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FRIEDMAN

FIRST DRAFT
DECEMBER 1, 1976

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS AT DINNER FOR PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI,
DECEMBER 6, 1976

Mr. Prime Minister, distinguished Italian
guests, ladies and gentlemen:

President Leone of Italy was the first State
visitor I welcomed to Washington as President of the United
States. Tonight we are once again celebrating the official
visit of a distinguished Italian leader, Prime Minister
Andreotti. These two visits symbolize the close friendship
of our two countries and the continuity of American support
for a valued ally.

Earlier this Autumn we welcomed the visit of
the Italian First Lady, Mrs. Vittoria Leone, who added
a charming touch to the already impressive Italian contribution
to our bicentennial. The performances of the La Scala Opera,
the loan of the Venus De Milo to our National Gallery,
Italian participation in the Tall Ships review and many
other Bicentennial events reaffirmed our close ties.

The gift presented by Mrs. Leone on behalf of the Italian people -- a portrait of Thomas Jefferson which hung for nearly 200 years in the convent of Lodi in Italy -- today hangs in the Oval Office -- a treasured reminder of Italian-American friendship.

Mr. Prime Minister, for two centuries Italian culture has enriched the life of the United States with unique contributions. Some of our historians contend that Thomas Jefferson, in writing the Declaration of Independence, drew on the wisdom of his Italian friend Filippo Mazzei in the drafting of several now-immortal phrases. It is widely known that our Capitol building was animated by Italian art and Italian artisans.

Along with Italy's cultural contributions, came many millions of Italian emigrants. America is proud of its citizens of Italian origin.

The affinity of Americans for Italy was demonstrated last May when an earthquake struck Northern Italy. The response of the American people and our Congress was immediate. We adopted legislation in record time to help earthquake victims rebuild their lives and their homes.

I was proud to sign the measure.

Mr. Prime Minister, the present moment challenges the advanced industrialized democracies of the West, which already suffer from recession, unemployment, inflation and the abrupt and steep rise in energy costs. Italy has been hit harder than many countries. But your government reacted vigorously and resolutely. I am impressed by your accomplishments.

Under your continuing strong leadership, Mr. Prime Minister, I am sure that Italy can return to balanced growth and renewed economic vitality without compromising the Italian people's strong desire for a Western-oriented, fully democratic political life. I am convinced that Italy will continue its strong commitment to the common goals we share

as partners in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization --
a secure peace, democratic freedoms, and economic well-
being for all our people.

Our discussions today reinforced my conviction
that the Italian people deeply value the community of
interest uniting us. It is with pleasure and confidence
that I express the continued best wishes of the American
people as well as the continued full support of the United
States Government for your government and the policies it is
following.

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you to join me in
a toast to the Prime Minister of Italy, to the enduring friendship
between our two countries, and to our mutual commitment to
peace, progress and prosperity for all mankind.

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