

Ms Diana Levine & Ms Pat Golbitz

7 March 1980

Dear Diana & Pat,

Many thanks for your letters. Between you, you make fourteen criticisms of the second draft. I have made changes which I hope deal with most of your points. A few I disagree with:-

The foreword from the proposal is nice and dramatic, I agree, but it also gives away the whole plot, so I think it would be a mistake to include it in the book.

Rommel and Sadat have crucial roles in the plot, but the reader won't be fascinated by their personal destinies. I tried to strengthen both characters in the second draft, but I can't do any more with them short of writing a different book.

I think it would be a big mistake to make the cuts Pat suggests in pps 151-161. I realise that this section involves characters about whom the reader does not care deeply, and presents technical details which many readers will find less than fascinating. However: (i) It is here in the desert that the actions of our heroes and villains have their concrete results for good and evil, and the reader must be able to see how that works out. (ii) The German Army would not fight a war according to the advice of one lone secret agent - it's just not plausible. We have to show how at first his reports agree with other sources of intelligence, then he gains a reputation for accuracy which is confirmed, until the point comes where Rommel will trust him - which is of course Rommel's downfall.

Al's comment here was that Rommel's trust in the spy is one of the 'givens' in the story. I couldn't agree less. Symon Myles would have relied on such 'givens': Ken Follet has to work a little harder.

My advisors differ over the internal monologues on the train. Diana hates all three, Pat hates the first and likes the others, Al loves all three. It seems I have to make the decision all on my own. I like the monologues. At that point they're right for pace,

tension and character. Let them stay.

Diana says: 'It seems almost accidental that Rommel picks up his (Wolff's) first transmission' and 'Wolff never makes this call to Rommel presumably because he was so sexually satiated by his orgy partners that he fell asleep.' It's not quite like that. At least twice in the book I have someone say that Wolff must broadcast at midnight because then and only then Rommel's wireless service will be listening. The reason Wolff doesn't call on p318 is that at exactly midnight Elene stands up, pulls her dress over her head etc. I don't see how I can make the point about midnight any more clearly. However what I have done in response to this criticism is rewritten p318 so as to emphasise the point that Elene's sudden decision to join enthusiastically in the orgy is a big turn-on for Wolff.

'Also, Wolff should explode out of his sleep. This missed transmission to Rommel is major ... ' Yes, it is major, but Wolff doesn't know that: he doesn't know that Vandam is about to pounce, he doesn't know that last night was his last chance, he thinks he can just as easily make the call a day later.

I have no strong feelings about Elene/Elena, so if you ~~to~~ agree that Elena is better, you've got it.

All your other points have been valuable, and I thank you for them. Thankyou, too, for all the nice things you say!

With warm regards,

Yours,