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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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CONFIDENTIAL

ACTION  
August 6, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR BRENT SCOWCROFT

FROM: Mr. Clift *ADL*

SUBJECT: Meeting with Italian-American Leaders

The memorandum at Tab I covers the August 4 Cabinet Room meeting with Italo-American leaders.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That you approve the memcon at Tab I.

APPROVE *ADL* DISAPPROVE \_\_\_\_\_

- 2. That you have a copy sent to Dr. Kuropas.

APPROVE *ADL* DISAPPROVE \_\_\_\_\_

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5  
NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines  
By KSH, NARA, Date 6/22/99

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

1b  
DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5  
NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines (Sulser)  
By KBH, NARA, Date 6/29/99

CONFIDENTIALMEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Italian-American Leaders (list at Tab A)

The President  
Bill Baroody  
Myron Kuropas  
Brent Scowcroft  
A. Denis Clift (Notetaker)

DATE and TIME: Wednesday, August 4, 1976  
10:40 - 11:40 a. m.

PLACE: Cabinet Room, The White House

(The following memcon records that portion of the meeting devoted to a discussion of foreign policy, together with a summary of the President's presentation on domestic issues.)

Baroody: Gentlemen, we have been joined by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, General Brent Scowcroft, who will give you a brief overview on foreign policy. We should have a chance for a few questions, and then we will be joined by the President.

Scowcroft: Good morning. I would like to run through a few considerations with regard to the foreign policy aspects of our relations with Italy. I don't need to explain to this group the closeness of our ties and the fact that it is built on kinship and friendship between the Italian and American people.

Basically, there are two pillars in our relationship:

-- our membership in NATO, and

-- the fact that we are both members, if you will, of the club of major, industrialized democracies

This makes up the web of the relationship. Looking first at NATO, Italy is the key to NATO strategy in the Mediterranean. With differences between Greece and Turkey and the general situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, Italy's role is even more important. We have key bases in Italy, key to

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to the strength of NATO's southern flank. In the NATO context, the President in May of 1975 went to the NATO Summit in Brussels. He met there with the Italian leadership and in July 1975 again met in Helsinki. This was not precisely in the NATO context, but United States and Italy have approached the European Security Conference in terms of our interests as NATO allies. The President had private bilateral talks with the Italian leaders. We also have the force reduction talks with the Warsaw Pact and Italy plays a key role in these. We are discussing the Belgrade follow-up to CSCE with Italy. In sum, in NATO Italy is a key member, a vigorous member, and we work in complete cooperation with each other as members of the Alliance.

The other pillar is our joint membership in the club of major industrialized democracies. This is both multilaterally and bilaterally. In terms of our multilateral interests Italy has participated with the United States, Great Britain, France, Canada, Germany, and Japan in Rambouillet and Puerto Rico. At Rambouillet the major nations got together to exchange views on economic and monetary cooperation and on our recovery from the recession. At Puerto Rico they met again to discuss ways to keep the recovery going without returning to an inflationary surge. Multilaterally the United States works closely with the European Community. We deal with the Community's rotating Presidency. Italy had the Presidency during the last six months of 1975 and we made good progress during that period.

In terms of our bilateral relations, President Leone was the first State Visitor of President Ford's Administration. He visited here in September 1974, and the two governments issued a joint statement on our policies and objectives. President Ford returned that State Visit with a visit to Rome in June 1975. I haven't done a check but my guess is that no other President has had the degree of close consultation that President Ford has had with the Italian leadership. Within two years he has had six meetings and has developed a very close rapport.

This leads me to our assistance in the recent Italian earthquake. As soon as we had news of the earthquake on May 6th, the President sent a message to President Leone offering America's assistance. Within hours our people were on the scene; it was near our NATO base at Aviano. Ambassador Volpe directed these initial efforts. On May 11, the President sent Vice President Rockefeller and AID Administrator Parker to survey the situation and forward detailed recommendations on U.S. assistance for his consideration. The President asked the Congress for \$25 million in relief funds. That money was approved. The Italian government has asked us to concentrate our restoration efforts on schools and homes for the aged. We have had the profound thanks of the Italian government. Just last week the President received a letter from Pope Paul in which the Pope said: "... this manifest

solicitude is an indication of America's desire to give an effective response to her calling to moral greatness and to leadership through fraternal love and convern."

Now, with regard to the current situation in Italy, since the election in June Andreotti has formed a Monocolore Christian Democratic government. He has formed a cabinet which reflects youth and new vigor. He is submitting a program today to the Parliament. The debate will take place over the next week. As it is a minority government, he will have to depend on the abstention of the Communist Party. We think they will abstain. This leads me to the question about Communists in the Italian government. Our attitude can be stated as follows. First, we believe this is a political issue for the Italians to decide for themselves. Our concern goes primarily to the NATO relationship. It would be anomalous to have the Alliance devoted to defense against Communism with a cabinet <sup>of a</sup> /government member containing Communists. You will recall that when Portugal had Communists, NATO did restrict classified documents. We believe Communist participation would undermine the moral basis for the Alliance. It is this which guides our position, not a desire to dictate to the Italian government.

The economic situation is different. Italy was jarred by the oil embargo of 1973. On top of that there was the world-wide recession. There has been a considerable run on the Lira. At present the Lira is strengthening and the Italians are taking steps to restrict imports. In addition, the world economy is recovering and this should be of benefit. Tough measures have to be taken by the Italians. This will not be easy for a minority government, but we will cooperate to the best of our ability.

Kuropas: Thank you General Scowcroft. Before we turn over the discussion to questions and answers, I would like to discuss the procedures for the remainder of this meeting.

(A discussion then followed on the origin of the meeting between the domestic side of the White House and the Italo-American leaders and informal ground rules were reviewed for the discussion with the President.)

Q: General, I have been in Italy three times recently. I have visited with Andreotti. He brought to my attention the need for US assistance and showed me what the Communists have done -- out in the countryside, vans with people giving out free shoes. We have to offset this. We also have the problem of the Communist press and unions. These unions can stop production anytime they want, and it's the same with the press. What frightens them is what the Americans and Helmut Schmidt said, you know, if you bring Communists

into the government there will be no aid. We must give them aid. Italy not only is our ally, Italy is the last seat of religion and christianity. I implore you to tell the President and the Secretary of State that we must give Italy aid.

Scowcroft: Your comments are well-taken. At Puerto Rico, the Italian situation was discussed. There was an inclination of the United States and others to be helpful. Italy's economic measures will be difficult, but we have every intention to give every kind of support. You may remember last spring the pressure by the American shoe industry. The President resisted that and that was important for Italy's economy.

Q: Andreotti's lucky, he's got Forlani.

Scowcroft: Yes.

Q: I would like to make an observation on aid to Italy. Aid always has the potential for corruption. It doesn't reach the people. The Communists have flourished because of the stagnation of the institutions of Italy's government. It's encouraging that Andreotti is bringing in new people. The change there must be visible.

Scowcroft: The Christian Democrats have for a long time rotated senior members in and out. That is why this cabinet is encouraging. It looks like they are revitalizing their own party. If they can't, no outside aid can help.

Q: I am close to the Italian press. During the election, there was no recognition given to the Italo-American role. The press is very poor in its treatment of America. It's distressing that we don't get the image we deserve.

Scowcroft: Yes, it's a tough problem.

Q: I have just come back from Italy and I would like to congratulate the United States Government on the earthquake assistance. I have made two visits and am proud to be an American. The people there appreciate the major effort of Americans, and they appreciate our fantastic expertise.

Q: My concern is trying to "stem-off" Communism in the rest of Western Europe. I was concerned when all the media stated Italy was going to vote Communist. I don't know whether we reacted. I think the best tool we have is the 25 million Italo-American population. It should be kept up to date;

tell us what we can do. We did so with our relatives. We did tell them: "Do you know that you might not be able to visit us if you have a Communist government?" I was brought into this by a different group. My concern was shared by other Americans. Americans should be told what's happening. As you know, the Soviet Union accuses the United States anyway. In this election there was no overall US planning. The Italian community should be briefed.

Q: I was also dragged into this by the same group. Italo-Americans are concerned about the lack of US involvement while the Communists are moving ahead. We have to keep people abreast of what is going on -- people in our leadership -- I represent US Steel Workers of America ; they may lose their positions because they took a hands-off policy. The steel workers are 20 percent Italian, and the people at the grass roots are angry.

Q: I also was brought in by the Alliance of the Mediterranean. My parent company has big holdings in Italy. One problem is that the Italian government before an election gives labor anything it wants; the absenteeism is unbelievable.

I wonder if Congress knew what a strain on Italy it would be when we did what we did in Turkey. Congress is to be blamed. All we have in the Mediterranean is Italy and if you will, Israel. The Congress should undo that.

(The President entered the meeting at 11:16 a.m. He said he had just been meeting with HEW Secretary Mathews to discuss potential very serious health situation in Pennsylvania and he said he was renewing his efforts with the Congress on swine flu immunization.)

The President then discussed his program of meeting with ethnic groups. He discussed the importance he attached to very necessary changes made in the procedures of the Bureau of Census. He discussed his urban development and neighborhood revitalization program, stating that Secretary Hills was firmly in command. He stated his opposition to discrimination and at the same time to quotas, and he discussed his work with HEW in this field. He then turned the discussion over to Mr. Mario Albi who read a statement on behalf of the National Coordinating Committee of American-Italian Organizations (copy at Tab B).

In the discussion which followed the President complimented the author of the paper. The President was complimented on his speech at Monticello. He was complimented on the attention being given to ethnic groups by Dr. Kuropas

and Mr. Baroody. He was complimented on his policies with regard to mortgage disclosures and the Small Business Administration. Several speakers addressed the need for more understanding and more effectiveness on the part of HEW. It was recommended to the President that there be a more visible Italo-American presence in government. The President noted that just prior to the meeting he had by coincidence, signed the papers nominating former Attorney General of Rhode Island Disimone to a Federal Judgeship. It was again pointed out to the President that the group believed the US Government had not played an active part in the Italian elections, with one speaker noting that if it hadn't been for John Connally he wouldn't have known where to turn. The President replied that this is an extremely sensitive subject but that the group should not assume by our lack of talking that we did not participate.

The meeting concluded with the one woman representative on the Italian-American delegation making a strong statement on behalf of the virtues and capabilities of Italian-American women.

The President then invited the participants into the Oval Office for photographs.

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Statement to the Honorable Gerald Ford

President of the United States

delivered at the White House by Mario Albi,

Chairman,

National Coordinating Committee of American-Italian Organizations

Mister President, on behalf of the National Coordinating Committee of American-Italian Organizations, I extend our deepest gratitude to you for the honor of being here today and having the opportunity to discuss important issues of mutual concern.

We know that there are many demands made upon your time, and that in fact, there are many demands being made upon the Federal Government by organized groups throughout the country.

It is not in the nature of Americans of Italian Heritage to look to government for either their material or physical well-being; we are fiercely individualistic--sometimes to our own disadvantage, and we are more accustomed to giving rather than receiving.

So what provokes us to be here is not principally our desire for what some people call a piece of the pie. What provokes us to be here is a desire to do what is best for America, and a desire to see that the Chief Executive of this country understands some major concerns we have about the role of the Italian-American in the United States.

One important overall issue that concerns us is the direction in which the political system has taken this country, and we would appreciate very much your thoughts on this matter.

It is apparent to us that the historic, political division of American people into special interest groups has now become an accepted fact of life. The growth and the role of government in our lives has exacerbated this process of division because power groups and power blocs are each trying to grab what is best for them, regardless of whether it is consistent with the national goals of America.

Ethnic and racial groups are one dimension of this pattern. The sad result has been that one group after another is thinking of itself less as American and more as ethnic or racial. We favor cultural pluralism, of course, but a diminishing Americanism would be disastrous.

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We Americans of Italian Heritage have watched these developments taking place while we attempted to melt into Americanism; we were reluctant to move as others have, but we have discovered that organized power is a practical requirement of the political system.

We didn't make those rules, but we will have to play by them.

Our real desire is to see an end to racial and ethnic divisiveness created by the political system. From everyone's point of view, especially government's, it would seem to be the best course of action. The ironic truth is that the very political system which foisted all this on us, is beginning to choke on its own creation. Demands are ferocious and growing, and Mister President, you know this better than anyone.

We would like to be part of a national effort to begin rolling back this trend--this trend of ethnic division and special interest, presuming you are in agreement. This will be a very long and tedious process, but we would like to see it begin.

In the meantime, we have three specific matters that we would also like to discuss with you.

1. Lack of sensitivity on the part of governmental institutions--causes frustration, polarization and worst of all, serious lack of social services to those who qualify for them as a matter of constitutional right. Studies, even those based on woefully inadequate census figures, invariably suggest large numbers of poor ethnics, not the least of which are Americans of Italian descent, who are not being afforded either outreach or assistance because of agency attention focused elsewhere, because of America's fixation with only the most visible needy. Cultural traits which mitigate against seeking assistance places an added burden on government to respond in fuller measure than heretofore.
2. Affirmative action is a great source of satisfaction for Americans of Italian descent who know only too well the difficulty of translating the American dream into reality. But our people, too, much like blacks, minorities and women, find it still difficult to penetrate the higher echelons of corporate America, the citadel of educational institutions--let alone admission to professional schools-- and the topmost ranks of government service. Indeed, in our nation's rush to make amends to others, the most basic rights of individual merit for ethnics in general and Italian Americans in particular are being sacrificed.

3. Italian-Americans rarely move, long after other groups have fled the inner city core, Italian-Americans remain. This pendant for urban living, for neighborhood stabilization, too often is equated with the uglier aspects of bigotry and prejudice. Yet there are far more imperative factors, unrecognized over and apart and aside from race, which are ignored by institutional frameworks. The condemnation of neighborhoods, either to oblivion of radical change by conventional thinking of banking institutions, or governmental agencies is destroying the viability of our cities. The failure to secure mortgage loans or urban renewal monies, as opposed to new housing, is striking at the very heart of what makes cities livable.

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