

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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The Road to Ithaca.

Pastor, Ben (Author)

Mar 2017. 352 p. Bitter Lemon, paperback, \$14.95. (9781908524805). e-book, (9781908524812).

Rittmeister (cavalry officer) Martin Bora is military attaché at Germany's Moscow embassy. It is June 1, 1941. Bora knows that in three weeks he'll be leading a panzer unit in Germany's invasion of Russia, and he's looking forward to it. But, first, he must travel to Crete to buy wine, as ordered by Josef Stalin. Bora arrives on the island very soon after German paratroops have paid a very bloody price to secure Crete, and many Greek and British troops have escaped to the island's rugged, mountainous interior. Bora soon learns that, before delivering Stalin's wine, he must first investigate the murders of an acquaintance of Himmler's and the Cretans the man employed. A trek to the crime site almost costs Bora his life, leaving the officer's youthful, aristocratic sangfroid a bit shaken. Pastor has astutely made this younger Bora seem more callow than he does in earlier installments, set later in the war (*Tin Sky*, 2015). Here Bora is bothered by not yet having been grievously wounded, and he's untroubled by National Socialism, although he's carrying a banned copy of Joyce's *Ulysses* and recalling Odysseus' journey home after the Trojan War. Solid history, convoluted crime.

— *Thomas Gaughan*