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Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., Greenwillow Books
Reynal & Co., Fielding Publications
105 Madison Avenue New York, NY 10016

March 4, 1980

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Dear Ken,

REBECCA is wonderful--that first paragraph is now one of my favorite of about half a dozen opening paragraphs--you grab 'em there and never let go.

You've resolved all the problems of the first draft. My following comments will require no major revisions. They're mostly small things that can be easily taken care of. The one thing I'd want to fight you on is Wolff's interior monologue on the train which I've discussed below.

Now I believe in Elene and Vandam's love affair!

P.33. Would an adopted European son get the biggest share of his stepfather's inheritance even if he were the eldest, especially if the stepfather had his own children? Doesn't seem right--you can easily cut or change because not necessary to the plot.

p.44. Wouldn't Wolff avoid a grocer who knew him? Since Wolff is so desperately trying to hide, it seems a small act of carelessness on his part. And the grocer does not need to know Wolff since Vandam tracks Aristopoulos down only through the counterfeit money. It jarred me a bit when Wolff tells Sonja "There's a little Greek grocer who remembers a good customer."

pp.151-161. This^{is} the only place (with one exception) where I felt the need to cut. There's too much detail away from the action. We don't need the Ic checking out Wolff's information--we can get to Rommel much more quickly. Please see cuts.

p.215. Vandam, Jakes, and Elene are waiting in the restaurant to ambush Wolff. He sends in note. Elene shrugs and goes out the door. It seems odd that Elene didn't try to let Vandam know that Wolff was waiting in a taxi. There's not too much she could have done, since no one must know the connection between Elene and Vandam, but she could at least have left the note on the table. Nothing would have to change except that Jakes, following Vandam, could see the note and grab it from the table.

p. 323-324. Elene puts on her shoes to climb the stairs and leave the boat. Her footsteps clatter on the stairs. She's trying to move quietly, not to wake Wolff and Sonja, and she could move more surely and quickly without high heels--so wouldn't she carry her shoes instead of putting them on?

p. 363-364. Wolff's interior monologue on the train. I didn't like it in the first draft and I don't now. Wolff is a complex enigmatic character, part Bedouin, part man-about-town, adopted son of Egypt, German patriot. We know enough about him to see how he functions, but we remain intrigued. When we finally get inside his head for two pages what we find is essentially trite and stereotyped. For me, this monologue trivializes Wolff. His scorn of the peasants, his Superrace mania--I am a master, I am a German, etc. This is not a person, but a type. I would like to cut all of Wolff's monologue and go straight to Billy and Elena. If you read that section without Wolff's piece, you'll see it works quite well. I expect you'll not agree with this opinion, but I do feel quite strongly about it.

So that's it. I've talked to Phyllis Skolnick at NAL, but she'll send on her comments separately.

No one else here has read the last draft--I'm having it photocopied now--and if there are any brilliant flashes from other readers I'll let you know.

Love,



PG:nvc

P.S. I don't have the ms before me so I can't check, but I missed the feel of the British besieged when they burn the files that you got in the earlier draft. I'm enclosing parts of the earlier draft that I'd like to see in the final one.