

Snowden: ‘To Tell the Truth Is Not a Crime’

Nov. 4—This “Manifesto for the Truth” by Edward Snowden was published Nov. 3 in Der Spiegel magazine.

In a very short time, the world has learned much about unaccountable secret agencies and about sometimes illegal surveillance programs. Sometimes the agencies even deliberately try to hide their surveillance of high officials or the public. While the NSA and GCHQ seem to be the worst offenders—this is what the currently available documents suggest—we must not forget that mass surveillance is a global problem in need of global solutions.

Such programs are not only a threat to privacy, they also threaten freedom of speech and open societies. The existence of spy technology should not de-

termine policy. We have a moral duty to ensure that our laws and values limit monitoring programs and protect human rights.

Society can only understand and control these problems through an open, respectful and informed debate. At first, some governments, feeling embarrassed by the revelations of mass surveillance, initiated an unprecedented campaign of persecution to suppress this debate. They intimidated journalists and criminalized publishing the truth. At this point, the public was not yet able to evaluate the benefits of the revelations. They relied on their governments to decide correctly.

Today we know that this was a mistake and that such action does not serve the public interest. The debate which they wanted to prevent will now take place in countries around the world. And instead of doing harm, the societal benefits of this new public knowledge are now clear, since reforms are now proposed in the form of increased oversight and new legislation.

Citizens have to fight suppression of information on matters of vital public importance. To tell the truth is not a crime.