

Booklist ONLINE

TIN SKY.

Pastor, Ben (author).

May 2015. 400p. Bitter Lemon

REVIEW. First published April 29, 2015.

Handsome, aristocratic German army major Martin Bora is in Ukraine. He has survived the unparalleled savagery of the siege of Stalingrad. He's assembling a new mounted cavalry regiment and awaiting the ferocious Russian offensive that will surely come. He's also receiving plaudits from superiors for his "lucidity," a veiled reference to the vast numbers of German officers broken physically and mentally by Stalingrad. But he's also still an Abwehr (intelligence) officer charged with interrogating two Russian generals who became heroes at Stalingrad.

One has been captured, the other has defected to the German side in the new T-34 tank. In short order, the captured general dies of a heart attack and the defector is snatched from the Abwehr by the SS. Bora fears he's losing his beautiful, strong-willed wife, and he's become obsessed by the murders of peasants in nearby Krasny Yar. Could it be Stalingrad has also broken the major?

Bora is a brilliantly developed character (*Liar Moon*, 2012), and Pastor's devastated Ukraine is richly atmospheric.

Thomas Gaughan