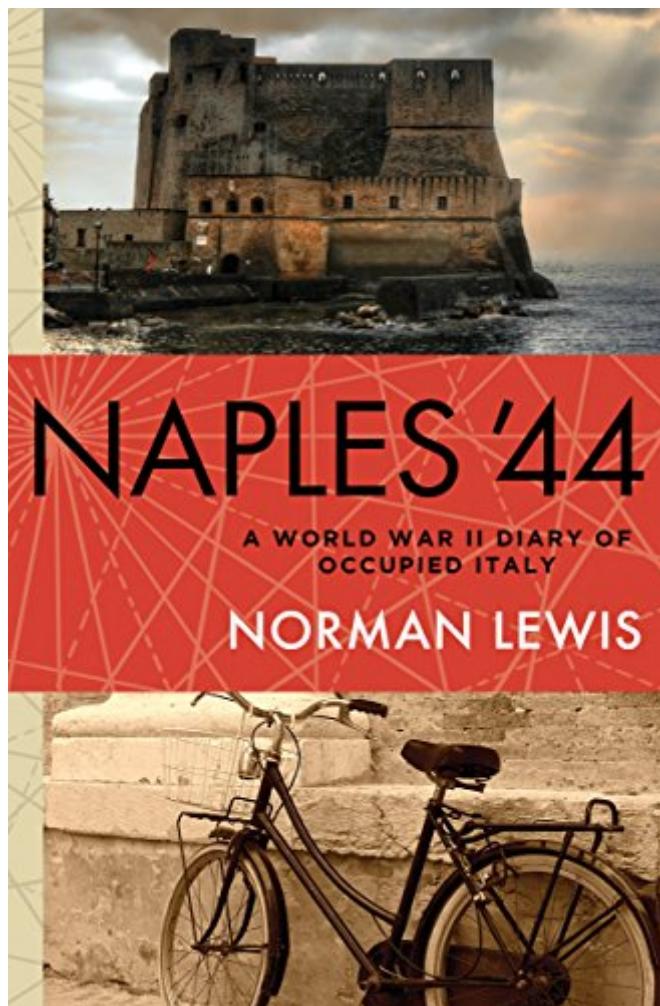


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Naples '44: A World War II Diary Of Occupied Italy



Synopsis

Now a documentary narrated by Benedict Cumberbatch: This memoir of the Italian city after Nazi occupation “sings like poetry” (The Plain Dealer). As a young man with a gift for linguistics, Norman Lewis was assigned to the British Intelligence Corps’ Field Security Service, tasked with reforming civil services, dealing with local leaders, and keeping the peace in places World War II had devastated. After a near-disastrous Allied landing at Salerno, Italy, Lewis was stationed in the newly liberated city of Naples. But bringing the city back to life was unlike anything he had been prepared for. Much of the populace was far from grateful, stealing anything they could, not only from each other but also from those sent to help them. Local vendettas and endless feuds made discerning friend from Nazi collaborator practically impossible, and turned attempts at meting out justice into a farce. And as the deprivations grew ever harsher, a proud and vibrant people were forced to survive on a diet of prostitution, corruption, and a desperate belief in miracles, cures, and saviors. But even through the darkness and chaos, Lewis evokes the essential dignity of the Neapolitan people, their traditions of civility, courage, and generosity of spirit, and the indefatigable pride that kept them fighting for life during the greatest calamity in human history. And with his detached British wit, Lewis finds the absurdity in almost any situation. A masterpiece of a memoir, Naples “44 is the heartbreakingly humorous, and starkly human account of the true cost of war as seen through the eyes of a young, untested man who would never again look at his world the same way. A

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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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