

# Thatcher, Bush, and North charged with 'breathtaking' Lockerbie coverup

by Mark Burdman

Despite efforts by the George Bush-Oliver North crowd in the United States and by the friends of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom to suppress it, a film was shown in the British House of Commons on Nov. 16, exposing the Bush-Thatcher coverup of efforts to find out who was really responsible for the Dec. 21, 1988 bombing of the Pan Am 103 jet over Lockerbie, Scotland, a terrorist atrocity in which 270 people lost their lives. Entitled "The Maltese Double Cross," the film was made by veteran filmmaker Allan Francovich, who specializes in documentaries about sensitive intelligence themes. Money for the film was provided by British tycoon Tiny Rowland, of the Lonrho interests, although Francovich insists that he was given complete editorial freedom by Rowland. The House of Commons showing was sponsored by Labour Party parliamentarian Tom Dalyell.

The film has had very restricted circulation, and was not available to *EIR* at press time. Our news report therefore focusses on the controversy it has aroused, and what others have said about it.

According to various synopses of its contents, Francovich rips apart the story that it was the Libyans who were responsible for Lockerbie. That has been the insistent claim of the British and American authorities, since Bush and Thatcher colluded, in early 1989, to suppress police investigative tracks that were clearly pointing to Syria and to the Syrian-controlled Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command. Libya has been pursued with rare fervor on the issue, including the imposition of U.N. sanctions against the country because of its refusal to hand over suspects.

Francovich insists that the Lockerbie atrocity occurred as a derivative of an arrangement between Syrian arms- and drugs-trafficker Monzer al-Kassar, then-U.S. National Security Council operative Lt. Col. Oliver North, and complicit elements in the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), to run "controlled deliveries" of drugs from the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon, to Nicosia, Cyprus, and then, via Frankfurt and London, to the United States. He punches holes in the "Libya did it" line, which hinges, in significant part, on the claim that an unchecked suitcase, planted by Libyan agents, got onto an Air

Malta flight, and was then re-routed onto Pan Am 103. Air Malta has already won two damage suits on this matter, and evidence has surfaced to shed great doubt on this angle.

## 'Bush and Thatcher in the docks'

William Paul of the *Scotsman* newspaper, who attended a preview of the film, wrote on Nov. 12 that Francovich had successfully exposed the "glaring inconsistencies" in the official finger-pointing at Libya. Paul asserted that Francovich's material, while admittedly circumstantial, is extremely powerful. What he has uncovered "puts George Bush and Margaret Thatcher in the docks, for orchestrating a breathtaking coverup, of proportions that are unbelievable."

As synopsised by Paul, Francovich's hypothesis is that "Oliver North is wooing Middle East drug dealers, allowing them to run batches of heroin via Cyprus via Frankfurt to America, in return for the release of the hostages. The 'controlled deliveries' are shepherded through airport security by U.S. agents." A "drug mule" who was involved in this arrangement, one Khaled Jafaar, was assigned to bring drugs onto the Pan Am 103 flight destined for New York; however, his bags were exchanged for one carrying the bombing device. This last-minute exchange was done by Syria, via al-Kassar and the PFLP-GC, who turned the "controlled delivery" around to their advantage. They did this at the behest of Iran, which wanted revenge for the shooting down of an Iranian airliner by the *U.S.S. Vincennes* in July 1987.

The film contains a sequence with U.S. intelligence operative Oswald Lewinter, describing how he was approached by North to set up a dirty tricks operation. A U.S. National Security Council document is displayed, purporting to show North's payments to Monzer al-Kassar.

From accounts so far available, however, it seems that the film sidesteps the fact that North was just a junior officer in a chain of command that had George Bush at the top, with the backing of the British.

Francovich details how a major in the U.S. Special Forces, Charles McKee, who was responsible for bringing about the release of hostages, had gotten wind of North's activities. He was sickened by the involvement of U.S. intelligence in drug activities, and was determined to stop it. McKee, however, conveniently died on the Pan Am 103 flight. He

was never warned off the flight, even though relevant U.S. authorities were fully cognizant of a terrorist threat. A related "curiosity" is that hordes of U.S. investigators arrived in the small town of Lockerbie, immediately after the plane was destroyed. Their mission, according to "The Maltese Double Cross," was to find and hide any incriminating evidence.

The film has been praised by members of the British organization Families of Victims of Lockerbie. The group's leader, Dr. Jim Swire, who lost his daughter in the bombing, has given a number of interviews to the press, describing the film as a "satisfying explanation of events." While he could make no absolute statement on the correctness of the film's contentions, he said that it certainly "portrays the most amazing coverup," a coverup launched, he said, by Mrs. Thatcher and the Reagan-Bush crowd. Were the findings to be confirmed, he stated, this would amount to "the biggest coverup in history." He asked why the authorities were "so afraid" to allow an open discussion of the issue.

Martin Cadman, a British "Lockerbie Families" member, is quoted on film, saying he was told by an official of the Commission on Aviation Safety and Terrorism, set up by then-President Bush after the Lockerbie bombing: "Your government and ours know exactly what happened, but they are never going to tell."

### North's 'sabotage and interference'

On two occasions, scheduled airings of the film were cancelled. Britain's Channel 4 was supposed to air it earlier this year, but backed off under pressure. The London Film Festival had scheduled an airing for Nov. 20, but backed off, claiming that they had been threatened with a libel suit by retired U.S. DEA official Michael Hurley, a key protagonist in Francovich's tale. Francovich has accused both Channel 4 and the London Film Festival of having succumbed to "scare tactics." The House of Commons is covered against legal action, by what is known in Britain as "Commons privilege."

One source close to Francovich surmised that Hurley could not possibly be acting on his own, as he would not have the resources to mount such a legal battle. This source told *EIR* that Francovich "has no doubt that the most strenuous of the efforts to suppress his film are coming from Ollie North's associates in the U.S., from the 'hang-over' from the old North-National Security Council group. He is convinced that this North-NSC crowd is interfering with, and attempting to sabotage, the showing of the film, that they were the ones, for example, who got the London Film Festival to back off from showing it."

North must be frantic. He has just been humiliated by losing the Senate race in the state of Virginia, despite having spent a record \$20 million on the campaign. Imagine what Ollie must now be thinking, about the possibility that he will be held responsible not only for the deaths of 270 innocent people—most of them Americans, and including McKee and one other senior U.S. intelligence operative, Matthew Gan-

non, deputy CIA station chief in Beirut and the handler of "drug mule" Jaffar—but also for having been involved in an *international coverup*, of several years' duration, of what really happened.

### 'This lightbird colonel running loose'

Francovich's film is largely based on the account in the 1993 book, *Trail of the Octopus: From Beirut to Lockerbie—Inside the DIA*, by British writer Donald Goddard, and based on the account of U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency officer Lester Coleman (the book was reviewed in *EIR*, Jan. 7, 1994). Coleman has been a fugitive from the U.S. justice system since the early 1990s, claiming that he is the victim of a witchhunt by various U.S. official agencies, because of what he knows about Lockerbie. Indeed, five days before the publication of the book by London's Bloomsbury Publishers on Sept. 27, 1993, Coleman was indicted on eight counts of perjury by a New York grand jury. Bloomsbury has more recently been hit by a lawsuit for publishing the book.

According to the Nov. 16 London *Guardian*, the U.S. House Judiciary Committee recently agreed to look into his claims of persecution by the U.S. government.

Goddard refers to North's prominent role in dirty Middle East activities on a number of occasions. For example, he details the importance of Monzer al-Kassar in the drug pipeline from the Bekaa Valley to the United States, via Frankfurt and London. He writes: "Al-Kassar was an arms dealer, armorer-in-chief to Palestinian extremist groups in the Middle East, including the PFLP-General Command, and also, through Lt. Colonel Oliver North and former Air Force Gen. Richard Secord, to the Contras in Nicaragua. In this latter capacity, he enjoyed the protected status of a CIA 'asset.'"

North's links to al-Kassar have been confirmed by a number of investigative reports into the Iran-Contra networks.

Coleman asserts, as reported by Goddard, that he was assigned by the DIA to blow apart a North operation in the Middle East that involved aid from the Pat Robertson/Christian Broadcasting Network complex in Virginia Beach, Virginia, to the Nicaraguan Contras. Coleman's case officer for the reported assignment is quoted telling Coleman that "Ollie North and that whole damn bunch of kooks and weirdos" were becoming a "real pain in the a—" for the DIA. "We got this lightbird colonel running around loose, telling two- and three-star generals what to do, and they're getting p—d off about it. So don't be surprised if we pull his plug."

This North-Robertson story, and the alleged involvement of Coleman in blowing it, has not been independently confirmed.

On another occasion, involving the story of how senior British Church of England envoy Rev. Terry Waite became a hostage, Goddard derides North's "cowboy mentality." In one further citation, he writes of North's "ragtag army of conmen, yahoos, and armchair merdenaries from Georgia."