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Dear Ken

Jackdaws at Nightfall is a fine sharp thriller, even as it stands ; you catch well SOE's mixture of the louche and the effective, and the nastiness of occupation, and the Gestapo's stupidity + brutality. I enclose a list of trivia which weaken it ; it would be a still stronger, and ~~an~~ a more credible, book if you cared to remedy them.

There are two major difficulties, which may be more troublesome.

SOE's basic telephone sabotage policy - which I have read, and have been allowed to quote in my forthcoming official history - laid down that telephone exchanges should never be attacked at all, because the allied armies would want them, in perfect working order, as soon as they were overrun. Saboteurs were to concentrate on long-distance cables and on isolated switching-boxes. You could I suppose get round this, by inserting a pair of paragraphs ; one to quote the policy, the other to explain that the main exchange handling traffic to Berlin was an exception.

Secondly : it is inconceivable that Brian would not have told the full story of his cathedral escape (which you manage beautifully) to Michel. Surely, though Michel's wife had never met Mlle Lemas, Michel had recruited her ; and would know that she was an elderly lady, not a stunning redhead ? I.e. Michel knew a few minutes after making touch with Brian that something was badly wrong. You may have meant your reader to infer this ; but it is not a point that anyone reading you fast would be sure to take up.

You notice how few points I have to urge on the last hundred pages - I was swept along too fast by your narrative, in a most effective piece of writing.

*Yours ever
Michael*

Ken Follett, *Jackdaws at Nightfall*, 1st version, difficulties :

* marks trickiest points

*page 6, end : NOT all SOE's agents were officers - e.g. Violette Szabo on her first mission was a sergeant ; most W/T operators were sergeants

page 30, near top : why is he so much at the beginning of his task ?

*page 36, top line : 161 Squadron had a cast-iron rule, not to operate unless the moon was over half full. See Hugh Verity, *We landed by moonlight*.

page 44 line 5 : this did not happen till after SW France was liberated

*page 45 line 7 : no intercom on Lysanders.

line 11 ; you write as though she did this often : nobody did. Three missions an absolute maximum (save for one or two escape line agents) ; one, or at the most two, more likely.

*page 51, top line : though 161 Squadron was based, with 138, at Tempsford, it flew all its missions into France out of Tangmere, near Selsey Bill : see Verity, again.

page 52, low : agents were supposed not to know 64 Baker Street, SOE's head office, nor to visit it. F interviewed agents in Orchard Court, a little way south, or in safe flats in Bayswater or South Kensington.

page 54 line 8 : strategic, or tactical ?

page 60, last line : good, thank you for bringing out a point too often overlooked.

page 71 line 8 : I know we wanted the Germans to think this, but I have never found an authentic case ; General Gubbins denied to me that it had ever been done ; and Colonel Bevan the head of the deception service told me himself that he distrusted SOE too much to rely on it as a vehicle for

deception. He only used it twice, in subtler ways than you suggest.

page 89, last line but one : Rommel a nice misprint for Montgomery.

page 95, lines 6-7 : here is point to insert discussion of telephone sabotage policy ?

page 95 line 13 : docklands do not lie between Baker Street (or Bayswater) and the Old Kent Road.

page 102, end : see note on page 6 above.

*page 120 line 13 : no one that senior would fail to understand the relevant country section language. (E.g. Marks was wrong to say that only the head of the Dutch section knew Dutch.)

page 133 four lines from end : si : Yvonne Rudellat was over forty when she parachuted in. I have found one agent parachuting in, elsewhere, in his sixties.

page 189 four lines from end : by this time, this was old hat : the Germans knew all about it. It just might be news to Dieter.

page 191 line 6 : a fully organized operator might well have a different security check for each day of the week ; you have left this rather delicate point out.

*page 236 line 4 from end : naming Chatelle highly unlikely : an established circuit, such as Bollinger, would have codenames for its usual DZs. Sorry, this will involve you in some sort of circumbendibus.

page 252, last line : SOE had three agents called le Chene in France ; the widow of one of them (who survived his KZ) is still very much alive. You might want to use another name.

*page 267 line 4 : Eureka's were never left to work unattended : sorry, another circumbendibus - or leave it out ? Bollinger doesn't sound to me a circuit large or sophisticated enough to manage one.

page 269 line 14 : but Archdeacon, supposedly working in Lorraine, had in fact been run for several months by the Gestapo out of Paris.

page 342 line 11, straight road much more probably Roman.

page 451 : the little knife is well known (you have of course seen the one in the War Museum) ; but I have never come across an instance of its use.

ca page 455, the interservice awards committee is a nice fancy, and gives you an extra dig at MI 6. In fact SOE had a whole branch, under Philip (Lord) Rea, by the autumn of 1944 which did nothing but devise citations and attempt to secure awards for agents ; without other offices getting a word in.

I am proud of your closing page. She is still alive, and fairly well ; come to Valençay and meet her in early May ?