Twitter Thread by Andrea Bernstein

Andrea Bernstein
@AndreaWNYC

In my book, American Oligarchs, I write extensively about Charlie Kushner. In the 1990's he was an ambitious real estate developer on the rise. Like Donald Trump, he found that political contributions enhanced his status, power, and money 1/

He began giving enormous amounts to Democrats. He gave over $3 million to New Jersey Democrats when Jim McGreevey was running for NJ Gov -- about the same as Enron gave to George W. Bush 2/

Bill Clinton came to his office in Livingston, as did Al Gore. But it turned out some of those attention-getting contributions were illegal, made in the name of others, including some of his family members.

3/

His brother sued Charles Kushner. A young and ambitious Republican prosecutor, Christopher J. Christie, began investigating, a standard white collar prosecution...of a big supporter of the NJ Gov. It probably would have been quietly adjudicated, except...

4/

Charlie concluded the whole thing was a hit job cooked up by his siblings & Christie. So Charlie hired an East Orange cop to procure a sex worker to entrap his brother-in-law. Charlie held on to the tape a while. Then, grand jury letters started to go out.

5/

And Charles Kushner sent the tape to his sister on the eve of his nephew's engagement party -- a nephew who was the same age as Jared and had been raised like a brother. The cop had to talk Charlie out of sending the tape to his nephew and nieces as well.

6/

When Charlie's sister got the tape, she brought it prosecutors, and not long after, Charlie was arrested. "This Department of Justice...will not tolerate the obstruction of federal grand jury investigations," prosecutor Chris Christie said when Charlie was arrested.

7/

Charlie's lawyer said the charges were "baseless." But it became clear Christie and his team had more cards to play. Charlie had his own connection to the sex worker. Prosecutors had learned that for years, Charles Kushner had been living a double life, using a pseudonym.

8/

To avoid further embarrassment, Charles Kushner pleaded guilty. His lawyer said he "recognized the poor, isolated judgement that led to his arrest" and wished "to move on with his life as quickly as possible."

9/

More than six hundred people wrote letters on Charlie Kushner's behalf when he was sentenced, including NJ Democrats Robert Toricelli and Cory Booker.

10/

When he was released from prison, Kushner said "I believe that God and my parents in heaven forgive me for what I did, which was wrong. I don't believe God and my parents will ever forgive my brother and sister for instigating a criminal investigation..because of jealousy."

11/

No one who lived through this story, and especially not Charles or Jared Kushner, or Chris Christie, would ever leave it behind.

Much more on Charlie Kushner in American Oligarchs:

https://t.co/47Zy6iAAr5

Going on @BrianLehrer soon with @ilyamarritz to discuss Kushner, Manafort, pardons and how there still *could* be a legal reckoning for Trump.