

Gaslit Nation Transcript

04 January 2023

“Follow the Money and You Won’t Lose the Plot!”

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/follow-money-and-76760598>

[intro - theme music]

Sarah Kendzior (00:00:11):

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

Andrea Chalupa (00:00:22):

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 so be sure to watch it.

Sarah Kendzior (00:00:37):

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

Andrea Chalupa (00:00:44):

And on Tuesday, January 24th at 12:00 PM Eastern, Sarah and I are gonna show you how the sausage gets made here at *Gaslit Nation*. You are invited to a live taping of the show, followed by a live Q&A where we answer questions. Whatever you've got, we will answer it because the questions we get here from our listeners are always interesting, funny, deeply personal and profound. So we look forward to that. And if you want to get a ticket to that event, just support the show at the Democracy Defender level or higher on Patreon. And by subscribing there, you also get our weekly bonus episodes and our regular Q&As. And thank you to everyone who keeps *Gaslit Nation* running. It is a show that, you know, we started off as an outlier. And voila, here we are all these years later; the fifth year of *Gaslit Nation*. Still an outlier. [laughs]

Sarah Kendzior (00:01:39):

Yep.

Andrea Chalupa (00:01:40):

In so many ways.

Sarah Kendzior (00:01:41):

Lots of people acknowledging the problems and very few acknowledging the roots because they're often living within the roots. And speaking of that, we have been not doing breaking news shows for about two weeks due to the holidays. We ran a couple of interviews that relate to Putin's war on Ukraine. One with Tim Snyder, the other with Deborah Cohen. So you should go and check those out. There's been a lot of developments in that war since then so Andrea is going to bring us up to date on that. And then we're gonna talk about some of the other stories that occurred during this holiday deluge of Apocalypse News.

Andrea Chalupa (00:02:22):

Mmhmm. So Russia continues to pull men off the street, literally kidnapping them. They're doing it now in major cities; Moscow, St. Petersburg. Imagine going about your business. It's holiday time. You're enjoying all the festive holiday lights, and a white van pulls up and police officers storm out. They grab you and throw you into the van and send you off to the meat grinder in Ukraine. So that's what's happening in Russia, only more so. They're also continuing to snatch Russians for Putin's meat grinder in homeless shelters and prisons. Meanwhile, Russian military leadership has been decimated in Ukraine. That's generations of trained Russian military gone. It's estimated it'll take a decade for Russia to rebuild all that it's lost militarily in its stupid suicidal war in Ukraine. Putin continues to direct the war personally. There are even reports that he would call up commanders getting shelled on the front lines and order them not to surrender, even though he refuses to set foot anywhere near the fighting, unlike Zelensky, who goes to the trenches of some of the worst fighting like Bakhmut in the East, and shows up there and gives out awards and gives speeches.

Andrea Chalupa (00:03:33):

So Putin is in his bunker, on the phone, yelling at his meat to run face first into the grinder for him to keep his wealth and power. And they're doing it. They're doing it because the dictatorship in Russia has normalized an enslaved mentality. It's that insidious. Putin and Russia, why are they doing this? Obviously, as we keep pointing out on the show, they have genocidal imperialism at the heart of their idea of what it means to be Russian. Just like in America, we have the Confederacy, which has glorified the whole culture that gave rise to centuries of slavery. You know, fancy balls of all white people at plantations, all this sort of romanticism of American heritage that they cling to. So, you know, Russians have this sort of sense of self that they must have Ukraine. They must own Ukraine and they must move on to Poland, the Baltics, and so on and so on next.

Andrea Chalupa (00:04:25):

It's just they cannot kick this habit of imperialism; genocidal imperialism. Tim Snyder in our recent interview with him spoke beautifully of that, where Russians have to—all of them, even the ones escaping abroad—Russians have to answer for themselves, personally, deep inside their dark, mysterious Russian soul; what does it mean to be Russian without empire? There's been a lot of big empires that have come and gone. Look at Spain, look at Portugal. They're doing great, you know, in the modern age. And so Russia needs to get with it. And so as Tim Snyder pointed out, the way historically to speed up the end of a hostile empire is through a definitive military defeat and that is what we need now, and that is why we need the West—including under President Biden, who has done a great job to a very large degree—but they need to stop putting limitations on themselves.

Andrea Chalupa (00:05:17):

Meaning they keep saying, “Oh, we'll give you Javelins. Oh, we'll give you Javelins. Oh, we won't give you this, but we'll give you this finally. Oh, we're not gonna give you the patriot air defense. Oh, now we're gonna give it to you.” They need to stop holding themselves back because it's just bleeding out the war. It's creating this frozen conflict. They need to speed up the aid, the military aid, including long range missiles, long range missiles, because Ukraine is taking this stuff we're giving them and using it to take out military targets to great effect, which has limited some of the deliberate mass war crimes targeting of civilians. So the more we can put pressure on our elected officials, the Biden administration, Democrats, the whole foreign policy team to hurry up and give Ukraine the long range missiles they need, then sooner we can finish this war, because the only way to end Russian genocidal imperialism—as history shows—is a definitive military defeat. And that's where empires then start rebuilding outta the ashes by finding their way in a different form and building a new future. That's what needs to happen here.

Sarah Kendzior (00:06:20):

Yeah, absolutely, and I just wanna make a quick point about the military aids Ukraine. There's understandable frustration—which we are also feeling—about the state of the American economy, about inflation, about the broken campaign promises of the Democrats to pass various social programs that would alleviate the financial strain that we're under. And you see the propagandists going on Twitter and they're saying, “Oh, all that money that should have gone to Americans is going to Ukraine.” And that's bullshit on a number of levels. One, they're just simply not passing programs that have a social safety net for Americans. They're continuing the pattern that's been there basically since the Reagan administration and only recently has even been fought against in a really vociferous way. So that's just on the Biden administration.

Sarah Kendzior (00:07:17):

But when you look at what the Biden administration is doing with their military budget, it's absolutely enormous. It is far more enormous than any predecessor or president. It's \$858 billion. And a lot of folks see that number and they think that it must be because of Ukraine, because people know that we're providing aid. Only \$800 million of that \$858 billion budget is going to Ukraine. When you consider the scope of that budget, that is a small amount. What needs to happen is that that overall military budget needs to be shrunk to an enormous level. Judd Legum has a very good op-ed about this in his... I think it's his personal newsletter, you know, just talking about how you could end homelessness, you know, you could do all of these things with this money. But one of the things that should not be eliminated and wouldn't even make a dent in the problem if it was eliminated is US military support and humanitarian support, especially, for Ukraine. So do not fall for that propaganda.

Sarah Kendzior (00:08:27):

The vast majority of this \$858 billion budget, by the way, is going to military contractors. They're the ones raking it in. So speaking about people raking it in, we had another faux revelation in the endless deja news cycle of Trump's taxes where finally, after many years of pleas and of demands and dodged subpoenas and IRS failures, we got an extremely selective view of Trump's tax returns. And this is one of these things where most of the time I don't watch, I guess, the mainstream media, at least I don't watch it for information. I watch it to see how information is conveyed. I don't watch CNN or MSNBC. Because of the holidays, because of the family members I was staying with, I had to watch how this news of Trump's taxes was relayed to the American public.

Sarah Kendzior (00:09:32):

And I was so horrified by the portrayal because the key takeaway of the release of these income tax returns is not that Trump is a tax cheat. We knew that already. It's that the returns themselves cover only the years of 2015 through 2020. And these are useless years. These years do not do anything to get to the heart of the deep, entrenched financial corruption not only of Trump, not only of the Trump Organization, but of the American institutions that have bolstered him, that have protected him, and of the international actors—in particular, the Russian mafia, which is a transnational mafia and has been for several decades—and how they bolstered his political rise and his financial prowess following his bankruptcies in the early '90s. And of course a lot of that information isn't gonna show up on tax forms anyway.

Sarah Kendzior (00:10:32):

I mean, you don't report that kind of thing. But there's a reason that people have been asking for Trump's tax returns for so long. And it's very important to note the length of time that this has been an object of inquiry. Back in the '70s and '80s, there was investigative reporting about Trump being a tax dodger. You saw this from reporters like Wayne Barrett. You saw it in *Spy Magazine*. There was a lot of

speculation about what he had gotten up to with the mafia—at that point in American mafia mostly—and his real estate holdings. It was so well known that you would see references to Trump's tax corruption on children's shows, shows like *Sesame Street*, shows like *Erie, Indiana* which was a short-lived children's show that I loved when I was a kid that I referenced in my book, *They Knew*.

Sarah Kendzior (00:11:22):

There's like entire plots based around Donald Trump, you know, being stalked by the IRS for refusal to pay taxes. So none of this was new. We knew he was in bed with the mafia since the 1980s and we've known he's had a financial arrangement involving both organized crime and the Kremlin since the late 1980s, and very likely earlier than that. We've long known that the IRS refused to investigate it. We still don't know why, or, you know, we have suspicions, but they are refusing to tell us why despite congressional increase, despite some senators continuing to ask that question. We know that the refusal of these agencies of accountability to either provide all of the tax returns of Trump's professional life—which is what we would need to really assess the situation—or to comment on why they're withholding them may have to do with Trump being possibly what some pundits call an FBI confidential informant.

Sarah Kendzior (00:12:24):

And I wanna be real clear here that “confidential informant” is a euphemistic way to say that Trump had a collaborative relationship with some of the most corrupt elements in the federal government in order to enable and streamline organized crime. This is not a case of Trump, you know, valiantly ratting out bad actors. This is a case of the government *and* organized crime using Trump and his apparatus as a way to basically move money around, map networks, form new corrupt relationships and so forth. It is notable that in 2016, as Hillary Clinton was running for president, she raised the issue of Trump's taxes multiple times, including at a presidential debate widely seen by tens of millions of Americans. She said that he doesn't pay his taxes and he admitted it. You know, he was flaunting it, he was bragging about it.

Sarah Kendzior (00:13:25):

He was saying that it was a smart thing to do. Clinton at that time in 2016 encouraged an investigation of Trump and his taxes. And I wanna emphasize that point because the years that we have received the returns for—2015 through 2020—those six years came after the point. So what Clinton was getting at was corruption and criminality that transpired long before and we still do not have the answers to any of the questions that she was raising then. And those are still very, very important questions because the 2015 through 2020 returns are almost irrelevant because the key question to ask is, Why was a career criminal elevated to the level of the presidency in the first place? And why was he protected by government institutions both during the campaign and while he was in office? And I'm gonna read now a little bit from my book, *Hiding in Plain Sight*, which I wrote four years ago in 2019 and which came out in April, 2020.

Sarah Kendzior (00:14:34):

And it goes into a side of this Trump tax evasion and government arrangement story that is really not well told. I think it's very important. I think the question of why people avoid it is also important. So I'm just gonna read you a little bit of this. So to start: “In 2016, shortly after Trump was deemed president of the United States, the German publication *Bild* published a series of documents showing that Trump had not paid federal taxes since 1977, an allegation that echoed a vague claim Hillary Clinton had made during a debate but never fully explained. The files came from the Czech security services, essentially the Stasi of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, which had been monitoring Donald Trump and his Czech wife, Ivana, since they married in 1977. It was typical of the CSSR to monitor Americans who came onto

their radar, particularly rich, powerful and connected Americans like Donald Trump, and to pass along information to their counterparts in the Soviet Union and in other communist states of the Eastern bloc.”

Sarah Kendzior (00:15:44):

“The private information they procured for blackmail purposes is called kompromat. 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 embrace 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”—and here I'm quoting the documents—”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 (00:17:02):

“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 follow up on the file's existence was British reporter Luke Harding. Harding tracked down Czech officials who affirmed that the files were real and told him”—and here I'm quoting the Czech officials—”It wasn't only us who paid attention to Trump. The first department of the StB”—this is 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 Roy 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 (00:18:11):

“The answers could be found. The IRS should know. Given the number of times Trump business dealings have fallen under investigations by federal agencies, including the Department of Justice and the treasury, other government agencies know too. But the American people do not. And the question of why we do not know remains as enormous and as disconcerting as the information in the Czech files themselves.” So that is from my book, *Hiding in Plain Sight*. It's actually available on Kindle now for \$2.99. Get it while you can because that's not gonna last. But anyway, I find it amazing that this story has not been picked up especially since Luke Harding did the legwork of going to the Czech Republic, meeting with officials, seeing the files firsthand, interviewing security service agents. What it appears is that Trump, who of course is working with mafia lawyer Roy Cohn, who's working with organized crime, who appears to be working with very corrupt elements within the New York FBI had some sort of arrangement to not pay taxes for 30 years, likely having to do with what those taxes would show about what the Trump organization and other enterprises were actually up to. That should terrify you. That should make you very worried about what is actually going on within your government, particularly when you look at financial and political disasters of that time period between 1977 and 2007; Iran Contra, for example, around which a number of Trump associates were involved, the 2008 financial collapse and the buildup to that that came out of the collapse of New York Real Estate and Wall Street corruption. I mean, there are so many different facets of this to look at and it shouldn't matter what your political views are, what your party affiliation is. This is serious stuff.

Sarah Kendzior (00:20:10):

This is information everyone should know about and the fact that the media and our politicians are afraid to even examine these documents and ask these questions—even if they don't know the answer, just raise the questions—should concern you. The fact that people are playing down that we do not have the majority of Trump's tax returns, you know, we don't have anything before the year 2015, should really alarm you. And so, yeah I would encourage you to think more about that and leave it at that. Andrea, do you have any comments on that or should we continue to the latest con artist to enter the halls of Congress?

Andrea Chalupa (00:20:52):

So many con artists, so little time. Well, yeah, obviously we always knew—you can go back on this show—we were always pointing out that Trump and his little WWF wrestling theatrics with China was just a show that he was putting on because he was backed by so much foreign money, including his financial interests with China, how his daughter, Ivanka, was courting Chinese power, Chinese influence, getting to the front of the line on getting all the patents she needed inside China. She would have her daughter singing or whatever in Mandarin and posting that on social media. They're grifters through and through. We know that. They should have never come to power. Trump's tax returns weren't just confirmation or revelation, they were just further exposing all the powers that be that allowed Trump to become president in the first place.

Andrea Chalupa (00:21:47):

Where was the American intelligence community on all this in letting such a compromised guy—a foreign asset—become president of the United States? Where was the media on this that was bashing Hillary for emails and so on? I mean, basically just go to the first three episodes of *Gaslit Nation* and there you are. So, I do wanna turn to another Russian asset. I'm gonna read a quote and Sarah, tell me who said this: "If the Ukrainians really hated Russia so bad, the eastern border of Ukraine wouldn't have welcomed Russians into their provinces. They feel more Russian than Ukrainian. It's not like Ukraine is a great democracy. It's a totalitarian regime. They're not a great bastion of freedom." Tucker Carlson?

Sarah Kendzior ([00:22:30](#)):

[laughs] I feel like there's anywhere from...

Andrea Chalupa:

Putin?

Sarah Kendzior:

Matt Taibii to Putin to Tucker Carlson to, I don't know—

Andrea Chalupa (00:22:37):

Glen Greenwald.

Sarah Kendzior (00:22:38):

Glen Greenwald... So many. So many possibilities. Steve Bannon, who is it?

Andrea Chalupa:

[laughs]

Sarah Kendzior:

Is that who it is?

Andrea Chalupa (00:22:45):

George Santos.

Sarah Kendzior (00:22:46):

George Santos. Oh, yeah. Is there any quote that George Santos hasn't said regardless of whether it contradicts another quote that he said in the same breath? But yeah, he's one of your guys, man. New York. New York's draggin' the country down.

Andrea Chalupa

I know.

Sarah Kendzior;

We got him over here in Missouri. Anyway... [laughs]

Andrea Chalupa (00:23:06):

I know, the disgrace of New York continues. So that quote is from a *Washington Post* article which also points out that George Santos, the 33-year-old wonder kid who has led an illustrious life of great feats and accomplishments, including being Black, Jewish, having a brain tumor, working for Goldman Sachs—

Sarah Kendzior (00:23:26):

Having his mother die twice and then come back to life, once on 9/11—

Andrea Chalupa (00:23:31):

And then in 2016, surviving the Spanish Influenza Pandemic in 1917 after fighting valiantly in World War I. He's just... He's Benjamin Button or something. So good for you, George Santos, for freeing all of us suffering from... What's that one thing that women tend to.... Not Imitation syndrome. What's that thing?

Sarah Kendzior:

Imposter syndrome.

Andrea Chalupa:

Imposter syndrome. Right. You're liberating all of us from our imposter syndrome. Okay? Ladies, may you have the confidence of George Santos. So that *Washington Post* article where we have that very Tucker Carlson Russian propaganda quote by George Santos, that article also points out that this remark was echoing remarks by Nigel Farage at a recent conservative conference. We all know Nigel Farage, a far-right British Kremlin puppet who has repeatedly proclaimed his love and admiration for Vladimir Putin. Nigel Farage, of course, led the Kremlin-backed Brexit campaign, which was an extremely close

vote which was tipped by a massive Kremlin bot operation and dark money and has produced a disastrous outcome for the British people, which includes chaos across industries, political instability, and a steep decline of the British Pound.

Andrea Chalupa (00:24:52):

All of those things are, of course, music to the Kremlin's ears. [We did an episode with Carole Cadwalladr](#), who was sued by another Kremlin puppet and won that case. That episode is called 'Brexit and Trump are the Same Crime.' It's the same transnational crime syndicate that did Brexit and Trump, and they're still at it. So why does George Santos sound like a Kremlin puppet, like Nigel Farage, like Donald Trump? Well, it may have something to do with Kremlin dirty, dark money. George Santos has claimed that he has visited Moscow several times over the years, staying at fancy hotels. There's nothing wrong with that, of course. Where there are problems is the fact that, as *The Daily Beast* reports, he was taking money from a well-known cousin, well-known if you are an intelligence agent for any of AmeriCorps' allies, this guy Andrew Intrater, a money manager to infamous massively-sanctioned Russian oligarch close to Putin, Viktor Vekselberg.

Andrea Chalupa (00:25:55):

He gave massive amounts of money through several entities to George Santos over the years to his campaigns. Who is Viktor Vekselberg? Again, he is one of Putin's wallets along with several others of Putin's wallets, right? We've always said on the show that Putin is the richest man on the planet. It's not just his stolen wealth that he controls, but he controls an entire court of oligarchs like Abramovich, Deripaska, Vekselberg, who are beholden to him and who go out into the broader world to all the fancy capitals, very dressed up, flaunting their money. And Vekselberg's big Trojan horse was trying to create the Silicon Valley of Russia. And to do that, he was trying to build these lucrative relationships, these deals where he was throwing around money to MIT and Silicon Valley and others in the spirit of collaboration, innovation and so on, where the FBI and other US intelligence agencies have been saying, "Hey, this guy is a threat."

Andrea Chalupa (00:26:55):

"He could be coming in here pollinating Russian influence, trying to entrench Russia's influence inside the US to weaken us within, steal our secrets, compromise people," because this is what Russians do. They do this because they're mafia. There was a recent case that happened that came out—not really shocking at all if you follow these things—where a high level German official in the German government was blackmailed by Russia into handing over German intelligence and other intelligence from Ukraine's allies in the war against Russia. And that guy was blackmailed. So having a guy like Vekselberg, one of Putin's wallets, going around throwing his money around through various entities across Silicon Valley could seriously compromise American data, research, relationships, all sorts of things. Trade secrets, military secrets. And you might get some Russian propagandist suddenly buying Twitter, the town square, with a bunch of dark money.

Andrea Chalupa (00:27:55):

So there are all sorts of vulnerabilities there to having a guy like Vekselberg out there operational. He also was one of the nodes in Russiagate—the massive, massive international conspiracy that helped bring Donald Trump, Ivanka Trump, and Jared Kushner to power during the transition period of 2016. Shortly before the inauguration, Vekselberg met with longtime Trump lawyer and fixer, Michael Cohen, to talk about strengthening US Russian relations because they wanted to now cash in on all the help they gave Trump in bringing him to power. Shortly after that meeting, Michael Cohen then gets a \$1 million contract through Vekselberg money, right? This is disgusting. But Michael Cohen, of course, has

redeemed himself and joined the whole Liz Cheney Gang of Redemption in being one of the darlings now of cable news and the Democratic Party. And he has a podcast and a book deal.

Sarah Kendzior (00:28:50):

Yeah, I have to say, this is not redemption. I mean, I keep wondering, Is anyone gonna ask Michael Cohen about the dirty details of this, about the relationship with Vekselberg, about the relationship with Blavatnik, who, you know, I'll get to in a second. I was just looking before we taped this episode at an old article about the connections between Andrew Intrater (who gave Santos the money), Vekselberg, the Mueller investigation, and of course—of course because he's involved in everything—is Jeffrey Epstein because Epstein was working with Intrater right around the time that Michael Cohen was transferring these enormous amounts of money to him. There's a big *Haaretz* report about this, another report from the publication *C Tech* saying that Epstein then went and invested \$1 million into a partnership with Vekselberg company in the Virgin Islands.

Sarah Kendzior (00:29:51):

Then we have a story last week about investigations into his Virgin Islands holdings getting shut down. I mean, yeah, it's very good that Michael Cohen testified to Congress in February, 2019. He was basically the only person in the real inner core of the Trump circle to do that and it was very informative for the American public to hear very early on that Trump was not going to accept the results of the 2020 election and that Trump, you know, I think Cohen would phrase it as “behaves like a mob boss.” I mean, I would say he's a boss but, you know, he's a mafioso. He's a career criminal. You wouldn't notice, of course, that Congress under Pelosi immediately shut down similar congressional hearings after Cohen delivered those findings to the American public. Felix Sater, a partner of Cohen—lifelong partner—was supposed to go after that. He did not go. 81 others including Kushner and a number of the most deeply corrupt people involved with Trump were supposed to testify to Congress. That didn't happen either. We've covered this.

Andrea Chalupa (00:30:58):

It's a shame because it would've been must-watch tv. It would've been riveting, just like the January 6th hearings did make a dent. We did see a big shift in the polling. And so again, we kept telling the Democrats back in 2018, 2019, for the love of God, follow through on your promises. Bring these people out. Ivanka's on your list. Yes. Get her out there.

Sarah Kendzior (00:31:17):

And then they didn't. And I just wanna make one little note, since you were bringing up Vekselberg and the donations to Santos: One of the reasons it seems that the Democratic House under Pelosi—this is just a possibility—did not want to hold these hearings was because they were getting a record sum of money from Vekselberg's American citizen partner, Len Blavatnik, who in 2019 after giving the Republicans tons of money in the previous years switched to the Democrats, gave the DCCC the largest donation it had ever had in his history, gave the Nancy Pelosi Victory Fund \$50,000, which was one of the biggest donations that it received. That was actually in 2021. They kept doing this. Blavatnik got in trouble initially for giving so much money to the Democrats. There were articles about it in publications that now are either paywalled or shut down.

Sarah Kendzior (00:32:15):

A lot of this financial information is really just not explored to the degree that it should be. But they felt embarrassed, the Democrats did, after we among others brought it up, and they returned half of that money, half of that DCC donation. Then when the heat was off and, you know, more attention was on

the plague and the coup and all of the other problems that we're facing, they started taking money from him again and investigations were shut down or deprived of context or very superficial in their nature once again. And then here with Santos, I mean, my only hope with this is that people look at the money that he took and then start to pan out broadly into who is Blavatnik—and Viktor Vekselberg by proxy—funding and why? What are they getting in return?

Sarah Kendzior (00:33:10):

Because I think it's very interesting that they keep taking this money. It almost makes more sense for somebody like Santos, though God knows, you know, who he really is and who he really works for and where he gets his money, but that a newcomer would take that type of money because they need it. Someone like Pelosi who is the 14th richest member of Congress and who has been implicated in all sorts of insider trading stock scams and stuff, she didn't need this money. Len Blavatnik giving the Nancy Pelosi Victory Fund \$50,000 is like proof of purchase. It's just like a receipt, you know, showing that you own a politician, showing that you own a group like the DCCC. They didn't need this from him, especially. And given that it is in direct conflict with the Mueller report because, you know, Vekselberg was a target of the Mueller report, Intrater was a target of the Mueller report and the Mueller probe.

Sarah Kendzior (00:34:05):

They of course should not have been taking that money. And then once that money arrives, the Mueller report, once the probe is shut down by Bill Barr and Rosenstein and others, but also the report itself is not used by the House Democrats in any way. It's not used for impeachment. It has 10 recommendations for impeachment or indictment for obstruction of justice. It's not used while they're holding only the House and it's not used when they have the House, Senate and presidency. Merrick Garland lets the clock run out and so we're just left with an empty record of massive criminality. And so you have to ask, you know, what is going on here and why are these sanction oligarchs who, again, they've risen to the fore more since February, 2022, because there's been more of a focus on sanctioning oligarchs, depriving Putin of his funding network and so on.

Sarah Kendzior (00:35:04):

Why are they still taking money from these individuals? The Republicans are still doing it as well, by the way. Kevin McCarthy who at the time of this recording may or may not be the Speaker of the House. It's Republicans in disarray.

Andrea Chalupa:

We'll be saying that next week when we're recording.

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs] Yeah, every week we're gonna start off with, "Kevin McCarthy may or may not be the speaker at the time of this recording." But, you know, he took an enormous amount of money from Blavatnik as well, and so have many other Republicans. And you have to say, why is there nothing that you can turn down? Some of these amounts that people take are fairly paltry. Senator Blumenthal took... looks like \$2,900 in May of 2021. I just have these things open on my desktop just all the time.

Sarah Kendzior (00:35:49):

All Blavatnik all the time. Anyway, it's worth looking into and it's really suspicious that all of this—along with all of the other lies of Santos, many of which could have been found simply by perusing his Twitter account and looking for incongruities—were not reported on in the national media. *The New York Times* I guess got really defensive about this. When questioned they were like, "Oh, you know, that's not in our

territory.” They're literally like a couple miles away from this district and they have a Long Island section, yet they felt that they were not gonna bother to report on this. Why did the Democratic Party of New York, who would've found this unbelievably useful, one would think, in running the campaign against him, why did they not pick up this information? I don't totally know.

Andrea Chalupa (00:36:40):

Well they did put something out there. They did put a scratching-the-surface on it, some of the Dems—local Dems—did, but nobody really bit on it. The fact that they had enough to be like, “He's a fraudster. This guy is shady.”, that they didn't elevate it to major press in the capital of the global media shows you how dysfunctional the state party is. And we're going to get in on that because I think it's extremely important for people to understand what we're up against and the story we're going to keep coming back to. So I want to just start by saying George Santos was easily preventable. He won in a district held by a Democrat for two decades. And that district includes parts of Long Island and Queens. You know, from *Coming to America*? That Queens. Queens as in New York City. What's more, Long Island is the home of Jay Jacobs, Chairman of the New York State Democrats.

Andrea Chalupa (00:37:47):

So this national security threat came to power in Jay Jacobs' own backyard, right under his nose. Jay Jacobs is an Andrew Cuomo appointee who is being protected by the current governor, Kathy Hochul, who won her governor race by a historically thin margin for a Democrat in New York state against white supremacist and proud Trump lapdog and Sean Spicer lookalike, Lee Zeldin. Hochul ran on a platform of protecting abortion rights in New York state in an environment galvanized by Democrats, especially young women turning out the vote in a backlash to the Republicans on the Supreme Court who had just overturned *Roe v. Wade*. We all saw those historic numbers of early vote, of voting, and all the records that were broken. I know we didn't hold on to Congress, but we came damn close. We held on to all of our senators. We flipped some state governments.

Andrea Chalupa (00:38:42):

We protected and fortified the blue wall in the electoral college; Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Nevada, Arizona for the 2024 election. We did a lot of the damn things we needed to do to stand a fighting chance in 2024 except for the Democratic establishment corruption in New York state. And I wanna get back to Kathy Hochul because this underlines it all so people understand what we're up against. Kathy Hochul just appointed a conservative anti-abortion anti-union judge to be the chief justice of New York's highest court. She did this after running on a “I'm gonna protect abortion platform” then she goes around and knives her voters in the back. She's trying to hide behind the fact that he's Latino, which is very cynical because Latinx organizers in New York were like, “We don't want this guy representing us. He's anti-union, he's anti-abortion.” Out of all the options she had, she chose the most conservative one, someone Republicans would vote for.

Andrea Chalupa (00:39:43):

Why would she do this? Why would she also refuse to replace Jay Jacobs as the head of the Democratic Party even though he's incompetent and allowed a Republican bloodbath in New York state? And that of course has national repercussions because we lost easily winnable House seats. We could have held onto the House if New York was a team player with the rest of the country. Jay Jacobs also allowed Republicans, you know, to build a massive statewide movement to prevent Democrats from having a major advantage in redistricting, which ended up helping cost the House. Jay Jacobs was asleep during that redistricting battle and he was asleep during the 2022 midterms and he'll be asleep the next time around because that's what makes him so useful to the Democratic establishment. George Santos

happened in Jay Jacobs' own backyard. Sure, you can point to some of the lies being exposed by Democrats leading up to the election.

Andrea Chalupa (00:40:40):

As I mentioned, you can point to a decline in local news. But the reality is George Santos was a silver platter of scandal that should have sunk his campaign. They could have kept a winnable seat safely blue, which was blue for decades. But Democrats in New York lacked the muscle. They lacked the organization most damningly—I'm talking about the state party—and they lacked the political will. And I don't see things changing without a serious fight, including naming and shaming those enabling this. For instance, Jerry Nadler, Representative Nadler. He ran a tough primary as a progressive. He hasn't called for the resignation of Jay Jacobs and he endorsed Hochul's choice for a conservative anti-abortion judge to lead New York's highest court. Why are they doing this? Why are they betraying the American people? Well, now here's the big drum roll.... Because who is New York State home to? The very face of the Fox News Bolshevik threat who is going to turn America into a communist prison of breadlines, AOC.

Andrea Chalupa (00:41:46):

One of the most globally famous politicians in America is AOC and she and her grassroots army have been very effective in recent years in picking off old establishment Democrats in primaries that have overstayed their welcome. She's done this not only in New York state but she's helped do this in other parts of the country, expanding the number of progressives in Congress, which gives them a tougher bargaining hand when they're trying to build coalitions and get deals done in Congress. That is a threat to a lot of the big money donors propping up the Democratic party establishment as well as the Republican party establishment. It's the same trough of donors that they're all feeding from. So when you see a totally avoidable political tragedy like Kremlin dark money puppet and national security threat George Santos coming to power in Congress in a once deeply held for two decades Democratic seat, at a time when the survival of Ukraine is on the line, it's because the corporate establishment wing of the Democratic Party is at war with the progressive wing because they want to please their corporate donors; the same ones donating to the Republican Party. Think of it this way: The national leaders of the Democratic Party are both from New York right now; Chuck Schumer in the Senate and Hakeem Jeffries in the House. He won the game of Succession, right? Nancy Pelosi anointed him as her successor and they're both from New York state and yet New York Democrats just suffered a self-imposed bloodbath. ceding ground to Republican extremists, and neither Chuck Schumer nor Hakeem Jeffries called for new leadership at the Democratic party state level. They are instead touting what a miracle it is that Democrats did as well as they did in these midterms, defying the historical trends—which is all fine and good—but that's largely because Democratic voters and independents have had to organize during the Trump years to fight for their lives.

Andrea Chalupa (00:43:44):

They're now giving to groups like States Project, Sister District, Run for Something and other grassroots movements which are fighting like hell in the all-important local state levels, making history in Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, New York's Democratic party is on life support because corporate America and Wall Street are afraid of AOC and the only thing standing in the way of AOC and Wall Street is Chuck Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries, Governor Kathy Hochul and Jay Jacobs, the New York State Party chair. And you might be saying, "Wait a minute, look at all the progressive things that President Biden has done. Corporations, for instance, are now paying a 15% minimum tax rate." That's huge. We desperately needed that. And yes, that's a very good thing, but it's one of those basic rights like clean drinking water that you just expect to have. Everyone should have the right to clean drinking water.

Andrea Chalupa (00:44:36):

Yet greed gets in the way in places like Mississippi and Flint, Michigan and God only knows where else. Wealth inequality has skyrocketed in America to levels last seen during the age of robber barons. Oligarchs control our media and social media. The wealthy like Trump and Wall Street are treated as too big to fail. A 15% minimum tax is the *least* the US can do, like provide clean drinking water. And the 15% tax was a global movement agreed to by the world's most powerful nations, including the European Union. Again, in a time of staggering income and equality around the world, it's literally the bare minimum least they could do. Reality itself forced the 15% tax on multinational corporations. The massive price tags governments now have to pay for refugees and wars profiting the military industrial complex, for climate change, profiting something like a hundred major corporations driving the destruction of our planet.

(00:45:32):

The price of running countries as populations increase. Governments need more money. The 15% tax was fueled by reality, but reality demands greater progress faster. Like enshrining human rights, you know, abortion rights to speeding up the transition away from fossil fuels and so on. "But not so fast," say the New York State Democrats, "We don't want to become a bunch of Bolsheviks and a breadline. Our donors would not like that." The corporate Democrats' war against progressives, which you can see playing out in New York state, is a war by the so-called land-owning class, which gave us the electoral college and the filibuster because they want to pump the brakes on progress. It's the same war that was there at the founding of our country that's playing out today and it's holding us back. If a truly effective leader came to power running New York State Democrats, uniting the various grassroots coalitions into one well-run machine, New York would be reliably blue like Michigan. You reap what you sow. The New York Democratic Party is reaping and sowing a war on progressives starving the party from any meaningful organizing, any central command to ensure resources are getting to where they need to be and quality candidates are on the ballot across the state. New York needs to clean house but that would risk actual progress that could hurt corporate profits—in some people's imaginations—and move too fast. That's what's at the heart of a total flunky like George Santos easily buying a seat to power with the help of Kremlin dark money.

Sarah Kendzior (00:47:05):

Yeah, absolutely. And on that note, it's really interesting with this episode, I think, because you're seeing just this continuity across decades of New York-based corruption through Wall Street, through people like Trump, through these political donors, and there are more reports on that today. You mentioned both Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries being part of this New York apparatus, being representatives from New York, which by the way I do not think is healthy at all for a political party to have two of its leaders based in the same geographical area, in part because it's just not representative of the country as a whole, but also because you end up in this situation where if you have a very corrupt aggressive donor network you're going to end up with that dominating the policy agenda and also encouraging all of these feuds like the ones that you brought up. I mean, it's beyond a feud. It's really sick, I think, what they're doing; the attempt to take out people like AOC and other progressives and the rest of the "squad". And there's a new report today from Max Berger, a journalist who is looking into—

Andrea Chalupa (00:48:16):

Love. I know Max personally. We started off in campaign school together. We both were community organizers back in the day and we went to the same like training, the same sort of like George Soros [laughs] indoctrination training camp or something like that.

Sarah Kendzior (00:48:30):

Well he is graduating with honors today. He has a new report independently produced and I'm very glad to say not paywalled on his Substack called "SBF and the Injustice Democrats: How SBF"—that's Sam Bankman-Fried—"AIPAC and Pro-Trump Billionaires Coordinated to Crush the Left." And he has the receipts. He's talking about notorious fraudster, Sam Bankman-Fried, as many on Fox, many on the right have noted, a massive donor to the Democratic party in the last election. But he went into what exactly was he donating to? And what he was donating to was the suffocation of the progressive candidates in this party, whether they are challengers to incumbents or people currently in office. And he was doing it in coordination with AIPAC. And there's a lot of information in here. I think it would be interesting to compare some of these donations and groups with the ones that are funded by Blavatnik and Vekselberg and others that we've looked at.

Sarah Kendzior (00:49:36):

There's just so much dirty money, dark money, foreign money. But one thing that stood out to me when you were mentioning Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries is that Hakeem Jeffries—who we know by the way is an opponent of AOC and the progressives, he's condemned them multiple times—he in 2014 said one of the most horrific quotes I've kind of seen regarding foreign policy in the modern era. And that's really saying something given all the horrors we've seen. At the height of Israel's brutal campaign against Gaza in which they were massacring children. For a place that routinely endures violence and apartheid, this was at a level that even people who were reluctant to criticize the Israeli government were absolutely criticizing Netanyahu for this. Even the Republicans were, to some extent. One person who was not was Hakeem Jeffries who, as Palestinian children were being massacred, gave a speech where he proclaimed "Israel today, Israel tomorrow, Israel forever." And if that sounds familiar to you it's because he's paraphrasing George Wallace, you know, the civil rights opponent, the white supremacist representative George Wallace. And so, you know, you have to ask, why is this representative paraphrasing Alabama governor George Wallace in 1963 in order to protect an apartheid regime committing brutal acts of violence against children and against citizens in general? I don't know. He really hasn't been asked about it very much, but that was what he wanted to emphasize. That was the message he wanted to bring. And I think that that's the message that he is attempting to convey today. His major donors—we went through this on one of our bonus episodes—his donors are Israeli lobbyist groups and also, I think, some hedge funds and some Wall Street interests.

Sarah Kendzior (00:51:39):

And so that's where his loyalty is going to lie and it's really disturbing when you add in the Sam Bankman-Fried aspect when you add in real criminality, not just dirty money donations but outright fraud, into the mix. I do not like that it's Schumer and Jeffries that are representing the Democratic Party because I think they're among the least likely to get rid of these dark and dirty elements. It also puts us in great danger for the representatives who actually are trying to pass progressive policies, trying to do their jobs. And to do any of that requires gutting out corruption. You know, we've been saying that on this show for years. That is the way out of our domestic and our foreign crises and our national security crises and our mafia crises because that's what this was always at heart. The Trump administration, as we've said many times, was a transnational crime syndicate masquerading as a government and what the Biden administration has at least been behaving as is an entity that attempts to mask that criminality. So you're just getting layers and layers of it. You're getting refusals of people like Merrick Garland to do their job. And you're getting refusals of Congress to do a rigorous and thorough inquiry and to reveal the history of this crisis, which you can find through things like the full extent of Trump's tax returns, to even have a conversation about the issues at the heart of this, which often involve things like organized crime and kleptocracy. They just don't even come up. There's so many theatrics, such a

circus atmosphere even around Santos. And, you know, and I get that. When you have a serial liar who's so easily caught and wasn't and is about to be seated in Congress, yeah, that merits some attention.

Sarah Kendzior (00:53:33):

But I hope people follow the money. If you follow the money, it's gonna take you to very dark places. It's gonna take you to things that are hard to look at and I understand why there's reluctance. It's also going to possibly put you in danger because they really don't want you to know about these things. But if you don't follow the money, you lose the plot. You lose the history, you lose the ability for future generations to build on what we know and what we put into the public domain in the hope that people will do their jobs and protect this country and protect innocent people and finally bring about justice. You can't do that without information. You can't have accountability without the truth. And so we're still slogging away over here at *Gaslit Nation*, but I am grateful for people like Max Berger and Judd Legum and all these other reporters who often alone are doing this kind of work, digging into the money, digging into the receipts. I think it's important. It tells the real tale of American political life.

Andrea Chalupa (00:54:44):

Absolutely. There's a lot that I am grateful for when it comes to the good Democrats that we have. They did have an extremely active two years. They did achieve a lot of major legislation. They did provide a lot. And we're going to be reminded of that as we enter the next two years of having a totally impotent House under Kevin McCarthy and his Kremlin clown car. It's gonna be chaos. Luckily, right before New Year, Congress passed that big package that you mentioned, including of course funding our government and providing aid to Ukraine through 2023. And so what's going to happen when those conversations have to happen again is, going into 2024, the Kremlin clown car chaos of the Republicans in the House is going to just infuriate and unite Americans even further against the Republican party, giving a lot of great opportunities for House pickups for the Democrats heading into 2024 as the big presidential election is in full swing.

Andrea Chalupa (00:55:51):

And of course, you know, the support for Ukraine, for instance, being a big sort of rallying issue for the country is strong. It's across the board strong. Where it's weakening is the Republican base because of Tucker Carlson and others, and the Jim Jordans and Large Marge in Georgia and others parroting all of those horrific genocidal talking points blaming the victim in Ukraine and so on. But what Republicans, of course, refused to learn was that being Nazi, being fascist, being pro Kremlin is largely unpopular thank God across the US. And you need those independents to win the Senate, to win a lot of these key races, to win the electoral college. And so if you have a chaotic House, if you have a pro-Putin Republican party—which we totally expect to still have—the Democrats stand to do really well once again in 2024, including, whoever they run, keeping the White House if it's not Biden, okay?

Andrea Chalupa (00:56:45):

But the concern is that because of this self-imposed, self-inflicted civil war in the de Democratic Party, which is really being viciously run from the centrists, really. Whatever Bernie did back in 2016, you know, holding onto the nomination a little longer than people wanted him to and so on, that's so in the past. What Sean Patrick Maloney did in running in a district he had no business running in, knifing a progressive who would've won there and so on... It's very vicious now what the corporate Dems are doing. Jay Jacobs should resign, especially after George Santos. There should be a unified front of New York Democrats, especially since we're representing the whole country with Schumer and Jeffries. 2024 is the Democrats' to lose and I'm very afraid they're going to lose it. One thing that they're really benefiting from is Trump because the fear of fascism is uniting everyone together.

Andrea Chalupa (00:57:39):

The fear of fascism is driving independents to vote for the Democrats. I've heard this and I've read this in the reporting. In all the calls I was making to all these key districts, I was hearing independents saying, "Oh my God, I'm voting Democrat because I have no choice because I know about Germany in the 1930s." Trump is the best thing that happened to the Democrats. And just like Russians—as we said at the start of the show—just like Russians have to answer for themselves, "Who are you without Ukraine? Who are you without empire? Who are you without the Soviet Union?", Democrats must search their souls in the establishment and answer, who are you without Trump?

[outro 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:

We want to encourage our listeners to donate to RAICES, a Texas-based nonprofit agency that provides free and low-cost legal services to underserved immigrant children, families, and refugees. They're helping with the crisis facing migrant families at the Texas border and need your support.

Andrea Chalupa:

We also encourage you to donate 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 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* produced by David Whitehead, Martin Vissenberg, Nik Farr, Demien 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:

Gaslit Nation would like to thank our supporters at the Producer level and higher on Patreon...