



Icon

Frederick Forsyth

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From the master of the novel of international intrigue comes a riveting new book as timely and unsettling as tomorrow's headlines.

It is summer 1999 in Russia, a country on the threshold of anarchy. An interim president sits powerless in Moscow as his nation is wracked by famine and inflation, crime and corruption, and seething hordes of the unemployed roam the streets.

For the West, Russia is a basket case. But for Igor Komarov, one-time army sergeant who has risen to leadership of the right-wing UPF party, the chaos is made to order. As he waits in the wings for the presidential election of January 2000, his striking voice rings out over the airwaves offering the roiling masses hope at last--not only for law, order, and prosperity, but for restoring the lost greatness of their land.

Who is this man with the golden tongue who is so quickly becoming the promise of a Russia reborn? A document stolen from party headquarters and smuggled to Washington and London sends nightmare chills through those who remember the past, for this Black Manifesto is pure *Mein Kampf* in a country with frightening parallels to the Germany of the Weimar Republic.

Officially the West can do nothing, but in secret a group of elder statesmen sends the only person who can expose the truth about Komarov into the heart of the inferno. Jason Monk, ex-CIA and "the best damn agent-runner we ever had," had sworn he would never return to Moscow, but one name changes his mind. Colonel Anatoli Grishin, the KGB officer who tortured and murdered four of Monk's agents after they had been betrayed by Aldrich Ames, is now Komarov's head of security.

Monk has a dual mission: to stop Komarov, whatever it takes, and to prepare the way for an icon worthy of the Russian people. But he has a personal mission as well: to settle the final score with Grishin. To do this he must stay alive--and the forces allied against him are ruthless, the time frighteningly short....

Icon Details

Date : Published September 2nd 1997 by Bantam (first published October 1st 1996)

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Author : Frederick Forsyth

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Velvetink says

Finished. I liked it. Review sometime to follow - or maybe not because it's been a hard couple of months following mum's passing.

It's a shame I am reading this at the moment because I won't remember a thing about it, being currently consumed with thoughts that won't turn off and boundless grief. Icon covers an interesting period of modern Russian history. sigh. Looks like it's one I will have to come back to sometime.

The west Indies fish make their 2nd appearance around page 168 many years later..

Finitha Jose says

Thrillers or detective novels are best when it comes to train journeys; especially if you are in an Express or Superfast which goes slower than a Passenger and is held down in different stations for reasons I know not what. It is on one such journey that I came upon this novel -- a random search in the library revealed the worn out book in the corner and it looked like a good one too for the three hour ride home.

I never got a chance to read any more of Forsyth, but thanks to this absorbing tale, much fretting is avoided, though the train was late by one hour. Isn't that what great about books? For Keats escape may be through imagination, for Coleridge the opium, but to some others like me its books.

Now about the story; its a gripping action thriller interspersed with many flashbacks (which is the most interesting part) and as usual of the books of the period reflects the cold war in its extremities, ie., the good American saving the world from the evil Russians. Its a relief that now the place of Russians is taken by aliens and wizards or sometimes vampires and Greek Gods.

Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog here in November 1999.

Frederick Forsyth always has interesting ideas, but his writing never does them justice. Icon is no exception to this rule. The idea - a new Hitler attempting to take power in the chaotic ruins of a Russia devastated by mega-inflation and uncontrollable organised crime - is excellent. The major problem is the narrative style. The story takes second place to exposition of the idea - the reader does not really need pages of description of fictional Russian politics, for example. Such diversions break the tension which is needed in a thriller.

The primacy of the idea also overcomes any serious attempt at characterisation, an accusation usually levelled at science fiction rather than thrillers. Icon's characters are just ciphers and stereotypes, from Igor Komarov to the Western agents trying to prevent him from gaining power. Forsyth has bought into the idea that Western is good, Eastern bad; the Russians are corrupt, the British and Americans fighting for an ideal (except of course for Russian controlled double agents).

Like the best of Forsyth's novels, *The Day of the Jackal*, the idea of *Icon* is centred around a person. In the earlier book, this forces Forsyth to overcome his limitations as a writer of characters, but Komarov does not do this. The idea is sufficiently interesting and well enough done, however, to keep you reading to the end.

Midori Jimenez says

simply one of the best! i simply CANNOT put this book down when i started reading it. the plot was simple - stop Igor Komarov from being the Russian President. and how the lead character did it was simply amazing! it was brilliantly thought of and it is no doubt one of my favorite books of all time!

Liedzeit says

Rußland 1999. Im Januar soll der neue Präsident gewählt werden und es sieht so aus, als sollte einer der ganz bösen gewinnen. Zum Glück führt der seine finsternen Pläne schriftlich aus. Das Schriftstück wird geklaut und den Briten zugespielt.

Dann wird ein Topspion, Jason Monk, auf die Sache angesetzt. Und nun beginnt ein nettes Spiel, in dem am Ende der Westen alles geplant hat. Sehr nett.

Sehr spannend. Ein bißchen habe ich das Gefühl meine Zeit zu verschwenden oder wie die Leute im LQ immer sagen, mich unter Niveau zu amüsieren, aber berücksichtigend wie wenig ich überhaupt noch lese, bin ich dem Autor sehr dankbar.

Kristina says

I'm a sucker for spy novels and usually think that most good fiction in that genre died along with the Cold War. I will say, however, that this one was great. I took a little while to get through the first chapter but once I did I honestly couldn't put it down -- I stayed up until almost 3:00 a.m. one night to finish it because I just HAD to know what happened. It's kind of a "what would happen if ..." novel. When it was written in 1993, it actually was set to take place in the future (1999). The interesting part to me is that some of the possibilities it referenced actually came to pass to a degree. It also provided a well-researched snapshot of life in post-socialist Russia. I always appreciate a well-written book that surprises me at the end, rather than the John Grisham-esque "hurry-up-and-wrap-everything-up-in-the-last-couple-of-pages" approach. This one did not disappoint.

Deepak Eshwar says

This is one of Fredrick Forsyth's best till date. The details he gives is so abundant that after reading you feel like you really had a date with the KGB or the CIA + if you are really interested in espionage this book is mandatory. Hail FF!

Nilanjan Paul says

The book was extraordinarily plotted. Many things were difficult to imagine, but the planning was meticulous and Forsyth-y. Overall loved the buildup of the novel, only complaining about the one man army scenario and useless risk involvement. Rate it 5 stars.

Antonio Rosato says

La prima volta che ho letto questo capolavoro della letteratura era l'estate del 1997 e Boris Eltsin era stato rieletto presidente della Russia da appena un anno; io comprai questo libro in edizione economica (era il periodo dei Miti Mondadori) senza conoscere la trama ma affidandomi solo al "peso letterario" del suo autore: Frederick Forsyth. Perciò, quando lessi le 450 pagine di "Icona", rimasi davvero sconvolto ma allo stesso tempo affascinato dalla storia quasi realistica in esso contenuta: tutto comincia nel 1999 con la morte improvvisa del presidente Cerkassov, successore di uno Eltsin malato ed indebolito politicamente. Si indicono nuove elezioni presidenziali, e tra i tanti candidati alla massima carica dello stato c'è anche Igor Komarov, leader di una destra innovativa di stampo "occidentale". O almeno questo è quello che lo stesso Komarov vorrebbe far credere... se non fosse che, per colpa di una banale distrazione, il suo vero progetto politico viene svelato in tutta la sua crudeltà: restaurare "a destra" la vecchia Unione Sovietica ed eliminare tutti gli ebrei e gli avversari politici. Il vero piano politico di Komarov, dopo un incredibile giro, finisce sul tavolo dei servizi segreti americani e l'ex agente Cia Jason Monk è incaricato di recarsi in Russia e risolvere la crisi prima che sia troppo tardi. Monk, a questo punto, riattiva tutti i vecchi canali che già in passato gli avevano permesso di affrontare il Kgb. Nel frattempo, sempre con l'intento di bloccare il piano di Komarov, un influente gruppo di americani ed inglesi, lavora alla più incredibile delle soluzioni: trovare un discendente dell'ultimo zar e riportarlo sul trono di tutte le Russie. Come avrete certamente capito, qui il genere "fantapolitico" sfiora davvero la perfezione con la trama (sviluppata su due differenti linee temporali) che, pur essendo inventata di sana pianta, è abbastanza credibile ed offre non pochi spunti di riflessione. Libro scritto davvero in modo elegante che, pur trattando un tema abbastanza duro (con scene abbastanza truculente), ne permette una lettura sciolta ed agevole. Chiudo con una mia piccola considerazione: alla trama del libro sostituite il nome di Komarov con quello di Putin... ed avrete un quadro abbastanza fedele di tutto ciò che sta avvenendo ai confini della Russia in questi anni: mi riferisco ai fatti di Ucraina, Crimea e Cenenia. [<http://rosatoeu.blogspot.it/2015/09/i...>]

Arun Divakar says

Too good to be true, don't we say this word about the really grand things we encounter at times ? A really hot lady/guy who for no reason strikes up a conversation with you and is willing to proceed further, a boss who suddenly supports you and gives a pay hike for no reason or maybe a new political leader who in a short time makes a tremendous impact on the masses. While any of these or for that matter any such overtly unbelievable incidents are going on, a small voice at the back of your mind tells you *Too good to be true bud ! Don't say that I didn't warn you .*

Now that I have fired the opening shot, let me get on with the review. The premise is Russia, a nation that is slowly shrugging off the shackles of Communism and the aftermath of Glasnost. A rather messy state of

affairs with hyper inflation, poverty & a few governmental decisions that took a turn for the worst. Into this melee steps in a charismatic and dynamic leader who is messianic in his demeanor towards the populace. But things are not always what they seem and it is up to the British & the Americans as always to save the world. The book is divided into two parts with the first being the build up and the planning part & the next being devoted entirely to execution of those plans to make the world a better place to live. This in my evaluation is not a novel that can be counted as one of Forsyth's best. For one, the suspense factor loses its steam after a while & also to be counted is the fact that a few crucial situations in the plot line are predictable. Nothing kills fun faster than predictability I suppose ! If there is one thing that truly stands out in this book, it is the research that the author must have done. He creates a vivid portrayal of Russia before the turn of the millennium. The bear whose claws have been worn down to stumps and lost all his teeth to add to his woes too !

Let me be honest here, I only took this book up as it featured one of my favorite characters Sir Nigel Irvine from Forsyth's 'Fourth Protocol'. The character referred to as the Fox and the erstwhile head of the MI6 still remains one that I love. While being high handed at times, the shrewdness that the author brings forth with this character is something I love.

Christina Lewis says

I haven't read Frederick Forsythe in a long time and forgot that I appreciate his novels. Although the details can get a little tedious at times.

Stefan says

Icon is one of my favorite novels by Frederick Forsyth because in this work he really makes easy to connect with the characters. Forsyth put many complicated characters in this book, and opened up the world post-Soviet Moscow. An excellent read that projects the settings so wonderfully described into the reader's mind. The dialogue does not fail the reader, and the plot is well developed and has a number of good surprises (which kept me on the edge of my seat). Forsyth also uses his previous experience as a journalist to weave interesting (but plausible) fiction with real organizations, places, people, or ideas. Frederick Forsyth did not disappoint in Icon, and brilliantly explores some important world issues while also keeping his narrative entertaining and tense.

Wendy S. Delmater says

A wonderful spy-thriller book!

At the time it was written this was a future scenario, but at this late date Forsyth's novel also works as an alternative history of the late 80s and early 90s.

It deals with the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union and the financial chaos that ensued if things had taken a different turn. A new leader is about to become President, and he has a black secret: he basically wants to be the next Hitler. Through a strange but believable chain of events a "black manifesto" of his plans comes to light and is verified by a chain of cover-up murders.

The governments of the world can do nothing. So a consortium of interested wealthy people in power hire retired spy Jason Monk to go in and clandestinely change the course of history. I didn't mind the flashbacks to Jason's time in the CIA; they gave background and motive and set up contacts for his daring plan.

The gist of it? Bring back God and the Tzars. And how it is accomplished is a fantastic read.

(By the way, where the brain-dead sequels to Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan books botch the whole "clandestine, extra-governmental spy" thing, Forsyth makes it WORK.)

Salmir Saadat says

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Rajan says

[Jason Monk is given the task of installing British style parliamentarian system where the symbolic head of government is King/ Queen

Krishnan says

This book is brilliant for a spy novel. Especially it is so relevant today considering the iconic Wallbuilder and mr spicier. Just keep in mind that you could easily replace the russian character Icon with wall builder and if the KGB head was mr spicier. The problem that I found with the book was it had so many innumerable characters with many of them created in part1 and the dots left without any connection. Having said this I must admit that FF is a master of the spy novel art and weaves a beautiful connection between part 1 and part 2. There is. Lot of hero worship but if u choose to ignore and show perseverance to go with the flow you will be rewarded with the final gripping plot. The last few chapters which are both a chasing scene and where most of the action occurs is both clever and unputdownable. This was my first FF book and I was satisfied with the book and it does leave me happy that I spent quality time in Russia, Scotland and other areas where Jason monk went. It's an expensive book to read considering the amount of time and the attention required while reading. The names of characters are quite hard to remember (mostly russian). The part 2 of the book was more of a screenplay while part 1 is terribly slow. When you finish the book though it leaves you satisfied and so I give 3.8 stars

Mark says

A destabilised Russia with an up and coming popular politician, the Icon from the title, who is bound to become the next ruler and willing to take Russia into the next century and clean up its internal mess and reshape it into a great country it was once.

Except for a small matter namely the man is mad as Hitler and his thoughts and ideas, full of ethnic cleansing are all written into an account called the Black manifesto. And by sheer accident it lands into the hands of a former soldier who cleans the headquarters of this man. This sets up a chain of events that will change the

fate of Russia once more. Only this time it is an engineered change from the outside of Russia. It is also the story of Jason Monk a former spy whose assets were betrayed by the Agency he required them for. The stupidity and gross oversight of the responsible people burns a whole network of agents inside of Russian. It is the story of a Russian security officer involved in the arresting a lot of the assets and really interested in capturing Monk one day to make him pay for the actions against the great Soviet empire. And he gets his chance as the security chief and military leader of the almost certain future leader of Russia. Jason Monk is returning again to Russia to change the wave of politics in a game that is about manipulation at the highest level.

Another brilliant page-turner that takes his time to set up, a common theme in Forsyths writing. And when the story gets rolling it keeps going at a ever increasing speed, which makes it difficult to lay the novel down, unless you have kids and are married in such a case you are sometimes overruled. Anyhow once the dust is settled at the end of the book the last three pages still have a few surprises in store for the faithful reader.

Another exciting spy/thriller from one of its great master writers.

Xabi1990 says

Creo que al poner estas estrellas (tres, y siendo generoso) a este clásico de Forsyth casi tengo que pedir perdón...

El caso es que me he acostumbrado a los personajes con cuerpo, reales, y aquí sólo veo un desfile de nombres que hacen cosas. Y eso no me gusta.

Como todo el mundo dice que es magnífica, lo será, pero a mí me gustan mucho más otras suyas.

Por si acaso, perdón.

Toby says

Very dull. Too many characters and too much fictional politics.

Ira says

Aku cuman mo nambahin kalo buku ini bagusss banget.. trik trik spionasenya ok dah... FF emang jagonya
