

Italy: a Democratic Republic in NY

Antonella Iovino (June 05, 2011)



The Italian-American community and the most illustrious representatives of the city of New York celebrate together the Anniversary of the Founding of the Republic (Festa Nazionale della Repubblica) at Cipriani 42nd street. OUR VIDEO COMING SOON

New York, June 2, 2011. The setting is the beautiful Cipriani, an old bank converted into a restaurant, on 42nd street, the occasion is the Anniversary of the Founding of the Republic (Festa della Repubblica).

Sixty five years have passed since that day – June 2nd 1946, when the Italian population voted “Yes” to the Republic, thus closing an important chapter of Italian history. The monarchy of the Savoy, reigning since 1861, stepped down in favor of a new figure... that of the President of the Republic. The first elected was Enrico De Nicola, the last one, the current Giorgio Napolitano.

This year, back in Rome, heads of nations, government officials and representatives of international



institutions met for lunch at the Quirinale, while in New York, the Consul General Francesco Maria Talò joined the Italian-American community, Italians and friends of our country in the celebrations of such an important day.

The party was kicked off by the kids of the Scuola d'Italia 'Guglielmo Marconi' and those of Harlem's Catholic school 'Our Lady of Lourdes' who sang the American, the European and the Italian anthems. It seems that no matter where you are, whether at the Quirinale or in any other city in the world, the celebrations of June 2nd successfully bring together countries and governmental institutions. Every year Italy tells us its story, the story of a unified, democratic and republican country celebrated by its people, even if they are on the other side of the ocean, in unity.

At the party, Italy was at first exalted for the beauty of its nature, the variety of its landscapes and the richness of its artistic fortune by the evening's hostess, and TV personality, Melba Ruffo di Calabria, who said, "Italy is an emotion rather than a country. We all promote its image everywhere we go; tonight here in NY, where the Italian community has always lead a very important role in its endorsement."

Consul Talò's speech added some important points to those statements: " Today is a special day because we celebrate the unity of a young nation that has a really old history. Here, right now, we celebrate the union between Americans and Italians. Unity does not mean uniformity: several different factors have contributed to the shaping of our culture, the same way it happened to American culture, and this is what makes our two cultures, so unique and similar. The Italian-American community functions as a bridge between the two countries: the glue that sticks people together is a core of shared values that allows us to work together. I was here in New York on September 11, 2001 and that day we all felt we were New Yorkers. Now, ten years later, nothing has changed, we still feel the same."

"In addition to celebrating the republic, this year we remember the 150 years of the unification of a country that has its contradictions. Italy was witness of the absurdities of the Holocaust, whose memory we want to keep alive together with the Italian Semitic community of New York, represented here tonight by Stella Levi (a survivor from Rhodes and Board Member of the Centro Primo Levi)," Consul Talò added. He then explained the symbols of the evening: "At the summit of the heads of state at the Quirinale, President Napolitano was presented by Vice President of the United States Joe Biden, with a special gift: a letter written by Garibaldi sent to Lincoln. It's a coincidence that we chose tonight the images of these two men as icons and inspiration. These are important figures in the fight for the unity of their own country, who shared several common values."

The Consul, who is about to leave New York for a new appointment, ended his speech by saying, "this is the fourth and, unfortunately, the last time that I am here to celebrate June 2nd with you. I will always have a wonderful memory of America but mostly of you all. You represent the strength of Italy and of New York, you have been the push behind all the activities of the past four years... and for this I thank you dearly."

Final greetings were addressed to Cardinal Egan, Bishop Nicholas Di Marzio of the Diocese of Brooklyn, and archbishop Francis Chullikatt, the permanent observer of the Holy See at the United Nations, who had the opportunity to see the Madonna di Pietranico, a wonderful terracotta sculpture from the fifteenth century that was greatly damaged during the earthquake of Abruzzo, and restored thanks to the donations of the Italian-American community through the Italian American Museum of New York founded by Josph Scelsa, that was exposed in a separate room at the restaurant.

Among its illustrious guests, the party welcomed representatives of the City Council of New York, the Comptroller of the state of New York and newly appointed knight of the Italian republic, Thomas P. DiNapoli, Silvana Mangione and Augusto Sorriso of GCEI (General Council of Italians Abroad), the President of the New York comites, Quintino Cianfaglione and the President of the New Jersey comites, Paolo Ribaudo.

On stage with the Consul General there were also the director of Enit, Mr. Riccardo Strano, the director of the Italian Cultural Institute, Mr. Riccardo Viale and Mr. Aniello Musella, director of the Italian Trade Commission of New York. They were accompanied by two actresses, the twins Silvia



and Laura Squizzato, who were presenting in New York their film “The Salt of Life,” directed by Gianni Di Gregorio, at Open Roads, the Italian film festival organized by the Film Society of Lincoln Center.

At the end of the Consul's speech, thanks to the generosity of RAI Italian television, images of the celebrations in Rome were projected on the big screen, in order to unify, symbolically, the two countries. At the time of wrapping things up there was only one last thing to say: the joyful motto “W l'Italia!” (Hurray for Italy!)

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