

TOAST OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AT THE LUNCHEON OFFERED
IN HONOUR OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND MRS. FORD

Quirinale Palace, 3 June 1975

Mr. President,

It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity of again expressing to you, to Mrs. Ford, to the Secretary of State, Dr. Kissinger, as well as to the other eminent members of your party, the most cordial greetings of the Italian people, the Government and myself and to confirm to you my great and sincere satisfaction at having you as so welcome a guest in our country.

I should like to say, first of all, how greatly we appreciate the fact that you have wanted to include this visit to Italy in the first trip that you are making to Europe, thereby giving us the opportunity of resuming the fruitful dialogue so happily begun on the occasion of my visit to the United States in September of last year, a visit of which I harbour the most happy memories and whose positive results were expressed in the Joint Declaration of Washington. To this document we attach the value of a substantial step forward in Italo-American collaboration. And a similar importance attaches to the two meetings that we have had here in Rome with the Secretary of State.

During this morning's talks we noted with great interest your impressions regarding the results of your intensive diplomatic activity of these last few days. These talks have brought to the attention of our Government and public opinion the significance and

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the importance of this first mission that you are undertaking to Europe in order to stress the solidarity between the United States and her European allies with a view to ever more promising developments of the process of détente among all nations and the consolidation of the cause of peace. We particularly appreciate the efforts you are making to find a peaceful and lasting solution of the Middle East crisis, a matter, as you well know, to which Italy is particularly sensitive.

The objective of peace that the United States pursues offers new perspectives, thanks to the recent meetings of Salzburg and to the further diplomatic action that the United States intends to carry on. As always, Italy gives its full support to these efforts with the greatest commitment.

Italy continues to consider decisive the role that our friend, the American nation, can play in ensuring for the international community an orderly and peaceful future based on the respect of the principles of freedom, democracy and progress that constitute the common heritage of our civilizations the firmest of foundations for our understanding and our alliance. For our part we should like to assure you that we shall make every effort to collaborate- in the spirit of friendship and cooperation that binds us to the United States and to our European allies - in creating, maintaining and consolidating everywhere a climate of confidence and peace, and in promoting a harmonious economic development to ensure the balanced progress of all peoples and nations. The grave problems of our times call for a full understanding and the active collaboration of all countries, the industrialized ones as well as the developing ones. Italy will make its convinced contribution to the far-sighted action that the United States is undertaking to this end.

We have welcomed with profound satisfaction the accent that you placed at the recent Brussels meeting of the Atlantic Alliance on the fundamental value of the relations between America and Europe

for the purpose of strengthening security and ensuring a more even development of the two sides of the Atlantic.

Italy, considering the Atlantic Alliance as an irreplaceable instrument of equilibrium and peace, has always held that a more concrete and effective European dimension would also give new vigour to the Alliance itself.

As you know, we in Italy feel a profound European vocation. This vocation is reinforced by our realization that a strong and united Europe will be an essential element in an increasingly close collaboration with the United States, and the West in general, for the solution of the great problems of peace, stability and harmonious progress of the whole world that characterize our times.

Our meeting of this morning will give new impetus to the already fertile collaboration that has been instituted between the United States and Italy with a view to attaining the solutions that we all look forward to in a framework of continued and, indeed, strengthened solidarity among the peoples of the West. I am sure that a similar result will be obtained by the discussions that you and the Secretary of State will have this afternoon with our Prime Minister.

Mr. President,

America is about to celebrate the second centenary of the Declaration of Independence, a document that embodies ideals and aspirations that originated, among others, also in my own country. In this connection I need only recall that the name of an Italian figures among the signatories of the Declaration,

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and that Benjamin Franklin had frequent contacts with the more enlightened thinkers in Italy. And Italy therefore feels that it wants to participate wholeheartedly in this celebration.

In this spirit, then, I raise my glass to the good health and wellbeing of yourself, Mr. President, and Mrs. Ford, to the success of your lofty task at the head of the American nation and to the live and deep-reaching friendship that binds Italy to the United States.