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Ken Follett
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Dear Ken,

Well, you did it, I now see possibilities for a terrific novel here, and NAL agrees. Checks are being sent all over the place.

We've got the people and the plot, a thousand percent better than before. I am not going to do a critique of the outline here--it's not necessary, but I will point out a few things and a few danger spots so you can be aware of them as you write.

When I talked to Al, he mentioned something, and Larry pointed it out too. It was something that I also felt, as I read the outline, but more in terms of suspense than character. Al said that your book was in danger of having no villain, you've made Feliks so attractive in this version. Larry said Feliks did not have the "heroic evil" of your other villains. (Good phrase!) I felt a lack of threat, which obviously must come from the bad guy who's going to do in the good guys. I now adore Feliks (as I wanted to!) but I should be a little more afraid of him than I am. (For "I" read "reader.") It is something to keep in mind and I have no doubt at all that you'll work it out. It is probably the most important point of all.

There are a few other things: Feliks jumping on the carriage and hearing Lydia yelling help. I most earnestly beg you to reconsider--it's too much like comic opera. Beware of coincidence: you use it in this novel more than in any other. "Help!" is one (and wouldn't Feliks know who Lydia married? It seems it would be so easy for him to find out if he's interested, and he is! So Feliks must have a good reason for not knowing, if you keep it that way). The woman lying on the sidewalk, discovered by Charlotte, who just happens to be her maid, is another. Let her see a woman on the sidewalk, but let the maid come to her in another way. There are times when you must use coincidence, so don't when it's not absolutely necessary.

I think it's wrong to have Feliks tell Charlotte she's his daughter. The reader knows, but Charlotte need not. It is much more effective, ironic and bittersweet if Charlotte runs to Walden after the bomb crying "Father" if she does not know. And of course Lydia knows,

and I think we should see her after Feliks's sacrifice. (The love story here is really Lydia and Feliks.)

I'd cut Bonnie telling Walden he's sterile. First of all, she couldn't know for sure (she doesn't know Charlotte isn't his daughter). It's enough that Charlotte is Feliks's daughter. You're beating it over the head when you, in an artificial and set-up kind of way, tell the reader that she couldn't have been Walden's child.

Toward the end Walden, on a train, recognizes Feliks as he goes by outside. My query was, "How did he know him?" Unless I missed something, the only time Walden saw Feliks was when he had a kerchief pulled over his face.

The chase, train, car and horse, is, except for the horse, very, very like the finale of Rebecca. Something to keep in mind.

One more thing. Hill Black asked, "Where is the love story?" It is, of course, Lydia and Feliks (and maybe in quite another fashion, Lydia and Walden), but their love affair belongs to the past. I'm just throwing this out to you, like a seed, to see if something gorgeous develops.

From the promise of this outline (and taking care of a few problems), I have said to the world at large that I think this could be your most popular book yet. It is certainly your most romantic. The era you're writing about has a wide, nostalgic appeal and you've got the people and the story to make it come alive.

THE RUSSIAN PRINCE is more a "novel" than a "thriller," though I believe your audience will expect to be as "thrilled" here as in your previous books. That's what I'd like you to keep in mind as you write the first draft.

These comments come from me alone--they are not official comments from your two publishers. I don't think that's necessary at this point. In fact, you don't have to reply specifically to any of these suggestions. But let me know that you've got the letter.

Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pat". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent loop at the end of the "t".

PG:nvc