

LaRouche cases aired at European Parliament

by Liliana Celani

On Dec. 9 and 10, 1993, the "International League for the Abolition of the Death Penalty by 2000" was officially founded at a conference at the European Parliament in Brussels. The conference was attended by approximately 50 members of parliament and jurists from Europe, including Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Bulgaria, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Moldova, Lithuania, Latvia, and Croatia, and from the United States, Canada, Ibero-America, Africa, and the Middle East, including a representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The attendees in turn represented 500 members of parliament from all over the world who endorsed the first call for an International League to Abolish the Death Penalty, which was launched at the congress of the Italian Radical Party in Rome in February 1993.

Among the main speakers were Emma Bonino, general secretary of the Italian Radical Party, and Sen. Alma Agata Capiello, a lawyer and a member of the Justice Committee of the Italian Senate who recently traveled to Washington to meet with members of the U.S. Congress to demand that political prisoner Lyndon LaRouche be freed. She is also one of 72 members of the Italian Parliament who endorsed a call to President Bill Clinton to free LaRouche.

Bonino, who was also among the signers of the call to Clinton to free LaRouche and who held a press conference inside the Italian Parliament on the LaRouche case last April, together with Sen. Flaminio Piccoli, former president of the Christian Democracy International, reminded the audience that the United States voted at the United Nations in favor of a proposal to create a tribunal on war crimes in former Yugoslavia which is based on the concept that, contrary to the Nuremberg Code, no crime shall be punished by imposition of the death penalty. Such an approach puts the United States in a contradictory situation which should be exploited, she said, especially considering the fact that "Attorney General Janet Reno has said she feels embarrassed by being a cabinet member in a country which practices the death penalty."

Attending the conference for the United States were Ashanti Chimurenga, a black representative of Amnesty International from Chicago, and Gail Billington, wife of political prisoner Michael Billington, an associate of LaRouche serving a 77-year sentence for "securities fraud."

From the speech of Chimurenga, it became clear to all participants how degenerate American "justice" has become, and how it became particularly bad during the years of the Bush administration, which used "judicial homicide," as Chimurenga called it, as a form of racial and social discrimination, since the death penalty in the United States particularly hits "white poor and colored people." "Human life means nothing in the United States," she said, citing the case of Gary Graham, which has become a symbol in the United States of those who are sentenced to death despite their innocence. She quoted, as did many other speakers during the founding conference, the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision allowing an execution to proceed in a case where the defendant was possibly innocent. This "exposes the whole fallacy of our judiciary system," she said, because with this decision, "judicial execution becomes straight murder. . . . In the United States, once you commit a crime and go to prison, you no longer have any rights." She called on the European Parliament to exert "persistent and strong pressure" to force the United States to abolish the death penalty, and to raise this issue also at the United Nations, particularly "when the United States fingers others," since it behaves in an arrogant way and "does not listen to others."

A note of optimism

Senator Capiello expressed more optimism that the situation in the United States may change under Clinton, and cited the case of LaRouche. "The fact that Mr. LaRouche, who had been sentenced to a 15-year prison term, was recently granted parole, shows that international pressures, if they are persistent, do have an effect in the United States," the Italian senator said.

In the afternoon session, the case of LaRouche and his associates came up again during the intervention of Gail Billington. "I am honored to have the opportunity to speak at this conference," she said. "My name is Gail Billington, and I am the wife of a political prisoner in the United States who has been sentenced to 77 years because of his support for the LaRouche movement. There are five more people who have been condemned along with LaRouche to very long prison terms—between 39 and 10 years. LaRouche ran as a presidential candidate during the last elections, together with Rev. James Bevel, on a platform which included the demand to abolish death penalty in the United States, and the urgent need to create a new monetary system in order to allow economic development for all people in the world. This explains the behavior of the Justice Department toward him and his associates, a department which Rep. Henry Gonzalez [D-Tex.] recently correctly defined as 'the most corrupt he ever saw in his 40 years in Congress.'" Billington concluded by calling on the European Parliament to demand oversight hearings on the U.S. Department of Justice and on the cases of LaRouche and his associates, including her husband.