

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.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

57

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Senator Pastore
Cong. Rodino
"Danaher
Judge Sinner"*

- 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 TRANSPLANTED - 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 Jen's report - govt plus business

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
SOCIETIES.

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~~.

~~THE~~ 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. *Deservedly,* VERY PROUD INDEED.

1

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.

END OF TEXT