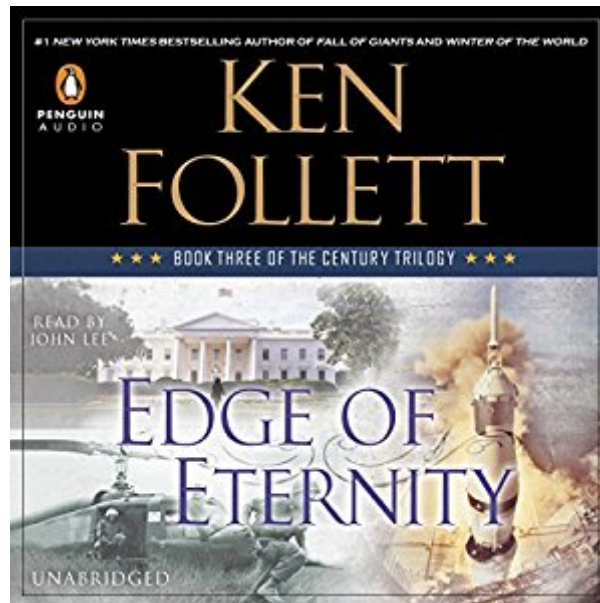




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Edge Of Eternity: The Century Trilogy, Book 3



Synopsis

Edge of Eternity is the sweeping, passionate conclusion to Ken Follett's extraordinary historical epic, The Century Trilogy. Throughout these books, Follett has followed the fortunes of five intertwined families - American, German, Russian, English, and Welsh - as they make their way through the twentieth century. Now they come to one of the most tumultuous eras of all: the enormous social, political, and economic turmoil of the 1960s through the 1980s, from civil rights, assassinations, mass political movements and Vietnam to the Berlin Wall, the Cuban Missile Crisis, presidential impeachment, revolution - and rock and roll. East German teacher Rebecca Hoffman discovers she's been spied on by the Stasi for years and commits an impulsive act that will affect her family for the rest of their lives. George Jakes, the child of a mixed-race couple, bypasses a corporate law career to join Robert F. Kennedy's Justice Department, and finds himself in the middle not only of the seminal events of the civil rights battle, but a much more personal battle of his own. Cameron Dewar, the grandson of a senator, jumps at the chance to do some official and unofficial espionage for a cause he believes in, only to discover that the world is a much more dangerous place than he'd imagined. Dimka Dvorkin, a young aide to Nikita Khrushchev, becomes a prime agent both for good and for ill as the United States and the Soviet Union race to the brink of nuclear war, while his twin sister, Tania, carves out a role that will take her from Moscow to Cuba to Prague to Warsaw - and into history. As always with Follett, the historical background is brilliantly researched and rendered, the action fast-moving, the characters rich in nuance and emotion. With the hand of a master, he brings us into a world we thought we knew but now will never seem the same again.

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Customer Reviews

Like many others I have read the entire trilogy. I lived through this era and remember all the important events that took place, civil rights, Vietnam and so on. By far this is the worst book of the series and makes me question the validity of the other two books. As one who was on a plane two times to Vietnam I know something about that too. Follett paints a picture of those who served in Vietnam as wicked, horrible, baby-killing, raping, villains. Maybe he was a protester in San Francisco where many vets returned home from Vietnam. He apparently knows nothing about the structure of the US Army, especially the Special Forces from that era. I worked with these guys for a short time (not as a member) and no one I knew killed because they enjoyed it. Most guys were there because they had no choice and simply wanted to get home alive. As a veteran of this era he really pissed me off with this "blame the foot soldier" BS he wrote in this book. This chapter alone made me want to burn the book. This is, as others have pointed out, a political book more than historical fiction. Does Follett hate Americans?

The historical novel *Edge of Eternity* (EOE) by Ken Follett is the final book in a trilogy by Mr. Follett. These three novels, perhaps, Follett's magnum opus, provide a broad overview of 20th century European and American history beginnings with the start of World War One and ending with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union as signaled by the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall. The previous novels of the trilogy were *Fall of the Giants* and *Winter of the World*, which were published respectively in 2010 and 2012. This 20th century history is told through the stories of six family clans originating in Russia, England, Scotland, Germany, Austria and the United States. We follow these families through five generations of personal struggles and triumphs while in the background the major political, economic, and social metamorphoses of that era unfold. EOE starts in 1961 East Germany with the Franck family: Walli and his sister Lili both aspiring musicians and Rebecca who was adopted by the Francks. Because of the family's progressive views and Walli and Lili's disposition for western music they are under suspicion of the Stasi, the East German secret police, whose main function is to spy on the general

population. This is the same year of the construction of the Berlin Wall. The year 1961 was start of the Freedom rides, a major event in the American Civil Rights Movement. George Jakes an African American who is newly graduated from Harvard Law is a freedom rider. Jakes is the grandson of Lev Peshkov, a Russian gangster who immigrated to the United States early in the 20th century and made a fortune. George, a major character in the novel, is raised by his mother and has had minimal contact with his white father of Russian decent who was a major political force in the US. Throughout the novel George, with a taste for fine things both wine and women, has a career in both the private and public sectors , all the time with a firm dedication to attainment of human rights and social justice through the constitution and laws of the US. In the early 60s in Russia , twins Dimka and Tanya Dvorkin, George Jake's distant cousins, are rising stars in Soviet infrastructure. Dimka as a trusted assistant to the General Secretary of the Communist Party Nikita Khrushchev and Tanya as a reporter for TASS, the Soviet News agency. George Jakes meets Maria Summers during the Freedom Rides of 1961. Maria like George is a recent graduate of a prestigious Law School, the University of Chicago. Maria is also dedicated to social justice and seeks a career in the federal government. George is attracted to Maria but the relationship does not immediately flourish into a romance. During a Freedom Ride in Alabama, George is seriously injured saving Maria from a white mob. Subsequently, George and Maria become very close professionally (but not romantically) as each move on in their respective careers, George initially as one of Attorney General Bobby Kennedy's few black lawyers and Maria in a junior position in President John F. Kennedy's White House Press Office. The reader is privy to the behind the scenes tensions and negotiations of the Kennedy Administration with respect to its lukewarm support of Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King and the push for a Civil Rights bill during the early 1960s. The readers also enjoy a candid backstage account of, perhaps, the most frightening world nuclear confrontation of the last 50 years, the Cuban Missile Crisis. During this crisis George is a trusted assistant to Bobby Kennedy and is a participant in some of the most strategic meeting of JFK's administration. In these meeting George is exposed to the hyper connectivity of politics, i.e., the interplay between domestic policy and foreign policy. Follett tells the American story through George at the Department of Justice and Maria at the White House, who has become a paramour of the President. During the

Missile Crisis, we are provided an insight into, perhaps, the USSR's thinking through the eyes of the Dvorkin twins. Dimka is now a senior assistant to Nikita Khrushchev and has a major responsibility in the secret program to ship missiles to Cuba. Follett always develops characters as layered human beings and he communicates Dimka's humanity through his uncertainties and slight awkwardness regarding his love life which is contrasted against his brilliance and decisiveness with respect to his job as a senior assistant/advisor to Khrushchev. Khrushchev, like Kennedy, has factions within his Communist Party and there is a constant struggle within between the progressives, those who seek to resolve issues through diplomacy and strategic negotiations, and the conservatives, i.e., those who tend towards military confrontations as a strategy for problem resolution. Dimka as a major player in the drama has to manage the progressive-conservative dynamics. Tanya Dvorkin is on a TASS assignment in Cuba during the Missile Crisis. While there she provides useful information to Dimka as she starts an affair with a Cuban Colonel in Castro's revolutionary army. There is a major build up of international tension after JFK announces the Cuban Blockade and the American Military moves to a DEFCON level signaling a status of imminent war. Tanya is amazed by the courage and fearlessness of the Cuban people as they marshaled their resources for war against the United States of America. At the same time, she was appalled by their naivety as the men armed themselves; sometimes lacking guns they carried kitchen knives, meat cleavers in their belts, as if they were going to fight the Americans hand-to-hand. She recalled that just one US B-52, one of the many, which would come to bomb Cuba if war was declared, carried 70,000 pounds of bombs. What would the kitchen knives and meat cleavers do against that she wondered. George, as Bobby Kennedy's assistant sits in on executive committee meetings of the National Security Council regarding the Crisis. The reader is given fascinating renditions of discussions of strategies by such well known US Government Officials of that era such as General Maxwell Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, John McCone, head of the CIA, Dean Rusk, and Robert McNamara members of JFK's Cabinet. Similarly, the reader is exposed to hypothetical discussions of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the ruling body of the USSR. In addition to Khrushchev, we hear from Soviet leaders of that time such as, foreign minister Andrei Gromyko and defense minister Rodion Malinovsky. During the early

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As we find that in England the story focus is on the Williams family in particular Evie and Dave as they initiate careers in the arts, with Evie as an actress and Dave as a pop musician. Over the next 40 years both enjoy careers of enormous success. The roads to their successes are not linear, particularly for Dave, who, as a young man, must overcome some learning challenges. He moves to the US and there he has an opportunity to explore some African American culture through its music and a brief tryst with an African American soul singer. Jasper Murray, who the Williams family takes in, also winds up in America. Jasper is very ambitious and without conscious while he becomes a well-known journalist and controversial television star. Brother and sister Cam and Beep Dewar who are the grandchildren of Gus Dewar a major character in the earlier books represent the Dewars, the only family that in the Follett trilogy originates in America. These are children of American political aristocracy, they had both a grandfather and great grandfather who were US senators. The social and political paths of Cam and Beep will take diametrically different directions throughout the almost 40 years of the novel. Cam in college becomes a Young Republican Nixon loving conservative and spends his life working to defeat communism with a career in the CIA. His sister Beep goes to UC Berkeley and adopts the political philosophy of the so-called hippie culture of the 60s. Follett is consistent in drawing parallels to oppression regardless of which side of the Iron Curtain it may fall. For example, he notes police power abuses in East Europe in particular East Germany, as well as, British Northern Ireland, America's deep South and the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. Through Follett's fictional characters, the reader is exposed to the details of several major factual seminal events of the last half of the century such as: The Freedom Rides; Berlin Wall; Cuban Missile Crisis; Birmingham Civil Rights Campaign; the assassinations of the Kennedys, Dr. King and Malcolm X; Vietnam, Watergate, Russia's desperate attempt to crush the Czech reform movement and stem the political decline of the USSR with 1968 Czechoslovakia invasion; to name just a few of the events covered in EOE. Throughout the novel the Dvorkin twins Dimka and Tanya are dedicated communist and lovers of their country. But they are also progressives and feel that the Russian people will never achieve full greatness and potential under the yoke of a

heavy-handed centrally controlled communist infrastructure. Therefore, secretly and with great risk, Tanya works surreptitiously to support freedom of expression and openness. She has a life long relationship with a brilliant dissident writer and helps to secretly to have his literature published in the western press. Dimka works inside the government for progressive change and towards the end of the novel he is a trusted assistant to Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev and becomes a major player in the implementation of Gorbachev's policies of glasnost ("openness") and perestroika ("restructuring"). These policies are major factors in USA /USSR rapprochement and the ending of the Cold War. Follett allows the reader to observe the unfolding of the major events of the 20th century through the lives of these complex and diverse families. In EOE we have the personal dramas of these characters as they go through the human journey of ambition, love, devotedness, sex, infidelity, marriage, divorce, birth, death, and renaissance. In addition to being a great storyteller, Follett is also a historical researcher and has been known to expend prodigious resources researching the topics of which he writes. The research needed for this book is quite formidable and it could serve as an addendum text for a formal 20th century history course. At the end of the book he cites the academics, politicians and others who were consulted during the research for the novel. I think that Follett provides enough background such that one could read EOE with first reading the prior two novels of the trilogy. But to do so would deprive the reader of an exciting journey through the mega transformational events of the last hundred years.

This book really disappointed. The dialogue was ridiculous as the characters are on the turning point of world history. The George Jakes character was especially tiresome. I preordered this book -- enjoyed the first two --but having lived through the history covered in this book, the writing at times was comical. Still, I finished it. Of course it helped that we were on vacation and it was the only book I gleefully packed, hoarding it for this time off.

What a disappointment! I greatly enjoyed *Fall of the Giants* and also *Winter of the World*. So, it was with impatient anticipation that I awaited this, the third of Follett's Century trilogy. Ugh! I labored to finish the tome and was able to do so only by summoning all my masochistic powers. Long, pretentious and tedious, this book is also exceptionally tendentious. More a political correct screed than a novel, the late 20th century political figures (Khrushchev, Nixon, LBJ, Jack and Bobby Kennedy and many others), pop up from its pages like cardboard cutouts. If the members of the Follett's British, American, German and Russian families appeared tragically in the first two volumes of the trilogy, their second their third generation descendents appear farcical in this third one. The

heroes espouse a medley of admirable causes (e.g., civil rights, glasnost') while the scoundrels do their worst to frustrate them. As in the earlier volumes, the geographically and socially far flung characters meet fortuitously together and/or with major political figures to advance the plodding plot. It's deus ex machina on steroids. Meanwhile, almost with exception, the dramatis personae appear sexually obsessed. The reader turns few of the book's 1,104 pages without an invitation to vicariously participate in one sort of orgy or another. It's as if the author realized that his pot boiler needed repeated voyeuristic stimuli to keep his reader going. Don't waste your time on this book.

The first two books of this series were fabulous, impossible to put down. This one is a chore to finish. The characters feel more like caricatures this time around. I find myself getting really excited when someone from Gen 2 comes on the page then let down when they are only there for a blink then gone. 1962 lasted for decades. Ditto 1963. Color this reader disappointed.

Follette can write a good story, but this isn't one of them. He simply took history and some historical figures and bent them both out of shape. The book quickly degenerates into a predictable liberal diatribe. Reagan bad! Gorbachev good! Republicans bad! Democrats good! Bush bad! Nixon bad! Kennedy's good! CIA bad! Vietnam bad! Protesters good! Throw in some drugs and some free love among the under developed characters and you have Book Three!

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