A letter from film producer Tony Garnett

“Edward Snowden has shone a light into the secret activities of the State”

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Tony Garnett, and collaborators including director Ken Loach and the late screenwriter Jim Allen, are responsible for a number of plays and films dealing sympathetically with working class life and exploring fundamental political issues such as the betrayals of the Labour Party, the trade unions and of Stalinism. They include *Up the Junction, Cathy Come Home, The Lump, The Big Flame, Kes, Days of Hope* and *The Spongers*. Garnett has produced critically acclaimed television series such as *Between the Lines* and *This Life*. His novels include *Marine Ices, The Seduction of Lucy Foster* and *Free Love*.

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The State's power is backed by loyal people with weapons: from the bobby on the beat right up to the finger on the nuclear trigger.

But its most valued weapon is secrecy.

This is most important to those States, like the United States of America and its colony, Britain, which preserve the forms of democracy without its content. In order for the State to have freedom to act with impunity, it must act under the cloak of secrecy. Whole populations must be spied on without their knowledge; enemies, or suspected enemies, must be tortured in secret; the killing of innocent civilians by the careless use of drone explosives must be hidden and denied. Or the people would refuse permission and punish those responsible.

Evidence, facts, are the property of the State. They are too valuable, and too dangerous, to be available to the people, who would not be able to understand the nuances. Or so we are told by our masters.

But, hey, not to worry. As William Hague says, “You have nothing to fear about the British State or intelligence services listening to the contents of your phone calls...”

Secrecy and surveillance are what make all the other weapons of the State useful. They offer freedom and elbow room. So it is with no surprise that when that secret world is breached and some of it is revealed, the State reacts: angrily, relentlessly, totally.

It is a stab at its heart. The State does not forgive.

All pretensions of democracy, of the citizens' right to know, of the sovereignty of the people are swept aside.

To provoke this response and to be in the path of the State's need to reassert its integrity, is to put your life at risk.

Edward Snowden knew this.

Yet he still released into the public domain details of surveillance, by the State, of everyone they care to monitor, effectively ending all privacy for all citizens. No limits, no appeal, no knowledge which could motivate an appeal: not only are you the subject of surveillance, you do not know you are the subject of surveillance.

The digital technology which Silicon Valley said would set us free, is enslaving us in its seductive arms. Giant corporations, ones we use every day and on which the modern economy depends, co-operate with the State; whether willingly or under threat is irrelevant. Business is business.

How the Stasi would crave to be in control of these new toys.

Its successors are.

Edward Snowden has shone a light into the secret activities of the State. We are all indebted to him, this man of conscience and courage, who has a future as a fugitive, forever on the run from the Feds who are trying to run him down, who want to kill him as a

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traitor.

To me he is a hero.

We should take courage from his individual sacrifice and work together to fight for the right to privacy, which underwrites true freedom of the individual. For that we need a participatory democracy: The content, not just the outer trappings.

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