Rouen: La Semaine Rouge

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Abstract

While many are familiar with the Normandy Invasion, few American, Canadian or British citizens know about the massive air campaign waged against their occupied ally. This offensive lasted four long years and targeted most of France’s population centers and infrastructure. By the time the war was over, the Allied air forces killed as many French as the Germans killed British civilians during the “ blitz” and vengeance weapon assaults, equating between 60,000 and 75,000 out of a total of 150,000 French civilian deaths during the war were caused by Allied bombs.

For Rouen’s civilians the war did not end on June 6, 1944. For more than two months, the city continued to see both the movement of German forces to the front and the continuation of attacks by fighter-bombers. After months of heavy allied bombing, Canadian troops finally moved into Rouen, ending the nightmare.

Today, after decades of reconstruction, Rouen is a thriving, vibrant city. It has a beautiful riverfront, great shopping and wonderful cafés and restaurants. However, evidence of the wartime destruction is obvious: damage to the front of the Palace de Justice, the remains of burnt-out buildings, and the noticeable differences in the architecture of buildings constructed before and after the war.

Justified or not, the devastation of Rouen in 1944 is part of the Second World War’s sordid history. It is certainly a narrative worthy of understanding when evaluating the war’s effect on politics and society in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Full Text:

Refbacks

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