

Gaslit Nation Transcript

12 October 2022

“Putin’s Nuclear War Tourist Trap”

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/putins-nuclear-73192750>

[\[opening clip\]](#)

Finnish PM Sanna Marin (00:00):

The way out of the conflict is for Russia to leave Ukraine. That's the way out of conflict. Thank you.
[laughs]

[intro - theme music]

Sarah Kendzior (00:17):

I'm Sarah Kendzior, the author of the best sellers, *The View from Flyover Country* and *Hiding in Plain Sight* and of the book, *They Knew: How a Culture of Conspiracy Keeps America Complacent*, which is out now.

Andrea Chalupa (00:31):

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, the film the Kremlin does not want you to see. And we know that because they keep shutting down screenings.

Sarah Kendzior (00:48):

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

Andrea Chalupa (00:56):

All right, and now some updates for you all: A friend in Ukraine who I used to hang out with all the time when I lived there in 2005 launched a crowdfunding platform for Ukrainian civilians trying to patch up their lives, their businesses, their community programs. Join me in donating what you can at keepgoing.com.ua. The fascist in Russia will hate it if you support this crowdfunding platform and all the great projects there, even if you amplify it. Amplify it on social media, wherever you hang out on social media. The website again is keepgoing.com.ua. keepgoing.com.ua. This site is available in English so be sure to click on the English button once you pull up the website. That's [keep going.com.ua](https://keepgoing.com.ua).

If you love *Gaslit Nation*, you'll love comedian Jena Friedman's comedy Special, *Lady Killer*. She takes on the Far Right's war on women and what that means for everybody. Check out *Lady Killer* by Jena Friedman on Peacock.

Andrea Chalupa (01:56):

Gaslit Nation wants to share our condolences to the family and friends of Anne Garrels, the fearless foreign correspondent who reported from the Soviet Union and the Iraq War and many other challenging places. In her final months here on Earth with us after an extraordinary career in broadcast journalism marked by empathy for victims of war, Anne spent her final months raising money for Ukraine

through the site assist-ukraine.org. That's assist-ukraine.org. Thank you so much to Anne for your powerful seeds of hope.

Now, the midterms are upon us. Don't forget to tweet at @GaslitNation on what you are doing to help get out the vote. Remember, these midterm elections bring to power the people who will oversee our elections in 2024. So if you want to protect the electoral college from Republican ratfucking, fight like hell now to help build the blue wave this November. Tweet at us at @GaslitNation on Twitter.

Andrea Chalupa (03:04):

Let us know what you're doing to help get out the vote and join me in aiming to make a thousand phone calls (or knocking on a thousand doors or writing a thousand letters) right now to help get out the vote. From those who tweet at us, letting us know what they're doing at @GaslitNation on Twitter, we'll select five people to come on the show for a *Gaslit Nation* slumber party-like discussion. We look forward to that.

And finally, send us your scary campfire ghost stories about the state of things here in the old USA. You can make it about post Trump, Jared and Ivanka, what's in Mar-a-Lago's basement, or any other creepy crawly thing threatening our democracy. Submit your radio play by October 20th for a chance to have it produced this year, around Halloween. Thank you to all those who submit a play. We really enjoy reading what your exciting mics come up with.

Andrea Chalupa (03:54):

And our opening clip was the Prime Minister of Finland, Sanna Marin, laughing [laughs] at the end of her answer, which you may have noticed, over the question on a lot of people's minds. And she gave a very obvious answer. She's going to go down as one of the great leaders in this moment of time. This has been an extraordinary crossroads for human history. Finland: The term "finlandization" is synonymous (or has been) with neutrality, a very uncomfortable neutrality, because, during so-called finlandization, Finland was essentially politically co-opted by Soviet agents. A lot of books critical of the Soviet Union during the Cold War were banned. People were sidelined that were critical. It was a very uncomfortable gaslighting time for Finland. It wasn't really, actually, so neutral after all looking back on it. And Finland now has historically, of course, voted to join NATO.

Andrea Chalupa (04:52):

And that is, you know, if you're so genocidal that you're getting Finland to finally join NATO, that tells you something. I also wanna point out that Finland is one of the leading countries on healthcare, on social programs, on equality, on supporting families, supporting women who just gave birth, supporting people who have housing and security issues. Finland is a strong community-first country and therefore it ranks with low levels of corruption, high levels of happiness. It's an extraordinary country that provides a model of empathy and action. And here you have a fierce leader knowing that empathy in action is standing up for people who are facing extermination. And that is Ukraine—the genocide in Ukraine—no matter how long it takes or what sacrifices, like higher energy bills, whatever it's going to take. So we're gonna go through that today because people need a reality check.

Andrea Chalupa (05:54):

People need a very serious reality check in terms of the very real threats we were up against and how to manage those and how to self-care throughout it all. So that leads us to a segment that I'm calling "Putin's nuclear war tourist Trap". As we saw, the big news of the recent week was that Ukraine finally destroyed the big bridge connecting Crimea to Russia. This bridge is a symbol of Russia's invasion of

Crimea, which was done in response to Ukrainians having a popular uprising launched by journalists and civil society leaders in Ukraine. It was a people-driven movement. Western leaders, European leaders at the time weren't really thrilled about this. They tried to sort of do a peace deal that the Ukrainian people themselves ignored and instead ran Putin's puppet out of town. This is very significant. The Kremlin talking points that a lot of idiots on the far left and far right like to repeat, saying that it was "a CIA uprising", No.

Andrea Chalupa (06:59):

Ukraine's Euromaidan Revolution of 2013-2014 was a people-powered movement. It was an inspiring movement. And because the people won, Putin had to then punish them by invading Crimea, seizing Crimea, doing a fake sham referendum like he just recently did in other parts of Ukraine, and then he went and invaded through his proxies and Russian military, side by side, working together, invaded the eastern edge of Ukraine known as Donbas. And the war has been going on ever since then, 2014. All this time, Putin could have just stopped. He could have just taken the bits of Ukraine that he bit off—

Sarah KendziorL

Mmhmm <affirmative>

Andrea Chalupa:

—And built a legacy off of that. And he had the world in his palm. He bought off all the people he needed to own. He was doing very, very well. And he decided to throw that all away for reasons we're gonna go through in this show.

Andrea Chalupa (07:48):

Crimea has been suffering ever since under serious human rights abuses, especially against the indigenous group known as Crimean Tatars, who suffered greatly under Putin's hero Stalin. So it's all history repeating there. The bridge was built after the seizure of Crimea. The contract, of course, was given to cronies extremely close to Putin. It was a big corruption racket and it was a symbol of Russian imperialism. Russians are very proud of this. Even the so-called good Russians, the Russians and the opposition, they're glad they have Crimea. They're glad they have this seaside resort. They're happy to vacation there. So, you know, it's a very divisive issue between Ukrainians and Russians. It's Ukrainian through and through, and Russia has been making a mess of the place, certainly with the human rights and clamp-down against free press, political assembly and all that stuff ever since they've occupied the peninsula.

Andrea Chalupa (08:41):

Now the bridge, the big symbol of oppression, has been destroyed. And Russia did something very self-destructive in response: they threw a bunch of missiles all across Ukraine, even bombing the center of Kyiv, a major park in Kyiv with a major university on it, which is the equivalent of Washington Square Park in New York City. Washington Square Park has, you know, NYU's right there. Parks for children are in the park. People gather there for political marches, political demonstrations. That is the equivalent of what Russia just bombed in Kyiv. This was, of course, stupid and self-destructive. Ukrainians of course, suffered first and foremost; around a dozen people were murdered and around a hundred are in critical condition. Critical infrastructure was out for several hours; hot water, electricity, including in places as far west on the border of Poland as Laviv, which is a cultural heritage site of Ukraine.

Andrea Chalupa (09:42):

The reason why this was stupid and self destructive of Russia, which is part of a larger pattern, is because several reports have said and have been pointing this out for some time, is that Russia is running low on military supplies and munitions. And they just went ahead and wasted a whole bunch of missiles; nearly a hundred missiles right now across Ukraine. Furthermore, the sanctions that have been designed against Russia have weakened its war machines. So they have a hard time resupplying what they have and they're going around begging Iran and North Korea for what they need to try to fill the holes in their weakening, diminishing supplies. So this is really important to a larger theme of today's conversation because people have to understand that Russia's greatest strength is bluffing. Their greatest strength is messing with people's heads and making them think that they're scarier than they actually are.

Andrea Chalupa (10:33):

Remember, we all thought for a very long time that Russia had the second most powerful military in the world. It turns out Russia only has the second most powerful military in Ukraine. So we're gonna get down to the brass tacks of what Putin's nuclear tourist trap means, and how not to be a tourist. Know your subject. The nuclear threats, it's a faint. It's all done to make ethnic cleansing look less bad by comparison to nuclear annihilation. There are reports out of Ukraine that the big, giant missile attacks that just happened across the entire country were planned for some time, which would indicate that Putin was saber rattling nuclear war threats to scare everybody, to get inside your head, that way when all he does by comparison is just throw missiles across the entire country, "Oh, that doesn't seem so bad now by comparison. At least it's not a nuclear war. At least it's not nuclear annihilation."

Andrea Chalupa (11:32):

So then you're less likely to react to good old fashioned ethnic cleansing. You're less likely to react to reports that Putin is going to continue these missile attacks, that Putin is going to even destroy the extremely important deal that was brokered to allow Ukrainian grain ships. Remember, Ukraine is the breadbasket of Europe. It helps feed the world. And right now, if Ukrainian grain cannot leave to go to Africa, the Middle East, countless people will starve to death. It's going to make this inflation crisis even worse. And right now, Putin has amassed a massive force in the Black Sea, which threatens to cut off a grain deal, which allowed, initially, Ukrainian ships with grain to leave and go off and feed the world. That's now at risk of falling apart because Putin has now gotten it into so many people's heads that he's gonna annihilate the world in nuclear warfare.

Andrea Chalupa (12:23):

And so please leave him alone so he can commit ethnic cleansing and peace and destroy Ukraine and succeed and placate the fascists at home in Russia who keep him in power. So congratulations to everyone who fell for the nuclear bluff. It doesn't mean Putin won't use a nuclear weapon. We'll go through the reasons why he would not and why he would. It is something obviously to take seriously. So far, the US government and the UK government whose intelligence during this full total war period of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, their intelligence coming out of the US and UK has been solid. It has been reliable. And those governments are saying that they don't see an immediate threat. They don't see Russia pulling off all the stops to prepare itself for nuclear war. They're not there yet. And another thing to keep in mind: Putin has a long history of threatening nuclear war. In the lead up to the 2016 election when he really did not want Hillary Clinton to win according to common sense and according to US intelligence reports, what was happening?.

Andrea Chalupa (13:23):

Putin was doing all sorts of nuclear drills inside Russia on the eve of the American election in 2016. And you had the Russian friendly candidates—Donald Trump and Jill Stein—essentially pointing that out and saying, “Don't vote for Hillary Clinton. She's a war monger. She's gonna drag us into war with Russia.” They were sort of amplifying that hysteria, that big paranoia, that fear and uncertainty with the American public that Hillary and Russia were going to face off in some big tit for tat Cold War struggle, right? And so Putin does the nuclear saber rattling and his useful idiots in the West amplify that messaging to get inside people's heads so you back down and you hesitate and you self censor and you question yourself. As a result, you have all these idiots on the far left and the far right saying on Twitter, “If you support Ukraine, you're dragging us into World War 3. Stop support for Ukraine.” So what they're saying is they're trying to equate any support for Ukrainians to defend themselves, to protect themselves against actual ethnic cleansing, they're equating that with nuclear war that's gonna destroy the world, right? And it works, unfortunately. So that's why we have the show. It's called *Gaslit Nation* for a reason.. Let's see... Sarah, do you have anything to add before I keep going?

Sarah Kendzior (14:38):

Yeah, I mean, I'm just sort of thinking about how long we've been discussing this, both in terms of how much time has passed since the late 2022 invasion, but also just... We began this show four years ago talking about Ukraine, talking about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, talking about how Crimea had already been taken, that this was an ongoing conflict, that Ukrainians were looking for support, and that they were not only not getting it from the West and from the United States, but were under Trump having the government take the side of their adversary. And when you brought up nukes just now, I'm remembering one of the early promises Trump made after he was declared president, but before he was inaugurated, was to partner with Putin on nuclear objectives. You know, they tried to frame this as a movement for peace, a kind of abolishment of nuclear weapons.

Sarah Kendzior (15:30):

That wasn't what they were up to at all. It never has been for either of them. It's analogous to when they did their fake little, “I think Putin should have a cybersecurity pact with us.” It's a combination of trolling but also a very serious bond between dictators joining together to target a third country. That was something that Trump discussed from the 1980s onward. It was something that I think would be a dream situation for Putin to have a partner in, you know, the largest nuke-bearing country in the world with the United States to target a shared enemy. And in this case, the enemy was always Ukraine. I get very frustrated when people act as if the current conflict is new, as if it emerged this year. They were invaded and had territory stolen in 2014 and then spent eight years begging the world for their attention.

Sarah Kendzior (16:27):

When people come out and they're like, “Oh, you know, everyone gives attention to the Ukrainians but they ignore all these other conflicts!”, yes, they do ignore lots of other conflicts that should not be ignored, but this is a very long time coming. And it took the threat of nuclear annihilation and it took Putin's proposal to take over all of Ukraine—his goal to take it over in 24 hours to 48 hours that obviously did not work out—for the world to really stand up and support Ukraine, for all those Ukraine flags to come out, for people to be able to even identify it on a map. This is a long time coming. And so it's very frustrating to see because there are very few wars that are clear cut in terms of good and evil. You know, all war is awful.

Sarah Kendzior (17:15):

All war involves loss of moral integrity, of principles. It involves violence. There's nothing good about a war. But in terms of what caused this war and who is to blame for this war, I'm not sure I've seen such a clear cut case in my lifetime. This is Putin and the Kremlin—a dictatorship, a brutal mafia state dictatorship—invading a sovereign democracy under the pretext that the people who live in it are not actually who they say they are, that Ukrainian is not a viable ethnic category, that they are naturally meant to live under the yolk of Russia. And there's, of course, as you've made a movie about and we've noted on this show thousands of times, incredible historic precedent for this. So just everything about the historical amnesia that's being put forward by people who I respect on other things, you know, people like Noam Chomsky, who generally I think is very good at covering corruption, covering imperialism, certainly at critiquing the United States.

Sarah Kendzior (18:24):

I don't know how they don't see the clarity here. No one wants this war. We all want this war to end, but the person who began it needs to be the one who ends it and that person is Putin and the Kremlin and its backers. And it is incredibly clear cut. And what people are arguing for is not war like it's some sort of, you know, fun game (although sometimes it is presented like that online, which I think is grotesque and I wish that that would stop), but this is about self defense. This is about self defense on the most basic level. It's saying, "I have the right to exist" and... I don't know. If you could see the bullshit pretext of the war in Iraq, if you could see that the Bush administration invented lies and fake weapons and all of these things to invade Iraq, a more complex situation, I don't know how you could not see the immorality, the viciousness of what Putin and the Kremlin are doing and who is clearly to blame here. Every excuse that they dole out, like, "Oh no, Ukraine wanted to join NATO.", well, yeah, why do you think they wanted to join NATO? It's because they kept getting invaded. None of this is hard. That's the thing. None of this is hard and usually these kinds of international conflicts are very difficult, very nuanced. There's never really a good guy in a situation like this. This is the closest I think I've seen in my lifetime to where there really is, and it's really obvious, and it makes me wonder what's wrong with people who can't see that.

Andrea Chalupa (19:59):

If you give into nuclear blackmail, you get more nuclear blackmail. You embolden other nuclear or wannabe nuclear terrorist states like North Korea and Iran. Russia can't win against NATO. Ukraine is succeeding in this war with old NATO hand-me-downs. Old NATO hand-me-downs. Imagine the full cutting-edge technological force of NATO power, the most powerful military alliance in the world founded to withstand the threat of Russian imperial sadism. The expansion of NATO was led by Eastern European countries that suffered genocide at the hands of Russian imperialism. That's why Ukraine's toughest allies today are in Eastern and Central Europe. Meanwhile, you have Germany's cyber chief, some trust fund kid who just got fired for chatting up Russian spies. Okay? Germany and France, they've been problematic so far in this war. Germany, far worse than France, and I'm talking about the governments of course. But it's been the Eastern European allies that have been the most resolute.

Andrea Chalupa (21:10):

It's been those who have felt Russian aggression directly—like Finland, which was invaded by Putin's hero Stalin. They're the ones who are on the frontlines who are basically doing the Nazi hunting that's needed when you're up against actual fascists, proud fascists. So the bottom line is Russia is losing the war and losing badly. The Russian fascists at home are furious. If you think a dictator doesn't depend on a base of supporters for survival—they do—Putin has people in power and in the public that he needs to

please who keep him in power, who can get rid of him if he doesn't do what they believe in. And they believe—like Putin—in ethnic cleansing. There's been a lot of analysis saying that Putin is getting old. He's thinking of his legacy, of bringing back the Soviet empire as part of rebuilding Russian greatness.

Andrea Chalupa (21:59):

That's all true, of course. But just as motivating for Putin and his base of supporters is genocide. Over the past decade, Putin and his super-based base have been bringing back Stalin as a great hero. Statues have been going up to Stalin across Russia. Textbooks for children have been rewritten to glorify Stalin. All sorts of merchandise has been produced to celebrate Stalin and Putin. Nevermind that Stalin, like Hitler, was a narcissistic mass murderer who committed genocide. Arguably the worst genocide that Stalin committed was, you guessed it, against Ukrainians! The worst catastrophe of Stalinism was Stalin's genocide famine in Ukraine known as the Holodomor. That's what my film's about, *Mr. Jones*. All these years that Putin and his base have been glorifying Stalin, they've made their plans clear to us all this time: ethnic cleansing. Ethnic cleansing, ethnic cleansing. And I wanna just point out that the Nobel Peace Prize was just awarded to three different winners.

Andrea Chalupa (23:04):

One of the winners was out of Belarus, a political prisoner, Ales Bialiatski. In Ukraine, the Center for Civil Liberties, which is documenting war crimes in Ukraine by, of course, the Russian genocidal military. And then the third group was Memorial. Memorial was the oldest, most prestigious, highly respected human rights organization inside Russia. It documented Soviet atrocities. It would unearth mass graves. It would give a name back to the nameless, to the countless victims of Soviet terror. Memorial dared to screen *Mr. Jones* in Moscow. The screening was shut down and shortly after Memorial was finally shut down. Okay? And the reason why the Russian authorities shut down *Mr. Jones* in Moscow and shut down Memorial is because they want Stalin back. And the way they bring back Stalin and all the glory of Russian empire greatness is they carry out what the KGB dictatorship, what the Chekist Soviet secret police dictatorship always carried out, which was cruelty for the sake of cruelty.

Andrea Chalupa (24:11):

That's the ideology. It's a fascist, mass murdering ideology. It is real. It exists. And it threatens the lives of millions of people across Ukraine and to further destabilize the entire planet. It is unfinished business from World War II that we're now being finally forced to deal with. We used one monster—Stalin—to help defeat another monster—Hitler. Never mind that these two monsters were in alliance together. They had a pact together, which actually got World War II started; the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. When those two got together, Hitler and Stalin, and made that pact, what do you think happened? They unleashed World War II. They started carving up Europe together. They jointly invaded Poland together. The Nazis struck first and then the Soviets came right on their heels to gobble up Poland together and then they held a joint Nazi Soviet military parade in Poland.

Andrea Chalupa (25:10):

This all happened, all right? And the only reason Stalin became our asshole, the only reason why Stalin became our monster is because he got betrayed by Hiller because these mass murdering narcissists, they can't do business together. They'll eventually destroy each other, right? And so Stalin, ever since World War II, was celebrated as his great hero. My uncle, who was a refugee from Ukraine, who went to New York City with my mom and my grandparents, he remembers his high school teacher in New York City crying on the day that Stalin died, his American high school teacher. Do you know how traumatic that is

for a kid whose family survived the horrors of Stalin to then see, in your new home, people glorifying him, the person that tried to kill off your family? That's pretty traumatic for a kid to witness.

Andrea Chalupa (25:59):

And so, yeah, we kicked the Soviet fascism can down the road and it never went away. It's always been there, and it's back. And it's threatening all of us. It's threatening all global security and we have no choice but to finally, finally take care of the unfinished business of World War II. And yes, it's going to take personal sacrifice, energy bills will go up. But the faster Ukraine gets the defensive aid that it needs, the sooner this can all be done. Ukraine is doing an extraordinary job with old NATO hand-me-downs. Imagine what they could do with even greater support.

Sarah Kendzior (26:37):

Yeah, that's actually something that I've been wondering about because [we interviewed Malcolm Nance and Terrell Starr way back in February](#) and they were among very, very few people who predicted, you know, actually analyzing the state of the military and the state of sort of the spirit of each country, of Ukraine and Russia, that Ukraine could defeat Russia. And that what it needed were the tools to do so and that it needed them quickly. And that if it was able to get them quickly, this war would end not just in a, a quicker way, but in a way that spared the world a massive refugee crisis, mass graves, the destruction of infrastructure in Ukraine, all of these things that have made rebuilding Ukraine, should it win the war, much more difficult and have caused enormous pain and suffering and a humanitarian catastrophe.

Sarah Kendzior (27:29):

It's in the moral interest of the world to help Ukraine militarily. It's in just the pragmatic interest of the world to help it militarily. And instead, you know, what we've been seeing is a depopulation of Ukraine out of necessity as people flee. We've seen mass death, incredible global destabilization. Why, given that now Ukraine has shown that yes, they are capable of winning a war; yes, they are better fighters than Russia; no, Russia does not have some great powerful military, why are they not simply giving them what they need to win and therefore end this conflict that everyone hates no matter where you stand seeing play out?

Andrea Chalupa (28:18):

Yeah. The answer to that is a big fact check on the idiots on the far left and the far right who think that NATO wants this war, who think that this is a proxy war, that NATO and the US somehow provoked Russia into this war. The powers that be in the Western alliance did not want this war. And proof of this is that the idiots in Germany—Germany being a leader of the EU—the idiots in Germany ensured that they were dependent on Russian gas, which now Russia is weaponizing against them as anybody with common sense, and especially across Eastern Europe and Ukraine have been saying, “Stop making yourselves so dependent on Russian gas. They're going to weaponize it against you like they did against Ukrainians. They're going to turn it off in the dead of winter. They're going to drive up your prices.”

Andrea Chalupa (29:11):

“Do not make yourself depend on Russian gas.” The Germans were like, “Oh, of course we're going to do this.” And it's a clown show over there. It just... Chancellor Scholz just came out and said, “Oh, we knew the Russians were going to weaponize gas against us.” Oh, really, Nostradamus? You knew this but yet you ensured greater dependency on Russian gas? Make that make sense. Also, you had Biden doing a big

summit standing side by side with Putin. He did that to make the EU happy. The EU wanted peace. The EU wanted all this talked down. Why? Because the EU didn't wanna be flooded with another refugee crisis. It's done with that. It's destabilized with all these refugee crises. It further fans of flames of the far right. And then you had the US wanting to position itself, to really take on China. That was really where the winds of change were blowing in US foreign policy was to get a stronger footing to take on China.

Andrea Chalupa (30:05):

And then, of course, they got sidetracked with this war. Really the US, as good as the intelligence was in predicting the total war invasion of Ukraine, everybody—everybody—underestimated Ukraine's fighting ability. Everyone. In fact, the US was rather assertive in trying to get Ukraine prepared for gorilla warfare, thinking the government in Kyiv would fall, Zelensky would have to be based in Poland and be like a de Gaulle sort of government during the French occupation by the Nazis. And instead, Ukrainians surprised everyone. So Ukraine's allies had to really scramble and they had to be one over. They had to be convinced. Also, the Ukrainian military is mostly used to Soviet-type weaponry so there had to be training. There needed to be time for Ukrainian soldiers to learn these new systems. Those are all the good faith reasons why it's been slow getting what's needed to Ukraine.

Andrea Chalupa (31:02):

Some very troubling reasons have been, of course, Russian propaganda. Russian bluffs work. The threat of nuclear war works, especially on Germany. German dependence on Russian ties, like Russian business, works. Germany has been talking out of both sides of its mouth, claiming to give support to Ukraine but then slowing down much-needed, promised defensive aid. So Germany has been horrific on that front, very slow. And so there are some useful idiots even in the alliance that want things to go back to how they used to be where they could put their heads in the sand like an ostrich, but they can't do that anymore. It's too late for that. There's no turning back now. And really what has happened because of the slow walking of aid—much-needed—to Ukraine by some of the allies, what has happened is a new generation of leaders emerging across Europe.

Andrea Chalupa (31:58):

And now the power centers of Europe are now East and Central Europe and of course the Scandinavian countries who have been staunch allies and very aggressive and very assertive in doing what it takes to make sure that Ukraine can win this war, however long it takes. And the UK as well, despite the instability there with the UK. The UK has been consistent and resolute as well in taking a very strong lead in helping Ukraine get what it needs. And Biden has been terrific. Obviously they need to do more and they need to go faster, but one of the crowning achievements of Biden's time in office is going to be his leadership when it comes to facing off with Putin and uniting the world for Ukraine to succeed and getting Ukraine what it needs. So yes, absolutely more must and needs to be done.

Andrea Chalupa (32:45):

And the situation's extremely urgent because while idiots on the far left and far right have been biting their nails over nuclear war Russia and getting completely psyched out by that, Russia has been committing systemic rape against Ukrainians. The UN just released a horrific report talking about how Russian soldiers were raping Ukrainian children in front of family members, raping men, women and children in front of their family members. It's systemic. The rape that Russian soldiers are committing in Ukraine is a widespread problem. And then again, this is from a recent United Nations report, then you have Russian children being taken from Ukraine into occupied Russian areas. Who knows what is

happening to those children. They're being mass kidnapped. You have nearly 2 million people, including a quarter million children forced onto Russian held territory. And you have Russian missiles destroying schools, targeting schools, playgrounds, hospitals, residential buildings at night while people sleep. It's genocide. So again, why does Putin threaten nuclear war? Because it works. If you're convinced that Putin is going to drop the first nuclear bomb ever used in over 70 years, then you're going to panic and insist on sacrificing Ukraine for the sake of the world. It's like a Sophie's Choice moment. You start equating anyone who supports Ukraine as leading us into World War 3. So right now, all the idiots on Twitter who are falling for this sound like this. And now we're gonna play a clip of Trump at a recent rally.

[audio clip of Donald Trump]

Donald Trump (34:19):

We must demand the immediate negotiation of a peaceful end to the war in Ukraine or we will end up in World War 3 and there will be nothing left of our planet, all because stupid people didn't have a clue. They didn't have a clue. They really don't understand. I rebuilt our military, I rebuilt our nuclear power. They don't understand what they're dealing with, the power of nuclear."

Andrea Chalupa (34:47):

That's Trump telling you at a recent rally exactly what the Kremlin wants you to think. Anyone who thinks that way has a pro Kremlin agenda or they've never heard of the Munich Agreement of 1938. The world celebrated the Munich agreement of 1938, which ceded land in Czechoslovakia to Hitler in exchange for peace. And they've certainly never heard of Minsk 1 and Minsk 2, peace negotiations with Russia that Russia ignored, along with several treaties they've signed with Ukraine over the years. So, no, peace negotiations with terrorists do not work. They want genocide, they want ethnic cleansing, and they won't stop until they exterminate millions of Ukrainians like the Russians did under Stalin, and eradicate Ukraine from the map. Russia's war is a campaign of ethnic cleansing. It's not a simple dispute; it's ethnic cleansing. You cannot negotiate peace with someone who thinks you have no right to exist. So if you're clawing your eyes out on Twitter over Putin's nuclear threats, then you're exposing yourself as a tourist falling for Putin's nuclear war tourist trap. You've no idea what the hell is going on. Putin's nuclear war threats work on people who hardly pay attention to the war in Ukraine or the history of that region.

Sarah Kendzior (36:09):

I just wanna say one thing on here, which is I do think it's possible that he'll use nukes but it makes no difference in terms of actually forming a policy in how to deal with Putin and how to deal with the Kremlin because there has not been a single time since Putin has been in office where his word has been good, where any kind of concessions have worked, where you can make some sort of negotiation. It is absolutely impossible. And it's been obvious from the moment that he came in there. It's just that the people who aptly warned about this, the people who were brutalized first, like the Chechens for example, were ignored. And so it's like, do I think that he might do it? Yes, I think he might use biochemical weapons like he did in Syria. That was another warning that went unheeded.

Sarah Kendzior (36:56):

But none of that is actually going to deter him. If you pull back, if the West pulls back, if Ukraine pulls back, if they cede territory, all that will happen is that he'll threaten again and then he'll take more. That is what he has done the entire time. It's an incredibly consistent pattern. So I think it's very reasonable to worry about the threat of nuclear war or any kind of dramatic escalation in the war generally, but to

think of it as something to be used tactically, like in the form of negotiation, like, “Ooh, we better back off, or he's gonna do that”, he'll do it anyway. He will screw you over anyway. That is how he operates. It's a mafia state. So folks need to get that through their heads.

Andrea Chalupa (37:38):

Mmhmm <affirmative>. Exactly. And I wanna go down the list of reasons why he would not use a nuclear bomb, whether even a tactical nuke in Ukraine, certainly not a NATO member. So here are the reasons why: Putin is getting his ass handed to him by Ukraine, which is fighting with old NATO hand-me-downs. Imagine how poorly he would do against actual NATO. Russia does not want NATO to enter this fight. They know they'll get destroyed. Also, Putin is having a crisis trying to mobilize Russians for his meat grinder in Ukraine, where he's using them as cannon fodder. One commander in Russia full-on told these troops, “Get in there, you're the meat.” They say this to them. We've seen that and we've seen all the viral videos of these Russians who have just been mobilized left out in freezing fields with no food, given rusty old guns.

Andrea Chalupa (38:37):

They know they're being treated as meat for the meat grinder in Ukraine. And Putin is trying to tell people that it's partial mobilization. No, it's full mobilization that they're attempting. They're attempting to get around a million bodies for their meat grinder in Ukraine. And you have Russian propagandists on Russian State TV crying about how, “Oh, look at all these Russians fleeing the country rather than stay and fight for the motherland. What has happened to people?” They see what's happening. They see how humiliating and disastrous this mobilization has been. Now imagine if a nuclear war is launched on Ukraine. Yes, the Russian fascists will cheer and herald Putin's genocidal strongman approach. Finally, they're getting the toughness that they want to see, because Putin's getting a lot of criticism and so are his top guys that are running the Ministry of Defense. They're being seen as being too weak on Ukraine.

Andrea Chalupa (39:33):

They wanna see Zelensky's home being bombed. They wanna see all the command centers across Ukraine being bombed. They wanna see all the civilian critical infrastructure being bombed so people have no electricity and no drinking water. They wanna see total annihilation of Ukraine. So yes, if Putin uses a nuke, it's going to be a national holiday for Russian fascists. But then what happens? How the hell is he gonna mobilize the meat that he needs for his grinder to go to Ukraine if it's suddenly a nuclear wasteland here and there? That's going to be a big pushback, right? And on top of that, Russia's falling deeper into isolation. You have India and China publicly scolding him and pushing back against Russia. The isolation will be even worse if he does something so unthinkable as dropping the first nuclear bomb in over 70 years. Plus, the sanctions are designed to bite really hard the longer they stay in place.

Andrea Chalupa (40:28):

And that time is coming. The clock has been ticking. So Russia's economy is on the brink. Russia, as we said at the start of the show, is running out of the supplies it needs to keep its war machine running. So further sanctions in reaction to a nuclear strike, further tightening of all the things Russia has been trying to do to escape sanctions, all those things combined is going to worsen Russia's economic crisis, worsen Russia's isolation, worsen Russia's war machine. Basically, the reaction by the world against Russia for a nuclear strike is going to further weaken an already weak Russia so it's not in their own self-interest to use a nuclear strike, no matter how good it would feel to the fascists inside Russia. Now, here's the terrifying reason why Russia would use a nuclear weapon, and it's the one that concerns me most.

Andrea Chalupa (41:26):

Russia would use a nuclear weapon because it's the stupidest thing that Russia could possibly do and so far, as we've seen, Russia suffers from a chronic problem of punching itself in the face. Everything that they're doing on the battlefield, the reason why they're losing so badly, as one popular meme of the Ukrainian war keeps pointing out is, there's a meme of Ukrainian soldiers saying, "We're lucky they're so stupid." They send soldiers repeatedly into a spot that Ukraine is just bombing. They'll just send them out there and Ukraine will just send a bomb and destroy them out in the open. And then they'll just send more people. And the pattern keeps repeating. They're waging war badly. They're waging war stupidly. Everything that they've been doing has been against their own self-interest. Even launching this total war in the first place, when they were winning... They were winning!

Andrea Chalupa (42:20):

They had the world in the palm of their hand. They were considered this great power, their oligarchs were respected in the West, they had successfully helped bring to power an American president and political parties across Europe... They were doing really well. And they could have left well enough alone, but they just could not stop with their genocidal tendencies. They had to unleash that because it's a big part of their own national identity and their historical pride and greatness as shown by all the statues they've put up to Stalin over the years. So the biggest concern I have is that it's the stupidest thing they could possibly do, so yeah, that means they might actually do it. The important thing to remind everyone of is that Ukraine is fighting for all of us. Just like Hitler did not stop at Czechoslovakia, Putin will not stop in Ukraine.

Andrea Chalupa (43:15):

They made their genocide intentions very clear over the years on Kremlin State TV. They made it very clear that they did not see Ukraine having a right to exist. Guess what? They've used the same genocidal rhetoric against NATO countries; against Poland, against the Baltic states. And so if they succeed in Ukraine, they're going to keep going. And even if Putin dies in the coming years, Putin is a product of Russian fascism. Unfortunately, this genocidal culture that we're up against is going to outlive him. So if we want to finally, finally defeat actual fascism that we're up against, the unfinished business of World War II, we need to ensure that Ukraine has everything it needs to end this now.

[outro - theme music, roll credits]

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:

Pakistan has been decimated by record floods and people need help. To help the victims of the floods, donate to Pakistan Emergency Flood Aid at www.launchgood.com/campaign/pakistan_emergency_flood_aid. Climate and economic crises are everywhere, so please consider supporting your local food bank as well.

Andrea Chalupa:

We encourage you to help support Ukraine by donating to Razom for Ukraine 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 wanna 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 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 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 in *Gaslit Nation* is produced by David Whitehead, Martin Vissenberg, Nik Farr, Demien Arriaga, and Karlyn Daigle.

Sarah Kendzior:

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Andrea Chalupa:

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