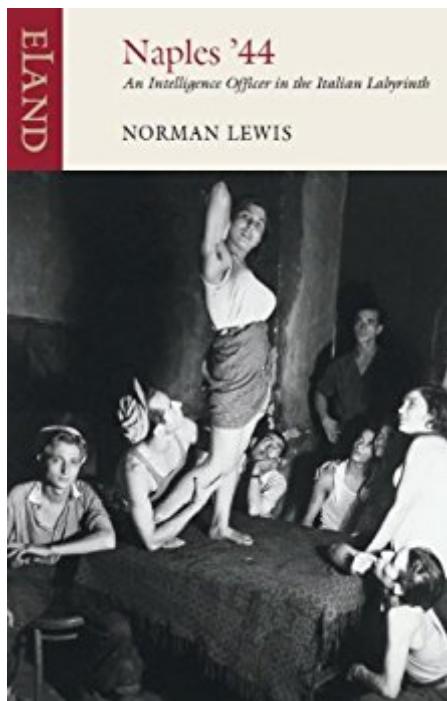


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Naples '44: An Intelligence Officer In The Italian Labyrinth



Synopsis

Norman Lewis arrived in war-torn Naples as an intelligence officer in 1944. The starving population has devoured all the tropical fish in the aquarium, respectable women had been driven to prostitution and the black market was king. Lewis found little to admire in his fellow soldiers, but gained sustenance from the extraordinary vivacity of the Italians around him - the lawyer who earned his living by bringing a touch of Roman class to funerals, the gynaecologist who specialised in the restoration of lost virginity and the widowed housewife who timed her British lover against the clock. "Were I given the chance to be born again," writes Lewis, "Italy would be the country of my choice."

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Customer Reviews

For those of us who know, or, more correctly, thought they knew, Italy, this book is irresistible. I fear I devoured it in 24 hours, instead of savoring it, like a good glass of cognac, sip by delicious sip. Mr. Lewis was stationed in Naples toward the end of WWII. He served as an investigator for the British Army and hence was in an ideal position to do what he does best: observe people, places, and situations that can only arise in a certain time and culture. The result is a portrait of remarkable

detail and veracity. At the end of the book, Mr. Lewis has been ordered to leave Italy for Egypt. I wonder if he ever returned and, if so, what his impressions were once the country had moved past the war. It will be delightful to read more of this books. This was my first; it will not be my last!

If you're lucky enough to travel to Naples or if you're a history buff about WWII, you will want to read these essentially diary entries of a British officer living in the area for over a year.

Really good not romanticized first person of Naples. Interesting for me as was in US Navy in Italy long, long after, in 1980s. If you want to understand the craziness of post war justice, reconstruction, romance and people responding to end of major war, read this. A bit of a gem.

I have been reading WW2 histories recently when I came upon Naples '44. I have to say that I devoured it! Lewis describes in detail the lives and experiences of the Napolitanos as the war was ending. His particular job took him to many different neighborhoods, seeking solutions or at least reports on various problems. As an already experienced journalist he was able to capture the essence of the scene as well as the generalized conditions of war. Along the way the reader learns more about both the history of the corruption including the Mafia, but also how the Mafia came to be in the first place. This story is powerfully written and had a big impact on my understanding of the futility of war. It's also testimony to the resilience of people to survive.

It seems like everyone has written about the invasion of Italy during WWII. However, few stories about those soldiers that followed the front liners have been written. This story details the life of a "Second String" infantryman, who was assigned to the Military Government in Italy following its liberation. In some respects, the troubles faced by those in the Military Governments was just as perilous as those at the front.

The author helps the reader to understand the dynamics of cultures clashing by relating his experiences of his time in Naples during WWII using a diary format. The reader begins to slowly sense how the people of Naples and the surrounding areas survived during difficult times. Not only was day to day survival difficult in Naples due to the deprivations caused by WWII, but also trying to survive while dealing with the German and Allied foot soldiers. Quite often I would laugh and nod my head in disbelief upon reading of the antics of both the natives and the Allied forces. The author has a wonderful dry sense of humor that I thoroughly enjoyed while learning about "how we won WWII".

Fascinating on several levels: historical, cultural and human complexity. This non-fiction personal description of Naples and the surrounding area after the Allied Invasion in 1944 is an intimate observation of what Naples endured under American occupation. It is full of surprises, humor and tragedy.

When I was younger I knew an Italian-American veteran who spent time in Naples at roughly the time covered by this book. His stories while entertaining always seemed a bit exaggerated to me. Now, after reading Norman Lewis' account of those days I owe my long departed friend an apology for having doubted him. This is a remarkable account from a gifted observer. Lewis as a British intelligence officer assigned to the Area occupied by American forces immediately following the expulsion of the Germans was in a unique position to observe many aspects of the struggles and adaptations of the locals under these extraordinary conditions. The ingenuity and superstition of the Italian people is displayed from a point of view that is neutral in its judgements while sparing the reader nothing of the darker side of the struggle to survive at the same time. As someone who has read extensively about WWII I was surprised this one got by me for so long. I stumbled on it while browsing and highly recommend it to anyone interested in the War, Italy or just a good entertaining read.

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