

# German TV exposes Bush's Irangate role

by Thierry Lalevée

On July 5, Lt. Col. Oliver North was sentenced for his role in the "Irangate" affair to a \$150,000 fine, 1200 hours of community service, and a suspended two-year sentence—hence, no time in jail. But despite this token sentence, the Irangate scandal is unlikely to die so easily.

One signal was the West German TV program shown on July 2, "The Hostage Deal that Brought Reagan to Power." This dramatic exposé reported that the 1980 Reagan-Bush campaign conspired with Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini to prevent then-President Jimmy Carter from securing the last-minute release of the American hostages held in Iran, giving the incumbent Carter a badly needed "October surprise" to present to American voters prior to election day. The broadcast identifies the crucial role in the negotiations played by Henry A. Kissinger.

Although the story has been much researched and speculated upon, the German TV program is the first time that it has been played through a major Western news media outlet.

The broadcast alleged that operatives of the Reagan-Bush campaign held negotiations with Iranian officials between Oct. 20 and Oct. 22, 1980, in Paris and Luxembourg, aimed at sealing a deal that would delay the release of the hostages. Obviously, the Reagan-Bush team offered Khomeini a better deal than the Carter administration. A few hours after President Reagan was inaugurated on Jan. 20, 1981, he triumphantly announced that the hostages were coming home.

The most startling revelation made in the German TV documentary was that President Bush sealed a deal with a terrorist regime back in 1980 which prolonged the suffering of American citizens.

Among those interviewed were figures who, at various points, had been associated with the deal, like **Barbara Ho-negger**, a former Reagan-Bush campaign activist, and two former CIA contractors, **Richard Brenneke** and **Heinrich Rupp**. Rupp was the pilot of a plane going to Paris, and he reports that Bush and Brenneke were participants there in negotiations which also involved campaign officials **William Casey** and **Richard Allen**. A star witness was one **Aharon Moshel**, a.k.a. **Horst Andel**, who, presenting himself as a former official of the Israeli Mossad, testified that he personally had seen Bush in Luxembourg on Oct. 22, 1980.

A former officer of the French intelligence service SDECE asserted that it was **Henry Kissinger**, during repeated meetings in Paris with then SDECE director Alexandre de Marenches, who had the idea for the negotiations and paved the way for them. A former Germany-based CIA agent testified on how NATO military depots in West Germany were depleted of weapons being sent unofficially to Israel, and then to Iran.

## International blackout

Prepared over a six-month period, the broadcast was nearly killed before seeing the light of day. Producers report that there was tremendous opposition to it being shown at all. As a compromise, it was decided to show it at 11:00 p.m., just before the traditional "summer lull." To undermine its impact, it was shown without advertisement or announcement in the weekly TV schedules, but only a short note in some daily newspapers with 24 hours' notice. The video was shown on a Sunday, and was originally supposed to be complemented by the publication on the following day of a related cover story in the weekly *Der Spiegel*. The cover story, for unknown reasons, never appeared. Similarly, the documentary was denied any publicity after its broadcast; not a single line of review in any German daily, not a single comment by any news service, nothing in the U.S. press.

This is not the first time that such methods have been used. Early in June, an American amateur movie titled "Cover-up: Behind the Iran and Contra Affair," won a prize at a film festival in a suburb of Paris. Made in June 1988, the film focuses on the role of George Bush in the Contra affair. It met with a wall of silence in the United States. All the major TV networks refused to broadcast it, unless those parts related to Bush were cut out. French TV apparently adopted the same policy. The documentary is now being shown privately by various political groups, notably those associated with the European clubs of the Democratic Party.

While the Bush administration has enough political muscle to silence the media, it has used other methods, too. On orders from the administration, investigators have been fed with a flow of seemingly precise but actually false information, which is then used to discredit them. The administration has even been using American Jews on the payroll of the CIA, portraying themselves as "Mossad agents." Washington started to use this technique when it realized that *bona fide* Israeli officials had started digging deeper into Bush's activities, and were leaking crucial information. Indeed, for many Israelis, the sudden death of Amiram Nir, the Israeli alter ego of Oliver North, last December in Mexico, cannot be chalked up to a plane accident, but to outright murder.

Hence, what amounts to a full-fledged intelligence war is on among the Bush administration, some opposing American political forces, leading elements within Israel, and others. It would seem to guarantee that Bush's hopes of burying the Iran-Contra scandals will be bitterly disappointed.