



Gavriel Cohen's Conversations with Isaiah Berlin: No. 1

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Gavriel Cohen: Conversation No. 1

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Selected topics

Origin of interest in Russia

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America

New Dealers

Churchill

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Freud & psychoanalysis

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W. F. R. Hardie

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Solomon Rachmilevich

The Schalits

International Centre for Peace in the Middle East

Raymond Carr

Side A

IB What do you want to talk about?

GC What I want to do at the beginning is to ask one, two or three

...

IB Questions.

GC ... questions at random and then check ...

IB We'll see what happens.

GC ... some of my – things I told about you, whether I was correct or not.

IB Yes.

GC How come that you are better equipped than nearly anybody to deal with British society, British history, British personalities, for the very reason that if you are not from within and yet have the possibility to observe phenomena from outside, like so many people you dealt with? How come you dealt with British history or British personalities less than one would expect? I mean, you didn't write a lot about England, or you wrote I think only on Disraeli.

IB It was really for Jewish reasons.

GC You wrote about Disraeli?

IB For Jewish reasons.

GC Yes. And so why didn't you write about ...?

IB Because I don't write about history in general. Who have I written about? I don't write about contemporary history. The only thing was, I was in America during the war, and so I was impressed by what went on there and thought I understood their politics. British politics is something my attitude towards which was that of most people: I wasn't specially interested. Neither in that, nor in contemporary British history. I took it for granted. I was not a political observer. By nature. I was made one by the war artificially. In the 1930s when I was growing up I was exceedingly detached from politics, history and these things.

GC Yes. Cultural movements, literary movements, you wrote about the Enlightenment in Russia. You wrote about Turgenev, Belinsky, not to mention Herzen or Vico and everybody. Didn't any British thinker attract you? Or let's say the Romanticism in England that you dealt with so often in Germany. It strikes one, doesn't it?

IB A completely reasonable question. Let me tell you. My real interest was and continues to be ideas. Not specifically political ideas, but ideas in general. And, as you say, certain cultural developments. Funnily enough, the reason for my Russian interest is because of my origin. I had a certain nostalgia for the language,

which I didn't speak much in England since the age of ten, or eleven, although I read a certain amount. And it became a kind of romantic universe to me because it no longer existed, because I had memories of Russia, and the Russian Revolution, which had become almost a kind of historical story, something outside the flow of reality. Some sort of – no, I daren't say fantasy, but anyhow, something which I thought of as one thinks – it was like something in a book or in a film. And it simply arose partly out of the affinity to the language and my accidental discovery of the writings of Herzen. It was purely accidental. On the shelves of the London Library. I'd hardly heard of him before, and that fascinated me. From there I went on to other things. Of course the Russian Revolution. It was a central event of my childhood. So that everything that led to it was of natural interest to me. From the interest in the Russian Revolution I went on to Marx. From Marx I went on to ideas in general, particularly in the eighteenth century, which preceded Marx. And then I found that ideas were expressed much more vividly, in much more extreme terms, which made them more interesting, even if it was exaggerated, in France, in Germany, in Russia, and not in England, where ideas never played a central part. You might say 'What about Burke?' Well, one took some interest But Burke was fundamentally a Member of Parliament, and a publicist, who didn't go very deeply into the analysis of ideas, who was not really governed by abstract ideas in the way in which all these fanatics in France, in Russia, in Germany, the intelligentsia, were – similarly with poetry. German Romantic poetry is genuinely Romantic. Russian Romantic poetry less so, but still Romantic. English Romantic poetry, qua Romanticism, marvellous as it is, is a pale reflection of German Romanticism. Much more so than French Romanticism, which was much more extreme, much more violent, in a way more absurd, but therefore more noticeable, more vivid. That is the reason. And the same is true about political ideas. Who had political ideas in England, in the nineteenth-century? Mill. I did take an interest in Mill. Carlyle. I've never written about Carlyle, but Carlyle I do read.

GC Because of historiography?

IB Because he was a German thinker. Carlyle does not descend from any British thought and has no disciples in England. He's in line with German thinkers. That's why Mr Powell likes him so much. As

he himself says, it has much more affinity to German historians, to people like Treitschke, to people like Wagner, to German nationalism and German Romanticism than it has to anything in England. He really was hostile to the whole atmosphere of nineteenth-century England in which he lived. What other English thinkers can you think of? Who are the ideologists?

GC Oh, let's say Bentham. Or Adam Smith. From another angle.

IB Well, Economics was something which I was frightened of. I did it for a year, and understood not a word. I was examined in it, and repeated propositions which these people had uttered, in the hope that the examiners would understand them; I did not. So I got a perfectly respectable low second grade, second-class marks, for it. I never understood Ricardo. I didn't really understand Marx's economics till much later. Bentham, yes. He is too dull. Just too dull. He may have been right about many things, and if one is interested in jurisprudence, then of course Bentham is an important deflationary influence on conservatism and traditionalism. But my natural interest is in rather vividly or pungently or sharply expressed views, and not decent common sense, which I take for granted and which I believe in myself, but I was always attracted by – my speciality is, I think – relations with the enemy, by which I mean reading the [8:00] people to discover chinks in the armour which one takes for granted. It is more interesting to know what the enemy says against one than to read thinkers with whom one agrees, and whom one therefore takes for granted, and to that extent, will try to cheat us [?].

GC Yes. Now I thought that there was another angle to it when it comes to political thought. It puzzles me what attracted you to America, to the United States.

IB Nothing. I never thought I'd go there.

GC No, but when you were there.

IB Ah, I was fascinated.

GC Fascinated. I believe that one of the reasons is that here you had an unexpected example of intellectuals and academics that had their impact on politics. That fulfilled ideas in politics. I mean the New Dealers. I thought that you were attracted by these kinds of personalities or ideas. Let's say on the one hand Lenin, Churchill or other personalities who had their impact on history, or that resulted in history having a different shape, or the New Dealers. Or am I wrong?

IB No, I think you're right. But it depends on something else. I think it was the result of my reading of these ideologists, in Russian, German, French. I became much more at home in the nineteenth century than I ever was in the twentieth. And I understood the vigour of, for example, liberal ideas; in the nineteenth century they were very sympathetic to me. In the twentieth century the whole thing became very mixed up. I no longer felt a powerful pull towards either socialism, conservatism, or liberalism in England. Partly because the whole thing had become too moderate, despite the violent differences of political attitude, expressed in rather grey and rather sensible language, whereas in the nineteenth century it was full of passionate eloquence, which I'm in favour of. Some people hate rhetoric, they loathe eloquence. They want flat, truthful, decent, quiet statements. I'm rather attracted by Michelet, by Mazzini, by Herzen, by Carlyle.

GC Would you include Turgenev?

IB Turgenev was not very eloquent. He was a wonderful writer but his ideas were – my ideas were much more like his [than] like [those of] anybody else, probably, in the nineteenth century, but ...

GC We'll come to that later.

IB No, no. He wasn't a preacher.

GC I know; that's why I asked.

IB But I have nothing against eloquence. I think there's much to be said for it. It was a certain passion and a certain exaggeration, otherwise ideas don't get through. Let me tell you, unless ideas are

exaggerated, they don't crack the crust of accepted thought. That is why it is only the exaggerators who ever had historical good fortune. I think the only non-exaggerators who have ever been remembered – I've said it somewhere else – are Aristotle and Locke. Everybody else exaggerated, and that's why they somehow got through. In America, in the politics of the nineteenth century, Republicans and Democrats were much more like Disraeli and Gladstone, much more like Campbell-Bannerman and Salisbury and Roosevelt than anything in England. To take sides, Roosevelt stood for exactly what one thought one liked, the Spanish Civil War; it was exactly the same thing. On one side decent people, liberals, generosity, the working classes, students, intellectuals, rational people. On the other side clericalism, despotism, traditionalism, feudalism, capitalism.

GC Of course Churchill, again, was more of a twentieth-century than a nineteenth-century figure.

IB Churchill was a hero only because he saved our lives. But he was.

GC And his eloquence attracted you?

IB Certainly. But I didn't sympathise with his views.

GC And not the eloquence of the Romanticism?

IB When I met him, I was fascinated, but I didn't like him. Too brutal. A bit too brutal, but he saved our lives and therefore I thought he was a superhuman hero, and, like many heroes, not a terribly nice man. And always had many dark sides.

GC Let's come back to America. Still I want to suggest: you are interested in implementations of ideas, I mean not just pure ideas.

IB I don't know.

GC And I did think this also attracted you in the States because you were there in a period in which the New Dealers did ... And it is probably the only example, except possibly Labour in 1945–50.

IB Correct.

GC Democratic politics was directly influenced by ideas, by intellectuals, by theories, and implemented, and relatively successful.

IB This is absolutely true. The people I met, who became friends of mine, were by and large New Dealers.

GC That's what I thought.

IB Felix Frankfurter, for example. Whatever has been said against him – his frivolity and superficiality – he was a great friend of mine. He was a man of warm, liberal sentiments. He brought up a whole generation of liberal reformers. Ben Cohen, who was responsible for more New Deal legislation than anybody else, he drafted all those bills which the Senators then got through. He was probably the most influential figure in what might be called New Deal legislation – social legislation. Like Depriz, perhaps slightly younger than myself, some of them, like Philip Graham, who was later publisher of the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek* and all that. He was a typically passionate young man who wanted to transform America. I was never a socialist, although I voted for the Labour Party steadily before the war, for obvious reasons. Because of Fascism and the Spanish Civil War and the extreme anti-Appeasement policies which were for me begun in the 1930s long before they were recorded. I never thought Mr. Baldwin was any good. I never thought that the Conservatives in Parliament were anything but people who wanted to deeply enter into war, who did not sympathise with some liberal people who were in Europe. And after Hitler, it was quite clear that the dislike of him was insufficient to stimulate action. What they were terrified of were the Russians. So was I, but it didn't for me follow that an alliance with Germany would accomplish some kind of defence against the rise of and the inundation of Communism into Europe. But back to America, yes, these people, my friend Prichard later went to jail, never mind for what, my friend Philip Graham, my friends in Washington by and large, people I had associated with, were doers.

GC Yes, that's what I thought.

IB They applied ideas for the transformation of American social economical life. I had never seen that happen before my eyes. As you say, maybe the New Deal and the Welfare State under Attlee were somewhat the same. By that time I was back in Oxford and involved in teaching and there was no longer anything to do with government, because I might have been if anyone had ...

GC You had friends?

IB I had friends. Yes. If anyone had wanted me to involve myself in these activities, I might have done. But nobody ever asked me to do anything in that sphere after I came back. In America I was deeply involved. The Americans kept on writing letters to me, saying, how could I keep out of comparable work in England? The answer was that there wasn't really any room for me in England. Nobody thought of me as really useful. Big pity. I would have been, if I might have been tried. But I never was.

GC And when you came back from America and you were so fascinated by it, did it surprise your friends? I mean, it was not common, among British intellectuals – old traditions in England were anti-American, the aristocracy for one reason, Labour for a different reason, and Oxford–Cambridge I believe too.

IB What are you talking about, the 1930s?

GC No, 1945 when you came back from America.

IB Labour was not anti-American at all then.

GC Then it changed.

IB No, because of Roosevelt. They were not. That isn't so.

GC No. But looking from above, Roosevelt is all right, but ...

IB The Truman doctrine didn't suit the pacifists or fellow-travellers or people on the Labour left, but the anti-American sentiment came from humiliation of England in the 1940s, because America was thought to be likely to trample over Europe. [America] was too

patronising, too rich, too strong, and the English had found it difficult to accept. Attlee was not pro-American, certainly. That's because he was a little Englander, fundamentally. Bevin was not pro-American, because of Palestine.

GC No, he was. Palestine stalled him.

IB The Marshall Plan, he grasped at both ends.

GC Bevin was pro-American from 1916, and he was the exception among the Labour leadership,

IB Unbelievable!

GC And Churchill was pro-American, and was exceptional among the Conservatives. I don't know all the reasons. There were some affinities between Churchill and Bevin. That was one of them.

IB Bevin was caught in the middle ...

GC And that's why Palestine he hated more so, because it spoiled his relationship with America.

IB Cripps did testify to that.

GC Of course!

IB So did – Dalton was not particularly anti-American. I wouldn't think.

GC Not particularly.

IB No. But I'm trying to think who they were. They were from the Labour government. Who were they?

GC The main figures you mentioned already.

IB Morrison.

GC Atlee, Dalton.

IB Morrison, I know he was.

GC Harold Laski was, of course, in general, but he didn't count.

IB That's correct.

GC No, but I mean the general mood.

IB The general mood was America, big capitalist power.

GC Exactly.

IB Big capitalist power, and not to be trusted, so we mustn't have a country dominated by extremely rich men, even if some of them were quite liberal rich men.

GC And on the Conservative side? Of course it's aristocrats, looking underneath.

IB But that's also true of the middle classes. That's perfectly true. I'll tell you what their position was. Their position was that here in England, an impoverished aristocrat kept going, whereas the proletarian nephew, humiliated by the fact that he had to live off somebody whom socially and intellectually he despised. And that created bitterness. That was the position. The Americans were much more pro-British after the war than the British were pro-American. During the war, the Americans were anti-British to a high degree.

GC They thought they were imperialist

IB Oh yes. Imperialism was the main thing.

GC Britain ought to hold a grudge against America after 1945, and the grudge faded rather quickly, I think.

IB What was the grudge?

GC Britain fought the war, lost its assets; America came into the war later; and America came out of the war the [greatest] power, and the

British the second-class power. You were sent to America, inter alia, to help Roosevelt to rally American public opinion, when America had to wait two years and so on and so forth.

IB In 1941 I was a British propagandist In 1942 I no longer was.

GC No. There was no need for it.

IB For America was at war.

GC Yes.

IB There was some need for it. Because the anti-British sentiment did not cease with the war.

GC Yes, I know.

IB Helping this empire to continue to be an empire stuck in the throats of a good many even conservative Americans. It was none of my business to do anything about that, because I stopped, and my job changed.

GC But let's come back to my original question. When you came back from America, were your opinions about American intellectuals at the many universities different from your colleagues'?

IB Yes.

GC Did you have to argue with them?

IB Yes. They were different.

GC That's what I thought.

IB I was impressed, yes. I was much more pro-American than most people I met. Much more, because I had lived there, and because I found that Americans had certain virtues which Europeans lacked, which I found intensely sympathetic and not dissimilar from what I found in the Russians in the nineteenth century. The Americans had a much broader vision than the English. They didn't see things in

such minute terms. They had less taste, less discrimination, less nuance, less sense of the more delicate and more inner sides of life, but much bigger horizons, much more generosity of temper, even politically. The idea that everything was done for the sake of power for America, which people like Chomsky think, that was false. There was a great deal of genuine altruism.

GC I agree with you.

IB And there still is.

GC There is an idealism in American foreign policy.

IB There is an idealism in America which was never allowed for in Europe. [23:08] They are thought to be materialist – the richest hunting[?] country. This is not so. Watergate could never have happened in a country which was not morally inclined. Never. Rightly or wrongly. Every American president who was ever elected before Johnson was always elected because he was thought to be a morally upright figure, likely to be generous and morally decent. Very many of them weren't, but they were thought to be before they were elected. The first president who was not thought to be a nice man was Johnson. No, nice he was not thought, but he was clever, able, interesting, important. Nixon was not thought to be a nice man, in spite of the enormous vote. After that they were all nice again. No, never had I thought that Johnson was a nice fellow.

GC Did you establish deep relations with academics, with universities?

IB No.

GC Not yet.

IB No, not at all. I never had anything to do with the academics in Washington. I met academics who happened to be American officials. Economists etc. I had nothing to do with the universities.

GC When did you start?

IB When I went to Harvard in 1949.

GC And did you like it?

IB At first I couldn't really find my feet; I didn't quite know how to function. In the end I became extremely fond of it, yes. I admired it very much. There were things in it which I regretted, things which I wrote down rather tactlessly. When I had a long period in bed with a slipped disc and nothing better to do, and I was asked by *Time and Tide*, which was a very minor periodical of the Lady Rhondda which used to produce diary-like reflections. One of my reflections was that too many of the American academics whom I had met felt guilt about teaching useless subjects. The professors of Greek were not entirely happy unless they could also claim to be doing something socially useful – for hospitals, do something for the poor, do something decent and good. And there was a general sense that the business of human beings was to improve mankind. What the Germans called *eine Menschenverbesserung*.

GC And you criticised it?

IB Yes. I said there was absolutely no reason for not doing intellectual things because they were interesting or because one liked it.

GC That's very interesting, because it leads to another question that will surprise you, but – I want to check myself now. I suggested once that what attracted you in American university life was the combination of, on the one hand, the American tradition that you liked, as you described earlier, and the contribution of the high academic standard that the European exiles brought. That this breed produced possibly the best universities for a generation. Am I right?

IB I don't think the people in Europe, the European exiles produced quite as much, gave as much benefit to America as is sometimes supposed. In some subjects, yes, in other subjects, not. Obviously in the sciences, enormously, the impact was terrific, not – they were pretty good before that, by no means, it didn't lag behind.

GC But still.

IB There were prizewinners before the war and so on, but still, the exiles, from Einstein onwards, made a great deal of difference. In particular, of course, physicists in Los Alamos – the bomb. But taken altogether, they had both morally and intellectually made a difference. Some of them were very honorable, high-minded, noble people. Some of the scientists, particularly the Jewish scientists. An exceptional lot. Morally exceptionally high-grade. Historians, I'm not so sure there was a great influx from Europe. There were some German historians, of course, who came from Europe who probably raised the standards in this country.

GC Art historians, of course.

IB Art historians made a total difference.

GC The whole difference.

IB I would think in England, too. The Warburg Institute transformed art history in England, and these people transformed art history in America. Panofski and others.

GC And Wittkower, Schapiro.

IB Certainly. Wittkower, Schapiro. They were post-war, of course. Wittkower came after the war.

GC Yes, that's right.

IB He was of course in England during the war.

GC But still, it's the same.

IB Still. The impact of that kind of thing – the German art historians made a difference, certainly. Though they did have very good art historians of their own. Better than ours. Meyer Shapiro was a better art historian and a native born ...

GC Is he a native born?

IB He was born in Shavli, he was born in Lithuania.

GC Was he born in Lithuania? Because I considered him also to be an exile, I didn't know ...

IB No. He went to school in the East Side, East Side New York. Straight East Side New York. Typical New York Jewish intellectual. Like Sidney Hook, like the rest of them. Like all the left-wing intelligentsia of the 1930s. Like Lionel Trilling. That was his generation, and those were the people. His people. All these people like Max Lerner. Now, in some subjects, for example psychology and sociology, the impact was not entirely magnificent.

GC It was extreme but not that good.

IB Very strong, yes. Well, I'm rather prejudiced in this matter. It seemed to me that they introduced an enormous amount of European smoke, and writing in America, both sociological and psychological, became much more unreadable as a result.

GC About sociology I agree.

IB Jargon! In a big way. Psychoanalysis of course was no doubt improved by the entry of the Europeans, but ...

GC What's your evaluation of the contribution of psychoanalysis to society? I mean, what's your attitude?

IB In America it became – particularly in New York, and particularly in Jewish circles – it became a kind of religion. In England, when people are psychoanalysed, they don't talk about it to other people. In America it is perfectly normal to say 'I'm very sorry. I have to go and see my psychoanalyst' It took over in a very big way, and entered every sphere of thought and action. It became a tremendous movement, sometimes for good and sometimes not. The application of psychoanalysis to the interpretation of history did not lead to brilliant results – not even to biography, which should have been so. Nor to something which it really doesn't fit. But for that, Dr Freud cannot be blamed.

GC But now, sixty years after, or eighty years after psychoanalysis was born, what's your general observation of its contribution to society? To history, I mean.

IB Psychoanalysis! Don't ask me! I have read very little Freud, I'm ashamed to say. Don't ask me. I really don't know enough.

GC But you know about England.

IB Yes. Of course it made a difference. It's made an enormous difference.

GC For the good or for the ...

IB Both ways. Naturally.

GC Because I think that it contributed to immorality.

IB Let me give you an example. The present fuss which is going on¹ about, for example, the – what is it called? – the children. Tampering with children, what is it called?

GC Abuse.

IB Abuse. Child Abuse could not have been discussed if there had not been psychoanalysis. The question is, do the children imagine they were abused, or were they abused? And what, if so, are the effects? Freud invented all that. He was accused, as you know, by his enemies, by his critics, of subverting the youth of Germany, and later, when he was thought shocking too much, changing into the idea and thought of mythologising it. But the whole subject wouldn't be discussed today if it weren't for Freud. It's a typical way in which ordinary topics for people who've never read Freud, who've never heard of Freud, take it for granted that there is a field of investigation there. And a moral field, too. The effect of Freudianism, morally, what do you think of it? Why do you ...

GC Negative. I'll tell you why.

¹ Probably a reference to the 1987 Cleveland child abuse scandal.

IB Negative? Why?

GC Because ...

IB We're not responsible.

GC Not Freud. The subject. Psychoanalysis in general. An average young man who has gone through it can explain everything that he did wrong, and explanation is sometimes justification.

IB Then what you're really saying is the idea of personal responsibility was weakened by the fact that you could give it ...

GC Exactly!

IB But that of course was my thesis all my life.

GC And you should be very critical of it because of your belief ...

IB So let's speak about it. My essay on historical inevitability is about the shuffling off of one's personal responsibility. Psychologically.

GC So why didn't you attack psychoanalysis? Because that's the one very ruinous thing to personal responsibility in the twentieth century.

IB It may very well be true. But the good that psychoanalysis did is that in cases where people are too apt to condemn, it's obviously possible to rescue people in a psychologically difficult or even potentially criminal condition by applying properly psychoanalytical cures. However you could say that sympathy for the victim, or sympathy for what might be called abnormal or neurotic or psychotic conditions, was much increased by the teaching of psychoanalysis. On the other hand, you are perfectly right. The idea of individual responsibility was removed both by Marxism and by psychoanalysis.

GC By two Jews.

IB That is right, two Jews. But partly even by Schopenhauer. Once you believe that occult forces govern us, whatever they are, whether they are divine, whether they are mysterious underground forces, nature in disguised form as it is written in Schopenhauer, mysterious cosmic powers which toss us about wherever they will, without any knowledge on our part, which we cannot help, as there is no pattern; whether they are economic forces of which we are not aware, which transform our consciousness into false consciousness, so that we misinterpret everything systematically because of economic motives, of which we are not fully aware; whether it is some kind of psychological drives, secret drives, which transform us in various ways, which are hostile to other people, which we're not aware of. Mind you, in all these cases there's always a certain amount of cheating. A psychoanalyst doesn't think that he is subject to irrational drives – the patient is, but he is not. The Communist leader does not think that he is liable to false consciousness, but everybody else is. For example, Mannheim, who was one of the great influences on the idea of psychological determinism, [espoused] some kind of psychological or sociological relativity. All that is called sociology of knowledge. Now Mannheim, because he realises there was a lot of trouble, and he was comparatively honest (though in many other respects he was not, I think), invented the idea that above the teeming nest of mankind, there is something called *die freischwebende Intelligenz*, freely wafting intelligence, which is free of these things, which can be taken impartially. These are the people to whom power should be given. These are the government of mankind, just as H. G. Wells thought scientists should be. Because they are free from the prejudices, the drives, the whole irrational apparatus, the whole mass of irrational stuff which crushes others.

GC It was his version of Plato's sages.

IB The Guardians.

GC Guardians. I did not want to pursue this, but ...

IB The point is that psychoanalysts have medically probably done quite a lot of good. As a doctrine, I find it most unacceptable.

GC When I first read *Historical Inevitability* I told a colleague – and it was before I knew you – I told a friend, ‘I’m sure one day he will produce an attack on psychoanalysis.’ But I see why not.

IB Too many of my friends are addicted to it. I hate making enemies, all I can tell you is that some of my best friends who are passionate supporters of psychoanalysis – none of these people is free from quite conspicuous neuroses themselves. I have never known a completely well-balanced personality.

GC I know only one.

IB Who is it?

GC Nechama de Shalit-Maisus. But I’m not sure she’s a psychoanalyst She’s a psychiatrist She’s the widow of Amos de Shalit, and she’s the mother of a young man, Avner de Shalit, he’s now coming to write his thesis with David Miller. And he’s a very nice man, I’ll bring him to you.

IB Nuffield?

GC Well, he’ll be at St Antony’s but he’s writing ...

IB I’ve met David Miller, but I couldn’t put a face on him.

GC I don’t know him.

IB Nor do I.

GC Let’s get back to psychoanalysis.

IB What is he writing about, this young man?

GC He’s occupied with progress and social justice. I’ll bring him one day to you, but later. You know that Montagu Norman, Governor of the Bank of England ...

IB Sure.

GC He went to Switzerland for psychoanalysis in the early 1920s. I know it from his biography. Was it common?

IB No. I wouldn't have thought it was.

GC A man of his background.

IB Exactly. Uncommon. He must have suffered. He must have had some kind of ...

GC Oh, he suffered till his last days. And England suffered because of his suffering. [*laughter*]

IB You probably ought to talk to his stepchildren. Editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*, Peregrine Worsthorne, his stepson.

GC He's a nice man, isn't he?

IB Mildly pro-Israel. Right-wing.

GC If he did do psychoanalysis, do you think that Protestants need more psychoanalysis than Catholics because ...

IB I cannot generalise.

GC ... because America, England – France was less taken by this.

IB I'll tell you what I think about that.

GC And it will bring me to a philosophical question.

IB I'll tell you something very crude about that. If people live under a discipline, very seldom do they have a nervous breakdown, psychological breakdown, whatever their discipline. During the war, neurotics who are joining the army do not have choices and consequently do not have breakdowns, and do not commit suicide. Suicide in the army is extremely rare. Real Catholics live under discipline. Pious Jews live under discipline. Protestants do not live under discipline. They are left to their own private consciences. That creates difficulties. Liberals don't live under discipline at all. The

intelligentsia are completely free of it. The freer, the more choices they have. The more liberated they are. The more liable they are to certain forms of psychological malaise.

GC That's what I thought.

IB It may lead to genius, but it certainly also leads to terrible inner problems.

GC Now, from the sheer theological point of view, Catholicism, Calvinism and Protestantism: who have the deepest sense of personal responsibility?

IB Oh, I'm sure the Protestants. Of course, Calvinists, in spite of being determinists. There's a certain paradox there. But the same is true of some Catholics. All the predestination etc. Yes, Calvinists have a deeper sense of responsibility and therefore suffer greater miseries. The Catholics devolve all that on to the Church. The Rabbanim – so do the Jews, too. Those that really are pious have some kind of Rabbi to talk to them. Calvinists do not have a Calvinist minister who really rules their lives to quite the extent to which Jews and Catholics do.

GC So I think that in America one can assume that Calvinists would not have been attracted to psychoanalysis. Unlike, let's say, other Protestants.

IB No. On the contrary. Why not? Calvinists suffer more ...

GC Suffer more!

IB And therefore have breakdowns ...

GC But psychoanalysis would be contradictory to Calvinism in the way it solves the problem.

IB Nobody who goes to see psychoanalysts goes because of the general theory, they go to be cured by these wise men. The doctrine, of course, is not compatible.

GC But I think I'll try to find out.

IB Mind you, one mustn't be unfair. Psychoanalysis doesn't think that your entire life is determined by forces over which you have no control. After you have been psychoanalysed, you can govern yourself, and you can be responsible. That's the theory.

GC I know. No, I'm not as critical of psychoanalysis as I might have seemed, but in the point of personal responsibility, I thought we ought to try and fight. Generally speaking, I think that the impact of psychoanalysis ...

IB In theory psychoanalysis promises return to personal responsibility: after you've discovered what pushes you, it won't push you.

GC Exactly. I agree. And I think that in some ways its influence on history was positive. Not the wide psychohistory, but the impact on Namier was not bad as a historian

IB On?

GC Namier.

IB No. I quite agree ... Well, it ...

GC Even the application of the term 'collective trauma' to historiography, what it did to Germany, to France, in the nineteenth century: for me it's a key to understanding many phenomena of that century.

IB Yes. It's quite useful, really.

GC But now I'm going to an entirely different question.

IB But Namier was a deeply neurotic man. He needed it.

GC I know. He did [psychoanalysis] twice. He's one of the few people who went twice to do psychoanalysis.

IB In Vienna?

GC Once in Vienna, and once I think in London. In Vienna in the 1920s, and then here, for many years. But historiography, the obvious subject, we'll deal with later. I want to ask you a very odd question. Do you think that you have matured early in life? And I'll add a question that might take you by surprise. I think that being taken by opera, loving opera the way you did, usually comes later in life. Tell me if you have many friends of your age with whom you could discuss opera the way you were taken by it. But this is one example only, and not an obvious question. People would ask you about your maturity probably, your mind, your writing.

IB What do you call early in life? When I was an undergraduate I used to discuss opera with other undergraduates.

GC This is very early in life.

IB There were plenty of other people for me to talk to.

GC On opera, really?

IB Yes. In Oxford, plenty.

GC So you know that in those days, you will not find a young man, except one who was brought up properly.

IB No.

GC I mean, opera had been mocked at, as a ...

IB Oxford University had an Opera Club. There were probably at least a hundred undergraduates who belonged to it. It was quite natural to go to Covent Garden to hear an opera. It was not abnormal.

GC To go to opera is sometimes a social thing.

IB Even to discuss it. No, they did take it seriously.

GC How many of your age wrote about opera?

Side B

IB I went to opera at school. I always went accompanied by my fellow schoolboys. In London it was quite a common thing.

GC Was it a good period for opera in England?

IB The 1920s?

GC In England, the standard?

IB There were two months in the summer at Covent Garden at which great international singers sang, otherwise nothing. Only the Karl Rosa opera company, which was third rate, but which was better than nothing. A lot of people, as somebody said, a lot of mindless wives, whistled tunes after this, so it did some good.

GC I thought opera ought either to be perfect or not at all, because when opera is not excellent, something is ...

IB No, I don't agree.

GC I know you don't agree with that. You are more tolerant.

IB Chesterton once said: if a thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing badly.²

GC Now we'll come to the opera, but early maturity ...

IB I think so. I think when I came to Oxford in 1928, I was not terribly different from what I am now. I think I was always somewhat middle-aged, probably. I doubt if I had a real childhood, real youth. I had a very happy childhood and that, but I was an only child, I didn't grow up with other children very much, but I think I

² 'If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly.' *The Paradoxes of Mr Pond* (London, [1937]), 55.

was probably fully formed at a fairly early period. By fully formed, I mean to some extent not all that mature either, but then I remained immature to that extent. Fully formed, yes. But I think that all the best things I have done in my life came late in life.

GC Came late in life?

IB Yes.

GC What do you mean except writing?

IB I'm a late learner. For example ...

GC Except learning and teaching?

IB I was never head of any class in my school, never.³ I was not a particularly good undergraduate.

GC You were not particularly good?

IB Not particularly. I did quite well. In the exam I got what's called a bad first class. Not a good one. I was rather idle by nature. I still am. All the work I've ever done, I've done because of shame about not working. I have never been addicted. I've never liked work.

GC And pressure from your parents, pressure from your mother?

IB Certainly. Pressure from St Paul's, to which I went. It was a school which overworked one. It is a sort of cramming establishment. But I think that my knowledge of people came late in life. Washington, for example, during the war, was a great liberating influence in my life.

GC I'm sure. I sensed it.

IB Certainly. So was All Souls. And meeting all these powerful, important and sometimes very unsympathetic politicians gave one an insight into how England was governed, which was fascinating.

³ Not true.

Every ten years in my life, I change what I do, and become fascinated by something new, so that, although I matured early, I remained, and I say it myself, still impressionable – even now, partly because I never became totally old in how many years?

GC No, you never became totally old, because you are ...

IB I was never totally young.

GC ... prone to new impressions. And you have never been totally young.

IB Absolutely. I remained at an impressionable middle age.

GC Now I got another impression ...

IB The fact that I married so late in life itself is proof. I lived a monkish existence at All Souls till a very late age. I felt no need to marry. Nobody ever thought I would. I had simply no inclination towards it. That you would regard as abnormal, but it's part of what I'm saying.

GC Yes. You know, when I recollect our conversations, all that I've read, you mention more often friends than teachers.

IB True.

GC I don't remember you mentioning the teachers who really influenced you. You told me once or twice, I can't remember now. Austin was your age, or older?

IB He was a year younger.

GC Even younger. I don't know whether you know, but you repeat this name very often in our conversations.

IB Sure. He had a profound influence on me.

GC Yes. But I never remember you telling me about the profound impact of one teacher or another, and so many stories about your

friends, and even more stories about your students and about your teachers.

IB It could well be.

GC Did you have mentors?

IB Yes I did. I had one very good schoolmaster at St Paul's, which of course is what makes all the difference. Not to begin with. The masters who taught me at school between the age of thirteen, when I went up, and the age of sixteen made no impact whatever. Nor were they much good. Well, one or two of them were better than others, more amusing, more stimulating. There was one schoolmaster who taught Latin who was terribly moved by literature, as one is by the highest literature, who talked with a kind of spontaneous sentimental eloquence, and that made a deep impression on me, so that when I began writing essays, which we had to do, about Greek literature, Latin literature and so on, I could write with a certain degree of uninhibited enthusiasm, which I would not have had if this man had not had a very liberating effect. The English in general, as you know, tend to repress rather than to liberate. But this man talked in a rather, I wouldn't say inspired, but nevertheless in some kind of liberating manner, in the sense that he talked in a very free, spontaneous, uninhibited way, about why he liked some poets more than others, what they were like. He talked about modern criticism of poetry. He wasn't very clever, he wasn't a great Latinist, but he was a wonderful schoolmaster, in the sense that he made a deep impression by the sincerity, and the rhetoric ...

GC What was his name?

IB Matthews. He was a classical scholar from Balliol. Long dead, as you can imagine. A natural. That was at St Paul's. At Oxford I don't think that anybody whose lectures I went to had a profound influence on me. My tutor at Corpus Christi College, who is eighty-five today, now, this year,⁴ who then became President. Called Hardie. He was a Union man, an Oxford Union man, that sort of thing. He was a scrupulous classical scholar who talked about one's

⁴ W. F. R. Hardie (b. 25 April 1902).

essays sentence by sentence. His horizons weren't very wide, but his decency, sincerity and his extreme intellectual sharpness had a real impact on me. One couldn't deceive him, one couldn't cheat, one couldn't get away with being eloquent. One couldn't write – I've done it in my life – but he taught me that this was not the thing to do. I do it, but I know perfectly well that one shouldn't. I admire those who don't. He was a censor, in a way, and a very nice man, whom I saw last night.

GC Ninety-five?

IB Eighty-five. He wasn't famous in everything, but he taught me about extreme scrupulous intellectual understanding, and extreme not going beyond what one new was supposed to be true, and no attempt at getting away with it by the use of words, in the way in which French philosophers do, for example.

GC He's very against the current.

IB It's against the modern current, certainly. My whole suspicion of sociological patter, psychological patter, literary patter, of the endless hypnotic use of words comes from that. I think I was liable to it myself until I came under his influence.

GC But you have never mentioned him.

IB Well, what opportunity did I have?

GC I don't know.

IB I've never written memoirs. I have never even written about my life. That is true. Frank Hardie is the name, and I owe him a great deal. Certainly I do. Nobody except Austin at All Souls – the only people – well, Austin was my age – the only person senior to me was a man called Richard Pares, who came as a severe, stern, witty – you never got away with anything – ironical, he saw through things. He was very undeceived, intellectually undeceived. He was a superb scholar of a very austere kind, and at the same time imaginative, lively and gifted. That was the way to be. I admired that. It is a quality I don't possess myself. But I admired it very much. I

don't know if there is anyone like that today: I rather doubt it. At least not in my life. No models.

GC But in daily life as an undergraduate – you had your tutors, you had your lecturers, nothing ...

IB Quite. Nothing that transformed me. No. I drifted into being a tutor in philosophy simply by being interested in it. No Wittgenstein-like figure and no G. E. Moore-like figure was about at Oxford.

GC You see, Isaiah, you come from a Hasidic family, but you never had a Rabbi, I mean not in religious terms ...

IB Never.

GC In philosophical terms.

IB Never.

GC You would always rebel to a Rabbi.

IB No.

GC To a Wittgenstein type, I believe yes.

IB Perhaps not: I might have fallen for some ...

GC But there were some strong figures ...

IB No. I think you are wrong. I think you are just wrong. I'm a natural hero-worshipper.

GC I know, but not in your field. You admired Weizmann. I think in a certain period you transferred your attitude to Ben-Gurion.

IB Never.

GC Maybe you wouldn't agree, but you didn't ...

IB I admired him, but ...

GC ... worship a philosopher.

IB Because there was nobody in my world. These people existed, but I never read their books or their writings. For me, admiration had to be conjoined with some kind of personal influence. But that's not entirely true.

GC Yes, that's what I mean.

IB Not entirely true. It's true of Weizmann, it's true of ...

GC I'm sure in the arts we can find some people you do admire.

IB Certainly. Well, it was true of Toscanini, who was an absolute hero.

GC But you didn't like him personally.

IB He's too ... No. I met him. I heard him conduct. He's that sort of conductor.

GC Why did Karajan deserve an article?

IB Deserve what article?

GC You wrote an article about Karajan.

IB I wrote a short article in *The Observer*.⁵

GC I don't remember.

IB In *The Observer*. In 1949 [sc. 1948].

GC After the war.

⁵ 'Karajan: A Study', *The Observer*, 19 September 1948, 2; repr. in [Isaiah Berlin on Music](#).

IB 1949.

GC He is the only living ...

IB I can tell you exactly why I dislike Karajan. I dislike his conducting. I admire him in a way. He's a man of some genius, but extremely unsympathetic to me. I had wanted to go abroad. In the summer – in all those years when one was allowed to have only about £20 in foreign currency, or £30, and one couldn't live on that, and so I managed to persuade somebody in *The Observer* to send me to Salzburg.

GC Salzburg!

IB In order to write an article about what I heard. That was the sole reason. [laughter] You see, 1949 was probably the second year in which Karajan was allowed to conduct at all, because he had to be de-Nazified for a rather long time. He conducted in Salzburg. I went with my friend Raimund von Hofmannsthal, who was a friend of the famous opera star, who introduced me to Karajan personally. I talked against him. I heard him conduct at least four works in Salzburg that year. What I wrote about him was not quite what I wanted to say. If I'd been braver, I would have said that his conducting was like that of a Nazi dive-bomber, zeroing in on the object that suggests not to the head, not to the heart, but to the nerves, which was what Trotsky said about Kandinsky. What I said about him was sufficiently unfriendly for him to take notice of it. He said he wanted to talk to me about it. I never took to him. No. I'd never admired him. I admired him in the sense – I wrote the article simply in order to get the money to go abroad.

GC I didn't know. I mean you didn't write about Toscanini ...

IB No, no. I didn't have to.

GC I never read it, by the way, but I saw it in the bibliography.

IB Yes. It was a very short piece in *The Observer*, simply to earn my money. About 100, 150 words.⁶ Not more. A short little article.

GC So now, coming back to worshipping. One can divide it into living and dead, of course. It's easier to admire ...

IB Of course it is. Pasternak I had that attitude towards, to some degree.

GC After you saw him?

IB Afterwards. I'd hardly read him before. Virginia Woolf I had it towards, who was not at all nice about me.

GC I think Stravinsky. Am I right?

IB Certainly

GC There was a period that he was always in your ...

IB Certainly. I admired him very much.

GC But naturally you changed your attitude towards people. I mean when I say Stravinsky, I can tell you that for ten years I could follow you speaking very often about him.

IB That's right.

GC Does it change over the years?

IB Well, one forgets. It's true for Edmund Wilson, towards whom I became a real hero-worshipper. I wrote a ...

GC Edmund Wilson?

IB Absolutely.

GC I don't agree.

⁶ 572 words.

IB Yes I did, certainly.

GC No, I mean it's more complicated. From your writings it's more complicated.

IB You are talking about my article about him. That was a *jeu d'esprit*. I just suddenly decided to write a rather irreverent article

GC Yes, but still, you ...

IB No. At the time, I was an absolute ...

GC At the time, but ...

IB Maybe I was partly discriminated on his part because of the fact that he wrote not too nicely about me, in his memoirs. In his letters, or his memoirs. So perhaps it was like revenge.

GC Now you don't seem to have empathy towards French intellectual life.

IB That is true. Nor at any time.

GC Nor at any time? But at least you wrote about French people, either positively or negatively.

IB On their ideas. Not about literature.

GC Yes, but why?

IB I don't know. I think I'm good on East of the Rhine. I have more sympathy for the Germans ...

GC And Italy.

IB ... than for the French. Italy too. The French are too ...

GC Something you don't like about them.

IB Something antipathetic, yes.

GC You don't visit France often.

IB No. Something morally disagreeable about them to me. They're too dry. No, it's not the intellectuality. They're too dry and they've no heart. Balzac has no heart. Voltaire conspicuously had no heart. Rousseau, who was Swiss – he pretended to have a heart, but I doubt if he did. Maupassant had no heart. Even Flaubert. Heart is what they lack; brain, a nervous system, a great deal of intelligence, deep sensitivity, and genius. And deep understanding, very often.

GC But not among so many. I mean the deep understanding is on the part of the few. You know, I'm a heretic as regards to ...

IB Proust! He understood a very great deal. No heart.

GC No heart?

IB Not for me. I may be wrong. What I call a heart is lacking in those sort of people I can't quite warm to. I admire them and I have nothing against them. I have never read a French novel which I've loved without qualification. Not Stendhal. I loved Stendhal's novels, but not that much.

GC And did you ever have French friends? In Oxford? Did you know *Élie Halévy*?

IB I met him, at lunch with Fischer.

GC I was wondering whether you – the people like *Élie Halévy*, on the one hand, *Vinogradoff*, on the other hand, people who wrote about Britain with the insight of foreigners ...

IB Quite.

GC They are very interesting.

IB Quite.

GC Did you have special contact with these kind of people?

IB No. They were rather dead before I came. Long ago. Vinogradoff Died in the 1920s, I think [1925].

GC I forgot that you came only in 1928 [1921].

IB Yes, Vinogradoff was long dead. I'm trying to think who they are. Élie Halévy I never knew; I met him. He spent his time denouncing Communism by that time, 1933–4. I read him with great admiration. I'm trying to think whether I ever had French friends.

GC In Oxford?

IB Evidently not.

GC We'll come to it later when we discuss whether you have an attitude towards national character, and so on. But not now. In your Oxford days ...

IB I knew one or two of the French academics, with whom I made friends, but not intimate friends. Not people I'd talk to. Partly because my French was so bad. This is the truth.

GC And you hate it. You can't ...

IB No, I can't understand what they say.

GC It's not that you hate ... but you can't express yourself.

IB No. I can't speak properly. I've never learnt it properly.

GC How come?

IB I just didn't. It's French at school. It's very badly taught in England.

GC And German? You went to Germany?

IB No, never. German because I spoke German until the age of three. My parents were bilingual, in Russian and German.

GC Like many Rigan people?

IB You see? And as a result [of the fact] that they went to German schools. And my mother went to German schools in Riga. So it was closer. Culturally closer. Not that my German is much good: I have to read with the dictionary. Nevertheless ...

GC Really?

IB Yes. I don't read it freely.

GC I mean, you devoted so much time to German ...

IB It takes me a long time. I read French more easily than German. I can read French quite well. German, with much more difficulty.

GC And yet you are more attracted by German ...

IB Because of the ...

GC Well, of course because of the ...

IB Because the whole culture of Eastern Europe means more to me, and German, the Romanticism and the humanity. The Germans, funnily enough, do have hearts.

GC Do ...?

IB Have hearts. Goethe didn't, but the others did.

GC But in the 1930s, didn't your ...

IB The Russians, of course, had maximum hearts. Turgenev less than the others.

GC I know. You told me once. I remember.

IB Tolstoy not at all.

GC But in the 1930s, the rise of Nazism and everything, didn't it cause you, didn't it deter you from dealing with German literature, culture, Romanticism?

IB You mean after Hitler was about? That is when I had written my book on Karl Marx.

GC But Karl Marx ...

IB ... does not count as a German for these purposes. I didn't read Germans at that time. I did not. When I was at Oxford I didn't read them very much. I read them a bit when I was a schoolboy, and a bit after, long afterwards. In the last ten, twenty years. Oh, it certainly deterred me. I couldn't go to Germany for twenty years after the war.

GC And yet you read so much about all ...

IB Twenty years is too long. No.

GC ... the Romantics. I mean even the obscure ones.

IB Less than that. I went to Germany. When did I first go to Germany? Nabokov's opera. When my friend performed in Köln. I had to go. [He would have been] too offended if I had not.

GC Now, what was the period when you dwelt so deeply on German Romanticism?

IB I had German friends.

GC That I'm sure of.

IB In the 1930s, who came here? Rhodes scholars.

GC Of course, many of them were Jews, probably.

IB No. Oddly enough, Yekkes was what I did not take to.

GC I know.

IB Yes. As you know. What German Jews did I ...? There was a principal influence on me, intellectually, by a Riga Jew called Rachmilevich. Nobody had a greater influence on me in my entire life. That you don't know about.

GC No.

IB He was called Lemchen Rachmilevitch. Solomon was his name. He was the son of a Riga Jew, who married a non-Jewish wife. He was a typical Russian Jewish Social Democrat. He was born, I should think about 1890, perhaps. 1880, actually. Let's say 1890 [1891]. He was educated in Riga, in a German school. He spoke Russian and German equally. He was very Jewish, and he was a typical Menshevik. He went to German Universities. He went to Marburg and he [knew?] Hermann Köhl. He went to Heidelberg, he went to Bonn. He went everywhere, and was very adept in German philosophy. He read the whole thing. He had read a great many German philosophers. He was intensely musical. Could read scores very easily, which I cannot do. And he read the whole of Russian literature. He was deeply Jewish. He understood Yiddish perfectly well. But he didn't actually talk it to me, at least then; but he used to go and talk to bearded workers outside Riga about the Menshevik – certain congresses in Europe. Typical Jewish Menshevik agitator for that time. Tremendously highbrow, tremendously intellectual. I've never met a more intellectual man in my life. He read German poets. He, as I say, knew a great deal about music, musical theory, he was the best educated man I ever knew. He came to nothing. As such people often do. I'll tell you a story about him and you'll see. When he was a schoolboy of sixteen he went to Switzerland to meet Plekhanov. And he said to Plekhanov, 'What should I do to help the movement?' And Plekhanov said, 'Have you read Plato's *Republic*?' He said, 'No.' He said, 'Have you read the *Phaedo*?' And he said no. 'Read those first, and come see me again.' He was terribly disappointed. He wanted him to give him secret literature to spread among workers. Or something. He felt snubbed. But you could see the sort of thing. So he then did read the *Republic* of Plato. Then, during the war, he and his family, who were called Schalit, his

mother was a relation of the Schalit – these are rich Riga timber merchants – they went together to Constantinople. That’s how they got out of Russia. In Constantinople, he wandered about until he got an English visa – that took about a month. He went wandering about Constantinople, found a nice garden, in which he sat and reread Eddington’s book on astronomy. He found around him people were sitting, he didn’t recognise anybody, and suddenly he decided that everyone had looked at him. He realised he was sitting in the garden of the synagogue. They were all saying ‘Tehillim. It came to his turn. They thought that what he had in front of him was a prayer book. He was very embarrassed. It was Eddington. Eddington in 1919! You see what I mean, he really was up-to-date. The relativity theory he knew very well. And I think he even helped one of the Schalit brothers who translated Einstein into Yiddish in Berlin. The Schalits had some intellectuals among them there, six brothers, five brothers. One of them was quite a competent mathematician. He then came to London and became a sort of assistant to Lipman Schalit, who was the businessman in the family, made a lot of money. He studied British law in order to be of use. I don’t think he was any good in business. I thought he was marvellous, but in business he was not. Every afternoon on Saturdays, at half-past one, two o’clock, he went to the British Museum, where he read until six. Steadily. Four hours every week. And he went to every concert there was. There was nothing he didn’t know about conductors. If you went to a concert in the 1920s, you’d see him in the gallery, leaning forward prominently, watching every move of the conductor. And you could recognise him, even if you didn’t know him, because in fact he stuck forward from the gallery. Money he never had. Well, I met him because my parents were great friends of the Schalits. When I was a schoolboy, he’d talk to me about Kant.

GC To you?

IB Yes. And he’d talk to me about Plekhanov, and he’d talk to me about Marx. Not so much about Marx, no. Whenever I mentioned the name of an economist afterwards, he would say, ‘That’s a bourgeois economist.’ They always talked like that, socialists. ‘Bourgeois, bourgeois’, every time I mentioned a name. Keynes was a ‘bourgeois economist’. Labelled. Then, he taught me a great deal

about music. Not so much opera, but symphonic music, quartets and so on. He tried to teach me to read scores, but failed. I used to see him as often as I could. He gave me the taste for intellectual life and for philosophical ideas. He was not a competent philosopher, but he knew exactly what the arguments were. He read every single British philosopher of note. He didn't like it very much. He told me what he didn't like about them. His conversations with me were the most productive in my life, so far as just sheer intellectual stimulation [goes]. Of course he was a very nice man, charming, amusing, [29:00] talked about everything in the world in a purely amateur way.

GC You would go to him, or he ...

IB When I lived in London, I would go to him. He had a little room, with books and a gramophone.

GC It was even when you were at St Paul's?

IB Afterwards. Mainly when I was at Oxford as a don. He came to see me as a don in All Souls too, when I was an undergraduate [*must be garbled*]. Afterwards, at St Paul's [??], I introduced him to all kinds of people. David Cecil liked him very much. Stuart Hampshire liked him very much. You see what I mean? They still remember him. Maurice Bowra liked him less, because he tried to talk to him about Russian literature, and he knocked him out with the first blow. It is the easiest thing, which I was [sc. I would tell him?] not to do. He was not inhibited. He was a one-man demolition squad. [*laughter*] And then, during the war, he still went on in London. He became an assistant of a man called [Tom] Horabin, a socialist Member of Parliament, and supplied him with pro-Zionist speeches. Although he was not a great Zionist himself, nevertheless the anti-Zionism of the anti-Zionists ...

GC That irritated him.

IB ... irritated him, so that he bombarded them in an excellent speech once, and he also supplied material to, of all people, not a very nice man, Silverman.

GC Sydney Silverman.

IB Sydney Silverman. He became a kind of intellectual supplier of speeches. He wrote their speeches. For example he wrote a speech which began with the words, 'Enemies cannot betray one, only friends can.' It's a very good epigram. That was about the British government, the problem with Palestine. Then after the war he went – I saw him quite a lot here till about 1950, probably. He then went to Israel, Palestine. He lived in Haifa for a year: 1949. I saw him there. He was officially engaged in some sort of business. God knows what. Printing, publishing. He then came back to London, and then he finally went mad. He became a sex maniac, began to write letters to various women he knew, demanding them, and then – nothing really happened, he never pounced on anyone. Well, he began writing mad letters, finally he went off his head and died very miserably. Brain febrile madness; he died very sadly. Nobody admired him as much as I did. Nobody realised how marvellous he was. A disciple I was not, but he contributed, I could talk to him about anything: Jewish matters, non-Jewish matters, anything you like. He was brought up in a pious Jewish family in Riga. He was not a German Jew. He was an East European Jew. A Russian Jew. His grandfather said Tefillin. His father died of drink, which was unusual. But his grandfather was a pious Jew.

GC He never tried to go to university?

IB He went to four German universities.

GC Really?

IB He went to Marburg, he went to Bonn ... Kant, neo-Kantianism. Nobody else ever talked to me about Hermann Cohen. Nobody else ever talked to me about [Paul] Natorp, about Emil Lask, who was a Jewish philosopher. *Kategorien der Kategorien*. Nobody else ever talked about all kinds of forgotten German philosophers and their ideas, which he spelt out very explicitly. He was completely clear. Nothing was ever obscure. And then we'd end up the evening – he'd then play Hindemith to me. You see what I mean. This is in the 1920s, mind you, late 1920s, when I was an undergraduate. He had views about the composers, and so on. Russian music he was not terribly

interested in. Stravinsky, yes. Bartok, yes. But, as I say, he was an absolutely unsundering highbrow who led a private life – he had no friends. He worked for Schalit, was a complete, fundamentally, hermit. And then these afternoons of what he called the British. ‘Today I go to the British.’ Strong Russian accent.

GC He preferred England to Germany? I mean to live.

IB Yes, certainly. For some reason. I don’t know why. He spoke German perfectly. No, he didn’t like Germany. He didn’t much like Germans. He knew no Englishmen, he knew a couple of – I don’t know how this came about during wartime, but he met these left-wing Members of Parliament. He was still a Social Democrat until the end. He never ceased to be a Menshevik. ‘Bourgeois economist.’

GC You know that I believe that the best elite of the Jews ...

IB Weizmann meant nothing to him. None of the Zionists did. He just happened to be anti-anti. He hated the English. He loathed the Conservatives, he loathed the treachery and the hypocrisy and all the rest of it. He was surrounded by Zionists. All the Schalit sons were.

GC Were Zionists.

IB One is still alive, I think. Leon Schalit.

GC Leon is still alive.

IB Still alive. Lionel is dead.

GC Lionel is dead.

IB Yes. But these are relations of his. He lived in that world. They called him ‘Rach’. Rachmilevich was the name. He was a cousin of the ...

GC Physician?

IB First cousin.

GC He was a physician of genius.

IB I know. He was a first cousin.

GC [Moshe] Rachmilevitz the physician is for me the example of what I always said, that the best breed of Jews of the twentieth century are those with Russian background and German discipline.

IB He was educated in Germany.

GC Jews who come either from Russia or Lithuania and got their education in Germany are successful ...

IB Lithuania doesn't exist ...

GC No, it's Russia.

IB Riga is less Russian than Lithuanian.

GC I know.

IB Less. It has some influence, some kind of ...

GC Surely. When you look backwards to your life in Oxford, what was your attitude, if you can generalise, to émigrés? I mean, except Russians. Intellectual émigrés. Except Russians.

IB Such as who? You mean Mannheim, or Germans?

GC Everyone. You can start with Eduard Fraenkel and finish with Kołakowski. I mean take the Russians aside.

IB I have no general attitude towards them. Russian émigrés were Jews, ones I knew, who were like my family.

GC And you liked them even if they were not Jews.

IB I didn't know any non-Jewish ...

GC Nabokov.

IB During the war?

GC I ask you, all along your life.

IB Russians I did not have any affinity to, which had nothing to do with being émigrés.

GC Yes, that's what I thought. Others.

IB I could have done equally well with them in the Soviet Union. Others, Germans.

GC It's a provocative question.

IB Certainly.

GC Because I haven't met any friends, any dear friends of yours ...

IB True. Quite so. No, I know just what you mean. Hold on. I'm just trying to think. Who are friends of mine among the German émigrés?

GC Or others?

IB Well, who else?

GC I told you, I mean from the early days to the days of Kolakowski and the Poles.

IB Those are very late. Wait a bit. Germans, above all. Cassirer, Dr Wiesengrund, I didn't know very many. I had not that many friends among them. I really didn't. I didn't like, I mean it's impossible for me to like German Jews, because – where ever have I liked a German Jew very much? Josef Cohn. He was a very harmless man.

GC I didn't know him. A delightful man apparently.

IB No! He was frightfully boring.

GC And you still liked him?

IB I got on very well with him, yes. Weizmann ...

GC Because of Weizmann?

IB He was honest, decent, terribly boring, but touching. Certainly had a heart. But he was a real, tremendous bore. Heavy, slow, but he kept to a treaty. That's why Adenauer liked him. He got money for the Weizmann Institute. All the German Professors liked him. He was so *deutsch*. Him I got on with. Wait, I'm trying to think. German Jews, who were friends of mine ...

GC There was a professor here now of German History and Literature.

IB You mean Praver?

GC No, the other one. Who was a friend of Raymond Carr.

IB No, I never got on with him at all.

GC You see.

IB Not because he didn't want to be a Jew! Partly because he was terribly anxious, he was completely concealed. Ganz!

GC You know that he is one of the closest friends of Raymond Carr?

IB I do indeed. Because he went to see him in Germany before the war.

GC Carr sent his affidavit!

IB Because he stayed with him before the war.

GC Exactly!

IB I know that story, Raymond told me.

GC I think I told you, too.

IB You may have told me, too. Ganz I knew. Never liked him much. Quite a nice man. Now, wait a minute, I'm trying to think.

GC Among the scientists, I don't know. You have Hans Krebs. He won the Nobel Prize.

IB Look, I knew Krebs, and I greatly admired him. But we were not friends. I couldn't be. One couldn't be. I was more friends with Germans than with German Jews. My two German friends were von Trott, who was a genuine friend, and a man called, that has just died, called, what was his name? Damn it, I can't remember! Formerly one of my best friends. He was a German Rhodes Scholar in 1938–9, and went back to Germany for the doctorate. Went to the Eastern Front, and left Germany in 1945, because – end of 1945 or beginning of 1946 – it was too Nazi-ridden. Still, after the defeat. He couldn't take it. They went to Sacramento and Malamud looked after them. His name was – terrible, wait a moment. It was a very German – he came from the same town as Hindenburg, near Neudeck, Junker. Properly Junker.

GC From Königsburg?

IB Neudeck. That's where Hindenburg came from.

GC East Prussia?

IB Exactly. East Prussia, yes. His name was ...

GC Well, it will come to you. I'll remember to ask you next time, so don't worry.

GC Like Momigliano.

IB Much better. Italian Jews I can do. I'm sure that if I had known Levi ...

GC Primo Levi.

IB ... Primo Levi, I could have made friends with him. I could. Momigliano I did make friends with. Kolakowski, too. Much easier for me than German Jews. With Kolakowski, I feel no barrier at all. I don't see him very much, which I regret. Of course, I don't see anybody very much. I feel absolutely easy in his presence. I understand his mode of thought, and everything. Yes. [Andrzej] Walicki, I had a friend, who is now in Notre Dame.

GC But I think that on the whole you didn't have many émigré friends. I mean, Kolakowski is not your friend.

IB No. I like him very much. He's not an intimate friend. No. Who are Kolakowski's friends? In England there are none. I mean Lukes – Montefiore is a friend. They're great friends, yes.

GC Kolakowski always reminds me by the way of Dolek Horubil[?]. They have the same ...

IB I understand. But since marriage, one loses friends anyway. While being a bachelor, it is far easier to make friends.

GC You know that my lesson from my long life in Oxford and Cambridge was that I shall never want to ...

IB I get exhausted when I talk. That's my only thing. I'm trying to think about those émigrés. It's amusing. Cassirer couldn't have been a friend. Wiesengrund Adorno was a comical figure to me, I knew him very well.

GC I think that you don't like sad émigrés.

IB No. Only German Jews.

GC German Jews. Maybe the others were not that sad.

IB Give me an example of émigrés. I get on very well with Gombrich, for example.

GC He's Viennese and he's Jewish.

IB Certainly. Well, his parents – he was baptised, of course. But his wife is Jewish, and his father was baptised.

GC Why did Noel Annan write in his latest ...

IB Popper. Typical refugee. Karl Popper.

GC He's not your friend.

IB No. But nobody is. Except Gombrich. But no, but I like him more than German Jews.

GC And why did Noel Annan write in his last article that next to Kenneth Clark, Anthony Blunt was the best art historian, and he didn't mention Gombrich, or perhaps he thought only of British ...

IB He's wrong! He wasn't all that marvellous.

GC It's in his last article.

IB Which one? About Blunt?

GC About Blunt.

IB The very last one? I haven't read it yet. No, the last article by ...

GC The one before was excellent.

IB The last article by him was on Ellmann's book about Wilde. In the current *Observer*. One *Observer* ago.⁷

⁷ Presumably he is thinking of Anthony Burgess, 'Wilde with All Regret', review of Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London, 1987), *The Observer*, 4 October 1987, 27.

GC I mean, the one before, in the *New York Review of Books*, on *Spycatcher*,⁸ was superb.

IB Yes. Very good indeed.

GC Superb.

IB Very good. Exactly. Got it right.

GC I'm going to phone him, because I never thought of ...

IB Absolutely. Do. Always a pleasure. Absolutely excellent. The *New York Review*. Very good. I must get a copy of the *Observer* of a week ago, because you don't get it. I don't think I read that. That was the review of the book on Blunt, which I never read. Book about Blunt. That's what I haven't read. Last Sunday. That was *The Observer*.

GC Ah, the *Observer* was Oscar Wilde.

IB This week. Today.

GC On Blunt it was ...

IB Last Sunday.

GC ... in the *New York Review of Books*.

IB No, that's *Spycatcher*.

GC No. There is a new issue of the *New York Review of Books*.

IB Which I probably haven't seen.

⁸ Noel Annan, 'Betrayal', review of *Spycatcher: The Candid Autobiography of a Senior Intelligence Officer* (New York, 1987) and Anthony Glees, *The Secrets of the Service* (New York, 1987), *New York Review of Books*, 24 September 1987.

GC Just out. And there, there is a very long article on Blunt.⁹ Less good.

IB Isn't that right?

GC Too long. There are very nice points there, but the one on *Spycatcher* was superb.

IB He admires Kenneth Clark too much, and he admires Blunt too much. Kenneth Clark, he thinks, was a genius. He was not. He was wrong about both. He knows nothing about art history. Cambridge opinions.

GC About Noel Annan we'll discuss in one of our next. Whenever he comes to Israel, he comes to me ...

IB He likes German refugees, I'm sure. He likes German Jews. He does. He married one, of course.

Side C

IB For moral reasons of one kind or another. There couldn't be. But he's not a German Jew.

GC He's not. But the Viennese we'll discuss. They are very interesting specimens, many advantages, but there is something ...

IB Oh, they are crooks. Yes. But I don't mind, I could be friends with a crook.

GC Here comes your tolerance. Your tolerance about people is very interesting.

IB Oh yes, they're crooks.

GC And you don't mind.

⁹ Noel Annan, 'Et tu, Anthony', review of Barrie Penrose and Simon Freeman, *Conspiracy of Silence: The Secret Life of Anthony Blunt* (New York, 1987), *New York Review of Books*, 22 October 1987.

IB Oh, not much. Not among the things which I mind most; mind nastiness more than crookedness, you see. Whether they cheat, no, that I don't mind so much. No. Those are human qualities. Weidenfeld is a super crook . The one thing which is true, as you say, is his devotion to Israel. Let me tell you a story. It comes to the same thing.

GC Weidenfeld could become Kreisky and Kreisky could have become Weidenfeld.

IB Easily!

GC Right? [*in Hebrew*]

IB Easily.

GC They are the same morally. Just by chance.

IB Absolutely. Highly intelligent. Very flexible. Kreisky is a socialist, Weidenfeld was a Zionist. He was a revisionist, Weidenfeld.

GC I didn't know any were.

IB There were three revisionist groups in Vienna. There was a sort of upper one which he belonged to. There was one which socially was not possible, it was the middle one. They had different names. He went to Jabotinsky's lectures in Vienna, and he was enrolled in a Herut Beitar group, it was called something else. But he was a revisionist all the way.

GC Like Arthur Koestler.

IB Yes. He was with Koestler. Same group.

GC It was either T'khelet Lavan, or Bar Kokhba. Something. Was he your student – George?

IB For about a year, yes. Too young, you see. Koestler was older. He says he's pro-Waldheim, because Waldheim was the only man

who was decent to him when he was a student. Oh, I forgot, you didn't read the – on Erev Pesach there was this issue of the *Independent*.¹⁰ I had received a document from William Frankel, who sat on the Committee for Peace in the Middle East, or something; the people on it were David Astor and William Frankel and probably Noah, I don't remember, a very left-wing Zionist, and he is a lecturer or something like that at one of the universities.

GC In England?

International Centre for Peace in the Middle East

LET THIS BE THE YEAR OF PEACE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

Twenty years have elapsed since the Six Day War, ten years since the historic Egyptian peace initiative.

There must be an end to the prolonged Israeli-Arab conflict, to terror and violence, bloodshed and suffering and to the rule of one people over another.

The conflict cannot be resolved by force. We call on all sides to forego the use of violence of any kind.

Appeal 2nd October 1987

<p>The Hon. David Astor Sir Isaiah Berlin O.M. Baroness Birk Ella Birk Benedict Birnberg Anthony Blond The Hon. L.H.L. Cohen The Rt. Hon. Sir Zelman Cowen Linda Davies The Duke of Devonshire Hugh Dykes MP Baroness Elliot of Harwood Sir Monty Finlayson William Frankel Lady Antonia Fraser Rabbi David Goldberg Lila Hagen-Warburg Ronald Harwood June Jacobs Dan Jacobson Dr Tony Klug Michael Latham MP Lord Lever of Manchester</p>	<p>Maureen Lijonan Barnet Livinoff Simeone Livinoff Dr Noah Lucas Sir Claus Moser Rabbi Julia Neuberger Harold Pinter Sir Leslie Porter Dame Simone Prendergast Rabbi Michael Rosen Simone L. de Rothschild Berrice Rubens Lord Saif of Brimpton Clive Sinclair Ruth Sandelson Sir Georg Scott Professor George Steiner Dr Miriam Stoppard Tom Stoppard Arnold Wesker Lord Wetherfield of Chelsea Vivian Witman Ethel Wix</p>
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This call for peace, issued by the International Centre for Peace in the Middle East, has been signed by several hundred leading Israelis and endorsed by prominent public figures including sixty-five other former and present Knesset members, ten former Cabinet Ministers, the Mayors of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa, fifteen Israeli Defence Forces reserve generals, former heads of Israeli Military Intelligence, prominent artists, writers and scholars, rabbis and other leaders from all walks of Israeli life.

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Cut and post to
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST (British Section)
College House,
4 New College
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Please add my signature to the above appeal

I enclose contribution of £ to help cover the cost of this advertisement and to disseminate its message

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The Tel Aviv-based International Centre for Peace in the Middle East (ICPME) is a world-wide coalition of scholars, politicians, religious leaders, businessmen and others actively concerned with the quest for peace through education and dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. Its officers include Justice Haim Cohn, Honorary President, Abba Eban, Chairman of the Præsidium and Justice Haim Zadok, Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

From The Independent, 2 October 1987, 9

IB You would have seen him somewhere. Maybe in Yarnton. His first name was Noah. Had an English name [Lucas]. Well, he comes from Israel, more or less. He was an extreme, not Matzpen, but really left. Peace Now. Well, it doesn't matter. He was on it. And a couple of goyim whose names I don't know. Somebody else? And the document said 1987 ought to be a year of peace, peace in

¹⁰ There was an advertisement placed by the International Centre for Peace in the Middle East in *The Independent* on 2 October 1987, 9, entitled 'Let This Be the Year of Peace for the Middle East'.

Jerusalem. And bloodshed should stop. Worthy sentence. It then said, we are against domination of one nation over another.¹¹ I think Harkavy was one of the signatories [he wasn't]. We believe in self-determination of both nations.¹² This arrived, and the only two things I had against it were, one, David Astor's name. It wasn't fatal. But still. The other was self-determination. That meant a PLO State in the West Bank, certainly. Can't mean anything else. I don't look forward to that. Nevertheless, I was sufficiently impressed by Harkavy and everybody else to think it's probably inevitable. If we get out of the West Bank, we're done for. If they are demilitarised, they may not be a greater danger than all the other millions of Arabs. Then I discovered from Frankel that they had produced a list of people who signed it in Israel. Teddy had signed it. Eban had signed it.¹³

GC That's respectable.

IB Anything Teddy signs I'm prepared to sign.

GC I agree with you.

IB But then Weidenfeld rang me up. And he said, 'You can't sign that.' 'Why?' Self-determination was a problem. Self-expression would be enough. It's been used in association with Jordan. I said, 'Self-expression means nothing.' What is self-expression? It means they are allowed to publish books in Arabic. They may not have defined it, but self-determination is what they mean. In the end, of course, I signed it. And everybody else whom I ever heard of signed it. Claus Moser, who wrote exactly the same letter to Frankel as I did, saying 'Self-determination. I accept George Weidenfeld's point of view. Weidenfeld rang up from America twice to try to stop me from signing it.

GC To Claus Moser?

¹¹ 'There must be an end to [...] the rule of one people over another.'

¹² 'The time has come to establish a piece of mutual recognition, based on territorial compromise and self-determination.'

¹³ The advertisement states that the call for peace was signed by the Mayor of Jerusalem [Teddy Kollek] and that Abba Eban was an officer of the ICPME.

IB To me. I said: I am going to sign it. If Teddy does, I am. I'm not going to bother. And I think, as a matter of fact, it's ridiculous not to, nothing will happen. It will have no effect. One ought to testify. He has signed it. Weidenfeld. He didn't want to be outside the respectable. But as for Begin, I'd like to make trouble for him among his friends. The people who've signed it in England are – well, you'll see it. We've turned up with copies.

GC On the eve of Yom Kippur?

IB On the eve of Yom Kippur. Marcus Sieff has signed it.

GC You are quite right. Your criteria was beaten[?] because Teddy is not that much of a dove as people think. He's very realistic.

IB I know he's not [that much of a dove]. He's anti-Peace-Now.

GC Yes, and you can trust him on those matters, if you don't have time to enquire, Teddy's very ...

IB But even Eban doesn't want to be – he is after all a Member of Knesset.

GC Exactly.

IB He's the head of a committee. He's not going to put his neck ...

GC He's a sober mind, Eban.

IB He wants to have a career. Peres would have signed it if he wasn't Peres. I could see, of course – Haim Cohen, all those people automatically. Exactly.

GC That you can trust.

IB I see that. No, I realise that. But I ought to have done it without knowing all this, but still ...

GC No, sometimes it's important to see what the company is.

IB What is the company. Exactly.

GC We would hate to be used by groups. And in the history of the twentieth century ...

IB That very often happens.

GC That's why I don't very often sign at all.

IB I know. Goodman wouldn't have signed it. Because he said he never signed round robins. Didn't sign general letters.

GC For many years I didn't sign, either.

IB I understand very well. I'm trying to think who among the English Jews. Who else is there?

GC In England, you mean?

IB No, I didn't see Jacob Rothschild's name. Could have been [not there].

GC No, people like Alan Montefiore, or ...

IB ... would have done, but they weren't asked. They all would have done.

GC I'm sure.

IB All that lot. Yes. No, I didn't ... Whoever William Frankel had sent it to.

GC And William Fraenkel himself is not ...

IB No, he is not so; no, he, and certainly Claus Moser did, and Sieff, but not the Jewish Board of Deputies. None of those people.

GC Well, they are ...

IB Rabbanim, yes. I should think ...

GC Probably they usually ask ...

IB I'm sure that – yes, I was trying to think, let me see; on the part of the Embassy, one could not. Wait a minute, who else? Who were the prominent British Jews whom Frankel would naturally turn to? Evelyn Rothschild signed it [he didn't, but Edmund L. de Rothschild did]. Jacob no, but ...

GC Not Jacob.

IB I don't think he was asked.

[...]

GC Victor I know. Victor I didn't like from the very beginning. Herbert likes Victor.

IB Because they worked together. That was during the war. No, he admires Herbert very much.

GC Now, has he got a real superb mind?

IB Who?

GC Victor.

IB He's very clever, really. In a very narrow way.

GC That's what I thought.

IB Like a scientist. He's quick, he's clever, he's sharp, he's cunning.

GC That's what I thought.

IB But completely uncultivated.

GC That's what I thought.

IB A barbarian.

GC That was my feeling.

IB He's a barbarian. I mean he is intelligent.

GC That's sure.

IB Not a fool. But he's vain, and he loves meddling. And that's what got him into trouble.

GC And he's not a cultivated man. He's not an interesting man to talk to.

IB Absolutely not.

GC He's intelligent, but in politics ...

IB He's a nuisance. But people ...

GC I met him only twice.

IB But Jacob is extremely amusing, great charm. [...] He's pro-Israel all right. At least he takes an interest. I took him to Israel, originally, you see, with Nabokov and Hofmannsthal. Imagine the party. And he was very impressed by the fact that so many of the streets were called Rothschild, and that made a deep impression.

GC When was it?

IB Fifty ...

GC Oh, that early?

IB Yes, 1956 or 1957. After Suez.

GC I remember when you were there.

IB After Suez, yes, 1958. I think the Prime Minister was ...

GC Again Ben-Gurion?

IB I wonder. Might have been. When was Eshkol?

GC Eshkol was after, Eshkol was from sixty ...

IB Correct. Sharett, he was maybe ...

GC It was earlier. Sharett was until 1956 [1954–5]. Before Suez.

IB I see.

GC And you were there when Ben-Gurion came back.

IB It was during the years of Propes in the Israel Festival. And leaders of that school.

GC Teddy gave Propes a job in the 1950s.

IB That was when Nabokov went. He was a great friend of Propes's.

GC I see. Ha-Zamir.

IB Nabokov was mad about Jews, loved Jews. Adored them. Quite genuinely. Didn't talk about it. But he was totally comfortable among particularly Russian Jews. He thought Propes was terribly funny, but he just loved him. It was a wonderful relationship.

GC Now that Raymond is not in the College, what's the source of Raymond's ...?

IB Hatred of all Jews[?]. *Sin'at binam* ['baseless hatred'].

GC Hourani?[?]

IB No, but it's sad. [?] in St Antony's is that. He didn't like the whole Arab Centre. They were no good to him, [?].

GC They are a non-entity, by the way, academically. Hourani, by the way, was not bad academically. Let's not underestimate Hourani.

But coming back to Raymond, his attitude – do you know him? Do you feel you know him?

IB Yes, more or less. I don't know him inside. Because he has no inside. I can't understand what is an act and what is not.

GC Yes. That's it. That's the problem.

IB He has a human soul. It has become clear during the years. What happens when he is alone? How does he talk to his wife and to his children? Does he talk as he does to us? Does he scream and shout? Does he make those jokes?

GC That you don't know? One thing I can tell you, his attitude towards students is superb. Not to the fellows, but the students he really cares about.

IB I can imagine.

GC And he is a good teacher.

IB He is a strange type. He's a marvellous teacher. He was marvellous at New College. He has a very odd life. He's a schoolmaster's son, who did not go to the war. He came to Christ Church, I think before the war, during originally [*unclear*] ... He became intoxicated by the aristocracy, flattered them like anything, began to hunt. At the end of the war. He was a schoolmaster during the war, and then he came back and had this tremendously disreputable period, when I couldn't bear him. But he came to All Souls. He grew a beard. He lived off them. He used to steal – lived with a kind of – Lady somebody. He used to steal her silver brooches and sell them, and he used to corrupt undergraduates. Not sexually, of course. He was always heterosexual, but he corrupted girls, with whom he had affairs and whom he really left abandoned. He was a bad man. He really was for a time. And then, suddenly, he turned over a new leaf. He got very Victorian. In his politics, suddenly, his favourite politician was Mosley, as you know.

GC No, I don't know.

IB Great personal friend of Mosley. He invited Mosley to dine at Nuffield later.

GC You mean after Mosley's transformation?

IB After the war. Mosley lived in England then. From Ireland.

GC Really? How interesting.

IB He wanted somebody exciting. The Communists were ...

GC He likes mischief.

IB Certainly, but he particularly admired Mosley. And Mosley has a Fascist son, and of course his daughter is one. He moved in a neo-Fascist circle.

GC You mean in the late 1940s, in the 1950s?

IB In the middle – 1946–7. He did. It was terrible. During this period – excitement. Odd, isn't it?

GC His wife's family ...

IB Because of course then he's ...

GC Who is a Charteris.

IB She's a descendant ...

GC She's a granddaughter of ...

IB Of the famous one, yes.

GC The famous one, of ...

IB Her mother was a Charteris. Not her father. He was an Air Marshal. Her father was in the Army.

GC I don't know this.

IB Air Marshal.

GC Yes, it's her mother.

IB Her mother was the daughter of Lady Desborough.

GC The friend of Balfour.

IB Yes. She was the one who said to a man who came to a party which she was giving, to which he hadn't been invited, whom she knew – he opened the door, came in. She met him at the door, and said, 'How very clever of you to know we were giving a party this evening.'

GC [*laughter*] But when Raymond spoke with me about Sarah when she had her breakdown, and so on, he was very empathetic about ...

IB Oh, he did so, yes. He has a heart ...

GC That's what I think.

IB In a funny way he has.

GC He was really ...

IB No, he would be. He's emotional. He's quite a good fellow, as you well know. But the point is, he's very mixed up. You know there is a very famous film and book called *The Duel* ...

GC I never read it but I know about it.

IB He's the Great Corrupter.

GC I know.

IB He's the man in whose house they play roulette.

GC It's interesting that after such a book, one can still pursue a career in a place like Oxford.

IB Well, in New College, of course, he was regarded as – but in All Souls someone got rid of him, because he thought he was a bad influence. And still, a good friend of Crosland, a great friend at one time, who was also with Mosley and Crosland at the same time. You see? And at New College he went straight at a certain point. He suddenly became straight and was actually a candidate for the Wardenship. Those who liked him when he was dejected, didn't like him when ...

GC Then he became ... It's like some of Max Hayward's friends whom he saw when he was drunk, and couldn't ...

IB Couldn't take him ...

GC ... when he was sober.

IB I couldn't take him when he was drunk. Only when he was sober.

GC But when he was sober he was real fun.

IB Certainly.

GC And very able.

IB Certainly. Very.

GC He could pick up a language – it was incredible! And he developed an attitude to Israel ...

IB Remarkable! That was St Antony's pro-Israel centre. Yes, he and Harry ...

GC Harry Willetts, yes.

IB Ruined by Katkov.

GC Spoiled and ruined.

IB In the sense that he made him into a pure anti-Soviet ... He could have been a critic of a distinguished kind. He had the ability, but he became too much of an instrument in the Cold War. His talent didn't really realise itself. It half did, but half didn't.

GC He was always on the edge of either going astray ...

IB Oh, yes!

GC He was kept in academic life just by chance.

IB Katkov saved him from being a kind of Borstal boy. From going to prison, surely.

GC The tolerance of – Bill Deakin and Raymond were really incredible towards him. And it paid.

IB Only because he was not left-wing.

GC No, there was something endearing ...

IB No, but he was not left, I know, so that would not have been enough; if he had been left-wing, they wouldn't ...

GC You think so?

IB Well, there was a Hungarian called [20:36] Krashum[?] who came in 1956 – he became a friend of mine – who was a half Jew, or a quarter Jew, who was Lukács's assistant, who was an endearing [?], he just burned himself to death with a cigarette. He was a Marxist. Stuart and I helped him keep going. He was a very very nice man. Bill couldn't stand him. Raymond would have nothing to do with him. He was an extremely nice man. Ultimately politics. More so than you would think. Bill did not have any left-wing friends.

GC Bill I can see, and the College was small ...

IB Nobody. Freddie Ayer was the nearest to it, and he wasn't far left in that sense.

GC Aha.

IB Of course they worked together in America, in Intelligence. It didn't matter, he didn't pay attention really very much. I assure you, in the end, it was too late. And in Raymond's case – Raymond likes drunkards, likes eccentrics, likes extreme people, but not like him.

GC Because for years he didn't teach. He was in Greece, and the government ...

IB Who, Hayward? No, but the point was, he hadn't been anti-Communist ...

GC Yes, I see what you mean.

IB However charming, disarming, delightful, original, gifted – it wouldn't be good. Wouldn't have voted for Blake, wouldn't have voted for Katkov, wouldn't have voted for Dillon. Must be so. I'm trying to think who he could have known who wouldn't. Who could he not have been afraid of? Mind you, he described himself as a socialist.

GC And it could be – he was a Cold Warrior but he was not a Conservative.

IB Wasn't he?

GC Because ...

IB Even though he wasn't a Cold Warrior, because he was outside the categories.