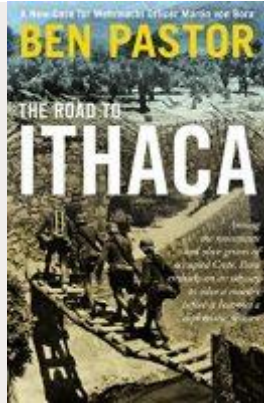


## Historical Novel Society

### The Road to Ithaca

BY BEN PASTOR



While stationed in Moscow in 1941, Baron Martin von Bora, a captain in the German Wehrmacht, is ordered to the isle of Crete to purchase wine and have it delivered to Moscow. While there, he is also told to investigate the murder of a Red Cross representative and Swiss citizen who happens to be a friend of SS Chief Himmler. All fingers point to German paratroopers, led by a boyhood friend of von Bora's. During his investigation, he meets resistance from his old friend and his superiors on Crete. Von Bora also faces danger from local bandits and foreign resistance fighters when traveling in the countryside alone or with a guide.

Initially, I wasn't sure I would enjoy reading a story where the protagonist was a German officer during World War II, but I was pleasantly surprised by how much compassion I felt for von Bora. This well-researched novel provides a rich, provocative picture of life on Crete after the German invasion. Bora is an interesting character full of many emotions. He is a product of the 1940s German elite who joined the army and, in his own words, was "brought up [in Germany] to care, to carry out my duty, [where] duty is an obligation, however minor the task." Even though his character is instilled with discipline, self-control, and firmness—qualities praised by his superiors—he must face his past, particularly because he was raised in a wealthy environment compared to that of his boyhood paratrooper friend, who now

feels nothing but animosity towards him. I may have to read the previous books in this series to help better understand the background of von Bora and what led him to become a criminal investigator during his army career.