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Information Outgoing -

Fire Arts
Monuments
Archives

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MONUMENTS, FINE ARTS AND ARCHIVES.

18766 Much less damage than was feared was done to the historic works of art of Sicily during the invasion in July, Allied Military Government officials report. The most significant monuments, Norman buildings in and near Palermo and the Greek buildings scattered throughout the island, are practically undamaged. The most important works of art were removed and stored before the invasion.

Heaviest damage was done to the Baroque churches, particularly of Palermo. The most seriously smashed building of major interest is the Cathedral of Messina, whose burning roof caved in and ruined the mosaics and side altars. But even this loss is not as serious as it might have been because the Cathedral was largely reconstructed after the earthquake of 1708.

Some smaller churches like dei Miracoli at Syracuse and the Annunziata at Palermo have been wiped out. Several libraries and archives were badly hit.

But civilian sacking during the first confusion of invasion did not affect items of great artistic value, and the troops have respected monuments and works of art.

Urgent repairs will cost at least \$250,000, according to a preliminary estimate by the Sub-Commission for Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives, A.M.G. The figure does not include the cost of ultimate restoration. Cement, lumber, tiles and glass are in short supply. Skilled labor is needed first for public welfare works.

Baroque interior decoration, lavish with frescoes, stuccos and marble veneers would have been ruined by rain. Therefore roofs have been restored as quickly as possible, windows and doors have been sealed up temporarily, and insecure walls and vaults are being strengthened or dismantled.

Conservation of libraries and archives has been given a high priority. Books and documents are being rescued from the rubble and sheltered from weather and theft.

Works of art stored before the invasion are being examined for possible deterioration.

The Italian organizations charged with looking after artistic and cultural treasures have been kept going by A.M.G. Local officials have been encouraged to assume the initiative and responsibility of which a centralized Fascist bureaucracy, concentrated in Rome, had deprived them. To this end, salaries were paid, funds were provided for maintenance, and adjustments were made to most costs altered by invasion.

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