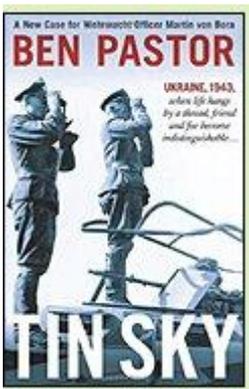


HISTORICAL NOVELS

TIN SKY

by Ben Pastor

Reviewed by Margaret Tomlinson



Tin Sky is the fourth in an unusual mystery series featuring a German military officer during World War II as detective. The story line is not the obvious one pitting a sympathetic protagonist against Hitler and his henchmen amid the horror of the Holocaust. Here, the murders and mayhem take place around the edges of the central Nazi crime, revealing a more complex picture and a soul-sickness tainting every aspect of life under the regime.

Martin Bora's goals are out of harmony. A fundamentally compassionate man, he also wishes to function effectively in his military role, and to survive and return to the young wife he still barely knows. His past experiences - especially during the horrific

and needless Battle of Stalingrad - have hardened him and taught him to suppress his emotions. In May of 1943, posted in Russian-occupied Ukraine, his primary mission is to interrogate a high-ranking Soviet prisoner. His methods are more sophisticated than crude physical torture and offer more promise of success. Meanwhile, he must also deal with a series of grisly murders in a wooded ravine which local peasants insist is haunted by an evil supernatural presence. A new mission soon overshadows these: managing the defection to the Germans of a much-admired Russian tank commander with his impressive new tank. Bora has personal reasons, as well as professional, for wanting to protect this man. But someone on Bora's own side is working against him.

Striking and memorable images make the setting almost tangible: ash raining from distant fires; a collection of icons; a rain-swollen canal rimmed with black mud. The intricacy and layers of duplicity within the military structure make this a complex novel that requires - and repays - close attention from readers. *Tin Sky* is a superb character study that also works well as a mystery. (2012, 397 pages)