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Occupy Til I Come: Moving Beyond Culture by Sissie â€™Katzâ€™™ - posted by Jeremy221, on: 2020/4/17 7:04

Occupy Til I Come

Posted by Sissie, daughter of Art Katz

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Art Katz first arrived in Europeâ€™Catania in Sicilyâ€™as a self-described tall, cocky, seventeen-year-old merchant seaman in 1946. The shock of surveying the ashes and wreckage from World War II drove him back to Brooklyn where, a few years later, he was drafted into the Army and returned to Germany as part of the American armyâ€™s â€œoccupationâ€ in late 1951.

His initial arrival in Europe had shattered any idyllic hopes for adventure, according to his autobiography. He was horrified as he surveyed the town with its gutted harbor and half-submerged, broken skeletons of ships and zombie-like civilians trudging past piles of garbage, stopping to forage through the same rubble that theyâ€™d scavenged through the previous day. He rarely made mention again of his disillusionment at the squalor and destruction from three years caused by the pulverizing by the Allied and German barrages during landings. He groped for explanation, numbed by an eerie impression that some vicious inhuman fist had smashed everything in a fit of indescribable hatred. Death prowled invisibly past collapsed buildings, alleys, and waterfront debris.

Occupy Til I Come

Any jubilation had been short-lived in Catania and throughout Sicily following liberation after German occupiers fled in 1943â€™just ahead of British and American troops who, after ridding the countryside of one enemy, resumed another occupation by foreigners. The war had eventually ended and to be followed by two tortuous decades of â€œreconstructionâ€, economic booms-and-busts, a plague of crime, neo-fascist outbreaks and, briefly, civil war. Governmental paralysis provoked massive civilian migrations to northern Italy and abroad through the end of the 20th Century, as the generalized weariness gradually subsided, allowing tedious rebuilding and social reforms.

But, the occupationsâ€™whether by German and Allied troops, the home-grown insurrections or local gangsâ€™had seemed peculiarly cruel, excessive and strangely living force that stifled a return to any life in Catania and across the rest of Sicily.

â€œâ€The famous parable has no military nor warfare implications. Or does it?â€œ

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With few exceptions â€œpeace-timeâ€ transitions for nations and regimes are rarely without lengthy aftershocks of harsh poverty, plunder, and violence. The stigma of military occupation is historically negative if not worseâ€™for resentful civilians and abusive though equally entrapped soldiers!

Katzâ€™s ancestors 1,900 years earlier had subsisted under Roman â€œoccupationâ€ that, according to most historians, lasted from 63 B.C. until 410 A.D., and had included the infamous judgment and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Read more: <https://benisrael.org/2019/08/04/occupy-til-i-come/>