



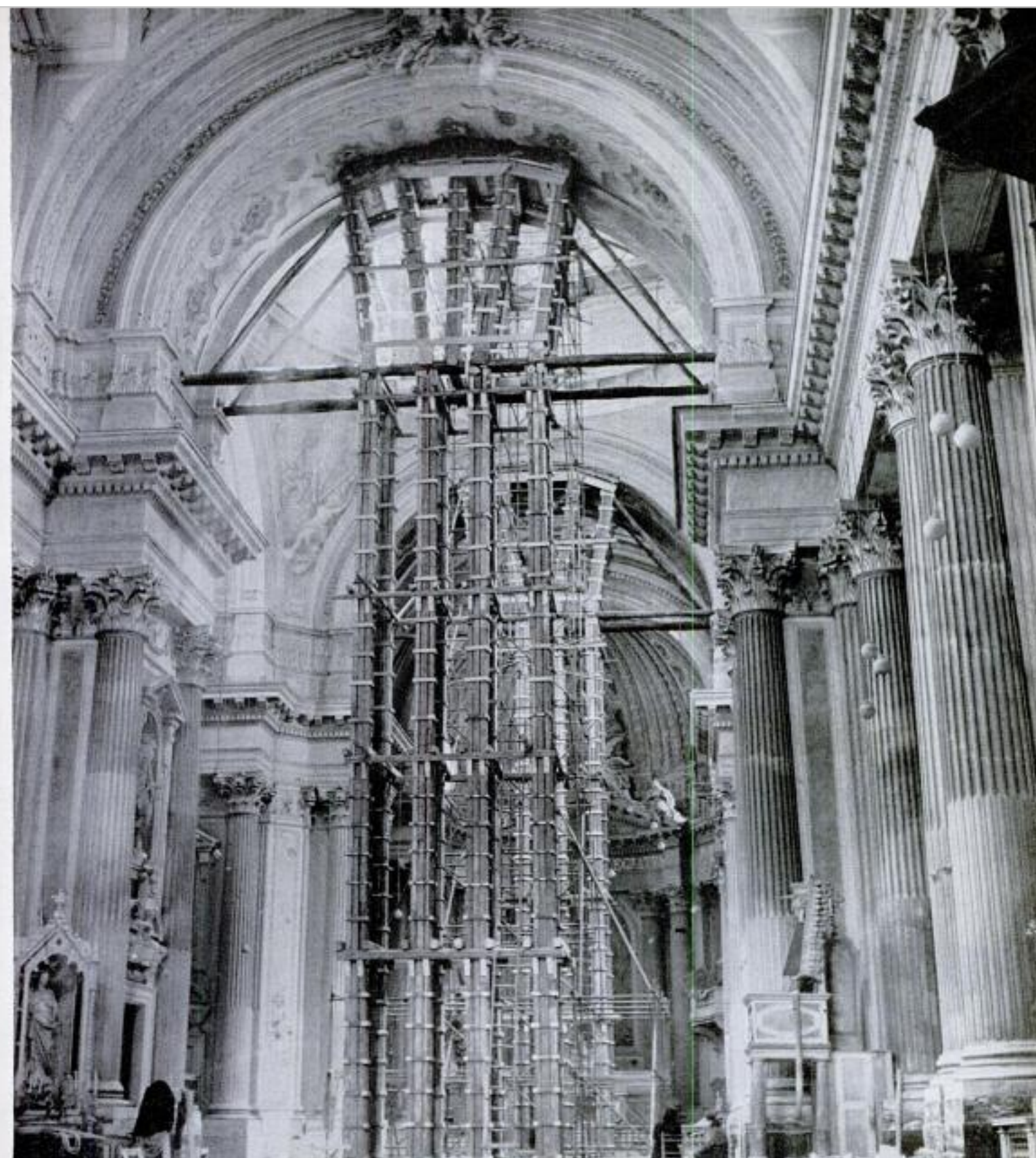
ITALIAN WORKMEN UNDER DIRECTION OF AMG DIG FOR VALUABLE FRAGMENTS OF SCULPTURE, FRESCO, ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENT IN BOMBED CAPUA CATHEDRAL

WAR RAVAGES ITALY'S ART

ALLIES TRY TO SAVE GREAT RELICS

When the allies began their march on Rome they faced a great spiritual dilemma. The battlefield of Italy which the Nazis held was a museum that housed relics of ancient Rome and the most precious relics of early Christianity. Almost every city, town and hamlet was crowded with architectural treasures of ancient monasteries, cathedrals and cloisters. They had stood for centuries as religious monuments filled with Old and New Testament art done by the world's most brilliant painters and sculptors.

For these memorials of the past the allied armies had a deep spiritual respect. They could not knowingly injure them but neither could they unnecessarily risk a single soldier's life. They were faced with the perplexing problem of which is more



THE MASSIVE DOME OF 16TH CENTURY SANTISSIMA ANNUNZIATA CHURCH IN NAPLES, PIERCED BY A BOMB, IS BRACED BY SCAFFOLDING BUILT BY AMG ART OFFICIALS

precious: life itself or the living cultural traditions that give life much of its meaning. General Eisenhower gave the only answer for civilized armies waging total war: wherever humanly possible, Italy's great monuments must be preserved. Yet in spite of allied caution many architectural treasures have been damaged by allied as well as Nazi forces. On these pages LIFE Photographer George Silk shows how war has ravaged Italy's art.

The Nazis were not so greatly bothered by the spiritual conflict that beset the allies. They deliberately mined and destroyed the great library of Naples and stole millions of dollars worth of art from private collections and public museums (LIFE, Jan. 10). Like the barbarian conquerors of old they regard art as legitimate loot.

The British and U. S. governments have set up a group of experts to carry on the work of art preservation. The experts have prepared maps for bombing missions, carefully plotting the location of art treasures so that the bombers can avoid any unnecessary destruction. Once a town is captured, the art experts quickly move in to minimize damage. They erect scaffoldings to support shaken walls and ceilings, put up temporary roofs to protect interiors from rain and weather, gather all rubble together so that it can be sifted for valuable fragments that can be used later to reconstruct damaged works. They have already helped compile a record of every important movable piece of Italian art, including all of the Nazi loot. This list will help to return to the pillaged towns many of their priceless paintings and sculptures.



BEFORE BOMBING (above), upper part of cathedral door showed 44 scenes from the New Testament. Other 24 panels right of which are shown here, portrayed Benevento bishops.



AFTER BOMBING, door fragments were spread on floor by a Benevento priest who is trying to piece them together. He has placed rosettes in the spots where panels are missing.

BOMBS SHATTER AGED CATHEDRAL

The most tragic Italian art casualty to date was the destruction of the ancient Cathedral of Benevento. For 1,100 years this medieval church stood as a small but precious religious monument in the center of the railroad town of Benevento, near Naples. Today nothing remains but the bell tower, parts of the facade and one side wall. The facade (opposite page) is a skeleton which remains standing only because it has been braced to keep it from collapsing.

When a direct bomb hit caved in the cathedral roof last September, tons of debris crashed down on medieval marble reliefs that adorned the walls. Vestments and utensils were destroyed. An ancient bronze chest decorated with sculptures and enameled of the Madonna and Christ made in the 11th and 12th Centuries and a huge Easter candlestick that had been wrought in the 13th Century were smashed to bits. Fire that swept the cathedral burned rare Sixth Century Langobardic manuscripts.

To people who loved the quaint architecture of the medieval church the greatest tragedy was the loss of the cathedral's famous 14th Century bronze doors that opened into the church from the facade shown below. On them an unknown Italian sculptor in the 1400s had carved 44 scenes from the New Testament (left) and 24 portraits of local bishops. Though fire set by the bombs had melted away entire panels, fragments of 69 were recovered. Burned away and lost forever is the delicate patina that had mellowed with centuries upon the bronze figures.

The recovered panels are now being pieced together by the local bishop and priests under the supervision of AMIG authorities. Bit by bit the fragments are being sorted from the debris and will be taken to a place of safety. After the war they will be put together again into new doors patterned after the old ones. New panels will be made to replace those that are entirely gone and the reconstructed doors placed on a cathedral rebuilt on the ruins of the old.

War's ill wind blew some good to Italy's art. In Sta. Chiara Church in Naples (shown on a following page) the bombing peeled some third-rate 18th Century decorations from the wall and revealed underneath some much more valuable 14th Century Gothic frescoes. Painted over and long since forgotten, their restoration makes up in small measure for Italy's losses.



BENEVENTO CATHEDRAL, in center of town, unfortunately stood only few hundred yards from rail lines, bridges.



BENEVENTO CATHEDRAL was wrecked last September when allied bombers in high-level attack struck at

bridges and railroads near the cathedral. Little railroad town of Benevento is about 33 miles northeast of Naples. Built in

the Ninth Century, cathedral was rebuilt about 1200. Bell tower (right), added in 1270, was miraculously undamaged.



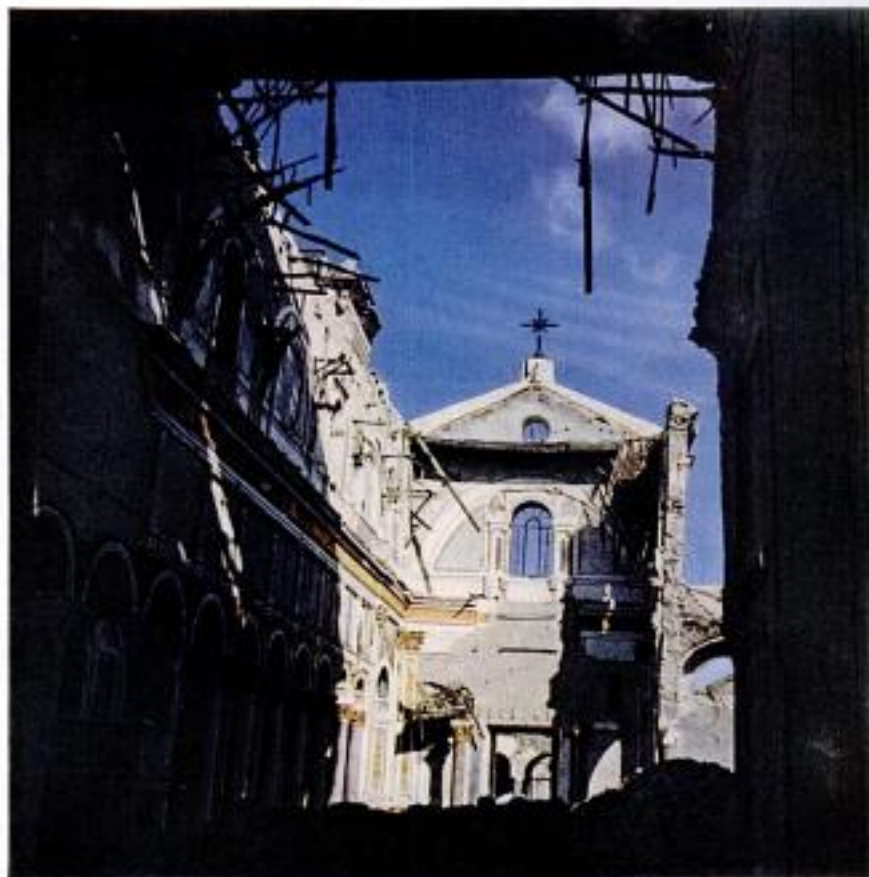
CAPUA CATHEDRAL DOME and rest of the cathedral was hit by German and allied bombs in October when the entire town of Capua, about 37 miles north of Naples, was laid in ruins.



RIPPED PAINTING of a saint in nun's robes is on side wall directly under dome shown above. Mural of Christ among the Doctors in the Temple over nearby archway (below) was unharmed.



ITALIAN ART RUINS (continues)



THE CATHEDRAL OF CAPUA is gutted. After is now part of rubble in foreground. AMG officials sifted rubble for fragments of a 13th Century mosaics, an 11th Century illuminated manuscript, frescoes and statuary.



STA. CHIARA CHURCH IN NAPLES, built in 14th Century, burned after bombing and roof caved in. Decorations added in 18th Century, traces of which are visible, peeled away, revealing 14th Century rose window.



UNDER ARCHWAY OF CAPUA CATHEDRAL workmen directed by AMG have set aside pieces of church sculpture (left) and the capital of overturned column which were salvaged from the rubble lying at the right.



STA. CHIARA CHURCH FRESCOES on wall of the oratory, depicting life of Christ and the Virgin, were done in the 18th Century and covered the valuable 14th Century crucifixion scenes which the bombing revealed.



ROOF OVER STA. CHIARA ORATORY was completely demolished. The damaged frescoes show Christ Rising from the Tomb, Resurrection, Apparition of Christ, The Descent of Thomas.



GOthic 14TH CENTURY FRESCOES of Sta. Chiara Church were found under newer frescoes after bombing. Adjoining frescoed archway (below) was also badly damaged by bombs.





NUNS' CLOISTER of Sta. Chiara Church in Naples is braced by structure of wooden beams. All the arches in arcade were bricked up by AMG to keep building from collapsing.



CHURCH OF SANT' ANGELO IN FORMIS, near Capua, one of Italy's important medieval monuments, had wall damaged by Germans. But 11th Century frescoes were intact.



EARLY RENAISSANCE CLOISTER with blooming wisteria adjoins the bombed church of Sta. Chiara in Naples but escaped damage. Frescoed walls depict life of St. Francis.



CAPUA CATHEDRAL CHAPEL, with painting of Last Supper, baroque sculptures, was damaged. In the background, through gaping roof, Ninth Century bell tower is visible.



IN THE PALACE OF CASERTA a British corporal takes a cut nap beneath a 16th Century statue of the Duke of Parma, who is being crowned by Victory. Built in 1752 for

Charles III, the palace was recently turned into a public museum. Germans once used palace as official headquarters. When Nazis were routed, allied officials made it their headquarters.