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## The Roads of Earth

Allen Drury,  
Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1984. 368 pages.

This novel deals with the future of the world, possibly in the last decade of this century, although no real time reference is mentioned. But it certainly refers to some time period after 1988 since the President of the United States is a man who could have come to power only after Reagan's years in the White House. In his "Note to the Reader", the author states:

"The coming to power of Hamilton Delbacher in the United States and Yuri Serapin in the Soviet Union, and their first confrontation across the lands and seas of the globe, will be found in the predecessor volume to this, *The Hill of Summer*.

A number of frantic reviews were written of that novel, conditioned by a visceral fear of facing up honestly to the constantly proclaimed and absolutely undeviating intention of the Soviet Union to destroy the United States and conquer the world if it possibly can.

This aim has been candidly announced and steadily maintained for almost seven decades; and still there are many in America who refuse to believe it, just as many refused to believe Adolf Hitler when he proclaimed, and attempted, the same two ambitions. Yet the record of the Soviets, like his, is there for all who have the courage to look, and to accept what they see."

The novel begins with the following headlines:

**SINO-SOVIET PACT:**

**RUSS, CHINESE SIGN FIVE-YEAR ACCORD "TO RESTORE SOCIALIST HARMONY AND REPEL IMPERIALIST AGGRESSORS."**

**U.S. ISOLATED.**

**WORLD STUNNED BY AGREEMENT BETWEEN COMMUNIST GIANTS, ONCE BITTER ENEMIES. MANY LEADERS BELIEVE "IT MEANS WAR."**

The President of the United States is now Hamilton Delbacher, the power in the Kremlin is in the hands of Yuri Serapin, and in China, the power is in the hands of the Vice-Premier Ju-Xing-dao, Yuri Pavlovich Serapin is the President of the Soviet Union, but he wields absolute power and so does the Chinese Vice-Premier Ju Xing-dao.

Since Yuri Serapin feels safe now after the Sino-Soviet Pact has been signed, he undertakes to humiliate, as it were, the United States by fomenting and instigating military attacks in four important areas of the world. The places are chosen carefully: in the first place, no Soviet troops are directly involved, everything is done by proxy, although on direct and secret orders from Serapin, and, secondly, all these states under attack have mutual aid treaties with the United States. The areas so chosen are: 1) Saudi Arabia, 2) Mexico, 3) South Africa, 4) Taiwan. Exactly at the same time when the American President, Hamilton Delbacher, known also as Ham Delbacher, and Uncle Ham to his close friends, is still asleep in the White House, rockets begin to rain on several main cities in South Africa, Mexico is attacked by the army of the People's Republic of Guatemala. In Saudi Arabia, in the capital city of Ryadh, the royal family is assassinated by the assassins supported by the South Yemeni forces, and in Taiwan, the capital city is attacked by the planes of the People's Republic of China, and the important seaport of Kaosiung is blocked by sunken ships.

Apparently, the Kremlin boss, Yuri Serapin, had hoped that the American President will not respond as he does. In other words, the Kremlin miscalculated: Ham Delbacher receives cries for help from all the four places, and he promises help right away! Not only promises but delivers as well, with everything available to the armed forces of the United States.

Naturally, most of the American press condemns the actions of the President. Demonstrators by the thousands spill into the streets of American cities chanting:

Hot damn!  
Look at Ham!  
Gonna go to war and keep us free —  
Kill us in the process, yessirree —  
But by God, friends, we're gonna be free!  
Who hates nukes?  
Only us kooks!  
Old Ham loves 'em!  
Hot *damn!*  
Get you, Ham!  
You go to war and *LEAVE— US—BE!*

Thank you, Yuri, he thought wryly. Someone in your embassy is a real poet and doesn't know it.

The chant was given great prominence on the evening news, along with many shots of banners that read: **DELBACHER SEEKS NEW WAR! . . . DELBACHER THE WARMONGER! ... YURI THE PEACEMAKER! ... YURI THE WORLD'S HOPE! ... YURI SAVE US FROM U.S. MADNESS!**

Major television commentaries and newspaper editorials reflected, a trifle more subtly, similar sentiments, (p. 39).

In spite of all these efforts instigated by the Kremlin, Hamilton Delbacher does not give an inch: he defends his firm stand in his news conferences, he takes the case to the United Nations Security Council, although he knows that his resolution condemning the Soviet Union for instigating and supporting these new attacks will not be voted in.

In the meantime, since the United States are now firmly and really committed to the defense of these four attacked nations, the resistance to the attacks grows, and there is clear evidence that the attacks, with the increasing help from the United States, will be eventually repulsed. Hamilton Delbacher decides that it is not enough just to resist, and thus he proclaims a new and very bold plan of initiative: he announces a total blockade of Cuba, at the same time offering the Cubans to give back, right away, the Guantanamo naval base and practically unlimited help in rebuilding their country.

In the meantime, a telephone call reaches the White House, a telephone call the American President had not expected. It is the Pope. The Pope suggests to the President that he might be of some help in organizing the resistance in Europe, in Poland, in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, etc.

After all kinds of events, after several telephone calls from the Kremlin, after another session at the United Nations Security Council, the final result of all this, based primarily on one thing, the real resistance of the United States to the aggression from the Kremlin, is that Yuri Severin is eliminated by his treacherous colleagues in the Kremlin, the four war zones turn into the defeats for the attacking Kremlin-backed Communist forces, and the whole of Eastern Europe led by the Pope, rises against the Russians. With the help from their Moslem neighbors in Iran and in Pakistan, the Moslems of Kazakstan and other southern tiers of the Soviet

Empire also rises against Moscow. Here are the headlines as given on page 355:

**KAZAKHSTAN REVOLTS! FOREIGN MINISTER LEADS TRIBES TOWARD LINK WITH PAKS, IRANIANS! SOUTHERN RUSSIA IN FLAMES!**

**LITHUANIANS, LATS JOIN EAST EUROPE REBELLION AS ATOMIC CLOUD DRIFTS NORTH!**

**SUPREME SOVIET CALLED TO SPECIAL SESSION!**

**SOVIET GOVERNMENT MAY DISINTEGRATE!**

The fabric frays, Ham Delbacher thought exultantly. The fabric frays at last.

With LATS, I am sure, the author intended to say LATVIANS, but it does not really matter, since we assume that all the subjugated nations have finally arisen. Even risking the Soviet nuclear arms, as in the case of Poland.

And the most amazing story is the last call from the Chinese Vice-Premier. It is so unexpected, even though this is fiction, that I would like to quote almost this entire conversation because it is very interesting. (Pages 359 ff.):

From Peking came the call he had been expecting at any moment as the news from Moscow and the battlefields appeared to be turning ever more rapidly in his favor.

Again he suggested the Picturephone; quickly Ju obliged. He materialized, smiled briefly and began to speak in a gentle voice as though he did not have a care in the world. But his words were far from innocuous.

"Mr. President!" he said. "Congratulations! The flower of peace begins to bloom amid the smoke of war."

"Thank-you, Vice-Premier," he said with a smile. "I'm glad you think so."

"Indubitably," Ju said. "Now we must begin to think what we will do with Russia."

"Do with Russia?" he echoed. "You take my breath away, Vice-Premier. Russia is hardly in a state yet to 'do' anything with, is she?"

"She will be," Ju Xing-dao said with a dismissive little wave of his tiny hand. "She is dying — they are dying. It is only a matter of time now, and very little of that. We think she should be partitioned. Do you not agree?"

"I'll admit something like that has crossed my mind from time to time, Ham Delbacher said. "But I think it's a little early \_ »

"The curse of the West!" Ju interrupted with sudden severity, relieved by a sudden smile. "You never think ahead. You never plan. In the midst of peace you should plan war. In the midst of war you should plan peace. You have lost the fruits of two world wars because you refused to plan until the guns fell silent. Then old hatreds, old fears and old ambitions leaped back, and it was too late. Now, Mr. President, *now!* Now is the time to plan."

"What kind of partition do you have in mind?" he asked cautiously. "East-West like Germany, or — "; "Much too simple," Ju said sternly. "Much too good for them. Also, much too conducive to eventual reuniting, just as is happening in Germany today. Do you have a map beside you, Mr. President?"

"I have a globe."

"Good. So have I. Now," Ju said, raising his right index finger like the schoolteacher he once had been, far back down the years before the Long March and all the great days, "let us observe this Russia and see logically what becomes of her . . .

"First of all," he said emphatically, "she must be reduced to Russia proper — Old Muscovy, if you will, and outlying areas."

"How outlying?" the President asked.

"About ten miles," Ju said promptly. Then he chuckled. "You look very alarmed, Mr. President, and yet why not? Have they deserved more?"

"Perhaps not," the President said. "But still — "

"Oh, I jest," Ju said. "You are familiar with me; I always jest." He became serious. "Not ten miles, nor a hundred. But certainly no more — no more than a thousand. Let them keep the heart of Russia, if they wish. But," he added, "completely disarmed and under occupation, of course."

The President whistled.

"You don't want much, Vice-Premier. A modest plan, if I ever heard one."

"Very practical," Ju said. "Obviously they must be disarmed so they won't attempt anything again. Obviously Moscow must be occupied to guarantee this. And obviously from that it follows that the present government must be abolished, the Communist Party must be dismantled and some new form of state must be set up — possibly on the basis of your favorite panacea in the West — 'free elections'."

"Go on," the President suggested. "It's fascinating. And very easy to do, too, with a couple of globes and a good imagination."

We will have more than that to assist us," Ju predicted, "when our friends in Moscow collapse. So, then," he added like a child contemplating a new toy, "what next?"

"What next, indeed," Ham Delbacher said. "You're conducting this exercise, not I."

"Oh, but you will," Ju said comfortably. "It cannot be done without you. You will."

"Vice-Premier," he said, "there are so many things involved and such a long, hard road ahead, that I wouldn't venture at this point to predict what — "

"Then I am glad I am braver than you," Ju interrupted, but again with his twinkling little smile. "I am not afraid to sail these uncharted but necessary seas. . . So, then: now we have Russia confined. What do we do with the rest of her?"

"Exactly."

"Trust the globe and follow the map Mr. President. It all becomes clear. Kazakhstan is in revolt right now. Aided by the other Moslem portions of the Soviet Union and the Islamic pressures from outside, Kazakhstan is going to succeed. He who is now called Foreign Minister is very shortly going to be called Prime Minister or President of a new Islamic state. This we should all recognize at once."; "That I am prepared to do," the President said, "the moment there are signs of victory there."

"Good," Ju said. "That is one partition — Islamasthan, or whatever they wish to call it — comprising Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizia, Tadjikistan, Turkemistan. Under our general protection and supervision — "

"Oh?"

"As the remaining superpower nearest the scene," Ju said smoothly.

"I see," the President said. "You are planning ahead."

"Certainly," Ju said.

"And Mongolia?"

"Returned to China, of course," Ju said firmly, "where it historically belongs and has always belonged before it was stolen from us by the robbers in Moscow. Joined with Inner Mongolia to form the Chinese Mongolian Autonomous Republic. We also intend to take the Sakhalin Peninsula."

"And with it all the missile sites and installations — and the missiles, no doubt," the President said.

"We believe we deserve them" Ju said blandly.

"I believe all the sites must be destroyed and all the missiles likewise," the President said. "That is my belief."

"Do not worry, Mr. President," Ju said airily. "They will be in good hands." (pp. 359, 360, 361)

One cannot forget that *The Roads of Earth* is a novel, fiction. However, it is based on the long experience of the author who had spent long years as a Washington journalist, and who has written many long novels previously and his novel *Advise and Consent* has won the Pulitzer Prize.

To my knowledge, *The Roads of Earth* is the only major novel dealing with such problems, and dealing, in my opinion, very successfully.

Certainly, one could also call this novel an imaginary novel, but all fiction is, primarily, "imaginary."

Some readers may object to the fact that Alien Drury found it desirable to bring in the Pope into the practical leadership of the anti-Soviet revolts in Eastern Europe. In other words, the Pope does get involved into things which may be considered outside of his true interests as the head of the Catholic Church. One could imagine that he could have done the same thing while still remaining in the Vatican. On the other hand, why not? After all, it is an imaginary, futurological novel.

Many readers will find this well-written novel very intriguing; you have to read it, if possible, in one sitting because the tension mounts on every page, and the result is that one enjoys reading it very much.

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