The original documents are located in Box 38, “9/16/76 - Remarks at the Bicentennial Tribute Dinner of the Italian-American Foundation” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- THANK YOU, JENO
- REVEREND CLERGY
- DISTINGUISHED PLATFORM GUESTS
- LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

REMARKS AT THE NATIONAL ITALIAN AMERICAN

BICENTENNIAL TRIBUTE DINNER

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1976

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN...
FIRST, LET ME THANK THE MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN FOUNDATION AND YOUR NATIONAL CHAIRMAN JENO PAULUCCI FOR INVITING ME TO BE A PART OF THIS VERY SPECIAL EVENING.

IN MANY WAYS, MY GOOD FRIEND JENO PAULUCCI SYMBOLIZES THE MAGIC OF AMERICA. HIS FIRST GREAT SUCCESS WAS A COMPANY CALLED CHUN KING. WHAT COULD BE MORE AMERICAN THAN A BUSINESS BUILT ON A GOOD ITALIAN RECIPE FOR CHOP SUEY?
THIS BICENTENNIAL DINNER PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE
EXTRAORDINARY CONTRIBUTION ITALIAN AMERICANS HAVE MADE
TO OUR COUNTRY.

THE MEN YOU ARE HONORING TONIGHT ARE THE DISTINGUISHED
OFFSPRING OF A CULTURE THAT WAS ONCE TRANSPPLANTED — BUT IS
NOW DEEPLY ROOTED IN AMERICAN SOIL — TO THE BENEFIT
OF ALL AMERICANS.
LONG BEFORE WE WERE A NATION, ITALIANS BEGAN MAKING NEW LIVES FOR THEMSELVES IN AMERICA -- AS TEACHERS AND MERCHANTS AND CRAFTSMEN -- ARTISTS, MUSICIANS AND WRITERS.

FROM OUR FIRST HONORARY ITALIAN AMERICAN -- CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS -- TO CONTEMPORARY FIGURES AS DIVERSE AS ENRICO FERMI AND VINCE LOMBARDI -- THE ITALIAN FIBER IS WOVEN DEEPLY INTO THE FABRIC OF THE UNITED STATES.
ITALIAN AMERICANS HAVE MADE THEIR MARKS IN MANY DIFFERENT AREAS. BUT THEY ALL HAVE SHARED AT LEAST ONE COMMON QUALITY—UNCOMMON PRIDE.

PRIDE IN THEIR COUNTRY. PRIDE IN THEMSELVES.

PRIDE IN THE ROLES THEY PLAYED IN MAKING AMERICA WHAT IT IS.
IN EVERY CENTURY AND IN EVERY FIELD OF ENDEAVOR,
ITALIAN AMERICANS HAVE GIVEN THEIR COUNTRY THEIR ENERGY,
THEIR TALENTS THEIR DEVOTION AND THEIR BLOOD.
WHEN THE EARTHQUAKE STRUCK ITALY EARLIER THIS YEAR,

THE AMERICAN RESPONSE WAS SWIFT AND BIPARTISAN.

JUST THIS MORNING JENO PAULUCCI AND AMBASSADOR VOLPE

REPORTED TO ME ON THE WAY OUR 25 MILLION DOLLARS OF

DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE IS BEING SPENT TO RELIEVE SUFFERING

IN THE COUNTRY WHICH HAS GIVEN AMERICA SO MUCH.

In Jeno's report - got plus brown.
I REMEMBER VERY WELL SOMETHING VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER TOLD ME AFTER HE VISITED THE EARTHQUAKE SITE AT MY REQUEST IN MAY. HE WAS STRUCK BY THE FACT THAT IN THE MIDST OF DESTRUCTION AND PERSONAL TRAGEDY ONE OF THE FIRST CONCERNS OF THE PEOPLE WAS TO PROTECT THEIR MONUMENTS, THEIR CHURCHES, AND THEIR CULTURAL HERITAGE.
THERE IS A LESSON IN THAT FOR THE UNITED STATES.

FOR WE ALSO RISK SEEING OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE DESTROYED

NOT BY A SUDDEN SHOCK, BUT BY GRADUAL EROSION.

WE MUST BE AWARE OF THE GROWING DANGER OF CONFORMITY

IN AMERICAN THOUGHT AND BEHAVIOR. WE NEED TO ENCOURAGE

AND PROTECT INDIVIDUALITY.
OUR NATIONAL WEALTH OF CULTURAL, ETHNIC AND
RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS IS A VALUABLE COUNTERBALANCE TO THE
OVERWHELMING SAMENESS AND SUBORDINATION OF TOTALITARIAN
SOCIEDADES.

LET ME ADD A FEW WORDS ON THAT SUBJECT...
ITALY AND THE UNITED STATES SHARE A FIRM DEDICATION TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT AND THE PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM AND LIBERTY. WE IN AMERICA VALUE THE ROLE OF ITALY IN THE WORLD, ITALY'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE, AND ITALY'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO A STRONGER AND MORE COHESIVE EUROPE WORKING WITH THE UNITED STATES.
WE HAVE BEEN HEARING A LOT RECENTLY ABOUT THE NEW CHARACTER OF SOME COMMUNIST PARTIES IN WESTERN EUROPE THAT THEY BELIEVE IN DEMOCRATIC, MULTI-PARTY GOVERNMENT, THAT THEY ARE INDEPENDENT NATIONALIST PARTIES WITH NO LOYALTIES OR AFFILIATIONS BEYOND NATIONAL BORDERS, AND SO ON.
LEST WE SUCCUMB TO THIS BEGUILING MESSAGE,

I REMIND YOU THAT WE WERE HEARING THESE SAME REASSURING MESSAGES FROM THE HEADS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTIES IN EASTERN EUROPE AFTER WORLD WAR II. WE ALL KNOW WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THESE PARTIES ACTUALLY CAME INTO POWER IN THE LATE 1940S. IT IS A HISTORY LESSON WE SHOULD NOT FORGET.
THE HISTORY OF OUR OWN COUNTRY TEACHES US ANOTHER
IMPORTANT LESSON: THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY, AS WELL
AS UNITY, AMONG OUR PEOPLE.
AT A MEETING IN THE WHITE HOUSE LAST MONTH, ITALIAN AMERICAN LEADERS SPOKE TO ME OF OUR NEED TO ENCOURAGE CULTURAL PLURALISM WITHOUT DIMINISHING AMERICANISM. I AGREE WITH THEM COMPLETELY.
OUR NEIGHBORHOODS ARE THE PLACE FOR US TO START.

ON THE FIRST OF THIS YEAR I SIGNED INTO LAW THE MORTGAGE DISCLOSURE ACT TO PREVENT REDLINING.

LAST MAY I MET WITH A GROUP OF ETHNIC LEADERS TO SEE WHAT MORE WE COULD DO.
AS A RESULT OF THAT MEETING, I CREATED THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION. I CHARGED THE COMMITTEE WITH DEVELOPING A SOUND FEDERAL POLICY TO HELP PRESERVE OUR NEIGHBORHOODS TO PREVENT URBAN DECAY.
OUR POLICY WILL BE BASED ON LOCAL INITIATIVE AND LOCAL CONTROL. I WAS VERY ENCOURAGED THE OTHER DAY TO READ ABOUT MAJOR NEW EFFORTS INCLUDING PROPOSED NEW ZONING RULES TO REVITALIZE NEW YORK CITY'S LITTLE ITALY.
THE NEW YORK CITY PLANNING COMMISSION AND A NEIGHBORHOOD

GROUP SPENT TWO YEARS COMING UP WITH THIS PLAN. I WISH

THEM EVERY SUCCESS, AND I HOPE OTHER GROUPS IN OTHER CITIES

WILL FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE.

I AM FIRMLY COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING THE STRENGTH

AND VITALITY AND THE UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION OF AMERICA'S

COMMUNITIES.
IN MY SEARCH FOR AMERICANS TO HELP WITH THIS TASK —

NOW AND IN THE NEXT FOUR YEARS — I WILL CONTINUE TO LOOK

FOR AMERICANS OF HIGH CALIBER FROM ALL CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS.

I WILL CONTINUE LOOKING FOR AMERICANS WITH THE TALENTS

OF A JOHN PASTORE AND PETER RODINO -- DOMINICK DANIELS

AND JUDGE JOHN SIRICA.
IT HAS BEEN A VERY SPECIAL PLEASURE FOR ME TO JOIN WITH YOU IN HONORING THESE OUTSTANDING AMERICANS TONIGHT.

AS ENJOYABLE AS THIS EVENING IS FOR ALL OF US PRESENT, WE MIGHT TAKE A MOMENT TO REMEMBER CERTAIN PEOPLE WHO CAN ONLY BE HERE IN SPIRIT, PEOPLE WHO WOULD HAVE GOTTEN AN EVEN BIGGER THRILL OUT OF THIS OCCASION THAN YOU AND ME.

THE PARENTS OF JOHN SIRICA — DOMINICK DANIELS

JOHN PASTORE AND PETER RODINO.
WHEN YOU STOP FOR A MINUTE AND THINK ABOUT THOSE

PARENTS... ABOUT THE SACRIFICES THEY MADE... ABOUT THE

HARDSHIPS THEY ENDURED... ABOUT THE DREAMS THEY HAD

FOR THEIR CHILDREN... AND THEN YOU SEE THOSE DREAMS

COME TRUE IN THE CAREERS OF THESE FINE MEN... THAT'S WHEN

YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT AMERICA IS ALL ABOUT... AND YOU

KNOW IF THESE PARENTS COULD ONLY BE HERE WITH US TONIGHT,

THEY WOULD BE VERY PROUD... VERY PROUD INDEED.
BY YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS AND THOSE OF ALL ITALIAN

AMERICANS -- TO OUR ARTS AND SCIENCES AND GOVERNMENT --

TO BUSINESS LIFE AND FAMILY LIFE -- AMERICA WILL CONTINUE

TO GROW TO PROSPER AND BECOME AN EVEN BETTER PLACE

TO LIVE.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

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