

# Remarks on Arrival at the Airport in Rome.

February 27, 1969

Mr. President:

I am most grateful for the generous remarks that you have expressed in welcoming me and the members of my party to your country.

As I stand here I think back 22 years ago when I first visited this country and had the opportunity to know the Italian people. For 2 weeks, at that period, as a new young Congressman, I traveled through this country studying the needs of this nation for the Marshall Plan. I visited Rome, Naples, Milan, Turin, and Trieste.

I had the opportunity to see a nation then in deep economic troubles, a nation which many thought would be unable to recover from those troubles and regain its economic and political strength.

But when I returned to the United States and, along with my colleagues, reported to the Congress, I was confident of the future of Italy because, first, I had seen a great Italian leader, De Gasperi,<sup>1</sup> and I knew that he would provide, with his colleagues, the leadership that this nation needed.

<sup>1</sup>Alcide de Gasperi, Prime Minister of Italy 1945-1953.

I also reported with great confidence because I had seen a remarkable people, a people who, in adversity had very great strength, a people who had contributed so much to our country and who now, in this land, were to contribute so much to its recovery--and the recovery of Italy, economically and politically--so that it now ranks among the first nations of the world, so that it now stands as one of the strong allies of the Western Alliance.

That recovery is due both to its leaders and to its peoples and I pay tribute to both as I stand here today. Now we look to the future. We look to the future with the new leaders, the leaders that you will provide in your government and that we will provide in ours.

As we look to the future we will look to the new purpose of our alliance and of our association together. As I think of that purpose I think of the words of another American President who visited this nation just 50 years ago. His words were spoken before their time but now their time has come.

Listen to the words of Woodrow Wilson spoken in Rome in 1919, 50 years ago: "Our task is to set up a new international psychology, to have a new, real atmosphere where what men once considered theoretical and idealistic turns out to be practical and necessary."

Mr. President, the contribution that you, personally, and that your people have made to the strength of NATO has helped to turn the ideal of collective security into a practical reality.

Now, as we seek a new international atmosphere, the strength of the Western Alliance has never been more necessary. A good ally listens 'to her partners.

As you pointed out in your remarks, we shall be having discussions with the Soviet Union. But before we have such discussions with the other side we will have discussions and consultations with our allies on this side.

That is the road that leads to Rome today. That is why I appreciate this opportunity to consult with the leaders of your government.

I come here to seek your advice and I am sure I will leave with that, and yet, with something more because we know that great lessons can be learned from people for whom humanity and tolerance are, in truth, a way of life.

That is why our discussion will not be limited to matters just between our two nations. Our talks will extend throughout the structure of our alliance and deal with the great problems of the world.

As an Atlantic partner and as a member of the European Community, Italy is playing a vital and constructive role in world affairs. That is why I am particularly grateful for the opportunity to visit your country at this time, to have the wise counsel of your leaders, and to reaffirm our steadfast friendship and to seek together ways of achieving our high purpose.

*Note: The President spoke at 4:35 p.m. at Ciampino Military Airport in Rome in response to remarks of welcome by President Giuseppe Saragat of Italy. An advance text of the President's remarks was also released by the White House Press Office.*

*President Saragat spoke in Italian. A translation follows:*

*Mr. President, on behalf of the Italian people and on my own it gives me great pleasure to extend my warmest welcome to you and to the distinguished personalities who accompany you.*

*Your visit confirms the cordiality of Italian-American relations which has its roots in history, in a common civilization, and in the many ties linking our two peoples through the migration of millions of Italians to your great country. Nor are we oblivious to the moral and political significance of this journey which you have wished to undertake at the beginning of your mandate as President of the United States. Italy is aware, like the other European countries, of the commitment of the United States, our friend and ally, to search for conditions that would guarantee a just and a lasting peace among all peoples of the world.*

*Your journey, Mr. President, is therefore of great importance for the future of the relations between the member countries of the Atlantic Alliance and as a basis for the negotiations you will undertake with the Soviet Union.*

*Europe, however, will be in a position to make a decisive contribution to this great dialogue of peace between East and West only if it finds, through unity, the necessary dimension to master its destiny.*

*The awareness of sharing the same ideals and the same objectives with the American Nation makes us look with confidence to the talks we are going to have with you in the certainty that they will not only contribute to the strengthening of collaboration within the Western World, but also to build on stronger bases peace and security for all nations.*

*It is with this hope, Mr. President, that I wish to renew to you our most friendly welcome upon your arrival in this city, ancient site and symbol of a civilization based on the highest human values which are common to all of us.*

Richard Nixon, Remarks on Arrival at the Airport in Rome. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/240742>