

## Tekst 5

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### Diana syndrome: we get the conspiracies we deserve

- 1 There was a time when only eccentrics were interested in conspiracy theories. However, in recent times conspiracy has gone mainstream. One recent survey found that 27 per cent of the British population believed that Princess Diana<sup>1)</sup> and Dodi Fayed were assassinated. As many as 43 per cent of the 4,170 people surveyed by London's *Evening Standard* answered yes to the question, "Do you think Diana was murdered?" Almost all the viewers who phoned in to *The Richard and Judy Show* last week about Diana's death, believed that there was more to it than meets the eye. The British establishment itself lacks the confidence to dismiss unsubstantiated rumours of conspiracy.
- 2 These theories are no longer ignored but investigated. That is why the official inquiry into Diana's death has turned into a de facto murder inquiry. Michael Burgess, the person appointed to head it, has indicated that he wants to investigate every theory about the death of Diana.
- 3 Burgess is likely to be kept busy well into the next decade. Since the 1997 Paris car crash, the rumour mill has been working overtime. So which of the many conspiracy theories is Burgess going to investigate? That Diana was killed by Mossad? Or that she was murdered on the orders of MI6 or the CIA? Will Burgess investigate Mohamed al-Fayed's claim that responsibility for this "horrendous murder" rests with the Prince of Wales and his father, Philip? Is he going to investigate the rumour that points the finger at Osama Bin Laden? Apparently Osama feared that Diana served as a poor role model for Muslim women so, it's claimed, he ordered the hit. While he is at



- it, Burgess could do worse than investigate the rumour that the singer Morrissey predicted the princess's demise in his 1986 song "The Queen is Dead".
- 4 Of course, there is nothing new about our fascination with conspiracies. For decades, people have speculated about who really killed President Kennedy. But at least we know for certain that Kennedy was murdered – so that rumours about his demise correspond to something that occurred in reality. Today an accidental death is sufficient to provoke officialdom to search for conspirators. Why? Because of an all-pervasive sense of mistrust in official authority.
- 5 The public's scepticism towards the official version of events surrounding Diana's death is the result of a profound sense of distrust in conventional authority. We live in an age of rumours where official facts often carry little more authority than an internet site devoted to alien abduction. We are increasingly cynical about the official "version of events" precisely because it is official.
- 6 Another important cultural pressure is the tendency to endow any form of misfortune with meaning. People find it difficult to accept the fact that a misfortune was due to bad luck or an accident. You don't need to be a Diana to have questions raised about your death. When a child meets an untimely death, parents frequently look for something that will explain their tragic loss. Desperate mothers and fathers will seize upon rumours of cover-ups to make sense of their children's affliction. The belief that "we are not being told the truth" helps shape contemporary public debate.
- 7 That is why the instinct is to assume that "they" have lied about matters such as weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the death of David Kelly or the true risks of the MMR vaccine. It appears that there

noot 1 Princess Diana: first wife of Prince Charles. She died in a car accident in Paris together with her lover Dodi Fayed.

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is always a story behind the story and a conspiracy theory fills a need created by a culture of mistrust. Some associate rumours and conspiracy with uneducated people who find it difficult to engage with our sophisticated knowledge economy. Yet, conspiracy theory is not confined to a misguided culturally illiterate sub-class.

8 It is the sophisticated Michael Meacher, one of Tony Blair's longest-serving ministers, and now a backbencher,

who argues that the US government knew in advance about 11 September but did nothing about it. And crackpot theories about the MMR vaccine are far more likely to be believed by middle-class professionals than ordinary folk. It may well be the lack of trust which afflicts the middle class that accounts for the mainstreaming of the conspiracy.

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## ■ Tekst 5 Diana syndrome: we get the conspiracies we deserve

- 1p **11** ■ What does paragraph 1 focus on?
- A The failure of the authorities to establish the truth about Princess Diana's death.
  - B The large number of people who believe in the idea of foul play behind Princess Diana's death.
  - C The many nonsense stories about Princess Diana's life which spread after her death.
- 1p **12** ■ Which of the following statements concerning "unsubstantiated rumours of conspiracy" (paragraph 1) is/are correct, judging from paragraphs 1-3?
- 1 The fact that they will be checked lends them more weight.
  - 2 The fact that they will be part of an official inquiry does not stand to reason.
- A Only 1 is correct.
  - B Only 2 is correct.
  - C Both 1 and 2 are correct.
  - D Neither 1 nor 2 is correct.
- 1p **13** ■ Which of the following sentences from paragraph 3 is meant to be ironic?
- A "Since the 1997 ... overtime."
  - B "Is he going ... Osama Bin Laden?"
  - C "While he ... Dead'."
- 1p **14** ■ How could the last sentence of paragraph 5 also begin?
- A Indeed we are ...
  - B Instead we are ...
  - C Yet we are ...
- 1p **15** ■ What does paragraph 6 focus on?
- A The belief that there is a purpose to life.
  - B The enormity of people's grief at losing a child.
  - C The growing tendency to show private emotion in public.
  - D The unwillingness to face the fact that certain things just happen.
- 1p **16** ■ What is Michael Meacher (paragraph 8) an example of?
- A Of a well-informed person who believes in conspiracy.
  - B Of someone foolish enough to openly disagree with the US government's decisions.
  - C Of someone who in spite of his respectable status cannot counter the general public's lack of trust.
- 1p **17** ■ Which of the following is/are true with regard to Frank Furedi's thoughts on a remedy for the "lack of trust" (last paragraph)?
- 1 He draws attention to the problem, but offers no concrete solution.
  - 2 He thinks the middle classes should show more political commitment.
- A Only 1 is true.
  - B Only 2 is true.
  - C Both 1 and 2 are true.
  - D Neither 1 nor 2 is true.