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February 5, 1979

Ken,

TRIPLE has all the potential to be a best seller, as big or bigger than EYE OF THE NEEDLE.

In this draft though, I think it's uneven. Most of the scenes with Dickstein or with Suza or with both of them work wonderfully well, and most of the others are not as successful. So I'm going to suggest some ways by which you might strengthen the weaker elements.

First, I'm going to make some general comments, and then I'm going to go through the book scene by scene. General comments first:

① Rostov for me does not quite come alive. You tell us a variety of things about his off-stage life, but I think it would be better for him to have one overriding concern. For example, he might suspect that his mistress is cuckolding him, and he is desperate to get back to Moscow and check on her;

or, he's desperate for promotion to the next higher rank which would entitle him to a personal spy so that he could more easily keep tabs on her;

or, he's desperate for a promotion which would entitle him to a particular dacha which he covets with unbridled lust;

* or, he's desperate for promotion to insure his son's gaining entrance to some elite school which otherwise the boy would never get into.

And if you decide to choose one of these, or if you come up with something better, in any case this off-stage plot line ought to develop some as the novel progresses -- so that the reader can always perceive Rostov to be a human being as well as a creature of the plot.

② Hassan is also a bit blurred to me as a human being. Clearly his main passion is political, but I think that for the reader to feel he knows this character, Hassan's dream ought to be made concrete. He might dream for example of being Ambassador to the Court of St. James for an independent Palestine or of being Ambassador to the U.N. or Foreign Secretary, while of course his friend Mahmoud would be Prime Minister. Giving him a few day-dreams along these lines (or you may have a better idea) would in this instance too make him more of a person and less purely a creature of the plot.

You could perhaps add an additional dimension to Hassan

Bring in Hassan
Kas. Hays or any other
to my in his Ugly.

if he had been having an affair with his neighbor's wife in Luxembourg. The man could have found him out and be threatening to kill Hassan, and if you wanted to add a touch of humor to the book, the man might be the head of a Russian trade delegation or some scientist attached to Euratom or something of that sort; and then in the course of the action, Hassan could also perhaps dream about this man's wife.

③ Suza ought to have a bit more of a past. She ought to have ditched or been ditched by some lover just prior to Dickstein, and comparisons with this other man in her thoughts would I think enhance our believing in her love for Dickstein and her admiration of him.

Focus. Ideally all or certainly almost all of the action ought to be experienced through the sensibilities of one or another of our four principals. Obviously here and there there are bits of important action in which the principals do not participate, but as I go through the scenes with you, you'll see again and again, I think, that the drama can be heightened considerably either by rewriting the scene so that it is experienced from the point of view of one of the principals, adding one of the principals to such a scene, or in some cases eliminating a scene that does not contain one of them.

A corollary problem is that a fair bit of the action comes through written in a very objective third person style without much emotion; and as much as possible, I think we need to eliminate that sort of thing from the book. In this draft you have devoted an enormous amount of time and energy to getting down all the facts relating to an extremely complicated and ingenious plot; but now your job is going to be to color those facts with emotion, and the ones which don't lend themselves to any coloring probably aren't really necessary in the book -- but I think I'll make this point much more clearly as I discuss individual scenes.

Your important scenes often need "setting up." Instead of beginning inside a character's mind, letting us know what he is worried about, what he is hoping for, what he is afraid of, you plunge us immediately into the action without our being inside the principal's head; the event happens, the story moves on, and the reader is left informed but unmoved. Again and again as I go through the manuscript with you, I'll point to scenes where you at least ought to consider this technique.

Along the same lines, I think our principals need to make each at least one big mistake and be aware that they have made such a mistake. Dickstein seems to make not a single false move in setting up his complicated scheme, except of course for being spotted by Hassan which is an

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accident and not a mistake. Rostov similarly seems to be so invincible as to be at times not human and almost a little boring. (E)

My last general comment is that you might introduce some high level government meetings in Tel Aviv, Moscow, Cairo or Beirut as we come into the climax of the action -- much as you did in EYE OF THE NEEDLE. An important decision which could sway the whole outcome, made in Moscow and/or Tel Aviv I think would add significantly to the impact of your climax. After all, the American Sixth Fleet patrols the Mediterranean, and there might be some risk of confrontation with an American submarine or destroyer which might necessitate approval from the Prime Minister in Moscow at some crucial moment, and similarly with the Israelis.

Diagram at Grog. Dickstein meeting

Now I'll go through the text and try to be specific:

Your prologue is a considerable and maybe even a vast improvement over the previous version, but I think it would do its job much better if you wrote it largely if not entirely from Dickstein's point of view. He is the one upon whom the scene has great impact, and yet you don't let us feel his reaction. The flow of events is good, the exposition is good, and some of the stuff you have from Cortone's point of view is good too, but I think that as much as possible you ought to put it down again from Dickstein's point of view. Most importantly how Dickstein feels about all these people, and perhaps a bit about the turmoil within him about being a Jew and his future life. Dickstein after all is the hero of the book, and why have us wait another fifty or sixty pages before we find this out?

Handwritten notes on left margin:
1. Dickstein
2. Dickstein's reaction
3. Dickstein's reaction
4. Dickstein's reaction
5. Dickstein's reaction
6. Dickstein's reaction
7. Dickstein's reaction
8. Dickstein's reaction
9. Dickstein's reaction
10. Dickstein's reaction

The moment with Suza needs to be enlarged. Later on when she recalls Dickstein's interest in her cat, the reader has almost forgotten this, since you only give us a line or two. We don't need a great deal, but I think a page or so would be more appropriate.

On page five I've circled two expressions which don't seem quite right to me, and on page six you suddenly introduce the fact that it's freezing, which it seems to me ought to be established earlier. On page eight you mention a beautifully dressed Arab, but it's not clear whether he's beautifully dressed in Arab garb or Western garb. On page nine you have Dickstein say, "I don't give a monkey's etc.". I suppose you mean a monkey's ass, but I had to read this two or three times before I got it -- if I did. On page 12 Dickstein says, "This isn't really your scene." I think that's an anachronism. I don't think anyone used that expression until 15 or so years later.

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If you decide not to redo this prologue and keep it as you have it largely from Cortone's point of view, I think you should end with his reaction, so that what he and Dickstein see will have its full impact. Of course you would end on an even more dramatic note, if you use Dickstein's reaction.

Then you give us 40 pages in which none of the principals appear, 40 pages of exposition in which you bring in all sorts of characters who for the most part disappear from the book almost immediately. This section I think is a problem.

I would recommend either one of two approaches: (1) cut both chapters one and two. (2) keep the Towfik material and the scene in London and cut the rest. The contrasting points of view between Dayan and Meir could just as easily come out in the next scene between Borg and Dickstein, with Borg representing the Dayan point of view, Dickstein the Meir point of view, and then of course Borg clinching things with his information. These scenes at the top level of the Israeli government, to me, stop the action, and I don't think they are appropriate in this sort of book. *Yk*

Small points: on page 18 I've circled the word "he". I had to read it twice to be sure you meant the agent as opposed to Towfik. Meeting point also is a vague term to me. Is it the information desk, the exit to the baggage delivery area? I've never heard of any place in an airport which is called "the meeting point." On page 19 you used the phrase, "the opposition", which I later understood to be the Egyptians. I think this whole sequence would be a bit stronger if we could be more inside Towfik's head, sweating with him a little, knowing how he feels about Cairo, Egyptians, his work etc. Page 21 you mention the original Walled City. Is that Cairo? If this is some picturesque and extraordinary ruin, perhaps it might be worth describing. Page 24 the scene ends on so flat a note. Towfik I assume must be bitterly disappointed. Just as you distance us from his feelings through most of the scene, you do the same thing here, and I wonder if you ought to.

Hansi I think we can do without. *And*

Page 47 you use the term faction meeting. In this country we'd probably call it a meeting of a splinter group or a meeting of her closest followers -- but I'd prefer not to have this meeting at all. Characters like John and Eli just clog up the action and diffuse the reader's interest -- I think. *OK*

Pierre Borg is a major secondary character. As such I feel he needs a more solid introduction and also a more distinctive persona all through the book. If we keep the London scene, then perhaps it ought to begin

with an interior monologue prior to his meeting Mahmoud. Borg could be worrying about the meeting, worrying about what he might find out, worrying about his wife or his girlfriend or the political situation in Israel or any one of a number of things which would clue us in to his character at the same time as we would be moving ahead with the story. If you began the scene this way with some sense of anticipation and concern, then the information conveyed by Mahmoud would have a greater impact both on Borg and on the reader -- I think.

Re-introducing Dickstein through the eyes of Karen works well. All this kibbutz stuff is very good. My one suggestion would be to make more of the tale of Dickstein's Sicily episode. This is an important event. In a way it sets the stage for all that is to follow, and it also is the "event" which establishes Dickstein's new persona. Perhaps it ought to be recounted to Karen in some detail by a member of the Kibbutz who was there with Dickstein. Or you may choose not to mention that episode at this time, and save it for the scene with Suza and Cortone, and then at that point Cortone could tell it in great detail and with high drama, but in either case I don't think it ought to be told in a flat manner in two short paragraphs.

Borg and Dickstein have known each other for years. As interesting, and in fact more interesting, to the reader than the factual basis for their meeting, I think, would be their underlying feelings for one another. Especially Dickstein, how does he feel about Borg as a person? How does he feel about the way Borg looks, smells, treats him, treated him on Dickstein's last assignment or the assignment before that? Here I think you need to establish the kind of thing that Le Carre does with his colleagues in British intelligence. You could begin the scene from Dickstein's point of view with an interior monologue as soon as Dickstein has been alerted that Borg has arrived, with Dickstein scheming in his mind how he'll get out of the assignment, or how he'll put Borg down, or how he'll welcome Borg or whatever. Or you might begin in Borg's mind, with him worrying about how he's going to handle Dickstein -- but this should be something to make these two men into people and to relate what I assume must be the complexity of their relationship.

Once Borg begins describing the problem, he could easily describe just a bit more about the CIA photographs and about the spy in Italy which would obviate the need for those two minor characters and their two little scenes.

Once Borg actively begins describing what Dickstein has to do, I think we need to experience this from Dickstein's point of view. For example, more important than Borg's telling Dickstein that he is going to steal

the uranium ought to be Dickstein's reaction -- either internal or expressed, but he doesn't seem to have one. Similarly what does Dickstein really think about being told he has to get 100 tons. Sure, he makes a joke of it, but what does he really think? The reader I think is entitled to know. *Yes*

The political discussion on pages 61 and 62 doesn't quite work for me. On the other hand, if you do go ahead and deepen these two characters a bit more and make this discussion relate to their feelings about one another as well as to politics, I think you'll then make us care about the politics. *+*

I wonder if we really need the expository scene between the two Egyptians from pages 62 to 66. From the meeting in the elevator in London, we already know that the Israelis have an agent in Cairo, and I think that might be enough to establish their capability for getting someone into the Egyptian atomic installation without actually having a scene showing how that is accomplished. The reader, remember, has no stake either in Mahmoud or Assam. *But*

The little scene between Dickstein and Borg, pages 66 to 69, could stand a bit of juicing up. Mightn't Borg be terribly worried, thinking that he was assigning a hopeless task to Dickstein? If you used that as the suspense factor, then perhaps the last few lines which you now have could serve as more of a climax. They're both so cool in this scene, they both seem hardly human. You tell us that Borg is his "usual oafish self," but we don't see him being particularly oafish. There should be, I think, a strong undercurrent of both sadness and hope in this "farewell scene", and I don't think you quite have it yet. *+*

In Dickstein's first scene at Euratom, the first page works wonderfully well because it's so human. Once Dickstein starts collecting information, the human component seems to disappear. Couldn't Dickstein be in just a bit more suspense about getting his information and then feel some real pleasure in the end at having gotten it? *Yes*

Pages 70 to 76 are super.

Rosov manipulation
the French background
The Moscow scene, pages 77 to 82, does not work for me. This spot, I think, might be better used to introduce Rosov in some dramatic context. This could be personal or professional, depending on how you wish to structure him; but I think it's far more important that we introduce him than take time with a bunch of Soviet bureaucrats who promptly disappear from the story. *No*

The reunion with Hassan works well, and I was especially pleased about the reference to Mottie. We could, I think,

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use a few more of these later in the book.

The flashback to Oxford is good, and the Hassan scene which follows is fairly good, but its tone is a bit journalistic, and I think it can be written somewhat more richly from the interior of Hassan's soul. Here is where you ought to introduce, I think, his dream about himself, about his future. The sight of his father queuing up for food, his village in ruins -- all that could be expressed through richer sense images, so that we can feel more richly his rage, despair -- in short have a richer sense of him as a person.

The visit to the nuclear power station, I fear, is a bit dull. Perhaps you ought to place more emphasis on the fact that he is now being followed than on the technology. Or perhaps you could liven it with comedy, more give and take between Dickstein and the tour guide or between Dickstein and the middle-aged woman.

The little Moscow scene is okay, but the last few lines are not clear to me. Who is Feliks, and which one is Yuri

I like the way Dickstein slips his tail, but shouldn't he sweat just a little in the process? And shouldn't he wonder who these people are? Or does he simply assume they are Arabs?

The recruiting scene between Wrontsov and Rostov ought to be written, I think, from Rostov's point of view. He after all is the man in whom we're interested, and what he thinks of Wrontsov and of the world and of the Israelis and of the Middle East all have more importance ultimately to the story than anything Wrontsov thinks.

The scene in the Roman bath house is good, but it would be even better, I think, if we could feel Borg's disappointment and anger even more. Also Mahmoud presumably has some feelings about all this, and I think it would help if we could see inside him a bit too. The tremendous jeopardy which now faces Israel does not really come across.

The scene with Stiffcollar is super. On page 107 you say that Dickstein is surprised at the unexceptionable quality of this club, but of course he has already been there previously. On page 112 you use the word fissile which is a new one on me. Does that mean radioactive? I've just come back from a massive dictionary, and I now think that the proper word probably is fissionable.

The surface action of the Hassan-Rostov scene works well, but I think you ought to inject something of a human element into it. What do these two men think of each other, their respective countries, their respective causes? Is Hassan at all in awe of Rostov, frightened of him? Is Rostov at

all suspicious of Hassan? Whatever feelings they have about each other now ought to draw on their mutual recollections of one another from Oxford. Also, I wonder if Rostov ought to be quite so confident. He's old enough and experienced enough to have failed at a fair number of his missions, and I think there ought to be some suggestion of the consequences both to him and to Hassan if they do fail. *ok.*

In the course of the operation, Rostov has a number of secondary Russian characters whom he uses to assist him, starting with Nik in this scene and ending with Tyrin at the climax of the book. I think it would make more sense for all of these to be combined into one person, who could then be humanized a bit more and then become a good continuing character through most of the novel. *Yes.*

As to the action itself in this scene, I'm puzzled by several things. Does Dickstein not spot these tails? Why don't they make an attempt to waylay him? And to steal his parcel? Might not this scene be more exciting if some portion of it were written from Dickstein's point of view?

Dickstein's coping with the computer printout ought to have, I think, both more frustration and more joy. Frustration as he tries and struggles to make sense of the massive document, and then excitement and joy as he begins to perceive a path through this morass of figures. You mention on page 126, "it was the sea journey that excited Dickstein,"; but I think we need bits of emotion punctuated all through this stuff. Otherwise it's awfully dry. And at the end of this scene, I wonder if he ought to be so self-confident, both for himself and for Israel.

The little scene on pages 128 and 129 between Hassan and Rostov gives us some information, but no real drama. If Hassan is bitterly disappointed at Dickstein's having shaken off his tail, we don't feel that disappointment. And again I think Rostov is too blithely confident. What would be most interesting here, I think, is the underlying feelings between Hassan and Rostov in light of this new development. We need a sense of Hassan's larger concern, fear that Israel may become invincible, and his dream for an Arab Palestine may be going down the drain. *Yes.*

The scene at Oxford with Suza and Ashford is a delight. My one suggestion is that there perhaps ought to be a bit more give and take between Ashford and Dickstein, so that Dickstein might glean Ashford's pro-Arab sympathies. *ok.*

The little Hassan-Rostov scene on pages 144-145 seems mechanical. These men need to be more eager, involved, worried etc.

Rostov's concerns about his family in Russia, I think, as I've suggested earlier ought to focus on one specific

problem, and it could be that at this point there is a new development in that problem -- whatever you decide it ought to be.

The scene in which Rostov abducts Stiffcollar lacks, I'm afraid, tension and excitement. Either Hassan or Rostov or both of them need to be worried about some or all of the things that might go wrong. Or worried about retribution from their superiors etc. Also, they ought to feel at least some small elation that they have the right man and that they're going to be getting the information they are after; but I think they also ought to worry that the day or two lead that Dickstein has may still keep them at a disadvantage.

Suza's dream is terrific.

In the scene between Hassan and Rostov, pages 153 to 156, again the drama dissipates. Both men are so cool, so calm, so seemingly at peace with one another. Perhaps right from their first meeting Rostov might say or do something which is a serious irritant to Hassan, and then you might perhaps play on that in their subsequent scenes -- something to give these meetings some inner tension. And you might create some outer tension as well if perhaps Hassan were for some reason opposed to going to Oxford. Also, it seems odd that Rostov with his steel trap of a mind does not remember seeing Dickstein at that party. Perhaps in the opening scene you ought to make more of a point of the fact that Rostov is off in a corner playing chess seeing no one or something like that. And finally why should Rostov think that Hassan should feel guilty about his affair with Eila? Rostov, it seems to me, doesn't himself pretend to middle-class morality and why would he think that Hassan should? No .

The Suza-Dickstein stuff, pages 156-165, is very good. I wonder if someone as analytical and deeply suspicious as Dickstein wouldn't ask her why she loves him. I think it would be characteristic for him to do this, and I think it would also strengthen the believability of her sudden declaration if she were to answer him and put at least some of her reasons into words. Yes .

Rostov's hassle with the Soviet bureaucracy is good, but if you did a bit more with Rostov's worries and inner feelings in the situation, I think the scene would be even better. Going over his superior's head to telephone the head of the KGB takes a bit of nerve. Rostov would be risking angering both his immediate boss and the head of the KGB, and I think he ought to weigh all this before he plunges ahead, accepting the risks connected with doing this, and then of course feel elated that he succeeds in getting through and also succeeds in getting the help he feels he has to have.

On page 171 Dickstein's speech about his relationship with the land of Israel does not hit me quite right. All the facts and all the thoughts certainly are accurate enough, but I think Dickstein needs to suffer and stumble just a bit, so that we can feel the emotion under all this which ought to be stronger than the ideas themselves. *OK*

The meeting between Dickstein and Borg ought to include some sense of how these two men feel about each other at this point in time, especially how Dickstein feels about Borg. Is he glad to see him, annoyed? Does he anticipate help, hindrance, approval, disapproval? I think we ought to have some "personal" subtext underneath the surface action of escaping their tail. *OK*

On page 175 Dickstein announces, "I'm going to hijack the ship." On the one hand this is amazing, but on the other hand for the Pirate I suppose it's characteristic. Still, I think Borg ought to have some sort of reaction either internal or expressed before he calmly responds, "And how will you keep that secret?" *OK*

Similarly when Borg reports that in Egypt the Russians are helping and Israel is in ever-greater danger, Dickstein ought to react, feel that danger, feel that urgency feel that horror -- what if he fails! -- so that the drama of this scene will hit the reader hard, which it does not do now. *OK*

Both these men want something from the other and both ought to be in some suspense as to whether or not they're going to get it. Dickstein needs approval of his plan and encouragement. Borg desperately needs assurance that Dickstein will be able to handle this extremely tricky situation. And this underlying sense of what each needs from the other ought to be brought out as well as the surface events of the action which you now have. *OK*

Borg's analysis of the change in Dickstein which you have in the next scene is just the sort of thing I'm talking about. But what you don't give us here along with the analysis is what must be Borg's worry about this change. After all, on Dickstein's success rides the survival of Israel. *OK*

The Tyrin scene, pages 179-187, is a bit long I feel for what it accomplishes. Maybe it seems long only because it is so impersonally descriptive. Tyrin is going to be a continuing character, so that it might be worth the time giving him more of a personality, more of a personal stake in what he's doing, more concern about his success or failure etc. If you accept my previous suggestion that Tyrin be combined with Nik and that he be a continuing associate of Rostov, I think Tyrin's feelings both about Petrov and Rostov would be more intense and more dramatic, and he also would have a larger personal stake

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in the success of the operation .

The short love scene is first rate, but the Tyrin-Rostov scene is a bit flat. Rostov, I think, needs to worry more that Dickstein and/or the Israelis will outwit him, and Tyrin probably ought to have the same concerns and also some additional ones about his relationship with Rostov and his need to maintain Rostov's approval. Tyrin may be overdue for a promotion or some such or maybe angling for a coveted assignment in America. But whatever you choose, he should have I think one personal aim, goal or longing to humanize him and individualize him in the midst of his plot functions.

The little scene between Borg and his Israeli cohorts, pages 193-195, needs strengthening. It might work better if the whole thing were an inner monologue in which Borg was debating with himself what to do. Neither Robert nor Meier emerge as characters and there is no reason really that they should, since they're superfluous except for the bits of exposition which they give us. I think it would be more interesting for Borg to entertain all of their ideas as his own, wrestle with these himself and then come to the conclusion -- at the same time as our sensing how deeply troubled he is about all this.

The first part of the next scene, Dickstein thinking about his future life, is wonderful. The phone call to Lloyds might include a bit of concern about whether or not they would actually give him this information, and then a bit more pleasure at his success in getting it -- or at the promise of getting it. Also, wouldn't he feel some real inner pleasure at having come up with a workable scheme? And also wouldn't he be a bit more troubled than he seems to be about the possibility of an international inquiry over the loss at sea of the uranium ore? It's his feverish concern that hopefully will make the reader feverishly concerned.

The Hassan-Rostov-Tyrin scene, pages 200-204, could use more suspense and tension. Tyrin might be desperately worried that his button will work, and then feel overjoyed when it does. This might be a good place in the book to dig into Hassan's soul. His own thoughts and feelings and reactions would run somewhat counter to those of the two Russians. He also might be dreadfully worried as to where the game he is playing might ultimately lead him vis à vis these two Russians, and this time perhaps his worries could provide the tension. At the scene's very end, Hassan might be desperately worried that he is the man who is going to be put aboard, or if you write the scene largely from Tyrin's point of view, then you might end with his fear -- since of course Tyrin is the man who is going to get that assignment.

Your Buffalo taxi driver I regret to say, is your least

successful character. I don't think you really need him. The drama of this little scene is in Dickstein's head, wondering whether or not Cortone is alive and well, whether or not Cortone has the ability to provide the help Dickstein needs, whether or not Cortone will in fact give his help, whether it will be in time, effective, etc. What if Cortone feels that he already has paid off the debt with the help he gave Dickstein in 1948? What if Cortone wants money? How much could Dickstein pay? etc.

Backhouse strikes me as an unnecessary character. Cortone could just as easily be alone, musing over how to handle his son, and then comes the call from the front gate. The drama of the little scene, it seems to me, lies in Cortone's guessing who it is and in his pleasure at his old friend's arrival.

I would enjoy the scene with Cortone more if underneath the business you let us know how Dickstein really feels about Cortone now, what Cortone appears to think of his life, Cortone's family, etc. Cortone could have an advisor present, but I'm not sure that he needs to be named or discussed. The important thing is the electricity between Dickstein and Cortone, and the fact that in the end Cortone promises to help and Dickstein is relieved if not euphoric. *sk*

The Mossad exchange of cables is lovely.

I also like your introduction of the Coparelli.

Pages 217-223 are pure declarative exposition, and since at this point we are more than half way into the book, we cannot afford, I think, to stop the action dead. I would suggest one of two options. One, boil this down into a page or two. Two, create some tension between Dickstein and Papagopolos. Dickstein may need Papagopolos, since the wiry Greek is the only one in the world who can help; but Dickstein may also know up front that Papagopolos is going to say no, and it could be that Dickstein has no sure way to compel the issue. In fact, Papagopolos may have some hold over Dickstein; so that getting through this hurdle could be a real accomplishment for Dickstein, whereas now he doesn't seem to have to do anything at all.

The Tyrin-Rostov-Hassan scene would work better if it were written from one of those characters' point of view. Mostly you now have it from Tyrin's point of view, but I think it would work even better if the main thrust was Rostov's concern over Tyrin's effectiveness, over Tyrin's ability to carry off this difficult assignment. Or if you prefer to stay with Tyrin, then I think he ought to be a bit more concerned about his own neck and about his likelihood of succeeding at what promises to be not

only an uncomfortable but a highly dangerous mission.

The scene with Tyrin pushing the radio operator in front of a car is good. I think it would be even more suspenseful if the reader were clued in more fully to Tyrin's fears prior to the incident, i.e. what if the guy dies, what if the car doesn't show up on time, etc.?

The main drama in the Borg-Dickstein scene, pages 231-234, is inside Dickstein's heart. That Borg has discovered his affair is a chilling shock, and that Borg thinks Suza is an Arab agent is almost a mortal blow, which must make Dickstein suffer profoundly; but we the readers don't feel that suffering and I think we need to. It would help, I think, if the entire scene were written from Dickstein's point of view; at the beginning he is anticipating problems from Borg in terms of the costs involved or perhaps some other sorts of problems, and then of course we switch into the love problem.

The Rostov-Hassan scene at Heathrow is undramatic. You could cut it in its entirety. Or you could make it dramatic by rewriting it from Rostov's point of view, having Rostov worry about what he should or shouldn't tell Hassan because of the double agent in Cairo and also worrying about what Hassan in the end will or won't tell the Egyptians. He might also speculate about what he would have to do if Hassan proves to be unreliable. If you did something like that, you could create a dramatic subtext for the exposition you are trying to get across -- but I'm still not sure we need quite so much exposition.

✓

In the Pedler scene as you've written it, the suspense is inside Pedler: whether or not he'll get that big order from the Israelis? The real suspense, it seems to me, for the reader should be inside Dickstein, whether or not he can succeed in getting this German to go for the bait? This is a delicate and tricky gambit which may or may not succeed, and the real suspense should be inside Dickstein -- feeling the extreme pressure of time, the new pressure from Borg, etc. I wonder too if we need all this background about Pedler. Again we're stopping the action for a great deal of exposition which I think is largely extraneous.

The love letter is a joy.

Second Pedler scene too I think should be written from Dickstein's point of view. Again he must be in suspense, and then feel pleased with himself that he is succeeding. And why does he consider Pedler to be a poor bastard. Pedler won't be losing anything on this deal, will he? *OK*

What Abdel does is important, but I wonder if we need this scene. The reader has no relation to Abdel as a character. The impact of what he does on Dickstein or Borg or even Mahmoud in Cairo would be greater for the reader than the event itself in Quattara. If Dickstein or Borg felt that they had already lost the race, what a relief at this reprieve! And since we are involved with them, especially with Dickstein, this event would have more impact as he experiences it than as Abdel does. *Talk to me*

The Tyrin scene on board the Coparelli is good, but it would be even better I think if we had some richer sense of how Tyrin feels about these things he is doing and about his hopes and fears.

The Hassan sequence in Palestine does not have for me the punch which I think it can have. First, the whole thing should be written I think from Hassan's point of view. He ought to arrive with some scheme in mind, eager and desperate even to win his comrade's support, hopeful that this scheme will do wonders for the Palestinian cause and perhaps for his own career as well. How he presents the scheme must of course be colored by his relationship with the guerrilla leader, which ought to be brotherly but at the same time fraught with uneasiness, since Hassan has been away so long and he no longer knows quite where he stands in his leader's estimation. We could then feel his anger and helplessness at being excluded from certain deliberations, and then when a counter scheme is suggested to him, he could feel frustrated or delighted, exhilarated with new hope for himself and for the cause. The scene as it's now

written is to me dispassionate, overly political, abstract. We need much more sense-image-- what Hassan smells, feels, touches, how he experiences this world from which he has been gone so long. And at the end, wouldn't he be terrified? Wouldn't some part of him want to run away from all this? Wouldn't he be afraid of being trapped by Rostov? What you give us now is the Arab plan, and what we need is Hassan's emotional reactions from the moment he gets there and continuing until with or without his agreement the plan is hatched. ✓

The scene in which the radio beacon is installed on the Stromberg I think is superfluous. All we need is a one or two line report to Rostov that this has been accomplished. ?

The underlying idea of the scene with Cohen is utterly delightful, but in the scene itself you don't give us much of that delight -- the thrill that Cohen must feel and the thrill that Dickstein must feel in sharing Cohen's pleasure and amazement. - ✓ Also we ought to enjoy Dickstein's causing Borg such discomfiture. Again we need more of a look into Dickstein's emotions -- in this instance happy ones. The ending of the scene strikes me as too cool. Dickstein needs to be more desperate to know what his opponent's next move is likely to be.

The Hassan scene needs to be set up internally. Will he find a ship? Will he find a crew? What if he can't? Will he be able to find out where and when Dickstein's hijack is going to take place? What if he can't find out? What if the KGB discovers that he's working behind their back? He ought to be sweating almost every moment, shouldn't he? ✓

The scene in Moscow could use a bit stronger sense of place and also more suspense. The Russians ought to be much more reluctant about revealing any information at all, and Hassan ought to struggle much harder to find out anything. After all, the Russians no longer trust the Egyptians. Again Hassan needs to sweat to get anything from these people, and we ought to perceive the scene from his desperate point of view, terrified lest he fail, terrified lest they discover what he is really up to, furious at his being treated like a second class citizen etc., and also hungering to turn the tables on these arrogant bastards. ✓

The scene in Oxford works nicely, but it probably ought to be "set up" a bit. Hassan could worry in advance about how to deal with Ashford, whether or not to tell him the truth, how to phrase things, and what if Ashford won't help, knows nothing, etc. Then when Ashford volunteers to help, the scene ought to end on

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Hassan's feeling of relief and then maybe profound pleasure.

Yes -
Suza's arrival on the scene could not be better.

The scene with Ashford's reasoning is good, but it ought to be written from Hassan's emotional point of view, with Hassan's inner reactions to most or all of what Ashford has to say. The subtext is Hassan's desperate need to locate Dickstein, and we should feel that desperate longing all through this visit. Yes.

Brilliant academic though Ashford may be, it's unlikely that he would remember the name of a chance visitor at his home twenty-one years earlier; but on the other hand, he could keep a guest book, and the name could have been written in it. He was so impressed by Cortone's new ship.

The scene in which Ashford confirms to Suza that he wants her help in locating Dickstein is wonderful, but I think it would be even more wonderful if you could play up Suza's reactions a little more.

The inner monologue in the bath is first rate. Why so quickly does she conclude that "to find him herself, she has to lead them to him."? Wouldn't she hope to get a lead on where Dickstein is and then shake off Hassan? Yes.

Dickstein needs to lust over that Uranium as he watches it being loaded. He needs to ache to possess it and be terribly worried that something, anything, may foul things up for him. The seduction of Sarne, if it's to be dramatic, has to be experienced through Dickstein's eyes, as he worries whether or not Sarne will in fact bed this woman, whether or not the gas is going to work, whether or not Koch is going to be accepted on the ship, etc. As you have it, it's a little too easy. You might also consider dispensing with this scene and letting us know its essentials in a line or two later on. Yes. Definitely.

The scene between Cortone and Suza would be stronger, I think, if written from Suza's point of view. Will this man see her? If he does, does he know anything that can help? If he does know anything, will he tell her? How much should she tell him? Her situation is fraught with suspense, agony even, but this doesn't really come through in this draft -- mainly because you're using either Cortone's point of view or an altogether objective one. Why by the way does she not warn Cortone against Hassan, who she knows will be following them? OK.

Dickstein's scene on the Stromberg seems to me to

be largely a rehash of exposition which we already know. If he's going to brief these young agents, perhaps the entire briefing ought to be devoted to things which might go wrong; things which would involve death and destruction -- and we could then sense Dickstein's horror that he may be leading these nice young men into what could be their death or what could be the destruction of Israel.

Suza's horror at Hassan's suddenly appearing and pointing a gun at Cortone must be greater. This section should be written from within her shocked sensibility, I think. Also, it requires a bit of preparation. Hassan has nowhere until now done anything violent or done anything to suggest that he is capable of such violence, so that his suddenly brandishing a gun and shooting Cortone in cold blood seems a little hard to believe. We either have to know well in advance that he plans to kill Cortone, or Cortone has to do something at this point which provokes him into killing Cortone. In either case, I still think the scene should be experienced by us the readers through Suza. Yes.

At the airport the confrontation ought to be from Hassan's point of view. He's been found out. What are these people going to do to him? Will they ruin the possibilities of his carrying out his plan? Will they kill him? He's got to be terrified, and then feel very relieved at being allowed to leave and return to Cairo. N.

I wonder if Suza oughtn't to be much more terrified by her Russian captors than she seems to be. Perhaps this is a bit soon for her to be constructing plots. I would imagine that the only thing she can feel at this stage is despair, loss, hopelessness; and that perhaps a bit later, once she's on board the Karla, she might begin thinking of what if anything she might be able to do to salvage the situation. OK.

The scene in Athens would be stronger if it were written from Borg's point of view. All the news he gets is deeply upsetting, terrifying even, and yet he hardly seems affected. The Egyptians are closer to having the bomb, Dickstein's scheme is in grave jeopardy. Borg ought to be fearing for his own very neck, shouldn't he? Yes.

The scene in which Dickstein decodes Borg's cable is superb.

Hassan's reunion with the Fedayen is flat. Perhaps when Hassan sees that his compatriots are all seasick, he may be stricken with terror, have second thoughts about their abilities to cope with the Israelis at sea, want to chuck the whole thing. Mahmoud might sense this, upbraid Hassan, and thereby inject some life into this

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scene. *No. Hassan's sense of embarrassment, glory.*

On the Coparelli, throwing the spare oil pump over board probably ought to be handled from Koch's point of view. He's the one who is undertaking a dangerous mission, worrying about whether he'll be caught, whether he'll succeed or fail, and we could have Tyrin observe and send his message (and I'm not even sure that's necessary), but in either case the suspense would be greater if Koch were the central figure here. And then he could continue on with his mission in the engine room. Again he needs to anticipate the things that might go wrong, the dangers. He needs to feel success at each bit of progress, and terrible fear and frustration at each obstacle. He needs to feel something special when he's finally destroyed the pump, and again when he has persuaded the captain that there is nothing more to be done.

Yes.
The scene between Rostov and Suza which starts on page 327 is good, but it would be even better if you "set it up." If we know Suza's plan before she springs it, we can worry with her as she sweats over whether or not to go ahead with it, over how to make it sound most convincing, over what the consequences might be if Rostov doesn't believe her. Once she breaks the news, I'm puzzled about some of the dialogue. Rostov calls Hassan a liar and a traitor, but would Rostov think that Suza also considers Hassan to be a liar and traitor, since Suza presumably is herself of Palestinian origin. There is something missing in here which I think is necessary to establish (for Rostov anyway) that Suza's loyalties lie with Egypt and Russia as opposed to the Fedayeen. Finally, I find it frustrating for you to end this scene on an unnatural cliffhanger. If Suza has something else to tell Rostov, I think she ought to tell him; and the suspense ought to lie in whether or not he will believe her and whether or not ultimately her plan is going to work and she's going to get out of this thing alive.

Tyrin's hiding on the Coparelli could be cut some -- if not entirely. It would be more suspenseful, I think, if Tyrin worried more about being caught and also began worrying about what ultimately might become of him.

When the Nablus is looking for the Coparelli, I find it odd that you make no mention of radar. I don't know of any seagoing vessel today that does not have radar, so that when one ship is looking for another, it relies on visual sightings only for other ships that are very close by. Perhaps the Nablus' radar could just have broken down, and it could be that they are unable to repair it.

Although Hassan is about to risk his person in what surely is the adventure of his life, we don't really feel his tension and excitement. He must lust for that Uranium, lust for the blood of the Israelis, and also perhaps be scared stiff. The whole adventure including his relationship with his compatriots should be experienced through his sensibility. ✓

Would Koch have gone to sleep?

Tyrin's being caught in this change of plans is wonderful. For this little scene to have its full impact, Tyrin needs to be both more amazed and more terrified. How does he feel about Rostov, the Fedayeen? His humanity ought to peek through.

That this stratagem turns out to be Suza's is to me not particularly exciting. What's exciting is the fear and turmoil and longing inside Suza as to whether or not this will work, whether or not it will save Dickstein. All right, now Dickstein knows that the Arabs have taken over the ship, but he still is in mortal danger, since presumably now he is going to try and hijack the ship away from the Arabs, and shouldn't she be worrying about that?

On page 339 is where you might consider a scene in the Israeli cabinet, one which I think would have more impact than the ones you have at the beginning of the book. It would appear that if there is to be a pitched battle at sea, far from Israel, on a ship loaded with Uranium, there is a possibility, maybe even a strong likelihood, that whatever happens the whole world is going to find out about it. Dickstein also knows (as does Borg) that the Russians also are somewhere in the picture and that they too may become involved. Borg may feel that at this point, since the theft of the Uranium may fail and since the worldwide publicity may be disastrous for the Israeli cause that it's necessary to get cabinet approval before continuing with the operation. A scene of that kind at this point would, I feel, enhance the "importance" of what's going on -- much in the way that your scenes with Hitler and Churchill did in the latter portions of EYE OF THE NEEDLE. ✓

Similarly, you may consider having such a scene in Moscow, either at this point or a bit earlier or a bit later. The Russians too must face the possibility that Rostov's information may be wrong, that they may end up ramming and sinking an innocent ship with all sorts of bad publicity which may accrue. There are questions of legality. The Russians have no right or business ramming any ship in the Mediterranean, no matter who or what its business. Obviously if they

are right, they can assume that world opinion will be on their side, but there is some risk; and it seems to me that the KGB would want approval from the Prime Minister himself before authorizing such a move. If you have such a scene, here again you would underscore nicely, I think, the world-wide importance of Dickstein's scheme. *Yes*

Dickstein ought to be more shocked than he appears to be by the news that the Arabs have taken Coparelli.

The laying out of Dickstein's strategy is dry and even a little boring unless you add some emotion. You could easily get this by Dickstein's having some thoughts about some of these young men and about what might become of them as they attempt to execute his plan. *Yes*

You mention that he suspects an ambush. Where does he imagine the Russians are, and what does he think they may be up to? And also, wouldn't he have recognized that the signal did not come from Koch?

The battle scenes as you've written them would probably translate beautifully into film, since you have a terrific visual sense, and I feel that you have seen all these events as they happen. On the pages of a book though they don't work so well. Confusion. I suggest that you limit our experience of this battle to no more than four points of view, and three would be even better. The reader cannot absorb the names of so many faceless characters so quickly, and I would suggest that we experience the battle through the points of view of Dickstein, one of the other Israelis, and also from Hassan's point of view. If you feel it is absolutely necessary, you could add one more Israeli. For these one or two new Israeli point-of-view characters, you'll also have to do just a bit more with them as human beings.

The flow of the battle action also needs some pauses so that the reader can get his bearings. I suggest that after two or three episodes of violent action, you put us into the minds of one of our point-of-view characters who then surveys the scene, evaluates in what respect he and his group have succeeded or failed and plans exactly how he is going to set about his next task, weighing the risks and rewards. If you break up the stream of violence in this way, I think in the end the whole wonderful sequence of action which you have devised will become truly mesmerizing. *OK*

On page 359, I wonder if you oughtn't to make a bit more of Koch's mutilation. Also, I think that Dickstein ought to be the one to make this discovery. *Mafra*

I loved your climax. But what became of Mahmoud? At some point in this battle, Dickstein or one of the other Israelis ought to get him too. His demise could perhaps be experienced from Hassan's point of view, since no one else would know who he is. *Yes.*

The scene with Suza in the radio room ought to continue from her point of view right to the end. What she thinks and how she feels about Tyrin's news and Rostov's plans are as dramatic or more dramatic than the facts themselves.

The sinking of the Stromberg is a milestone of sorts, but no one reacts. Dickstein or Borg or the Israeli cabinet or someone in whom we are interested ought to feel something about this event. *OK.*

Pedler at this stage of the story should be gone and forgotten. His relationship to the cargo is a technicality which I think we safely can assume has already been taken care of by the previous machinations. I would omit this scene entirely and push ahead with the action. *No.*

Suppose either that Pedler can't see the edipe coming down

Suza's attack on Aleksander is very nice indeed. But here again is a scene which would benefit, I think, from a bit of setting up. The anguish of her making such decisions, the worry, the stark terror -- all of which are in her heart and mind as she proceeds to do the things she does. If you clued us in to some of this just before the action actually begins, I think we'd experience it a bit more sharply.

When she calls Coparelli on the radio would she assume that Dickstein would be at the radio to answer her? Wouldn't she have to ask for someone to call him or something like that?

The way you have worked Suza into this climax is brilliant. I'm thrilled with everything she says and does. A bit more insight into her feelings and emotions as she does these things would enhance this scene even more.

Dickstein's subduing an entire Russian warship single-handedly is pure Errol Flynn, and I love it. You're going to have to do just a bit though to help me believe it. I think early in the scene we need a paragraph inside Dickstein's head in which he figures out for himself how he may pull it off. The problem for the reader is not that he convince these other Israelis, but that he convince himself (and us). Of course, this is pure fantasy, but just the kind of fantasy readers and especially movie-goers

love; and I'm positive that we'll get a major movie star who is going to adore playing this scene.

A detail. On page 389 make it more clear that the rope which he makes fast to the ladder is tying the launch to the Karla. The first time I read this, I thought he had abandoned the launch, so that I was altogether surprised in the end to find that he was retreating to the launch. This launch also, I gather, must be a fairly substantial little boat if it carries a radio (page 394), and I guess it would help if we knew a bit more about its size and equipment at the point at which the launch first is introduced.

The epilogue has some delicious touches in it, but it's also a bit longer than it needs to be. Don Fine I'm sure can suggest a few cuts.

Ken, I hope you are not exhausted from reading all this. But I've done all this work because the stakes are high. If the full potential of your terrific story is realized, our paperback guarantee goes from 650,000 to 850,000, and there also is I think in this book a huge movie sale -- not to mention big business from foreign language publishers.

Watering everything I've said down to a line or two, I would say the key thought you must keep in your head as you revise is -- emotion! Too many of the scenes present facts only. In almost every scene if not every one, a character in whom the reader has interest should have something crucial at stake, and his or her feelings must be more apparent -- so that the reader too can become and will stay emotionally involved all the way through.