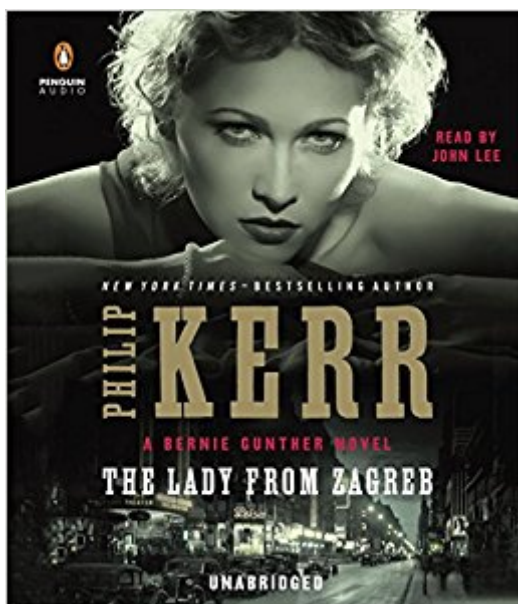


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The Lady From Zagreb (A Bernie Gunther Novel)



Synopsis

From *New York Times* bestselling author Philip Kerr, the much-anticipated return of Bernie Gunther in a series hailed by Malcolm Forbes as "the best crime novels around today." A beautiful actress, a rising star of the giant German film company UFA, now controlled by the Propaganda Ministry. The very clever, very dangerous Propaganda Minister's "close confidant of Hitler, an ambitious schemer and flagrant libertine. And Bernie Gunther, former Berlin homicide bull, now forced to do favors for Joseph Goebbels at the Propaganda Minister's command. This time, the favor is personal. And this time, nothing is what it seems. Set down amid the killing fields of Ustashe-controlled Croatia, Bernie finds himself in a world of mindless brutality where everyone has a hidden agenda. Perfect territory for a true cynic whose instinct is to trust no one.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Praise for Philip Kerr: "Kerr is the only bona fide heir to Raymond Chandler." —Jonathan Ames, Salon "Bernie isn't one of those detectives who gets to solve crimes and put things right. Instead, he just tries to behave decently in a world where the serial killers run the governments and history itself may be the biggest crime of all." —John Powers, NPR "Fresh Air" "On any continent, in any decade, no one does melancholy better than Bernie Gunther, and melancholy, after all, is the hard-boiled mystery fan's emotion of choice." —Booklist

Philip Kerr is the author of nine widely acclaimed Bernie Gunter novels, most recently *The Man*

Without Breath. Field Gray, the seventh in the series, was a finalist for the 2012 Mystery Writers of America Edgar Award for Best Novel. Kerr has also been a finalist for the Shamus Award for Best Hardcover Fiction and he won the British Crime Writers Association's Ellis Peters Award for Historical Crime Fiction. Under the name P. B. Kerr, he is the author of the much-loved young adult series Children of the Lamp. He lives in London.

Phillip Kerr gives his readers history lessons in the exciting Bernie Gunther novels. Lessons that are really necessary, because most people want to forget what happened in the past. And so, of course, it happens again. But even without that, the stories and plots are very good. And they make you happy that we - after 70 years of peace in Europe - never had to make the choices people had to make in those days.

Here is a totally unconflicted, empathetic and ethical character forced to wend his way through Nazi Germany's insanity, to keep himself and others he encounters and feels responsible for alive. He manages to wisecrack all the way through, even Gestapo and SS interrogations, which if it doesn't exactly save his ass, saves his core values and gives at least a few Nazi flunkies pause as to what bravery and honor really is. There were people who functioned like this throughout Naziland and some who survived and whose heroics will never be known. Bernie Gunther is emblematic of them.

Another winner from Kerr featuring former Berlin police officer Bernie Gunther as he tries to navigate WWII under the Nazis while remaining a fairly decent, non-fascist guy. This episode in the series takes Gunther into Yugoslavia where Croat fascists are all too willing to join the Nazis in genocide against Serbs and Muslims. These ripping procedural cum spy novels are like a history lesson in the complicated issues surrounding the Nazis' rise to power, and conduct of the war, including the persecution of the Jews and others. I'm grateful for my Kindle link to Wikipedia because Kerr's plots always send me in search of details surrounding the characters in the novels. I've even started "The Rise & Fall of the Third Reich". Beware though, this number in the series is one of the most graphically violent of them all, but then, that's the truth of genocide. There's a love interest at the heart of this story as well, and Kerr handles it deftly; showing what fools men can be, and how they come to realize they've been fools all along. Well done, in that regard.

Having read and liked other stories of Germany before, during and after World War II by Philip Kerr, I expected to like this one. And I wasn't disappointed, it's the kind of book you read until 2 am and

only put down because, well, tomorrow is a work day. There are probably two things I appreciate the most: 1) the historical detail, which will at times will shock you and almost always leave you with something to think about and the feeling that you have learned something; and 2) the clever conversational quips, at which I occasionally laughed aloud (perhaps making this questionable reading for the bus or tube). That said, the misogyny of the main character has to be a bit off-putting for female readers. He appears to be conceived in the image of Humphrey Bogart, cigarette in mouth, always ready with a clever, cryptic remark and surprisingly magnetic to women. And his leading ladies tend to recall - right, you guessed it - either Lauren Bacall or Ingrid Bergman. But then, that is definitely not all bad.

Phillip Kerr did the historical research on Nazi period politics and intramural intrigues to write this Bernie Gunther thriller. Gunther, an ex-police detective in Berlin, is a reluctant member of the SD just back from working for the infernal Heydrich in Prague. Anti-Nazi, he must step lightly to stay as far away from truly bad acts as he can. Goebbels, not only propaganda czar but head of UFA film studios, wants Gunther to help him mollify his latest start, "the Lady from Zagreb," a very beautiful woman married to an elderly Swiss lawyer who seeks to learn the fate of her father, a Croatian priest. . . Gunther is sent into the nightmare of Ustashi-Controlled Croatia to find him, and does -- the former priest is a sadistic colonel now. Plot winds from Berlin to Zagreb to Serbia to Switzerland and back. . . . Bernie is retiring to work in a hotel on the French Riviera. But there will be at least one more book, Kerr promises. (pub in 2016)

This is the most recent in Philip Kerr's wise guy policeman, and survivor, turned Nazi fixer Bernie Gunther series of 1940's novels. This tale, set in the grim late days of World War II, has Gunther falling for another femme fatale, an actress coveted by no less than Minister of Propaganda Josef Goebbels. With a few nasty murders long the way, one crafted with leaden symbolism of a skull crushed by sculpture of a bust of Hitler, which give Gunther an opportunity to demonstrate his skills as a former Berlin police detective. But, the heart of the story is the task assigned to Gunther by Goebbels, in his dual roles as head of the German film industry and womanizer, who sends Gunther to Serbia and Croatia to convince the actress' father to return to Berlin. This is the condition that the actress has imposed before she will return from self-imposed exile in Switzerland, to do a movie that Goebbels insists she is the only possible star, and probably to his bed, which she may or may not have warmed before. The trip to the meat grinder of Yugoslavia hints at another recent novel by Luke McCallin, the "Pale House" that explores war within a war between Ustase, Cetniks,

and the Wehrmacht in between, in the days before the end of the Russians and its western allies crush the Nazi regime. That novel did not have Kerr's light touch; for, even with atrocities of the Ustase observed by Gunther and his two companions see evidence of when they find the man they seek, Gunther keeps his eye on the ball and that is his desire to stay alive and perhaps live another day with the actress. After Gunther's return from Yugoslavia, the story falters and becomes a bit predictable, except for an interlude in which Gunther encounters a cryptic and opaque Allen Dulles of the American OSS and later head of the CIA, in which bodies drop all over the place for little or no reason, except perhaps to give Kerr a tease to another Gunther novel in which he is bullied and exploited by the CIA in exchange for his life, which is now a familiar dramatic device for Gunther fans, in this novel at the hands of Goebbels and in the last by Richard Heydrich in "Prague Fatale." Although I enjoy Kerr's Gunther series, I would like to see him return to the refreshing grit of the first three novellas of the series of "Berlin Noir" and resist the temptations to formula.

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