



## Episode 1,433: Was the Ron Paul Campaign Secretly Backed by the Russians?

Guest: Daniel McAdams

**WOODS:** [sighs] I don't even know what to say to you in this situation. I mean, I really, really, really and truly and honestly do not want to talk about this guy. I have gone out of my way to just ignore him. And the main reason, even though he's been pretty unkind to me – it's funny, the other day he retweeted Mike Gravel, who was saying, "End all the wars," and Sarwark is jumping on board saying, "Well, I support that." Well, I say that 24 hours a day, and he never thinks to retweet me. Because I do only wrong. Everything I do is wrong, so I'm only to be cited when I met my wrongest. Whereas Mike Gravel, who's horrible on pretty much everything but good on war, gets the retweet.

I mean, who cares? The reason I don't bother with him is that when he stops being the chairman of the Libertarian National Committee, no one's going to care about him. No one is going to say, "I wonder what Nick Sarwark thinks about" – it's like saying – is anybody in 2019 saying, "You know, before we come to a conclusion about this, let's find out what Gary Johnson thinks." He's a nonentity. He's forgotten about. Nobody cares. And so it would be ridiculous overkill for me to be addressing this person at all. Plus, he digs his own grave, because every time he attacks somebody like that, he gets ratioed. He gets 500 comments, 498 of which are against him. I mean, at some point he's got to say, "This ain't working," right? "This is just not working."

But anyway, you're the most recent victim, if we may put it that way, you and the Ron Paul Institute. And I want to start off with what it was that initially provoked him. I guess, on your site, there was a post relating to Sarwark and the issue of regime change in Venezuela. So let's talk about that just broadly as an issue before we get into the Sarwark aspect of it, because it's at least understandable why somebody would look at Venezuela and think: well, how much worse could it get? I mean, even the CIA-led coup has got to be better than what they're living with now. So what's your position on that?

**MCADAMS:** If that was ever the case, it might be worth considering, but there's never been a case where a revolution like that has ever produced a better result. And if there is, I'd be happy to see it. You can go all the way back to the prototype, the People Power Revolution in the Philippines back in the '80s. They got rid of the "shoe lady," but did their lives get any better? And I believe, and Dr. Paul believes, and I believe you probably share that view, that a libertarian revolution, a pro-market revolution, that is more of an evolution than a revolution. That's something that comes when the hearts and minds of the people are changed. And unfortunately, that's a long, slow slog, as we know, those of us who dedicate our lives to it here in the US, which is far more ripe than other countries for libertarian-style

government. It's a long, slow slog. The idea that you can flip a switch and have a libertarian society is basically just fantasy land.

**WOODS:** Right. So all right, so tell me about exactly what happened now. What was the problem? Did Sarwark retweet a video? Just give me the details on that.

**MCADAMS:** [laughing] The trigger, you mean. He was triggered.

**WOODS:** Yeah, maybe.

**MCADAMS:** He sent out a "Dear Libertarian" letter under the letterhead of the Libertarian Party, and it had a video embedded in it by a Dr. Varner, who's an American, who claims that he learned Spanish by watching Hugo Chavez videos. And as he was watching these videos learning Spanish, he realized what a monster Hugo Chavez was and how to dedicate himself to overthrowing the Maduro regime, which is aligned ideologically with the Chavez leftist revolution – a pretty strange story, if you ask me, in and of itself.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**MCADAMS:** However, the Sarwark part that comes in is he shared the video of this fellow speaking Spanish and essentially calling for regime change – and I'll give you the operative line – and not just regime change. You must support the person that the US government, that the CIA, that Mike Pence, that John Bolton supports to be president. He said, "Those who do not recognize Juan Guaido, they are the real enemies, not only of the Venezuelan people, but also of all of us libertarians." And that is pretty clear, a pretty clear statement. So Adam Dick, who's a senior fellow with the Ron Paul Institute, wrote it up and said that Nick Sarwark, the chairman of the Libertarian Party, is sharing a video promoting regime change with a specific candidate in Venezuela, and that doesn't sound very libertarian, in fact. And of course, the irony – I guess we can get into this later, but the irony, of course, now is that Guaido is in deep doo-doo, because it's turned out that his entire revolution in April was a complete scam, and millions of dollars have been stolen by his top party henchmen.

**WOODS:** Oh, I actually didn't know about this development.

**MCADAMS:** Oh, yeah. Interestingly enough and appropriately enough, it broke in an anti-Maduro newspaper out of Miami, called the *PenAm Post*, and it details the trickery, the theft, the mishandling of hundreds of tons of aid, which have now had to have been broken, and the extraordinarily shoddy treatment of those few soldiers that they were able to coax into defecting. We have it on the Ron Paul Institute website, but it's really an amazing story. These people absconded with possibly millions of dollars. So Guaido's name is mud now, which just shows you, Tom, why we shouldn't go picking people to rule other countries overseas, because we really don't know anything about them.

**WOODS:** Right, right. But yet isn't there still a nagging voice – now, I'm no – a lot of these people who write commentaries like this are what I call CIA libertarians or State Department libertarians. We know these people. These are the people who, their attention is always on whatever the villain of the day happens to be in the State Department, so they take their agenda and their marching orders from the State Department. Or also, they're like – I don't want to mention any names, but I could just think of one particular loser in the D.C. orbit

who would go to Iraq and walk around handing out US Constitutions. Could you imagine anything as foolish and idiotic as that?

**MCADAMS:** He made a good living with it.

**WOODS:** Yeah, no doubt, no doubt, and got to travel the world, and, let's say, meet a lot of interesting people and leave it at that.

**MCADAMS:** Made a lot of friends, a lot of good friends.

**WOODS:** Yeah, made a lot of good friends while doing that. Anyway, all right, so now you've got a bit of a problem, or at least you've got a conflict with Sarwark. So he hits back at you guys and says what?

**MCADAMS:** Well, he hits back hard, and he starts retweeting things, and the operative one is where he tweets something suggesting – of course, he doesn't have the courage to name names, but it's about how terrible it is that some people who call themselves libertarians actually support the governments of Venezuela and China and Russia. You know, it's a sort of a weaselly-word hit-back. And it's the old thing, Tom, and you remember it well. It happened in the Iraq war; it happened with Libya; it happens all the time. If you don't support the CIA view of what should happen in a country, well, you just happen to be in love with that leader. *Oh, you don't want to overthrow Saddam? How much is he paying you?* And that's kind of the mentality of the strike back.

**WOODS:** So one of these responses from him included a link that I think in 1,433 episodes of this show, I can safely say is the dumbest thing that has been linked to related to any of the topics I've covered. I mean, it's that bad. In fact, I want people to see the article Sarwark linked to, because you think, *All right, well look, maybe Woods has a beef with Sarwark, and who's to say who's right or wrong?* Okay. All right, fine. I mean, as I say, I'm the one who's – I've never started anything with that guy. Never, ever did I start – you can look at – we have the entire paper trail of every interaction he and I have had, and I have not started one of them.

But this piece that he links to on Medium.com is so shockingly bad, even though it's an attack on you guys, Daniel, I want people to read it, because it's so unbelievably bad. It's a piece by some guy – I mean, basically, the guy has no standing whatsoever. He's some guy who claims that he used to be a Ron Paul supporter. We've got a bunch of those, who go online and then they beat their breast, *Oh, my progressive friends, will you ever forgive me? My intentions were pure, and how was I to know,* and all that. So tell me about this article.

**MCADAMS:** [laughing] Yeah, I was going to say; I mean, this is right up there with the Protocols of Zion in terms of its crazy, conspiratorial nature. But this guy, who we don't really know what his real name even is, who now renounces his tipping his toes into the ideological waters of libertarianism and has renounced libertarianism as an evil philosophy, he wrote an article saying he was sitting there one day, thinking about Donald Trump and Ron Paul, and he realized that they had a lot in common. Their campaigns had a lot in common. And so therefore, because Trump is obviously Putin's puppet – of course, I think that was a pre-Mueller conclusion – that, *Aha, now I get it. The dots are being connected.*

And here's his evidence. Both campaigns "had an insurgent candidate with views that fell squarely outside the traditional GOP standards." Well imagine that. They "rested their argument on the failed nature of the US government as a continuing experiment." They were "labeled populists." They were "speaking of the need to read Washington of the elites," and they "possessed an absolutely rabid support base."

**WOODS:** Now, by the way, every single one of those is true of Bernie Sanders. Every last one.

**MCADAMS:** Exactly, and if anyone, at least as a campaigner, look at Obama. He positioned himself pretty much in that position.

**WOODS:** Yep.

**MCADAMS:** That's kind of how you win elections. So this article goes on – I agree; it's definitely worth reading this – but he goes on to talk about how Rand took a trip to Russia a while ago, if you remember, trying to establish dialogue, really, in the spirit of the president's campaign. And that was, of course, evidence that the Russians were behind Ron Paul.

**WOODS:** Yeah, but behind his 2008 campaign.

**MCADAMS:** [laughing] 2008.

**WOODS:** So they were already planting this before Rand was even in the Senate.

**MCADAMS:** And here is this – he said there is no smoking gun, but it still bothers him, and here are the things. Ron Paul met Václav Klaus. Wow, smoking gun.

**WOODS:** Yeah, half the libertarian world has met Václav Klaus.

**MCADAMS:** One of the great libertarian thinkers of all time. Single-handedly, despite what they say about what really happened in Czechoslovakia, it was Klaus who was the intellectual behind the change of regime. And of course, I write frequently for *Russia Today* and *Russia Insider* – which, of course, I don't. If *RT* or *Russia Insider* or anyone else picks up anything written in the Ron Paul Institute, that's fair game because we have a policy where anyone can republish anything we do. And there are a few other intriguing, but more tenuous ties.

**WOODS:** [laughing] Wait, more tenuous even than these nonexistent ties, in other words?

**MCADAMS:** [laughing] Yes, exactly. And the fact that John Laughlin, who I worked with and have known for, what 25 years or so – he's a PhD from Sorbonne; he's an Oxford intellectual professor at the Sorbonne. He was one of the leaders of the British Helsinki Group, and I've worked with him overseas for a number of years, is a well-respected historian, who's written like five or six books, and who sits on the board of the Ron Paul Institute, because he's an extraordinarily interesting and intelligent person. Because I have him on and he worked for a think-tank that was tied to Russians, there is the smoking gun that Putin backed Ron Paul in 2008.

**WOODS:** Are you kidding me?

**MCADAMS:** This is it.

**WOODS:** Yeah, so we'll latch on to what at that time was, at least at the beginning, a very obscure candidate with the entire media against him. Now, that sounds like a good plan. Obviously, the better plan is to find who the plausible nominees are and try to worm your way in or make contacts with them. But why would you latch on to a candidate who, in 2008 at least, had an extremely uphill battle ahead of him? It doesn't make any sense. Why would you do it?

**MCADAMS:** And if he actually started making momentum, he'd probably back out.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**MCADAMS:** The last thing you wanted. And also, more seriously, the idea that the Russians bankrolled Ron Paul is an insult to all of those people. And I'll tell you – you know this too, Tom. There was a lot of people who didn't have a lot of money, and they put money on their credit cards, they scraped together a couple of pennies, a couple of bucks, and they donated it, because they believed what Ron Paul was talking about: a free market economy, a more sensible foreign policy. It's an insult to every single one of these people to suggest that they weren't part of the revolution. It was all some amazing plan concocted by Putin, who spotted Ron Paul as a potential dupe. It is just disgusting.

**WOODS:** So that's an article now, basically with no evidence whatsoever. I like how they say, well, now we've got some more things that are maybe a little bit more tenuous. The things you've already shown us don't even qualify as tenuous. It is nothing. It is entirely nothing. So then let's say a little something about Russia. What is the Ron Paul Institute's opinion about what the United States' policy toward Russia should be?

**MCADAMS:** I think the Ron Paul Institute's opinion is it should be like our policy toward every other country, which is what our founders suggested: free trade and friendship with all nations who seek the same. And that's what got President Trump elected. We're tired of this. "What's so bad about getting along with Russia?" was what Trump said. Of course, the Russians paid him to say that [laughing].

**WOODS:** Right.

**MCADAMS:** But what's so wrong with getting along with, you know, fill in the blank, really? That's the question, especially as a libertarian. What's so wrong with getting along with fill in the blank? We're not trying to tell them how they should be governed, who should govern them, when they should bathe, how they should brush their teeth. Just get along. Have commercial ties. Have personal ties, educational ties among private citizens. And that's it. No entangling alliances. And that sounds like a pretty good idea, and that's our policy toward every country.

**WOODS:** People will say that you're turning a blind eye to some, let's say, unacceptable Russian policy, and you're glorifying or white washing the leadership.

**MCADAMS:** Yeah, but what policy would that be? What have they done? I mean, we had a productive ties with Russia in the depths of the Cold War, when they were pointing thousands

of missiles at us, banging their shoes on the table and threatening to nuke us. Nevertheless, we'll go over there; we'll talk to them. Nixon met Brezhnev, etc., etc. So how could it be worse with communism ended in Russia? With the US going around the world slapping sanctions, Russia is going around the world doing business. In a Russia like this, how could this be worse than under Stalin or Khrushchev? It's this mindset that, somehow it's even worse than the Cold War. I don't know where it comes from, other than the neocons and the military industrial complex, who thrive and who must have an enemy to survive.

**WOODS:** The Russia hysteria, not just surrounding Trump, but just in general about Russia as a threat – I mean, you remember Mitt Romney famously said in one of the debates with Obama that Russia is our number-one enemy, and everybody laughed at him at the time? And now it's chic among progressives to say, "Oh, Mitt Romney, we're so sorry. You was so right when you said that about the Russians." But it makes me wonder, is this what conservative sounded like during the Cold War, maybe? I mean, I don't know, it's like when left-liberals would listen to conservatives, they must have rolled their eyes or something during the Cold War, because that's probably what conservatives sounded like to them. I don't know. But this, it doesn't correspond to anything. I mean, yeah, all right, I wouldn't necessarily want to live under the Russian regime. Who cares? There's almost no regime I would want to live under in the world.

**MCADAMS:** I don't want to live under our regime. Please.

**WOODS:** Yeah, I don't want to live under our regime. But these are the cards we've been dealt.

**MCADAMS:** I mean, as I tweeted the other day, I'm all for getting rid of socialism. Can we please start here first?

**WOODS:** Yeah, yeah, exactly, exactly. And it's not like we don't have our hands full with stuff to do here. It's just such a strange thing. I wish libertarianism well all over the world. I absolutely do, and I want people to be as free as possible. But at the same time, I've got limited resources, and our movement has limited resources. And it just seems like – the example I like very much comes from Jeff Deist, when about a month and a half ago, we were at the state convention of the Libertarian Party of Florida. Jeff gave, as usual, a brilliant talk, and he gave the example – he was talking about a mass shooting that had occurred in Paris. And he said, now, I know that a lot of Americans and a lot of libertarians want to say, look, if the provisions were open carrying, this wouldn't have been an issue. They would have gotten that gunman, and we wouldn't have had this problem. And he says, now, on the basis of the pure logic of it, there's no getting around that. That is true. That's absolutely true. He says, but the thing is, that's just not French. That's not the way the French think.

**MCADAMS:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** That's just not the way they think. So like that or not, that's a reality. You like that or not, that's a reality. So the question then becomes: given the limited resources we have and our limited scope and the huge array of problems we face at home, what kind of a use of resources would it be for us to try to turn Parisians into Texans on the gun issue?

**MCADAMS:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** Why not just be willing to say: there's going to be a lot of parts of the world where there are a lot of things I object to, but there's just nothing I can do about that? I have to be reasonable. I have to be a non-utopian, and I have to focus my energies where I'm likely to get the most bang for the buck, namely, right here.

**MCADAMS:** Yeah, and there's a real danger. I mean, I think Jeff is, of course, absolutely right. There are cultural differences in the world. And to ignore those is to really be like a Stalin, to be like a Lenin. We will, by force, if necessary, create the New Soviet man, whatever we have to do.

**WOODS:** Yeah, it's a neocolonialist mentality.

**MCADAMS:** It is, and it's a Trotskyite mentality that we have to have a world permanent revolution. Countries may not be right. Maybe in 30 years, if they have a few more shootings, the people in France might change their mind and say, "Hey, you know what? Let's try some guns. This might make things better." But for us to go over there and yell at them, "You've got to try some guns," it doesn't work that way. And I think the Venezuela example is the perfect example. "Hey, if you don't love Juan Guaido, you are an anti-libertarian. You hate the Venezuelan people." Well, it turns out the guy is a huge crook. So this is the point, and that goes along with your limited resources point: we don't have the ability, we don't have the knowledge to understand the complexities of a foreign society.

Even this guy who goes over there watching Hugo Chavez speeches, he's got a lot of buddies in Venezuela, he knows all about it, and, *Let me tell you, buddy, you better back this guy.* Well, the guy's a crook. We just simply can't know. We can't even know in our own voting system, Tom, where we have access to so much more information about candidates. We can't even know the truth. Obama ran as a peace candidate. He snookered a lot of people. George W. Bush ran his no-nation-building. He snookered a lot of people. So we can't even know with our own candidates. How on earth are we going to pick and choose people overseas? It just really underscores the folly of this branch of libertarianism that thinks it needs to spread itself by hook or by crook overseas. I would say, and Dr. Paul always says: why don't we lead by example and fix this country and make it a beacon so people will want to emulate us?

**WOODS:** Indeed. It's the Ron Paul message from all these years. Now, I want to address something that came up in just a social media thread. But your involvement in this British Helsinki Group, there was somebody saying that this was a Putin front or whatever, even though it disbanded before Putin took power. I mean, these people are so pathetic. But tell me about this and what it was all about and why it's not what they say.

**MCADAMS:** Yeah, it's a brilliant organization. It was started by Christine Stone, who was the wife of, sadly departed this week, Professor Norman Stone, as you know, the great 20th century conservative historian, who I think is really one of the most important intellectuals of the last hundred years and an absolute delight. Tom, I once spent an evening with Professor Stone and John Lukacs in an apartment, so Tom, as a historian, I'm sure you can imagine what it was like being in that room.

But Christine Stone was an attorney, and she was the wife of Oxford professor Norman Stone, and she started a group, essentially – so let me back up just a little the time. All of the Helsinki Groups that are praised by everyone, including libertarians, they say, "Oh, the British Helsinki Group was not a real Helsinki Group?" Well, the problem is that all of the "real

Helsinki groups" are 100% funded by governments. So if your government funds your NGO and your NGO is a watchdog over your government, how objective are you going to be? And so that's the idea. The British Helsinki Group was a free-market alternative. We were funded by private – I would say *they* were funded by private donations. It was a private organization to counter all of these government-controlled Helsinki groups.

And yes, we did take a contrarian view of many of the events that were happening at the time in the post-Soviet world. But yes, again, 20 years later, it turns out that the analysis that we did was right. The things we were saying were right. We were observing the very early stages of the color revolutions in places like Slovakia, in places like Serbia, and elsewhere. We were observing the practice runs for what came later in places like Libya. So in fact, we were right to challenge the state narrative that was being pushed by the other Helsinki groups. So I mean, the idea that as a libertarian, you would trash a private, free-market alternative to state-funded NGOs, frankly, it's beyond me, Tom.

**WOODS:** Yeah, no kidding. And your experience in this area goes back, what, 20+ years?

**MCADAMS:** Yeah, in fact, I finished up grad school, and I moved to Hungary in 1993, and I wanted to observe – I was doing my Master's in international relations, dealing with the then-newly-post-Soviet Central and Eastern Europe. And so my great friend at the State Department, where I was an intern as a grad student, said, "Hey, go east." If you want to understand what's going on, get your feet on the ground. Don't read books. And so I moved there, and I wanted to see on the ground what was happening. And so with the British Helsinki Group, we were able to go to these places; we were able to go to the hotspots. I spent a lot of time in Albania. If you remember, there was a revolution there in '96, which was one of the early People Power Revolutions. And there are books that can be written about that. But being on the ground there and observing it up close is extremely important, because you understand it in a different way than if you were sitting here looking at news articles.

**WOODS:** Yeah, indeed, indeed. And then just tell me, how did it come to be that you wound up working in Ron Paul's office? Because of course, you had all this knowledge about international affairs from firsthand experience, but how did you make that connection?

**MCADAMS:** Well, I was against NATO expansion in the mid 90s when it came around. I was living in Hungary, and I saw what the big defense contractors were doing in Hungary. They came around with fistfuls of dollars, and at the time, they were passing that money around to the former commies. And I didn't and don't like commies or former companies [laughing]. And they were passing that money around and emboldening people who I thought were bad guys. And I realized that the whole thing was a scam. This is part of the time, Tom, where I was really undergoing my intellectual revolution. I started reading Lew Rockwell, my gateway drug, and Justin Raimondo, my gateway drug, and understanding that it's not just that we're supporting the wrong guys overseas; we shouldn't be supporting any guys overseas. And that's when the light went on. And I completely turned against NATO expansion. I thought it was a terrible idea.

And in fact, I went back to Washington, in 1999, 2000 to work for a think-tank, where the head of the think-tank was also opposed to NATO expansion. And it was a slight mistake for me, because the think-tank did not have the ideological bent that I anticipated. And I'll just

say that Lew Rockwell and Justin Raimondo were not welcome people there. It was in neocon think tank. And of course, I was fired [laughing].

But before I went, I went to Ron Paul's office, and I talked with Joe Becker, who I did not know, and I just said, "I just wanted to let you know that when I was overseas, reading what Ron Paul" – whom I had never heard of – "what Ron Paul was writing about the mess that we created in Yugoslavia, this is the one guy who was a beacon of light, who really understood what was going on. And I just want to tell you to please tell your boss that I really admire this man." And it turns out after I was fired, I got a call from Joe Becker, and he wanted to quit because he had to do some other things. He had been working there for several years and wondered if I was interested in potentially filling that position. And of course, I put my hand over the phone and yelled and screamed –

**WOODS:** [laughing]

**MCADAMS:** – and then calmly answered, "Oh, that sounds interesting."

**WOODS:** [laughing] Yeah, right, *Yeah, I'll think about that*. And that was that was what year again?

**MCADAMS:** That was 2001. That was just before 9/11.

**WOODS:** Oh, wow, so your position became very, very interesting, very, very quickly.

**MCADAMS:** Maybe someone should write a Medium article about that [laughing].

**WOODS:** [laughing] Yeah, that seems a little suspicious, the timing there. All right, what's going on – I want you to have an opportunity to say something about the Ron Paul Liberty Report.

**MCADAMS:** Well, sadly, but happily with this crazy nonsense in the Middle East, our numbers are going through the roof. We had a record live audience this past week or last week on Iran and on what's going on there. We're getting close to 200,000 subscribers and 20 million views, so we're benefiting in a way, but I think it's because in – and Tom, you're the greatest example of this too – people are hungry for something that's outside of the "mainstream media." They want to have some real news. They want to have some real perspective, and that's what we try to do every day. And we do it on the show, and we've got a big conference coming up in August for the Ron Paul Institute, which the Liberty Report is part of the institute. And so we reach out to people, and we give them alternatives, and so far it's a free-market thing. People are responding, and they like it, and as long as they do, we'll keep doing it.

**WOODS:** What are the websites you want to tell us about? One or more, I suppose.

**MCADAMS:** Sure, [RonPaulInstitute.org](http://RonPaulInstitute.org) is the institute, and if you want to check out the Liberty Report, it's live every day at noon on the East Coast, noon, and that's [Youtube.com/RonPaulLibertyReport](http://Youtube.com/RonPaulLibertyReport).

**WOODS:** All right, well, I'm going to link to that stuff at [TomWoods.com/1433](http://TomWoods.com/1433). Send Dr. Paul my regards. It's been a while, but I still follow you guys, and I'm really glad about your success. And it's unfortunate that, as you say, you get a spike when things are bad, but when things are bad, that's when we need Ron Paul the most. So it's working out the way it should. Well, thanks so much for your time, and it's always fun talking to you.

**MCADAMS:** Thanks so much, Tom.