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June 28, 1982

Mr. Ken Follett



Dear Ken,

Mostly I was very impressed with THE BULL AND THE PEACOCK. About half-way through, I got up and danced around, because I couldn't believe how well everything was organized and put together; how interesting it all turned out to be; and because I knew the foreign publishers were going to get what they paid for!

My main criticism has to do with the fact that as a point of view character, Ross is wonderful--but he's only involved in the first half of the book. My feeling is that the second half really needs at least one point of view character through whose eyes we experience all the tension, fear and excitement of the rescue mission itself. It seemed to me that just as tension was building in one segment of the mission, you'd switch to another segment. Instead of all that tension building into one wonderful climax (or a series of them), it all kept dissipating. It seemed very long and very drawn out. (I know those are the facts of the situation; but if this were a novel, you would have had things happen much more quickly, one thing on top of the next.)

I thought Rashid was good, although a bit over psychologized. What disappointed me the most with his character was that he was so one-track minded, caring only about getting to America. I wanted to know how he felt about the revolution, about the blood and the torment his fellow countrymen were undergoing. For instance, in the beginning, the violence didn't really reach me. I felt I had the nonchalant, Americans-can-do-anything attitude of Paul C. Perhaps someone else's view, i.e. Rashid's, could get across the point that the country was undergoing a goddamned revolution. Though Paul and Bill experienced great physical discomfort in jail, I never had the sense that they were scared to death. When they meet high Iranian officials

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in the jail, they are only relieved to meet other English-speaking folk. To me, that ^(their presence) would indicate that things were very very bad. Later (page 123), Bill gets a photo of his son Christopher--but we get no reaction to this. For a religious man, I would think perhaps that his soul, or at least his thoughts, would run a bit deeper than we're shown. On page 125, I was even more surprised to learn that Paul would give away a picture of his kids he was fond enough to have posted on his wall to a man you describe as having "apparently grown fond of them" (Paul and Bill).

The rest of my comments are sort of line-by-line reactions I had while reading:

page 67: After a good portrait of Simons, I found the last line of this page a bit disappointing. I guess I wanted more of his reaction. Like what he did when he put the phone down--or something. The line struck me as a bit anticlimactic.

page 81: I found this last line a bit dumb on Simons' part and Coburn's reply even dumber.

page 89: You say: It was, of course, Ron Davis who made him mad. Why 'of course'?
It's not clear why Schwebach can't take the bomb ingredients with him.

page 99/100: It's not clear to me why the Shah, of all people, would want the US government to talk to Khomeini?

page 104: I was surprised that Simons, Coburn, Poche and Boulware all flew together on a mission like this. I would think they would have split up just in case one of the planes crashed, or something.

page 115: I loved this whole bit with the code. Around these pages, I wanted to know how Coburn felt being alone in this crazy, revolutionary country, far from family and friends. I wondered if he was suspicious about any Iranians following him around? None of the team ever seems to have a thought about someone, somehow having got wind of their plans. They don't seem scared enough to me.

page 140/1: If Ross Perot's name was on the stop list after having gone to the Embassy, it's unclear what this means about the Embassy: are they feeding information to the Iranians or is there a spy in the Embassy or what?

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page 145/6: Thought you'd want to know that the word 'formidable' is used twice to describe Gasr Prison.

I was interested in knowing for whom Gasr was a palace and wondered if, as representative of a changing Iran, it wouldn't be interesting to also describe the change over of Gasr from palace to prison. This could also give the reader a sense of what the Iranians were rebelling against.

My notes next say: I'm up to page 165 and don't understand what the rescue team is waiting for. Or what they are doing in the mean time. I want to know since the tension and excitement is with them.

page 179: It's not clear until here why they are risking so much to drive to the border.

Somewhere between page 179 and 214, I wrote that it all seemed so straight and serious, humorless. And I was getting the sense that just for these two men-- against the backdrop of a whole revolution, with thousands dying and more risking their lives--it*all seemed somehow out of proportion. Then I wondered if *the rescue mission and all it entailed/

what was missing was a point of view character or two or three to remind me of how important and crucial it really was.

page 214: I was very disappointed with your 'A moment later they walked in, and all hell broke loose.' I want to feel the jubilation, relief, love, happiness...everything; after all they've all been through. Scratch that--I just read page 215 et al.

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I guess my overall comment/^{is}that with the exception of Ross, the characters strike me more as players than real people. Which makes what they are going through less real to me and less exciting.

Ken, I really think you've done a fantastic job. And I think the book is going to sell like mad.

Love,



Sue Rapp