Philip Kerr returns with his best-loved character, Bernie Gunther, in the fifth novel in what is now a series: a tight, twisting, compelling thriller that is firmly rooted in history.

A Quiet Flame opens in 1950. Falsely fingered a war criminal, Bernie Gunther has booked passage to Buenos Aires, lured, like the Nazis whose company he has always despised, by promises of a new life and a clean passport from the Perón government. But Bernie doesn’t have the luxury of settling into his new home and lying low. He is soon pressured by the local police into taking on a case in which a girl has turned up dead, gruesomely mutilated, and another—the daughter of a wealthy German banker—has gone missing. Both crimes seem to connect to an unsolved case Bernie worked on back in Berlin in 1932. It’s not so far-fetched that the cases might be linked: after all, the scum of the earth has been washing up on
Argentine shores—state-licensed murderers and torturers—so why couldn’t a serial killer be among them?

But Argentina, just like Germany, holds terrible secrets within its corrupt halls of power. When beautiful Anna Yagubsky seeks Gunther out, desperate for help, to find out what happened to her Jewish aunt and uncle who have disappeared, he is drawn into a horror story that rivals everything he has tried so hard to leave behind half a world away.

In this new postwar world, Bernie Gunther is a man without a name or a country, but still in full possession of his conscience. He is “the right kind of hero for his time—and ours.” (Marilyn Stasio, The New York Times Book Review)

Philip Kerr’s "A Quiet Flame" is my second Bernie Gunther novel. Somewhat late to the game, I recently read, enjoyed, and reviewed "If The Dead Rise Not", giving it five stars. I’m an avid reader of WW1 and WW2 fiction and non-fiction, and had somehow missed Philip Kerr. I’m now on a mad rush to read all Kerr’s backlist.

"Flame" is quite a novel. Kerr alternates both time and locale, Berlin in 1932 and Buenos Aires in 1950, telling a tale of policeman Bernie Gunther's hunt for a vicious murderer. Gunther, a cop's cop, has no fondness for the incoming Nazi regime. He wends his way thought the various political affiliations at "The Alex" to solve crimes. He is subsequently "reassigned" to paper-pushing when the Nazis finally take power and purge the Berlin police department of any dissident voices.

Eighteen years and many lifetimes pass and Gunther finds himself on a freighter leaving Italy, heading for Argentina. His companions are former German war criminals passed along the "Rat line" from probable prosecution for war crimes in post-war Europe to safety in the Peronist-Argentina. A new future, along with a new name and identity, await Gunther in BA, where he hopes to obtain an Argentine passport (instead of the rather flimsy Red Cross passport) and return to Germany and live quietly under his alias, Carlos Hauser. However, BA is no more free of corruption and crime than was Berlin twenty years earlier. Gunther gets swept up in a police-investigation of murder, missing young women, and just who is a "bad Nazi" and who is a "really bad Nazi".

Gunther, who can wise-crack in German, Spanish, and Russian, soon finds that no one is who he says he is, and almost everybody he meets has at least one agenda, and often more than one. Of course, he meets, woos, and then loses a couple of beautiful women and meets past
companions in new settings. Most of the story takes place in BA, with a few long flashbacks to Berlin.

Kerr's a very good writer. Gunther is seen as a flawed but essentially decent man. Not so most of the other characters.

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A Quiet Flame by Philip Kerr - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!