

Review of Russia's Biggest Hack by Rosanne Ferreri

What would happen if there were a joint venture between the largest United States telecommunications company and the largest Russian telecommunications company? That is the question posed in *Russia's Biggest Hack* by James E. Doucette. The author's thirty-five year background in the cable industry lends credence to his conclusion that utter disaster would ensue. This fictional story of espionage and intrigue begins in New Jersey with the head of Global Communications, Gordon Fuqua, about to take a flight at Teterboro Airport, with Ken Blankenship, Congress's "Svengali," attempting to reach him and warn him. When that flight crashes and Blankenship is also immediately killed in a hit and run accident, the plot thickens as Alfred Simms, Chairman of the Board, directs the course of events with Ilya Babin, the Russian cultural attaché to the United Nations. This story of an attempt at global domination includes assassins and "deep-cover agents" who are embedded in the USA. Having broken Nazi codes during WWII and listened in on covert Russian conversations, the tables have been turned in this novella.

The shipping of large assets from the US to the UK precipitates a telecommunications merger designed to bring America to its knees, halting the stock exchange, everyday commerce, turning off power and forcing civilians to fight over water. Russia's desire to be a superpower leads to deep-cover spy Haversham altering Global Communications beyond recognition, removing one by one the top executives who stand in the way of Russian progress. Deposed from his role within the company, John Ward, a US navy veteran takes on the role of a detective to find, isolate and remove the enemies. Having been asked to leave men behind in Vietnam who were attempting to interrupt North Vietnam's supply lines, Ward refuses to leave those in this company behind and retire silently. The Cold War is apparently not over; the encryption technology created by engineer Shorty Coryell is at stake. When KGB agent Philip Haversham [aka Adolf Tokkachev] realizes that Ward will not acquiesce, the remaining leaders of Global Communications have to go into hiding, while continuing to convince US agencies to take action.

As Doucette states in his preface, "While this is historical and fiction, much of what I've written is fact." Where one ends and the other begins is the mystery; it is left to the reader to decide. The hysteria of Y2K may have felt irrelevant—a nonevent, in fact—but this story asks us if anything has been done since then to prevent joint ventures of this kind for happening. What would happen if the entire telecommunications industry were dominated by one tyrant? What would happen if companies created mergers based on profit alone and could not be made to consider the final outcome? Doucette references the statue of Prometheus in Rockefeller Square on purpose. Prometheus was a trickster who stole fire from Zeus and gave it to the mortals for which he was chained to a rock and eaten alive by an eagle, which repeatedly attacked his liver. Perhaps the statue is a cautionary tale for all CEOs on Wall Street.

I would give this novella a **3 out of 4** for its plot line, but a **2 out of 4** for its actual writing style. Those with a military background will be most likely to enjoy this book, with its references to Vietnam, leave no man behind, and use of interrogation techniques. The book read to me like a movie script, but lacks ample dialogue to be such and the characters have not been fully fleshed out so we feel their sorrow, embarrassment, terror, and joy as all of the events within Global Communications transpire.