

CRYPTOME

Et tu Poitras?

Laura Poitras Omits Corporate Spies and State Capture

By **Bill Blunden**, November 13, 2014

A couple of days ago Laura Poitras, the filmmaker who directed the movie *Citizenfour*, gave an [interview](#) to the Dutch news outlet *NRC Handelsblad*. For those in the audience who don't speak Dutch there's a rough English translation available at [Cryptome](#).

Readers following the Snowden affair won't encounter much in terms of new material but there are certain statements that Poitras makes near the end of her interview that are astonishing. For example, Poitras comments that both Google and Apple have made great strides towards protecting users:

"I think certainly a change in consciousness has come after Snowden. Google's servers are secure: that's a big change. This protects the privacy of people. Apple brings a secure phone on the market, that frustrates the FBI"

Do Google and Apple really give one iota about protecting civil liberties? Online service providers like Google and Apple are essentially [corporate intelligence operations](#) which profit by [monetizing user data](#). They'll gleefully sell your data to the highest bidder on one hand while simultaneously working to dilute privacy laws with the other. And if someone happens to make a fuss... well, who cares about paying a few lousy fines? Pay no attention to the [slave labor](#) in China or parasitic [tax avoidance](#). And as far as foiling security services is concerned, despite award-winning performances by high-ranking officials the FBI has plenty of ways to [sidestep encryption](#).

Poitras then points out that Facebook is running a Tor hidden services and that this is an encouraging development:

"Facebook has its website available through the anonymous network Tor. Everyone has appreciation for it, while Facebook is always seen as the enemy of privacy."

Unfortunately, in light a recent [darknet sweep](#) that took down over 400 hidden services, the Tor development team [concedes](#) that it can't make any promises about the security of hidden services.

"The task of hiding the location of low-latency web services is a very hard problem and we still don't know how to do it correctly"

So everyone and their brother in Silicon Valley is pushing the idea of cyber-security. But even the Director of the FBI [intuits](#) that assurances of cyber protection are "part of a marketing strategy." Public relations, as in noise for rubes. **Products don't actually have to be secure, they only need to provide the impression of offering security.** Capiche? Honestly, in a lemon market like cyber security how's the

average user going to know the difference? Half the time victims don't even know that an attack has even taken place.

Though executives [complain publicly](#) to the President while the cameras roll, when they're asked in private corporate spies tend to collude with government spies; willfully handing over data and embedding backdoors as a matter of [shared class interest](#). They've done it before, lied about it, and will do it again. **The intelligence services, as former CIA officer John Stockwell put it, are the Praetorian Guard of the corporate elite.** Another CIA officer who went public back in the 1970s, Philip Agee, offered the [same conclusion](#). That spies and the secrecy that shields them are a "logical, necessary manifestations of a ruling class's determination to retain power and privilege."

Finally, Poitras wonders aloud how countries like Germany allow the NSA to have so much leverage:

"I don't understand why Europe still leaves all this communications to pass through the United States."

The former editor of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, one of Germany's largest papers [has an answer](#). Udo Ulkotte, who claims to have been on the CIA's payroll during his tenure as an editor, says that Germany (the economic powerhouse of Europe) is an **American client state**:

"Germany is still a kind of a colony of the United States, you'll see that in many points; like for example, the majority of Germany do not want to have nukes in our country, but we still have American nukes; so, we are still a kind of an American colony, and, being a colony, it is very easy to approach young journalists through (and what is very important here is) transatlantic organizations. All journalists from respected and big German newspapers, magazines, radio stations, TV stations, they are all members or guests of those big transatlantic organizations"

Udo is on the something. The origins of post-WWII German intelligence and the role played by Nazi Generals like Reinhard Gehlen are inextricably [tied to the CIA](#). **In other words the modern German espionage apparatus was initially architected by American intelligence.** So while Angela Merkel puts on an entertaining temper tantrum for domestic consumption when it comes to light that the NSA spied on her, keep in mind that there are [subtle currents](#) just out of view that run in the [opposite direction](#). Note how Merkel politely asked Obama to stop spying on Germany [only to be shooed aside](#). Please stop spying on us. Pretty please, with sugar on top? Go ahead and keep the drone bases if you want...

Denouement

Looking at how Poitras is framing her narrative, she's conveying the impression of an adversarial relationship between government spies and corporate spies. Despite the fact that researchers like Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page have [empirically demonstrated](#) the reality of corporate state capture.

Over 70 percent of all intelligence work in the United States is performed by private contractors. The data broker industry literally dwarfs the NSA. In other words **Poitras fails to acknowledge that the government's surveillance apparatus is an appendage of a much larger corporate panopticon.** The policymakers in the executive branch, the very same people who give orders to U.S. security services, respond primarily to plutocrats and organized groups representing business interests.

I also can't help but notice the recurring techno-libertarian theme that our civil liberties can be protected by the latest app. Paging Mr. Omidyar! It's a refrain that's been echoed by both [Glenn Greenwald](#) and [Ed Snowden](#). Imagine that? The mass subversion programs that enables the NSA's all-seeing eye is rooted in flawed technology (accidental and intentional). Disarming spies and implementing meaningful regulation within the hi-tech sector will oblige seismic political shifts. In both cases such efforts will run afoul of sources of power outside the government, **corporate factions** that transmit their commands through the American Deep State.

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