

Travels around Rome

Wednesday, August 22

Spent the day sight-seeing, visiting various towns of interest. Motoring to Villa d'Este, we saw the splendid old castle, with glorious waterfalls. The severely-bombed city adjacent to Villa d'Este was in ruins.

Visited all the points of interest in Rome—the Coliseum, St. Peter's, Pantheon. In the square adjacent to the beautiful Victor Emmanuel statue—commonly referred to by the Americans as “The Wedding Cake” (as that is what it looks like)—we saw an amusing signboard. On the walls of the buildings were painted grand Fascist maps of the Italian Empire—Ethiopia, etc.—glorifying the former conquests of the Italians. Over one of these beautiful designs was a realistic direction sign, “Allied Pro Station,” meaning “Allied Prophylactic Station.”

We saw with a lot of interest the balcony from where Mussolini made his speeches. Now, underneath the balcony is the original Fascist flag torn to shreds.

After dinner our conducting officer took us to the Excelsior Hotel, now an Allied Officers' hotel and officers' night club. The lively resort was filled with young allied officers all jitter-bugging with Italian girls. It reminded me of a typical Broadway dance hall—bad liquor was being consumed by everyone.

The Italian girls, we were told, are fascinated by the generous American G.I.s who show them some fun, unlike the Italian men who keep them at home. The Italian men, however, resent their girls going out with the American G.I.s and in many cases shave the heads of the girls if they have seen them with foreign officers.