Correspondences between Pius XII and Roosevelt

In May 1943 (three months before the Nazis occupied the city), Pius XII wrote Roosevelt asking that Rome "be spared as far as possible further pain and devastation, and their many treasured shrines... from irreparable ruin."[4]

On June 16, 1943, Roosevelt replied:

"Attacks against Italy are limited, to the extent humanly possible, to military objectives. We have not and will not make warfare on civilians or against nonmilitary objectives. In the event it should be found necessary for Allied planes to operate over Rome, our aviators are thoroughly informed as to the location of the Vatican and have been specifically instructed to prevent bombs from falling within Vatican City."[5]

General Henry H. Arnold described Vatican City as a "hot potato" because of the importance of Catholics in the U.S. Armed Forces.[6] British public opinion was more aligned towards the bombing of the city, due to the participation of Italian planes in The Blitz over London.[7]

Raids

On July 19, 1943, Rome was bombed for the first time by 521 Allied planes, with three targets, causing hundreds of civilian casualties. After the raid, Pius XII, along with Msgr. Montini (future Pope Paul VI), travelled to the Basilica di San Lorenzo fuori le Mura which had been badly damaged, and distributed ₤2 million to the crowds.[8][9]

The target of S. Lorenzo was the mission of 5th Wing USAAF, 150 aircraft (B17 Flying Fortress) were over the target (S.Lorenzo railway station and steel factory), with this order of flight: At 11.08B, 36 F.F. from a mean altitude of 23,000 ft, the 32nd, 352nd, 353rd, 419th Squadrons, 301st Bomb Group, dropped 421x500 l. bombs. After at 11.16B 38 F.F. of 2nd Bomb Group, dropped 456x500 l. from a mean altitude of 19,000 to 24,000 ft. At 11.37B 36 F.F. of 99th Bomb Group, the 340 th, 341st, 342nd and 414th Squadrons dropped 442x500 l. bombs. The last group of 37 F.F. was the 97th Bomb Group at 11.43B from a mean altitude of 24,800 ft, dropped 456x500 l. bombs.

The second target was the "Scalo del Littorio" on North side of Rome. The third target was the Ciampino airport, on South-est side of Rome.

On November 5, 1943, a single Nazi plane dropped four bombs on the Vatican, destroying a mosaic studio near the Vatican railway station and breaking the windows of the high cupola of St. Peter's, and nearly destroying Vatican Radio.[10]

On March 1, 1944, Nazi airplanes dropped six bombs over the Vatican, littering the Court of Saint Damaso with debris.

References

Wartime Correspondence Between President Roosevelt and Pius XII. New York: Simon & Schuster. ISBN 0-446-51258-3
The bombing of Rome in World War II took place on several occasions in 1943 and 1944, primarily by Allied forces. The most devastating air raids on Duisburg occurred during October 1944 when the city was bombed by the Royal Air Force (RAF). The title of this article contains the character Ü. Where it is unavailable or not desired, the name may be represented as Duesseldorf.

Notes
1. The military and internal political development of Italy 1943-45 (German)[1]
3. Wartime Correspondence Between President Roosevelt and Pope Pius XII p. 90.
4. Wartime Correspondence Between President Roosevelt and Pope Pius XII p. 91.
7. Trevelyan, p. 11.
9. Murphy, p. 222.

External links
- Bombing of Rome documents at FDR presidential library
- Collection of documents related to Australian bishops and the bombing of Rome
- World War II city bombing
- Area bombardment - Terror bombing - V-Weapons

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