

YANK

THE ARMY



WEEKLY

September 7, 1945

ROME The people of Rome—Italian civilians and U. S. GIs—took the news of the Japanese surrender in their strides. There weren't any parades, bells didn't ring and there were few drunken soldiers. People went about their business as usual, including the girls on the *Via del Tritone*.

In front of the *Ristorante San Carlo*, a GI restaurant on the *Corso Umberto*, there was the usual line of hungry soldiers waiting to eat. Aside from the fact that most of them were grinning as if they'd just heard a joke, they showed little reaction to the news. A big, beefy corporal wearing a Bronze Star ribbon and a blue combat Infantryman's badge, with the Red Bull patch of the 34th Division on his shoulder, said, "I don't know. Can't believe it. Only two bombs and they give up. Don't sound like all that stuff we heard about the Japs fighting to the end. Seems to me there's a catch somewhere. Hey, what the hell's holding up this line?"

Outside the PX Italian kids were begging for cigarettes with "Joe, war *fnito*. You give me one cigarette?"

A Nisei staff sergeant from the 442d Regimental Combat Team came out carrying a paper bag full of rations. He grinned and said, "Wonderful news. Almost too good to be true. I'm anxious to get home. I hope people there'll realize the war's over. But it's sure fine news—best ever."

In front of the Red Cross a gray-haired tech said, "The best news I've ever heard on the radio. It's a funny thing. I came out of an Engineer outfit that's headed for the Pacific. They pulled me out because I got 95 points. I wonder if the boys have left Italy yet. They'll sure have the laugh if they beat me home."

At a sidewalk cafe on the *Via Nazionale* stood a bald-headed GI who was getting a buzz on. Laughing and sweating, he showed two Italians pictures of his wife and kids.

"... and this garage here, you can just see part of it sticking out from the side of the house. I got the sweetest little Buick, what a car. You cipito Buick?"

Inside the Florida Club, a GI hot spot, things looked about the same—a band giving out with some strictly Roman version hot jazz, about 30 couples dancing and several soldiers singing at their tables. A private who said he was attached to the 34th Station Hospital was drinking with an over-bright thin blonde. The private said, "I don't know why, but the thing sort of sneaks up on you. I started out to raise hell tonight but somehow I can't get started. It seems hard to

ROME

believe. No more worrying about points, stripes or anything. Bud, when I get home now, it's to stay. Maybe when I get home I'll celebrate, really pitch some hell."

"War *finito*," the blonde said. "*Buono*. Americans leave Rome, no?"

It was hard to tell from her voice whether she thought the GIs leaving Italy would be a good or a bad deal.

The private put his arm around her and said, "Yessir, baby, from now on it's home sweet home. 'Play 'Home Sweet Home,'" he shouted at the orchestra leader.

A GI at the next table said, "That ain't dancing music."

The nine o'clock show at the Barberini Theater was out and the crowd of GIs and Tommies streamed into the streets fresh from seeing Lana Turner in "Slightly Dangerous." An English sergeant said, "Wonderful news. I went to the cinema because I didn't know what to do with myself. Five years of it for me, you know. Nearly four overseas. I was slated for Burma so I'm glad the show's over."

A couple of soldiers were walking down the *Via del Tritone* singing hillbilly songs. Three Brazilian soldiers were sitting in a parked jeep watching the girls as they passed under the street light, laughing and making cracks in Portuguese. On the corner an Italian was selling watermelon slices to a small crowd of civilians who stood around his cart eating and spitting the seeds out. You could hear them saying, "*Guerra finita . . . bomba atomica . . . molti morti . . .*" while a loud-mouthed buck sergeant from II Corps was happily stuffing himself with melon and explaining how the atomic bomb worked.

In the Borghese Gardens a Fifth Army T-5 was sitting with a slim, pretty Italian girl. "I figured something like this would come. It's been a long war and nobody's sorry it's over. Of course, I married here—this is my wife. Now I wonder how soon I'll go home and if she'll be able to go to the States at the same time. If she gets stuck here, I'm going to ask for a discharge here and sweat out Italy till we can both go to the States. But no more sweating out Japan!"

Near the Galleria Club a Negro sergeant from the 92d Division, wearing a silver star ribbon under his combat Infantryman's badge, said, "I'm glad we didn't have to invade Japan. That would've been a bitch. Got a brother in the Navy in the Pacific and I bet he's shouting now."

Inside the club somebody yelled over the music.