

DISCOVERING VIA BISSOLATI



At the close of the nineteenth century, within the ambit of the division of the eastern portion of Rome into lots, via Bissolati linked Via Veneto with Piazza Esedra at the top of Via Nazionale (Piazza Esedra is now Piazza della Repubblica). As soon as development began, institutional buildings, and offices and the headquarters of companies opened up in the area. The buildings along via Bissolati conform to the model set forth by Marcello Piacentini in the premises constructed in 1937 for the bank, Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, at the start of the street on the corner with via Veneto.

While this property conveys an impression of massiveness, relief is provided by alternating brickwork and marble elements. These buildings, with their lines denoting sobriety and regularity, provide one of the more coherent and successful examples of the Fascist architecture of the Ventennio (twenty-year period of Fascist government). Sorrentino was not interested, here, in celebrating the beauty of these buildings, of which he used a balcony to shoot Jep Gambardella's birthday party.

In the background is an illuminated MARTINI sign, which, for decades has been a characteristic feature of the skyline here – a vague (quasi-melancholy) throwback to the lifestyle of the bars in Via Veneto during the era of the Dolce Vita.