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CRAXI, ONOREVOLE BENEDETTO (known as BETTINO)

Prime Minister and Secretary of the Socialist Party (PSI).

Born in Milan on 24 February 1934. Career as a full-time party official. Milan City Councillor 1960-70. Party Directorate Member since 1965. Deputy for Milan-Pavia since 1968.

He replaced De Martino as Party Secretary in July 1976, when the latter was removed following the PSI's disappointing performance in the general election the previous month. Craxi at this time aligned himself with the small 'Autonomist' faction of the party, led by Nenni, and his election as Secretary was due to the support of all the younger (i.e. less than about 45 years old) members of the PSI National Council, and of Mancini.

The National Congresses of the PSI in 1978 and 1981 over-whelmingly confirmed Craxi's leadership and backed his policy of asserting the party's independence of the PCI. Craxi always wanted to take the Socialists back into government with the DC, but had to bide his time because there was vocal opposition among the rank and file. He was re-elected Secretary of the Party by acclamation at its National Congress in 1984.

In early 1980, he narrowly defeated the left wing in a power struggle within the party; since then, he has consolidated his position. In April 1980, he took the PSI back into government and was thus able to reward some of his supporters with Ministerial jobs. His relations with the PCI are bad and the left wing of the DC also regard him as an untrustworthy ally and threat to DC supremacy. Craxi made no secret of his ambition to become Prime Minister as quickly as possible. Electoral results in the last three years suggest that his line is paying modest electoral dividends: in June 1980 the PSI gained 2% to poll 12% in local elections, and they got 11.4% in the general elections of June 1983. He was able to achieve his ambition of becoming Italy's first Socialist Prime Minister because of the drop in the DC vote and morale following the 1983 elections.

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CRAXI (contd):

A tall, dominating figure, he looks older than his years. Fond of good living and eloquent in private conversation, but spends much of his time with close party colleagues isolated from criticism. Held in respect by other PSI Deputies though not greatly loved; generally distrusted by other politicians. Something of a bully. The joke that he was really christened Benito (like Mussolini) says much about his style. But he chooses his words carefully and his salvos are never accidental. Scathing in his attacks on the inequalities and inefficiencies of Italian society, but less eloquent when forced to suggest remedies. Has a difficult relationship with the Socialist President Pertini. A clever self-publicist. Regarded as pro-American. A staunch supporter of NATO's 'double track' policy on INF. His readiness to face up to difficult decisions as Prime Minister has won him respect particularly from the business community in the North.

Visited the UK as guest of HMG, and attended Labour Party Conference at Blackpool in September 1976. Caused us a lot of trouble over the Falklands affair in 1982, but has taken a much more restrained line since then and has been helpful over Falklands vote at the United Nations. Craxi visited London for talks with the Prime Minister in September 1983, and hosted the Anglo-Italian Summit in Italy in January 1984. He also attended the London Economic Summit and the Anglo-Italian Summit in London in June and October 1984.

Little English. Fair French.

Married with children. He enjoys basketball.

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