

KIRKUS REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

JACKHAMMER

A Novel

Mackin, Bob

CreateSpace (514 pp.)

\$17.95 paperback, \$9.95 e-book

ISBN: 978-1491207567; November 21, 2013

BOOK REVIEW

Mackin's debut novel is a detailed historical thriller with a familiar and compelling premise—a labyrinthine plot to kill Hitler.

In Mackin's book, as early as 1934, a British special ops unit "*has been working to put in place an agent capable of eliminating the present head of the German Reich....For the most part, private monies have funded the project. It has never been an official enterprise of His Majesty's government.*" But Churchill and Roosevelt are both in on it, as are some industrialists, members of the military, street thugs and numerous spies. Readers are introduced to an enormous cast of characters and their real and putative backgrounds beginning in the early 1900s, including scenes set in Gallipoli, Manhattan's Yorkville, London mansions and the Belgian Congo. The conspirators were playing out a very long game: After selecting their assassin in 1934, the attempt isn't launched until June 21, 1941, on the eve of Germany's invasion of Russia, code-named Barbarossa. The historical environment is rich with factual embellishments. Readers are treated to imagined, in-depth conversations between Bormann, Himmler and Rommel, as well as Hitler, Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt. The expansive depth and breadth of Mackin's historical knowledge enables him to incorporate competing German military strategies into this series of Byzantine plot twists. Nobody is who he purports to be, and relatively minor events ripple through the story and eventually gain significance. Despite its dense plotting, assumption of substantial World War II knowledge and its 500-plus pages, the book hums along at a brisk pace. Even with the total certainty that this long-planned assassination of Hitler will not be successful, the anticipation and excitement is palpable. Occasional awkward spots could be smoother, such as a 1937 meeting at a Madrid bar between a certain writer and a physician and his wife from New York: "My name is Ernest, Ernest Hemingway," to which the wife responds, "We know your work. I've read *A Farewell to Arms* and loved it, especially Catherine Barkley, the nurse."

An extremely confident debut that's face-paced and full of surprises.