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Charlie Hebdo, A Free Press, And Social Security

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Puzzled by the title? It will all come clear.

Europeans have written to me with more information that raises questions about the Charlie Hebdo affair. Some point out the strange emptiness of the street on which the professional killers depart. Others point out the film has hallmarks of orchestration or staging. Still others point out the size and described physical attributes of the killers do not correspond with the accused brothers and that the getaway car turns away from the scene differently from the official description. Another puzzle is that the video of the police assault on the deli repeatedly shows police moving in front of other police who are firing their weapons, yet despite the pointblank range are not hit. And there are other matters.

All I can say is that clearly at least some Europeans notice and on the basis of what they have seen have a lot of suspicion. I cannot evaluate the information sent to me. I do not know the neighborhood in Paris or traffic patterns. I know nothing about film making. Those who know enough about these matters for their suspicions to be aroused are the ones who need to address these issues. Possibly some of these suspicions are contrived red herrings designed to redirect the focus of suspicion down dead ends and discredit skeptics.

In my articles I raised a question about the official story, which was so completely at the ready as to appear pre-packaged. I said that the official story had many of the characteristics of a false flag operation. I did not say it was one. My intent is for the media to make some effort to verify the story and not simply repeat the script handed to them. I made it clear that I thought it unlikely the story would be examined by the print and TV media. As Patrick Smith makes clear in CounterPunch, an embedded media is not a media. Journalism is absent along with truth.

My column was used both by neoconservatives and the leftwing People for the American Way to attack or to try to embarrass Ron Paul.

I learned of this when an email arrived from a Washington Post reporter asking if I had considered the possible effect on Rand Paul's presidential prospects before writing the article for a Ron Paul website. Apparently, the reporter had in mind a story: "Paul Craig Roberts Derails Rand Paul's Presidential Hopes." I suppose the story was going to be that by publishing the conspiracy kook Roberts, Ron Paul had destroyed his son's chance to become President.

At the time I had no idea what the Washington Post reporter was asking about. I replied that I write for my website and that, once I post, many other websites from locations around the world pick up the column and repost it and that it is beyond my powers to consider what implications my columns might have for all the known and unknown websites that might choose to republish it.

Next I learned from readers that some non-entity named Luke Brinker, who doesn't even rate a Wikipedia entry, had attacked Ron Paul on the tabloid site Salon: "Ron Paul defends insane Charlie Hebdo conspiracy theory," and in the process called me a "paleoconservative crank and notorious 9/11 truther."

What was this all about? It turned out that the notorious neoconservative William Kristol had started it. Kristol's way of defending the official story was to try to bring embarrassment to Ron Paul, with the result that libertarians would line up with the official story in defense of Ron Paul.

Misrepresentation of my article was essential to the plot. My statement that the Charlie Hebdo affair has characteristics of a false flag event was turned into an accusation that it was a false flag event. Of course, we don't have proof one way or the other. On one side we have an official narrative that relies entirely on belief in the veracity of officials and their embedded media, which after Iraq, Libya, Syria, Iran, and Ukraine is not very high. On the other hand we have the suspicious aspects that many have pointed out.

When Ron Paul was deposed on People for the American Way's RightWing Watch, he stated the obvious. He said that I had not said it was a false flag event but had pointed out reasons that suspicious needed to be investigated and answered for the sake of the credibility of the official account. Ron Paul said that he supports that sound approach and that it was important for people to think and not simply blindly accept government explanations.

That should have been the end of it. But no, libertarians responded not quite like Kristol had hoped but partially. Dale Steinreich wrote on LewRockwell.com that he "doesn't buy Roberts' posited theory," thus perpetuating the misrepresentation as I have no theory, only suspicions. Steinreich then takes issue with the various neoconservative and leftwing obscurantists who are out to get Ron Paul.

I think that Steinreich is unnecessarily defensive. Ron Paul needs no defense from proven warmongers and ideological jerks. Nevertheless, Steinreich took the bait. Part of his defense of Ron Paul is to write: "For clarity, Paul Craig Roberts is not a libertarian. . . . he is a supporter of federal programs such as Social Security and Medicare." As hardly anything could be worse than that, not even conspiracy suspicions, Steinreich concludes that "far more left progressives share the totality of [Roberts'] current views than libertarians."

So here we have again the view about which I have written so often that the great mass of people cannot evaluate what is said or written without first classifying it into a prevailing ideological box. If what is said fits their box, it is correct. If not, it is wrong. According to this way of thinking, If you support Social Security and Medicare you are a leftwing progressive. Therefore the leftwing freaks attacking Ron Paul are really attacking their own Paul Craig Roberts.

Steinreich certainly turns the tables on the feeble-minded who tried to attack Ron Paul through me.

This brings me now to the last part of my title, my real interest in this affair. Possibly on one occasion during his life William Kristol told the truth about something. I just don't know what it was. As for Salon and RightWing Watch, they have no following among thinking people. Essentially they serve as gatekeepers and propagandists for Washington and private interest groups. Everyone knows that William Kristol and The Weekly Standard want more war, especially with Israel's enemies, and that leftwing progressives hate people like Ron Paul, who believe in limited government and distrust the left progressives' god, which is government.

What interest me is Steinreich's opinion that I am a suspect supporter of freedom and liberty because I support Social Security and Medicare. Clearly, Steinreich knows little about my positions or the history of Social Security privatization, a debate I started with my Business Week column back in the 1980s.

During the 1980s and into the 1990s I supported Social Security privatization, or perhaps more precisely, looking at it closely. In one of my Business Week columns I wrote about the Chilean government minister who succeeded in privatizing the social security system in Chile. I do not know the current condition of Chile's social security system, but when I wrote the system had proved to be a success, and many Chileans had become share owners in Chile's economy.

The Chilean minister thanked me profusely for making him world famous. He travelled around the world explaining how he went about the task that he accomplished, and he ended up at the Cato Institute in Washington, at that time a libertarian think tank at which I spent several years before being evicted for being an independent thinker.

Back at the time I was advocating thought about Social Security privatization the Dow Jones was around 1,000. The subsequent rise in the market would have made privatization feasible. More importantly, perhaps, if Social Security had been privatized, it is unlikely Congress would have deregulated the financial system. It is one thing if gamblers wish to risk their money in a casino. It is another if it is the money of Social Security retirees.

Once the financial system was deregulated—a libertarian objective—it became impossible to privatize Social Security other than for insincere reasons of letting Wall Street rob retirees. The lack of accountability, which followed the last financial crash, and the declaration of financial institutions being too big to fail, and thus are carried on the nation's budget or the Federal Reserve's balance sheet, also make clear that it is impossible to trust old age security to an unaccountable financial system.

Therefore, being practical and not a libertarian ideologue, I understand that Social Security privatization is no longer possible on the basis of a sound and sincere case. It might still happen as part of the normal corruption that now engulfs the US government.

Neoconservatives have an ideology of US world hegemony and an agenda to achieve it. Everything that they do and say relates to their agenda.

The leftwing progressives and neoliberals have their agendas, and, like the neocons, admissible thought is agenda-specific.

Libertarians have an agenda, an honorable one but largely not practical. In the libertarian mind, it is government that misuses power. The remedy is to place power in private sector hands. Yet as all of history shows, private interests also misuse power.

The solution to the dilemma is countervailing power. Labor unions to offset capitalist monopolies and company stores. Private interests that government must both accommodate and regulate. The division of government power into executive, legislative and judicial, a distribution of power between federal, state, and local governments, and accountability of all to law and the Constitution.

Perfect results would not be forthcoming, but there would be more liberty and more justice than if one power rules us all. The goal is to keep Sauron off the throne.

Being impractical, libertarians have jeopardized a better outcome, and advanced a worse one, as much as have other groups. The rise of jobs offshoring, misinterpreted by libertarians as free trade, destroyed the countervailing power of labor unions. As this domino fell, it knocked over another—the Democratic Party. The decline in union financial support sent Democrats to the same influence purchasers as patronized by Republicans, with the consequence that the same interest groups now control both parties.

Conservatives worshiping presidential power have supported the accumulation of undue power in the executive branch, power that has over-ridden the Constitution.

America is now a closed-mind country. Minds are closed by ideological agendas, by narrow private interests, and by the view that only conspiracy kooks dissent from official explanations. Dissent and protest are gradually being criminalized. The government does not succeed all at once, but gradually step by step.

Before too long we will have to believe the most fantastic stories or be arrested. That is the path that both government and ideologues have us on.