

# 'Rome Remembered' -- A Poignant Appreciation

By CLARE BOOTH LUCE  
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to Rome

Not long ago, I received a postal card depicting the Coliseum. It came from a friend who was writing a novel which called for some chapters with a foreign background.

What W. S. Gilbert in the nineteenth century called "fascination frantic" for "that's romantic" had, really enough, led my friend to Rome. A sense, even scholarly sort, his encounter with the Eternal City must have moved him deeply. But he was no doubt aware that generations of writers before him had been defeated in their attempts to match their prose to the lofty and profound emotions their own first sights of Rome had aroused in them. He simply scorned the ancient challenge. He scrawled on the back of his card, "Man, like I mean, Rome zaps everybody!"

Rome does indeed zap everybody—the philosopher, the historian, the archeologist, the poet, and the artist, and even that least zappable character—the tourist.

At this point I must make a confession. While I was serving in Italy, I tried, very consciously, to shove Rome—historical Rome—to the back of my mind in order to keep Italy and America in the forefront of it. For I soon sensed that historical Rome can zap the diplomat harder than anybody!

Few can do a job well who do not believe in the urgency and importance of it. To be effective, the diplomat must believe that his successful pursuit of his country's foreign policies is important, however relatively, to the prestige, power, and preservation of his nation.

Never was this truer than in the nuclear age. Today the United States and Soviet Russia, the two mightiest nations the world has ever seen, are more or less evenly matched. They are locked in an enormous struggle for ideological supremacy over the hearts and minds of mankind.

Neither the Western diplomat nor the Iron Curtain diplomat can afford to let slip away even trivial diplomatic victories. Consequently, each is expected by his own government, and especially by his own countrymen, to pursue his mission in a spirit of ideological zeal and passionate patriotism.

But of all the frames of mind required of any professional, this is, precisely, the hardest to maintain in the Eternal City.

The diplomat is history minded. His very profession is the making of history, at the cutting edge, where sovereign powers come into conflict in mutually abrasive situations. A knowledge of the history of his own country and equally the history of the country in which he is serving, is essential to the diplomat.

He must know and study history in order to identify those situations which in the past have led to war or the diminishment of his country's world position, in order not to let them be repeated.

To live in Rome is, inescapably, to think about history. The rub for the diplomat is that Rome forces him to think about such a long, long span of history — indeed, three thousand years of it. And this is to think about the history of civilization itself.

Werner Bergengruen's classic "Rome Remembered" has been distilled into an English edition with an introduction by Clare Booth Luce which follows.

Containing 40 full color photos by Erich Lessing and 57 etchings by Giovanni B. Piranesi, the book is offered at a special pre-Christmas price of \$14.95. Published by Herder and Herder, it normally sells for \$17.50.

Western world. The diplomat can scarcely miss the point the Rome heavily features the decline and fall of "invincible" empires, the birth and death of many "proud and prosperous" nations, the evolution, merging, and disappearance of scores of cultures, ideologies, religions. The moss-covered tombs of

magnificent emperors, the white sepulchers of great kings, the crumble and ruins of princely palazzos, Caesar's forum and Mussolini's—what are they all but sermons in stones on a single theme: sic transit gloria mundi. The monuments are the message. Or, as my poetic friend might put it—POW\*! to the pre-

tensions of all "sovereign nations."

A Roman tour of duty would be easier for the diplomat who would like to believe that his own young, modern ideology is the final answer for a brave new world, if only Rome also taught some ideological or political lesson. Such as, that in the long view of history, cultures collapsed, or rulers lost their hold over the population, or nations perished, because of some error or failure common to them all.

Unhappily, Rome rather tends to teach the opposite.

During the long reaches of its history, art, architecture, poetry, literature, and religion did flourish under occasional benign and peaceful rulers. But they also burgeoned under brutal warlords, and mad and murdering emperors.

It is no wonder that in such a city the diplomat sometimes becomes skeptical, even cynical, about the value of his own relatively puny efforts to assure his country a durable place in history.

"Ma chere colleague," an Allied diplomat once chided me, when I sought his support on a diplomatic question affecting the welfare of Italy. "What can it possibly matter, a hundred years from today, at five o'clock in the afternoon, whether or not the Italians are granted this concession?"

He waved his hand towards the window, from which there was a view of an old Roman wall, glowing rosy and golden in the warm afternoon sun. "Let us enjoy the light on that old wall, while we can," he sighed.

Later, he told me that he planned to retire in Rome when he had finished his mission. He did not know it, but he had already retired. He had retreated into Roman history. He had given over to the Roman shards and ruins with their melancholy reminder that "all this, too, shall pass," including, one day, the "glory" of his own glorious country.

In Rome, which has witnessed approximately every form of government ever tried by man, the wages of wisdom and virtue, no less than those of folly and sin, seem to be failure and death.

And yet for many people, of whom I am glad to count

myself one, "the grandeur that was Rome"—many Rome — has a message far more compelling than that "all the paths of glory lead but to the grave." Rome bade me to glory, not in power, nor wealth, nor even in God (who may be gloried in anywhere). It bade me glory in man himself, man the free-swinging pendulum between good and evil, with his enduring capacity to hope and love, suffer and have faith, man who is brutish, but never a monster, man who is the ruin of good.

It is as the City of Man that I remember Rome.

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**Cardinal Concern Modern Liturgy**  
Chicago — (NC)—John Cardinal Cody of Chicago has demned an "avant garde" liturgical service held here during "Day of Information" sponsored by the Chicago Council of Laymen.

The service included African "soul" and "psychedelic" music and an Offertory dance and the of French bread for the charist.

In a statement Cardinal Cody said permission has not been given to individual parishes "nor will it be given" — to conduct any services "not in keeping with the devotional sense of the liturgy." Non-liturgical "elements" are forbidden, Masses, he added.

The cardinal also pointed that the CCL is "not approved by the archdiocese and has connection with it."

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