

known links of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and others in her circle, to a top funder of Chechen operations, former Chechen Deputy Prime Minister Khoj-Ahmed Nukhayev. His lordship feigned ignorance of all this, weakly countering with the quip that “maybe Pinochet is also involved.”

During his Russia-Caucasus mission, Russell-Johnston had been accompanied by Lord Judd, head of the PACE Political Affairs Committee, the group which prepared the official PACE position-paper on the Chechen conflict.

Warnings from Russia

Although sidestepped by the PACE, the matter of “outside involvement” was very much on the minds of high-level Russians who were in Strasbourg for the debate. Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov had taken the unusual step of coming to Strasbourg, where he delivered an address on Jan. 27, warning that the Chechen fighters and their allies were bringing “barbarism” to the doors of Europe. A position paper submitted by Ivanov’s Foreign Ministry, charged that “2,000 foreign mercenaries” were fighting on the Chechen side.

Among other Russians in Strasbourg, was Russian Communist Party head Gennadi Zyuganov, who spoke at a Jan. 27 press conference. The day before, regional Governor Mikhail Prusak warned ominously, that what is unfolding in Chechnya is the signpost of a coming wider “North-South conflict.” He pointed out the Taliban involvement in the war, and stressed the support given to the Taliban by Saudi Arabia.

The most violently worded declarations about the wider implications of the Chechen war, were made by Russian State Duma (lower house of Parliament) Deputy Speaker Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. In the midst of the often rambling and sometimes incoherent comments for which he is notorious, Zhirinovskiy told a Jan. 26 press conference that the war was part of a broader attempt to “weaken Russia,” similar to the use by Britain and France, in the 1930s, of Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union. He expressed bitterness against Denmark and the Netherlands, in particular, for being in the forefront of current Strasbourg-centered diplomatic moves against Russia.

Zhirinovskiy insisted that there is a plan by NATO to intervene in the Caucasus by 2002, and to provoke conflicts in Central Asia and along the Russian-Chinese border. He said that such plans were “known to our Defense Ministry and security forces,” and would backfire against the perpetrators.

Russians of more moderate views have told *EIR* that there is considerable resentment in Russia against PACE delegations, particularly those from Scandinavia and the Baltic states, for fomenting an “anti-Russian mood” in Strasbourg, and that, should the PACE actually take moves against Russia later in the year, this would produce an “anti-European backlash” in Russian society.

Obituary

Craxi fought ‘Clean Hands’ attack on Italy

by Claudio Celani

This writer is probably the last person in the world who could be accused of harboring political sympathies for Bettino Craxi, the Socialist leader and former Italian Prime Minister who died on Jan. 19. I was the first, in 1981, to portray Craxi in political cartoons as a would-be Mussolini, a characterization which, in the following years, was copied by more celebrated Italian cartoonists. The fact that Craxi and I were political adversaries should entitle me to expose, as I have for *EIR* and other publications, the infamous “Clean Hands” investigation that targeted and politically eliminated Craxi starting in 1992.

“Clean Hands” was a discriminatory political operation, in the context of a general attack against the traditional party system in Italy, similar to the one being carried out today against former Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in Germany. Craxi was a victim of a political persecution whose pretext was illegal party financing, but whose real target was the institutions of the nation-state.

Craxi died at the end of a long illness which, if not triggered by, was surely aggravated by the psychological effects of his political fate. Although formally a fugitive from Italian justice, his funeral in Tunisia, where he had exiled himself, brought together a crowd of Italian politicians, including representatives of the government. In Rome, the Parliament held a special commemorative session. And in the media, a debate broke out on Craxi’s role in Italian political history, and on the real meaning of the “Clean Hands” operation.

The merits of his policies

Although Craxi’s historical role cannot be separated from his persecution, the fact that he was the victim of a jacobin assault must not influence an objective judgment on the merits of his policies.

Bettino Craxi’s rise to power started in 1976, when he became general secretary of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI). He steered the party on an anti-communist, neo-liberal economic course, and opposed the policy of dialogue between the Christian Democratic Party (DC) and the Italian Communist Party (PCI), led by Aldo Moro, in 1978. After the kidnap/murder of Moro and the failure of the DC-PCI dialogue, Craxi succeeded, in 1983, in becoming Italy’s first Socialist Prime Minister. His cabinets lasted for more than three years, still a

record in Italy's postwar history.

As Prime Minister, Craxi showed statesman-like qualities; for example, when he strongly supported President Ronald Reagan's (and Lyndon LaRouche's) Strategic Defense Initiative, over the opposition of his own Defense Minister, and called it "Star Peace." He also gave impetus to Italian foreign policy, especially in the Middle East and Africa. He concluded a new Concordat between the Italian state and the Vatican, which replaced the first one signed by Mussolini.

On another occasion, during the hijacking of the *Achille Lauro* cruise ship in 1985, Craxi won a showdown with the United States government, which came close to starting a shooting war between the two countries. In that incident, Craxi, as Prime Minister, refused to allow an Egyptian airliner that had landed in Sigonella, a NATO base under Italian jurisdiction, to be delivered into the hands of U.S. Delta Force commandos. The Egyptian plane was carrying the *Achille Lauro* hijackers, as part of a deal to free the *Achille Lauro* hostages. The deal had been concluded by the Egyptian and the Italian governments. At stake was the sovereignty of Italy and Egypt, as well as the good relationship between the two countries. But, it involved even more than that: It involved the principle of national sovereignty, against the concept of "humanitarian interference," or a global police, which was imposed 15 years later, in the Iraq war, and then in Kosovo, by the British-American alliance. After his political elimination, Craxi referred to the Sigonella episode as part of the motivation for his ouster, implying that maybe his "American friends" had never forgotten it.

Economic policy blunders

Craxi's main blunders were in the field of economic policy. He promoted financial liberalization and upgrading the role of the stock market, and supported pro-environmentalist, post-industrial policies. In 1986, he succeeded in getting a popular referendum against nuclear energy voted up, which forced the government to shut down all existing nuclear plants and to cancel future investments in the sector, an action that has had catastrophic consequences for Italian industry and technology.

Craxi's neo-liberal and pro-environmentalist policy was fiercely opposed by the European Labor Party (POE), the party representing the LaRouche movement in Italy. As head of the government, Craxi undertook legal action against the POE because of a poster in which he was portrayed together with Henry Kissinger. Eventually, the POE won the case, and Craxi, according to eyewitness accounts, never forgot it.

This did not prevent him, however, from publicly acknowledging that LaRouche and *EIR* were right in describing the international character of the assault against the Italian nation, which included, among other aspects, the "Clean Hands" operation. In February 1993, when Parliament was expected to vote on whether to lift his immunity as requested by the "Clean Hands" prosecutors, Craxi distributed to the



Former Italian Prime Minister, the late Bettino Craxi, in 1988. Craxi fought the "Cleans Hands" anti-corruption witch-hunt whose target was the institutions of the nation-state.

press an *EIR* memorandum on the "Britannia plot," which reported on how the destabilization of Italy was decided upon, among other places, at a meeting on privatizing Italy's vital state sector, that was held aboard Queen Elizabeth's yacht while anchored off Italy on June 2, 1992. Craxi told the journalists: "Read this to understand what is going on. Ever heard of globalization?"

In his last speech in the Parliament, Craxi admitted that his party had taken illegal contributions, but said that all parties did it. Parliament did not listen to him, and instead lifted his immunity. Craxi fled to his vacation house in Hammamet, Tunisia, where his relationship with the Tunisian President guaranteed his safety. While the PSI disappeared from the political landscape in the next elections, Craxi never stopped organizing for his rehabilitation, and at the same time continued to intervene politically. In interviews, he accused international financial circles, naming George Soros, as the forces who were engineering the destabilization of Italy. He stressed that one of the aims of such forces was to loot Italian state industry through privatizations.

Whereas the legal battle seemed to be lost (he was sentenced to ten years in prison), the political battle gained ground: Recently, his original proposal for a Parliamentary investigating committee had been accepted by the government. But, as a consequence of the psychological stress, his diabetes became worse, and he had to undergo surgery. He died before the surgeons could attempt the second surgery, a heart bypass operation. His son Vittorio ("Bobo"), who seems willing to pick up his father's political heritage, said that his father left many files. "He worked at night, he had insomnia. He wrote everything, he forgot nothing," Vittorio recently told the press. He hinted that many people in Rome will lose sleep as well, on this account.