

THE MYSTERY GAZETTE

TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 2011

Lumen-Ben Pastor

Lumen

Ben Pastor

Bitter Lemon, May 1 2011, \$14.99

ISBN: 9781904738664

In 1938 Father Malecki, a Polish American priest from Chicago investigates the alleged powers of Mother Kazimierza, the abbess of a convent in Nazi occupied Cracow, Poland. People believe in her ability to foresee the future. However, before Father Malecki can make a determination, someone shoots and kills Mother Kazimierza.

Wehrmacht Captain Martin Bora is assigned to investigate the homicide in which his superior Nazi fanatic Colonel Schenk demands one finding, a Jew killed the holy woman. At the same time the Archbishop and the American consul demand Father Malecki stay out of the inquiry; in fact they prefer he return to Chicago.

Although the murder mystery that at least in the first case is relatively easy to solve, Lumen is also a great historical that uses the killing of a nun to provide a stunning period piece focused on the horrors humanity does in the name of some ism. The profound story line focuses on the Nazi-Communist takeover of Poland while the Church remained mute to Father Malecki's shock. Seemingly minor incidents like how a Jewish teacher addresses his former student now a German Officer and the visiting official told to back off or else make for a discerning read. These little tidbits of horror include the trip Bora makes to the Communist allies taking Poland apart from the east while the Germans do likewise from the west; with each side trumping the other in brutality. Readers will relish the lives of Bora and Malecki circa 1938 as the value systems the soldier grew up with has been obliterated by his country and their ally; and that of the priest devastated by the Vatican's silence in this dark early WWII era thriller.

Harriet Klausner