

Edinburgh International Book Festival – Hans Köchler

Was there a cover up over the Lockerbie Bomber?

“Eight senior Scottish judges got it wrong, but the question is why? It is not because of a lack of intellectual skills”, said Hans Köchler this morning at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, suggesting an international government cover up over the conviction of the Libyan bomber Abdelbaset al-Megrahi.

Speaking at the first keynote event on the opening morning of the Book Festival, Köchler, who was an observer at the Pan Am Flight 103 (Lockerbie) bombing trial and subsequent appeal, argued that the verdict was reached for political motives and that the Scottish judges at Camp Zeist passed a ruling which was not logical upon examination of the facts.

Joining Köchler in the event was John Ashton, author of *Megrahi: You are My Jury*, as well as Jim Swire, whose daughter was killed in the Lockerbie bombing of 1988.

Ashton, who worked on Megrahi’s legal team and has written the biography of Megrahi on his request, agreed with Köchler, arguing that the Crown Office withheld evidence in the initial trial, “their incompetence was shameful” he said.

Following a meeting with the Lord Advocate in February of this year, Jim Swire spoke of his fury that the Lord Advocate did

not know why evidence was withheld by the Crown Office in the original trial, specifically the evidence surrounding a break in to Heathrow airport around the time Pan Am Flight 103 took off from London.

Megrahi, who died in May this year, was released on compassionate grounds from Scottish prison in 2009 – a decision that was deeply divisive. “Megrahi’s cancer was a gift from God for everyone involved in this case. It was a tragedy for Megrahi but everyone else was punching the air”, said Ashton, suggesting that the release allowed for improved relations between the UK, Libya and the United States, having earlier said it was “plain as daylight” there was a deal between Tony Blair and Colonel Gaddafi.

The Edinburgh International Book Festival opened yesterday and runs until 27th August 2012. The full programme can be browsed online at www.edbookfest.co.uk