusion so people don't know what to believe. This is bigger than that.

Andrea Chalupa (39:57):

They full-on justified civilian targets in Ukraine. That's what they did. Needless to say, the director of Amnesty International was called out on Twitter by various foreign policy, military, human rights, a broad spectrum of experts, not just Ukrainians, but experts in international law, genocide law, prosecuting war crimes, and so on. How did the secretary general of Amnesty International, Agnès Callamard, respond to the criticism? She dismissed the critics as mobs and trolls. She wrote, "Ukrainian and Russian social media mobs and trolls, they are all at it today, attacking Amnesty investigations. This is called war propaganda, disinformation, and misinformation. This won't dent our impartiality and won't change the facts." To which one young Ukrainian woman by the name of Alina Mykhailova responded, "I am a deputy of the Kyiv City Council and a soldier of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. I'm not a social media mob troll and I'm writing to you from a verified Twitter account that you have a Russian Dick in your mouth."

Andrea Chalupa (41:00):

Perfectly said. So not to be outdone, here comes CBS News. On the heels of the Amnesty International blowjob comes this big report by CBS News, this documentary, claiming that only 30% of the aid to Ukraine actually makes it to Ukraine. And so CBS news launched on Twitter a promotion for this documentary with this big 30% claim. The same far-right/far-left crowd that was already excited over the Amnesty International Russian blowjob, they start going crazy over this CBS News Russian disinformation blowjob about this 30% claim. "Only 30% of the aid that we're sending Ukraine actually makes it to the front." Now, according to one of my favorite people on Twitter, Phillips O'Brien, a professor of strategic

studies at the University of St. Andrews, he writes on Twitter, “There has never been a single piece of hard evidence supporting the 30% claim. It was an unsubstantiated claim back in April that has taken on a life of its own. It's the QAnon story of the Ukraine war.”

Andrea Chalupa:

So CBS News took a conspiracy theory and decided to make that the crown jewel to promote their documentary on arming Ukraine. Needless to say, the claim did not stand up to scrutiny and CBS News had to pull that promotional tweet for their documentary, issue a correction on Twitter, and delay the release of the documentary. But the damage is already done. It's already out there. There's already a massive amount of people that believe this and are gonna repeat this. So I kid you not, this is all happening in the year of 2022, when we're facing the existential threat of fascism at home and abroad.

Andrea Chalupa (42:52):

So who did CBS News feature in their damning documentary, painting Ukraine as a corrupt black hole where all our aid goes to disappear? None other than the author of the Amnesty International report, Donatella Rivera, the same person who ignored warnings from several non Ukrainian journalists who had covered the war extensively, who ignored the Ukraine office of Amnesty International, who allegedly, according to that one Western journalist who spoke with her when she first arrived in Ukraine, was determined to be contrarian, was determined to both-sides a genocide. Donatella Rivera, on top of all that, is not a Ukraine expert, and yet CBS News is putting her front and center in a documentary claiming that our aid is not getting to where it needs to be in Ukraine. This is all being deliberately done to weaken the support we give to Ukraine, to basically empower Russia and force some fake Russian propaganda negotiated peace deal that's just gonna buy Russia time to regroup so they can keep the genocide going over the coming years.

Andrea Chalupa:

Russia, right now, is losing. Russia right now is desperate. Russia right now needs to hit the pause button, needs to figure things out. The sanctions are gonna start to hit. What's happening in the meantime? The US is pumping Ukraine full of much-needed heavy machinery weapons to demolish Russian ammunition factories, warehouses, and all those things. Russia is being pounded right now. They needed this disinformation campaign to put the brakes on all the support Ukraine is getting. As one respected security expert wrote on Twitter, “I've spent quite a bit of time in Ukraine with the Ukrainian military. I've also written extensively about Western military aid to Ukraine. It's pretty clear to me that Amnesty International's Donatella Rivera is either horribly misinformed or deliberately lying about Western aid.”

Andrea Chalupa (44:47):

Now, what might have caused Amnesty International to go astray? Why the super cool edgelords of Kremlin disinformation, The Grayzone disinformation merchants. One board member of Amnesty International out of Finland has a long history of retweeting the worst of the worst of pro Kremlin accounts, Kremlin fan boys and girls that have written things like “the Baltics should go back to Russia, Finland should go back to Russia, Ukraine belongs to Russia,” accounts that are blatantly promoting Russian colonial genocide. These accounts are being retweeted by a board member out of Finland at Amnesty International. That sounds very shocking. So just to confirm all that, we are going to share that person's tweets, tweets about that person in the show notes for this week's episode, which you can find on our Patreon page as always. Alright, so basically here's where we are. I wanted just to warn everyone about this because you're gonna see a lot of trolls, a lot of idiots, a lot of Walter Durantys parroting all

this nonsense that we've just covered and I wanted you all to be armed and aware that Walter Duranty is back and he's at Amnesty International. And nobody there has gotten fired for this yet.

[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 stlfoodbank.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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