



“Does Italy Still Matter to the World?”

Chiara Morucci (February 20, 2012)

An interesting panel attended by many Italian and American distinguished speakers. Among them were Former U.S. Ambassador to Italy Ronald Spogli, President and CEO of Italian Business and Innovation Initiative Fernando Napolitano, Italian journalist Maurizio Molinari and Gianluca Galletto, Co-Founder of PINYC - Professionisti Italiani a New York (Italian Professionals in New York). Stefano Albertini, Director of Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò, moderated the discussion.

On Valentine’s day, [Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò](#) [1] hosted an interesting panel about the current situation in Italy titled: “Does Italy still matter to the world?”

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The speakers acknowledged the economic decline of Italy in these years in the larger frame of the global financial crisis, but at the same time underlined that there are currently signs of recovery for the Italian economy, especially after Monti’s visit to the US.

According to Gianluca Galletto, Italy has now a stronger international credibility and America believes in its potential. Galletto believes that Italy is a country with many brilliant young professionals that need to be supported and encouraged, and said about PINYC: “It is a gift of love to our country that is backing in its feet, to promote our culture and promote professional achievements of Italians studying or working in New York, whom are here thanks to what they learnt in our country.”

Napolitano argued that the first step to strengthen the Italian cooperation with the United States is to promote the learning of English among the population: “Communication is fundamental nowadays. Italy unfortunately is isolated, we do not speak English well enough. Business meetings in Italy are in Italian and happen just among Italians. In Italy everything is extremely local.”

Napolitano highlighted the influence of the state’s role in recovering the sorts of Italy: “No problem can be solved in a democracy without a responsive government,” he said and added about the fundamental importance of the Monti government, raising hope about the Italian growth and an benefiting the general credibility of Italy in the US. “Monti’s economic initiatives are opening an opportunity unique to Italy in the next few years,” Napolitano said.

Spogli said he has always believed in the great potential of Italy: “Italy has all it takes to be



successful, and is full of young talented students in many different fields.” In Spogli’s opinion, Italy’s weakness lies in the lack of connections between those who generate ideas and those who can translate these ideas into business results.

During his mandate as ambassador to Italy, in 2005 Spogli created “Partnership for Growth,” an initiative fostering educational exchanges between Italy and US. The Partnership allows selected Italian students in engineering, science and medicine to spend months working in the US, then return to Italy.

Spogli agreed with Napolitano that Italians have to learn English, as communication issues are very important. “America loves Italy and we are great allies, but we need to build stronger economic links. We need to invest and trade. This path is starting little by little,” he said.

The panel was an extremely interesting occasion for the guests to get an in-depth historical and economic picture of Italy, and to have a clearer idea of Italy’s international image.

Notwithstanding the crisis, Italy is still respected for its heritage, culture and potential. Italy definitely still matters to the world, and it matters particularly to America. The US in fact have never abandoned it, constantly supporting the country and its younger citizens with scholarships, partnerships and other initiatives. The links between Italy and the US promise to grow even stronger now that the new government is infusing the markets with a renewed confidence in Italy’s recovery and development.

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