



## Stalin's Hammer: Rome

*John Birmingham*

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Ten years have passed since Admiral Kolhammer's 21st century battlefleet was dragged into a wormhole and thrown across oceans of time, emerging with disastrous consequences and shattering the history of the Second World War.

Hitler and the Nazis have fallen, Kolhammer sits in the White House, but Stalin rules half of Europe and Asia. The great Soviet engines of state power turn and burn to 'set history right'. Not just of the war, but of all future time.

In Rome with his lover Julia Duffy, an older, mellower Prince Harry is drawn into Stalin's plans when a simple game of spies goes horribly wrong, while underneath the eternal city, former Spetsnaz officer Pavel Ivanov fights a running battle with the NKVDs executioner in chief as Stalin's minions fight to preserve the secret of a weapon which could destroy the West with one, fearsome blow.

In *Stalin's Hammer: Rome*, the first of a series of ebooks, John Birmingham returns to the world he destroyed along with the US Fleet at Midway in *Weapons of Choice*.

## **Stalin's Hammer: Rome Details**

Date : Published February 25th 2013 by Del Rey (first published November 1st 2012)

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Author : John Birmingham

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Genre : Science Fiction, Alternate History, Fiction, War, Military Fiction, Time Travel

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## From Reader Review Stalin's Hammer: Rome for online ebook

### Leighton says

Read the Axis of Time and loved them all.

However, this is awful... Don't go in to this Axis, please don't!!!

How I review...

1 star - binned it before half way, please don't write anymore!!!

2 stars - finally binned it after really trying, I mean really trying and I hate to not finishing someth....

3 stars - finished it but boy was that hard work on times, it just about hooked me back in as I was about to dump it

4 stars - great book but it lacked something, something, can't put my finger on it but.... something

5 stars - want more, more books, more movies about the books, more movies about the authors and the making of the movie, just more!!!

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### Jen Neumann says

This was a short story by the author to tide us over until the last book in the series came out. I was not so much of a fan of this short story, but I don't think that it takes anything away from Birmingham as an author or his series of speculative and alt-history novels.

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### Sebastien says

And here's where the hammer falls in the series. Except the hammer isn't hammering a nail. It's hammering a mediocre alternate history story that could have been fan-made. And it's called Stalin's Hammer: Rome. Come on, Birmingham, you're not this milquetoast! Look at what you wrote before this (relatively) mildly foul-smelling book! What in the hell happened? You were the Babe Ruth of alternate history to me! Don't do this to me!

Someone else's review took the words out of my mouth. In writing the first three books, you feel like Birmingham straps you into a rollercoaster. In this book you're watching a baseball go from one hand to another, over and over again.

That being said, the Axis of Time series is still unbelievably good - if you haven't read it up to this point, you're doing yourself a disservice, especially if you love alternate history. I still think Birmingham is a great writer, and I will continue reading the Stalin's Hammer series with my fingers crossed that it gets better. I just think he sort of fumbled the ball on this one.

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### Kate says

A ripping yarn that sets the stage for what will be another epic adventure. Big on action, this alt. History 'novella' recreates the mid-50s of occupied Rome, not Berlin. More Harry to come in Cairo, I hope - and hopefully the untangling of an intriguing hint about 'the events of 49' and the royal succession. You've hooked me, Birmingham.

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### **Grant says**

I enjoy John Birmingham's work in general and absolutely adore the Axis of Time series, but this was rather disappointing. It's a novella, but honestly, it reads more like a fanfic.

In general, the AoT books are overflowing with culture clash, skewed pop culture references, and fun action setpieces, but the novella just doesn't have any of that familiar energy or spark. It's clearly supposed to be part of a series and an overarching plotline, but it feels weak as an introduction...like something Birmingham kind of tossed off in an afternoon. He wisely keeps the story pared down to two plotlines focused on fan-favourite characters (with a few cameos), but the problem is that they're both kind of wooden, and the Ivanov storyline is basically a "urban fighting in slum/wartorn area" stock story.

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### **Tony Calder says**

John Birmingham has made a welcome return to the alternate history that he created in his World War trilogy. Rather than the military focus that was the mainstay of the original books, this one is a Cold War spy story. Or rather a short story - this one is around a hundred pages as compared to the 450-500 pages of the earlier books.

This is where I find this book slightly disappointing - it's not long enough. It would seem that Birmingham is going to advance this story in smaller sections. I would like more, but this is a story I am happy to follow in whatever size chunks I can get.

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### **Kassi says**

The 'Axis of Evil' trilogy by John Birmingham is quite possibly one of the BEST trilogies I have EVER read, so I had high hopes for this eBook-only, follow-on story. Based 10 or so years after the end of AoE book 3, it follows a couple of characters from the original trilogy - I won't say who or what to prevent spoilers!

Disappointment is not a strong enough sentiment. As it is set in the new/ altered past-present there are no more interesting situations brought on by modern warfare/technology during the mid-20th century that made AoE so fascinating. We know how history became altered & it has now settled down into its new timeline, so the 'new' outcome of WWII as we know it, skewered so disastrously by The Emergence, has ended & there are no longer any 'ooopppps, I just changed another major part of history' moments. Also, the plot, as it is based on only 2 or 3 of the previous characters, reads like a sub-plot of AoE & becomes, therefore, a little tedious. AoE was such a vast concept that boredom never set in - it was a juggling act trying to keep up with the many diverse plot-lines and colourful characters, both future & past, modern technology with 1930s/40s mentality. 'Stalin's Hammer:Rome', in contrast, isn't so much juggling as tossing a tennis ball from one hand to the other & back again. It wasn't bad by any means, just a little bland, and as far as this series goes,

perhaps unnecessary. Needless to say, I shall download the next instalment when it appears as I HATE not finishing a story...grrrr!

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### **Jacilda Refalo says**

well written book. I really enjoyed it. I am looking forward to the sequel as the book was left on a major cliffhanger.

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### **Stephan says**

The Axis of Time trilogy involved an international fleet of ships from the 21st century interrupting the battle of Midway and accidentally destroying a large part of the US fleet. Trying to put things right, giving the axis powers knowledge of their defeat, causing Stalin to reconsider his allies, and fitting 21st century civil rights into the 1940s was a grand tale. This follow up 10 years later was disappointing. Too much of it involved an agent just running around Communist North Rome, and not enough about the politics of this changed world. Hopefully the next book will get back to that. Alternate history sagas can go on forever and hopefully Birmingham won't make the mistakes Turtledove did.

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### **Bjoern says**

Okay, there is little flawed in this novella, the writing is solid and both main protagonists are pretty nice guys... (that's Harry Windsor and Ivanov the Spetsnaz from the future), still it does not really compare to the original trilogy as one - it is an espionage story that does not try too hard to go into details about the future tech or showcases any warfare actions... two it is not the most inspired or original plot... and three .. it's awfully short and has no real place to spread out its wings and soar about as the axis of time books could and did.

and i'm a bit concerned why the announced follow up "Cairo" has not yet reached Goodreads... could this have sold so poorly that the sequel was cancelled

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### **Lianne Burwell says**

A great side-story to the Axis of Time series. We finally get to see Prince Harry (in this universe) as a focal character, including what was determined of his position in the royal family when his grandmother is younger than he is. It's also interesting how, instead of Berlin, Rome is the divided city with a wall down the middle.

Spies, defectors and secret Soviet weapons (since Stalin, who has now lived longer than he would have in our world, is determined that the collapse of the USSR won't happen the same way in this changed timeline).

I look forward to the next part of this story.

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## **David Watson says**

Alternative history is fascinating and this book - part of a series - does it fairly well.

It takes place in a post-World War II world in which Rome, not Berlin, is the city that is divided between the Soviets and allies. This change is convincing, and the wall dividing North Berlin (Soviet) and South Berlin (Allied) is only partly effective, due to the labyrinth of tunnels and sewers, some dating back to the Roman empire, beneath the city, which allow those in the know to move between sectors.

Stalin survived his 1953 stroke but is confined to a wheelchair, from which he still calls the shots.

The alternate world in which Stalin's Hammer: Rome is set comes about as a result of a 21st century warship crashing through a wormhole into 1942. As a result, everyone (including world leaders) saw, in 1942, the course of history as we know it, and there are people called "uptimers" around.

It's an interesting device, but I prefer my alternate history to happen in the conventional space-time continuum, just with different events.

Anyway, in the wormhole scenario, Stalin foresaw the fall of the Soviet Union, and is determined it won't happen. So he follows China's model and allows some free-market activity by an elite group of Russians, while ruling with an iron fist through the Communist Party and NKVD.

But it's still very Cold War, and one of these elite Russians tries to defect, taking a huge scientific secret with him.

The rest of the story is action-packed with lots of shooting and killing, some of it convincing but some contrived.

Overall this is worth a read for those who wonder what would have happened if World War II ended with a different twist and Stalin lived a bit longer.

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## **Brandon says**

Sadly, like most short novella additions to series', this one was also short and anticlimactic. It was basically a partial story of a thread from the new cold war after the emergence. The overall plot is good, but, it's basically like a single episode of a season-long TV show.

Reminiscent of James Bond, the story involves various spy agencies and agents, primarily between the western allies and Soviet Russia. The Sovs are developing a new super-weapon, and things turn into a major clusterfuck whenever the westerners get close to finding out just what it is.

I'm a big fan of the original trilogy, so I'll read this little mini-series addition, but I just hope that we do come to some kind of conclusion by the end. I'm almost done with the second one (Cairo), and no end in sight yet. Although, the Cairo episode was a bit more fun to read.

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## **Mieczyslaw Kasprzyk says**

Well this is a jolly romp round a divided Rome (think Berlin) in John Birmingham's Axis of Power alternative universe. Stalin has developed a nasty weapon and the implication is that details are going to be passed to the West. This is predominantly an action-packed, explosive spy thriller involving two of the

characters from the series; the anti-Communist Ivanov and (much to my disgust as a British anti-Royalist) jolly Prince Harry. It's a short read and will probably end up as part of a bigger book but it's fun... and games.

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### **S.B. Wright says**

Stalin's Hammer: Rome is the first in a set of serialised novellas from John Birmingham. I managed to pick it up at the introductory price of \$2.99 (it's since reverted to \$4.99).

So, I am ashamed to admit, this is my first Birmingham – but it won't be my last. Set in the alternate history of the Axis of Time series, it focuses on Stalin's attempt to derail the future as the uptimers have foretold it.

But Stalin's machinations largely take a back seat in this instalment. The setting is Rome, segregated much like Berlin was in our timeline. The West on one side, the communists on the other. We follow the adventures of two uptimers Prince Harry, commando, heir to the future English throne and Pavel Ivanov, ex-Spetsnaz, freelance spy, as they attempt to uncover Stalin's plans. There's action and intrigue aplenty - a nice intro to the alternate history and it sets up some interesting plotlines for future resolution.

Birmingham's style is engaging and the take on history inventive. I would have liked more of the story, but I guess that's the point of serialised fiction, to get you to want to read more. It falls more into the camp of the post war spy fiction category in terms of pacing, the short nature of the medium really doesn't allow for an escalating run up to a techno thriller ending.

I'll be coming back for more.

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