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Acclaimed Documentary Filmmaker Allan Francovich Dead of Heart Attack

Shortly after his London flight landed at Houston on Thursday, April 17, airport officials announced that documentary filmmaker Allan Francovich had collapsed while going through U.S. Customs. A Houston medical examiner pronounced the cause of death a heart attack. Francovich, was best known as the director of the controversial film, *On Company Business, A Documentary History of the Central Intelligence Agency*, 1980. A feature-length revelation of illicit U.S. covert actions, the film was shown by PBS to a national audience and received the International Critics Award for best documentary at the Berlin Film Festival in 1980. It also received the Jury Prize for documentary at the Leipzig Film Festival. Featuring ex-C.I.A. agents Philip Agee, Victor Marchetti, and John Stockwell, as well as interviews with C.I.A. defenders such as William Colby, then Director of the Agency. Francovich's film followed Philip Agee's groundbreaking book, *Inside the Company: A CIA Diary*.

Francovich's most recent film, *The Maltese Double Cross*, 1994, investigated the Pan Am Flight 103 crash in Lockerbie, Scotland. Winner of First Prize for documentary at the Edinburgh Film Festival, this film achieved notoriety through a last-minute cancellation of its showing by the London Film Festival. Earlier films directed by Francovich include *The Lobster Pot*, a dramatic short; *San Francisco Good Times*, co-directed with Gene Rosow, 1973, a portrait of the Bay Area counterculture in the Sixties; *Chile in the Heart*, 1975, a study of the Chilean coup; *Allies* (co-producer), a documentary on U.S.-Australia defense and intelligence relations; *Short Circuit*, a film interview with former head of Salvadoran intelligence Roberto Santibañez about U.S. intelligence services' prior knowledge of the murder of four U.S. nuns serving in El Salvador; *The Houses Are Full of Smoke*, 1987, a three-hour investigation of the covert U.S. role in Central American conflicts; *Dark Passage*, 1990, a documentary about Salvadoran death-squads; *Murder in Mississippi*, 1991, an investigation of the death of three young civil rights workers in Mississippi in 1963, produced by Channel 4, England; and *Gladio*, 1992, a 3-hour documentary on the European terrorist network, produced by the BBC.

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Born March 23, 1941 in New York City, Francovich grew up in mining camps in the mountains of Bolivia and Peru, where his father worked as a mining engineer for the Cerro de Pasco Corporation. He attended the University of San Marcos in Lima before going on to Notre Dame in the U.S., where he earned a B.A. in English, Romance and Slavic languages. In Paris at the height of the French New Wave in cinema, he studied Comparative Literature and Drama at the Sorbonne, as well as Russian and Serbo-Croatian at *L'Ecole des Langues Orientales*. He later obtained an M.A. in Dramatic Arts from the University of California, Berkeley. Based in Berkeley for many years, in 1970 Francovich married writer and translator Kathleen Weaver, who collaborated on many of his films until they were divorced in 1985.

Francovich had come to Houston to begin shooting a short film on his friend and longtime supporter, art collector and philanthropist Dominique De Menil (with the Centre Pompidou). Recently Francovich had completed a play on the Spanish Civil War as well as several screenplays, including a script for a feature-length dramatic film, *Treasure of the Isle of Mists*. His projects in development included a film on Indonesia, and an investigation of the Olaf Palme assassination, *Northern Lights*.

Cremation will take place in Houston; the remains will be taken to the Isle of Skye in Scotland. Francovich is survived by his brother, James, of San Antonio, Texas; a niece, Jeanette Lorenz, and nephews Edward Francovich and Robert Francovich. Memorial services are pending.

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