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September 16, 1980

Mr. Ken Follett
The Sherry Netherland Hotel

Dear Ken:

Since I wrote you my last letter about THE RUSSIAN PRINCE, I've had a few further thoughts which may be helpful.

You may recall that I thought the prologue ought in some minor way to mirror and use the body of the novel, so as solidly somehow to connect the two. Along that line, what if Peter were to be some sort of flaming radical? You know the various breeds of British radicals better than I, but what if he were to be one of them, and what if Lizzie were to be in some way more like Charlotte, or to emanate more from that class of British society? They could be in love, but they could perhaps be at opposite poles as far as the state of the world was concerned; and then somehow the telling of Charlotte's story could maybe moderate some fiery scheme of Peter's and at the same time bring the two of them more closely and more solidly together. This may strike you as constructing too neat a little package, but then, what else is a thriller but a neat package?

In my first set of notes, I pointed out that a big hole in the story has to do with Walden's action after the initial assassination attempt. In thinking about this some more, I wonder too about reactions by Lydia and by Charlotte. As you have it now, presumably no one notices this attempt other than Walden and Oblomov. But what if either Lydia or Charlotte or both of them were to notice? There are interesting complications here which you might consider playing with. There is the possibility that these could become somewhat involved that they might unnecessarily slow down the story, but think about it. Charlotte, for example, might talk to Feliks about the assassination attempt, not knowing that Feliks was the would-be assassin. Lydia too might ask Feliks if he could help in directing her husband to the would-be assassin if this person were to be found in the Russian expatriot community. In other words, if both these ladies (or at least one of them) were aware of the physical danger, this might heighten the level of excitement.

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Follett /2

When last we personally discussed this plot in England, you were thinking about working in some sort of chase sequence, but then, I guess, this never worked out for you. It occurs to me now that if indeed Walden and/or Pritchard were to be around at the missed attempt to arrest Feliks, and it became clear at that point to both of them that he was the would-be assassin as well as the lover of Lydia and/or Charlotte, at that point they might themselves begin some sort of vigorous pursuit or chase or hunt; and there might be room at that point in the novel for action of this sort until the climax at the estate.

And that's it for this installment!

Talk to you soon.

Love,

Al