

FIFTY  
WAR-DAMAGED  
MONVMENTS  
OF ITALY

ITALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR ITALIAN  
WAR-DAMAGED MONUMENTS

# FIFTY WAR-DAMAGED MONUMENTS OF ITALY

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**W**HAT are works of art if not rays of the divine light shining in the minds of men and fixed by the hand of the artist in the material which he fashions for the enlightenment, consolation and encouragement of mankind amid the difficulties of life? And what are books and papers on which are preserved and handed down by means of written signs, poetry, music, songs, philosophy, science — the accumulated wisdom of the centuries which in its turn sustains the work of what we call, in common language, progress and civilization? Sacred objects belonging to a universal human liturgy, surrounded by love and reverence, watched over and defended by anxious hearts. In modern times and especially in the nineteenth century to which we older people belong and owe our education, it was our pride to keep them far from conflicts, placing them apart as common treasure, never thinking, never imagining that this silent sacred trust might be violated.

But the trust has been violated in the recent terrible years that are continuing, let us not deceive ourselves, in alternating moods of fear and violence. The houses in which these objects were collected, museums, libraries and archives, churches and monasteries of venerable age, have been battered down and burned; and in great numbers their contents have disappeared from the earth: irreparable losses that we vainly force ourselves to blot out from our memories while they still live on forever in our hearts. These losses are the outward aspect of the age that has come upon us, with alasement and bewilderment of moral and religious forces overcome by forces of blind and brutal power, unchained by destiny, which yet will have their own justification, an unfamiliar justification, in the hidden plans of Providence.

All that is now being done and will be done to lessen the damage suffered is surely the duty of all men of good will, of peoples, and of states. But in view of political conditions in the world today, shall we not be like physicians who care for and heal and conserve the strength of a sick man for whom the executioner is waiting? Will not a more extensive and more fundamental destruction come upon what we succeed in restoring, and on what now remains intact? And the problem of politics that is the premise and presupposition of all this work, does that not perhaps reduce to the necessity of reaching an agreement among nations that, in the interests of everyone, will make impossible the destruction of the common heritage of the higher life of man, freely, equally, and infinitely available to all men alike?

The authors of the acts of destruction which were committed in the recent war professed the primary intention of terrifying the enemy and forcing him to surrender. But does experience

show that this result was attained or is attainable? In my own city where bombardments followed one another without respite for five years, where the famous archives were burned, containing the records of twelve centuries of history from byzantine times and the autonomous duchy to the last centuries of the Bourbon dynasty, where whole libraries were burned, and famous churches were demolished, like the temple of Santa Chiara, a museum of the history of the Angevines, my experience has led me to reflect that the calculations on terror are made by narrow minds ignorant of the power and elasticity of the human spirit and to conclude that it is childish to expect tumults and revolts and supplications for peace from supposed terror since in these cases a new psychology appears, different from the psychology of a tranquil and ordinary life, dominated by resignation and possessed of a kind of serenity. In this way simple people who had seen their loved ones die did not protest or rebel but calmly said that their turn would come soon. Even a sort of humor appeared in the midst of the sadness, as when peasant women seeing the scout planes approaching in the morning would call to one another in the streets, "Don't be afraid — it's the photographer ,,".

Again, it is said that this destruction, however terrible, is caused by military necessity in order to make the operations less difficult and to shorten the war; it is even added that the sparing of one soldier's life is worth the loss of a work of art. This last pronouncement is not in keeping with man's conscience nor his moral dignity. As to military necessity and shortening the war, we must take into account the simple nature of military men and the ease with which they try methods that often prove inefficient or unnecessarily violent.

These are the thoughts that I turned over in my mind as I looked at the striking photographs collected in this volume and read the catalogue of the works of art destroyed or mutilated in Italy by the war.

BENEDETTO CROCE

Naples, October 1946.

IN 1943, the American Council of Learned Societies appointed a "Committee for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in War Areas", a group of volunteers which worked for two years mapping cities and sites in Europe and Asia, listing the monuments and works of art that might be endangered, and gathering all the information it could which might be useful in repairing what damage was done. The Committee has ceased to exist, but its work continues in the hands of its successor, the American Committee for the Restoration of Italian Monuments.

The Committee for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in War Areas, in the occasional intervals when it could pause and consider its job, became aware of two characteristics by which it differed from any other body working in the War. In the first place, it made none of the distinctions so carefully observed by war departments and chancelleries as to hostile or friendly countries, allies, enemies, co-belligerents, and neutrals. To us a cultural monument was a cultural monument, wherever it happened to be, and we mapped in Germany and Japan as busily as anywhere else. And in discussing this, we became aware of the truth of what had been before a mere cliché and needed the War to give it vitality: that works of art may be physically the property of a single nation, but in terms of civilization they belong to all mankind. The simple fact that they were in danger, divested them of nationality.

It is curious that War, the cruelest and most selfish human aberration, has also the power to shock us into realization of fundamental values such as this, and is able, while it probes the depths of national loyalty, to make clear those things which transcend national prejudice and passion.

Of such are the monuments of Italy. Here rose the concept of a unified world, organized under law, which inspired the authority and grandeur of Roman architecture. Here the grim Christianity of the early Middle Ages was humanized by St. Francis in practice and by Giotto in art, and here French Gothic and Byzantine were harmonized by the painters of Siena. The well-spring of Medieval culture may have been north of the Alps, but it was the Italian mind that comprehended the Middle Ages, reducing its emotion to system, and its artistic expression to pattern. It was Medieval Italy in fact that initiated the habit of thinking internationally which has been a tradition of the peninsula ever since.

Our modern age was initiated by the Italian Renaissance. The vocabulary of ideal style in modern art was invented and elaborated by the painters, sculptors, and architects of the Quattrocento



and Cinquecento in Italy. The record of this tremendous contribution to modern culture still stands, impaired but not destroyed by war, in Italian churches and palaces and Italian museums and galleries. What has been preserved owes its survival in large part to the devotion of Italian museum officials who kept their treasures in safe hiding, and to the exceptionally skillful measures taken by the Direction of Antiquities for the monuments that could not be moved. Trajan's Arch at Beneventum, unscathed in spite of an almost direct hit, owes its preservation to such protection.

There are total losses to be regretted incessantly in time to come: the irreparable damage to the Tempio Malatestiano at Rimini, the frescoes in Pisa's Campo Santo, the Mantegna masterpieces in the Eremitani at Padua and others. But the hard work of Italian restorers has greatly diminished the losses that otherwise would have occurred for lack of such prompt attention, and if sufficient help can be given them, and soon, these skillful operatives can save still more.

The restoration of its monuments is being shouldered by Italy to the utmost extent of that stricken country's resources. But these monuments belong to the common patrimony of western civilization, and the civilized nations of the West cannot but feel some share in the responsibility of preserving them from further ruin.

\* C. R. MOREY

Rome, August 24, 1946.

**B**UILDINGS of artistic value in Italy are not, as in other countries, gathered in the most important cities in groups of constructions that were carried out according to a prearranged plan. From earliest times, Italy has been made up of a large number of regions each of which has had at one time or another an independent life, often a life of historical and political significance abroad as well as at home. Many cities without any importance in modern life were capitals of small states that had connections throughout the world in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, or the Renaissance and, in their days of splendor, were adorned with fine buildings, pictures, and sculptures showing a passion for the beautiful that has no equal in any other western country.

When it is said that Italy is the garden of the world we must not think only of her natural beauty but also of the beauty that has been created, as in a garden, by the men who have lived here for three thousand years and have always possessed an extraordinary artistic sensibility.

Today the war has passed over this garden, the most terrible storm in its history; and the gardeners, whose living costs have been multiplied twenty-two times, are confronted with ruin so great that they cannot repair it by themselves. They are turning for help to all men who realize to what an extent their own civilization is derived from Italy and that the destruction of her works of art would be a loss to mankind everywhere.

While this aid is awaited, much work is going on in Italy, in the field of monuments and art, to repair the damages resulting from the war.

Under the authority of the General Direction of Fine Arts, in Rome, are 58 regional offices where archaeologists, historians of art, and architects are at work on the restoration of monuments and the reorganization of museums. All buildings of artistic interest and all museums are dependent on the State. Even the churches in Italy are not only places of worship but to a very large extent are truly and properly museums of art. The churches are responsible to the ecclesiastical authorities in matters of worship but in all that concerns their artistic character they are subject to the State. Catholic officials cannot make any change in the interior or exterior of a church without permission of the State which exercises its supervision through the offices dependent on the General Direction of Fine Arts. The Italian State has taken a great responsibility on itself in this, but it feels it must in order to protect the artistic aspect of the country. The State intervenes also in private properties where these have sufficient artistic importance to be considered of public interest.

The statistics which are included in the exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum show what has been done in Italy for the reconstruction of monuments. I should like to give here some other information of a general character.

In 1939-40 the Italian State had an annual budget of about 3,200,000 liras for the maintenance of monuments, museums, and regional offices for the guardianship of art.

In the years 1941-43 the average expenditure was 5,250,000 liras. The increase was due to the work involved in protecting the monuments from air attacks and in emptying all the museums and transporting the works of art to safety.

In 1944-45, 50 million liras were added to the normal expenses, for the restoration of monuments damaged in the war. This was a considerable increase in relation to the previous budgets, but in reality it was very little. The regional offices had to be reorganized before they could seriously undertake the work and even the General Direction of Fine Arts had to be recast in the new Italian State. A first survey was made to establish the minimum that would be necessary, not so much for real restorations, as to do the immediate and urgent work of reinforcement that could protect the damaged monuments from further ruin, from the weather or from the natural deterioration that comes very rapidly in a bombed building. This survey fixed one billion five hundred million liras as the minimum amount for the work of first aid. Of this the Government allocated about 600 millions for 1945 but out of this sum approximately 200 millions had to be taken for reopening libraries, schools, academies of Fine Arts, and conservatories of music.

In the years 1945-46 and 1946-47 the following additional sums were assigned to the work of taking down the protective coverings against air attacks, the replacing of the works of art, and the reopening of the museums: replacing of works of art: 1945-46, 16,900,000 liras; 1946-47, 50,000,000 liras; dismantling protective coverings: 1945-46, 23,250,000 liras; 1946-47, 5,200,000 liras which added to 9,500,000 liras that has already been asked for, will be sufficient to complete the freeing of Italian monuments from their protective casings before the end of the year.

In the first six months, January to June 1946, approximately 500 million liras have been spent in financing the work on 404 monuments.

At the same time substantial amounts have been spent from the budget of the Ministry of Public Works — as can be seen from the statistics shown here at the Exhibition — for carting away debris, for covering roofs, and for other masonry work on portions of historic buildings that, strictly speaking, have no artistic significance. In addition, in 1946, 2 billion liras were allocated on the budget of Public Works for the restoration and rebuilding of churches and a part of this sum will benefit churches that can be considered artistic monuments.

To sum up, it can be stated that by the end of the current financial year 1946-47 (which ends June 30, 1947) the Italian State will have come to the aid, with work of reinforcement, of all buildings of artistic value, thus saving them from imminent ruin, if only the final restoration is not delayed too long.



But there remains the long and complicated work of real restoration. I shall speak later of the criteria that are followed by the General Direction of Fine Arts in carrying out these restorations. I think it is interesting, before we leave the problem of finance, to compare the figures of the Italian budget for Fine Arts with that of another European nation with a great artistic patrimony that has been damaged by the war, a nation that economically is incomparably better off than Italy: for example France.

On the French budget for 1946 the following sums were allocated: for reconstruction of monuments and civic buildings belonging to the State, 750 million francs; for reconstructing buildings not belonging to the State, 100 million francs; for restoration of works of art of national monuments, 2,175,000 francs; for rebuilding libraries, conservatories and schools of music, 20,800,000 francs.

These figures are not appreciably higher than those allocated in Italy. We can see from this comparison how great an effort Italy is making, with her modest financial resources, to repair the damages of war in the field of art. With all this, however, Italy by herself could not complete the restoration of her monuments except over a very long number of years, a number of years so long that, in the meantime, the damaged works of art would end in ruin, often irreparable.

But the restoration of buildings of artistic significance, of pictures, and sculptures damaged by the war, is not alone a question of money. It presents a whole problem, and a delicate one, of evaluation and of historical and aesthetic sensibility. I believe it can be said that this problem is solved better in Italy than anywhere else in the world. On the surface it seems simple to remake a building, or a part of a building that has been destroyed, exactly as it was before, and in the majority of cases there would indeed be no obvious difficulties. But what would be the result? The result in every case would be a falsehood ably stated. It would be making people believe in the authentic antiquity of a building which instead has been constructed under our own eyes. If then only part of the building has been remade, when we become aware of the deceit, through some indication, we shall be led to doubt the antiquity of the authentic portion as well. And immediately the building will have lost the major part of its interest for us. Because in an ancient monument, just as in a picture or a sculpture, what attracts us is not only the external beauty of form and proportion but also the fact that it is for us a testimony of an age that has gone, a document left to us by men who disappeared centuries ago and who left in the work of art a sincere and spontaneous witness to their existence, to their mentality, their way of life, of thought and of action. We have no right to falsify this testimony. And in a certain real sense we cannot do so even if we should wish to. In each smallest ornament, the capital of a column, or even simply the cornice of a window, or some other hand-worked detail, the early sculptor who made it in the style that was the fashion in his time has instilled a spontaneous live expression which we can imitate more or less well, but which we can never make a natural expression of ourselves. Each one of us belongs to his own age and since a work of art is the sincerest revelation of personality, it is therefore unique and cannot be repeated.

For this reason, a restoration must be made in such a way that it will not deceive. The new part must be distinguishable from the old; but at the same time the work of art must give again to whoever looks at it the same sensation that it gave in its original untouched form. The sensation is stronger the more clearly the original part can be distinguished from the restoration. The satisfying of this subtle but essential need of the critical sense makes for much complication; but Italian officials in the field of Fine Arts are meticulous in this kind of work and go to great lengths to preserve even the smallest piece of the original. Often it would be far simpler to tear down a piece of falling or disconnected wall and to build a new piece. Instead, the original part is strengthened with all the clever devices of modern technique and inserted in the new portion. And the officials are scrupulous to the point that, when it is necessary to remake a piece or a small detail of an early building in such a way that it cannot be distinguished easily from the original, the date when the restoration was made is cut into every stone of the structure. At Naples for instance, the fine Gothic church of S. Lorenzo, besides losing its roof, was so badly dislocated by bombs that all the walls were out of line and the piers, threatening to fall at any moment, would never have been able to support the roof. It would have been easy to tear down everything and build a new church like the old one. Instead a very complicated work was undertaken. The piers were partly hollowed out throughout their entire length and a strong framework of reinforced concrete inserted in each one in such a way that it could not be seen when the work was finished. These cement cores, set in the foundations, will effectively support the roof and the original piers will remain intact with no other function than to hold themselves erect, attached to their cement centers. Yet they will remain the same piers that were built six hundred years ago by order of the Aragonese King of Naples. The same rigid care is taken in restoring pictures, where retouching of even the smallest part is avoided. The fragments of the frescos of Lorenzo da Viterbo and of Mantegna shown in the exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum, have been put together from a great number of small pieces collected on the ground after the bombardment; and it can be seen how the parts that are missing have been filled in with color, in small spaces, so that the gaps will not spoil the effect of the figures but how, moving nearer for a close view, the observer can easily distinguish what is left of the original picture and what has been done by the restorer.

The Istituto Centrale del Restauro in Rome, the Gabinetto di Restauro of the Uffizi Gallery, and the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence are the centers where patient and clever craftsmen are working on these delicate restorations of pictures and sculptures, under the guidance of technicians and historians of art. On the concentration and high intelligence of these devoted men rests the solving of the difficult problem of restoration, taking a new form with each work of art.

RANUCCIO BIANCHI-BANDINELLI

General Director of Antiquities and Fine Arts

## EMPOLI - COLLEGIATA



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This church, dedicated to St. Andrew, was built, it is thought, in the V century but transformed in 1093 and again in 1736.

It still has its XI century façade in Romanesque style, all of white and green-marble.

In the interior, which was completely altered in 1736 by the architect Ferdinando Ruggeri, there are numerous works of art, among them, in the Baptistry, the famous fresco of the

Pietà by Masolino da Panicale. The campanile was Romanesque-Gothic but the top part with its pyramidal termination was by Andrea Bonistalli (1619). It was destroyed by German mines.

The work of restoration and architectural reintegration of the building is far advanced.

For this 8,400,000 liras have been spent so far; 12,500,000 liras more will be necessary to complete the work.





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