



Gavriel Cohen's Conversations with Isaiah Berlin: No. 12

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Gavriel Cohen: Conversation No. 12

Conversation date: 13 March 1988

Place: All Souls

Transcribed by: Donna Shalev

Selected topics

Philosophy in Oxford in the 1920s and 1930s

The (high) status of philosophy in Oxford

Other subjects at Oxford

Ernst Cassirer

History of philosophy versus philosophy

Philosophy and rot

Philosophical orthodoxy

Hegelian idealists

The Locke Prize

John Plamenatz

The Aristotelian Society, the Jowett Society, the Oxford University
Philosophical Society

The philosophy BPhil and DPhil

J. L. Austin

Hugo Bergmann

Leon Roth and Jean Fayard's *Oxford and Margaret*

Continental philosophy

Voting in elections: the candidates to be MP for Oxford

How IB voted in general elections

The Union debate on King and Country: Joad versus Hogg

National politicians at All Souls and their guests: Dawson on
Mussolini

Men who were and were not elected to All Souls before, with and
after IB

Saul and Sol Adler

Appeasers and anti-appeasers

The abdication of Edward VIII

Wykehamists, Etonians and socialism

Side A

GC I would like to finish some questions from the previous meeting. Some remaining questions about Oxford in the 1920s and

the 1930s. Philosophy, in Oxford, when you came to Oxford, and then in the 1930s, when you were a fellow of All Souls, until the war, let's say. How was it regarded in the University, among students, among faculty – among students who went [on] to read philosophy? What kind of image of philosophy did they have? Was it the queen of disciplines? There was no hierarchy?

IB There naturally was a hierarchy. I'll tell you. There was no philosophy as such. It was a very highly regarded subject. The best dish which Oxford offered in its [?] was Greats, Literae Humaniores. It isn't so much now. All kinds of things happened, but in the 1920s and 1930s – this goes back to the nineteenth century; it certainly goes back to Balliol in the eighteenth century [?], and before – it was a combination, this very unique Oxford combined dish of ancient history and philosophy. Originally, of course, it was the classical world: ancient philosophy, ancient history. Then, when modern philosophy thrust its way through, it became detached from Plato and Aristotle; it meant that Plato and Aristotle [*unclear*]. That was regarded as the most distinguished of all Oxford non-scientific degrees. That was that. And philosophy was intrinsic. Moreover, there was PPE already, since 19... – I don't know, fairly early 1920s [1920]. Philosophy was part of both. It was the only subject which was part of both, and although Greats dominated PPE, the standards were higher: only people who could read Greek could do it, only ancient historians. Nevertheless, philosophy was very highly regarded. It certainly was fashionable. And next to philosophy was probably history. And after that, everything else was far less important, in the humanities.

GC And classics as such?

IB Classics as such was a first part of Greats. You didn't need to do it. I didn't. But in theory, five terms of classics, seven terms of [*unclear*]. First part, second part. You could skip the first part by doing the Pass Examination, which I did, for example. But most people didn't. Most people, I don't know, like Herbert Hart, did, but most people from public schools did both. So classics was intrinsic. Classics was high, philosophy was high, and ancient history, which was part of classics. That was the top subject. Then

came history, then came the rest. Foreign languages, English, God knows what else there was for a humanist to do. Oh ...

GC Literature – English Literature?

IB Didn't I say English? English, part of languages.

GC Part of languages [?].

IB Part which mainly women did. And, I'll just think what else there was to do. There was PPE, which was not as good as Greats. [?] But still not bad.

GC And economics?

IB No, it was part of PPE. You couldn't do it as such. You couldn't do politics or economics or – as such. Only in combination with philosophy. Three-part, tripartite subject. After that, what could you do in finals? You could do geography, I suppose.

GC Yes.

IB But it was not a full-fledged subject. Honours geography was a rather remote subject. Agriculture. That sort of thing. Nobody with any distinction or ability did that. If you did it, it was because you weren't very clever, and you wanted to get a degree.

GC Theology?

IB Theology, yes. Not highly regarded.

GC No?

IB No. It existed but intellectually it was, already in the 1920s, of no standard.

GC Archaeology was also ...

IB Ah, you could do oriental languages, and that was real, that was genuine. Small subject, but genuine.

GC Now, a student in Greats or in philosophy that sought graduation ...

IB Law! I forgot. That's an enormous school, law. Never regarded as intellectually particularly good. Better now than it was.

GC The best lawyers didn't study law.

IB Exactly.

GC The students of philosophy that distinguished themselves, that were good students, what did the teachers expect from you, and you as a teacher, when you became a teacher in the 1930s? To understand philosophy well, or to philosophise?

IB Oh, both. Nobody was content with a man who expounded philosophy really well, but had no views of his own. No position. Nothing you wanted to defend or develop. That didn't exist. If it existed, it was the tail end. All philosophers had a position of some kind. They all belonged to philosophical societies. They all argued with each other. You see, it was [an] active Socratic subject. It was not learning.

GC That's my feeling.

IB The German philosopher who came here, Cassirer, was terribly shocked. All this argument. When he came here, it was quite amusing. I got him here – I was responsible for getting him invited to All Souls. He was the most learned philosopher in Germany, probably. Pupil of Hermann Cohen. He was part of the Warburg Institute, and he knew a very great deal. He was the greatest living authority on Kant. As he didn't talk English we organised a seminar for him in German, with dons who understood German. It was an absolute galaxy. Everybody came who was any good. Not the older ones, but Price [?], Ryle, other famous philosophers of the time. The man called Foster, who got his degree in Germany. Freddie, Austin. Let me see who else came. Crossman, of all people [?], because he spoke German.

GC German?

IB Exactly. Whoever didn't know any German couldn't come. One or two others. And – here in my rooms, in All Souls, and the seminar was on Leibniz's *Theodisee*, as he called it: *Théodicée – Theodicy. Theodozee*. Because he had written a book on that in 1910. So he thought he might still remember, he might explain it to us. Well, people read it, in Latin, the way it was written. An English translation existed, of course, and then questions were asked. Some people said – put questions like 'What did he – do you think what he says here is consistent with what he says in [some other work]?' That he didn't like. If you asked such questions as 'Do you think what he says is true?', that struck him as absolutely irrelevant. It's as if you had asked whether what Racine said was true. That's not how he did it. The purpose of doing Leibniz was to explain what as relation was to Spinoza, to Descartes, and ultimately to Kant, all streams lead to Kant. And he was very learned, prodigiously learned, and he explained exactly what the text meant, and how it was connected with Jansenism, how it was connected with Greek philosophy, etc. But the question of truth was somehow not something he – he was sure, I don't know, it disturbed him. He would be very polite, so what he would say is, 'That is a very good question. It might well have puzzled Leibniz himself. Then you got top marks [?] for that. But no answer came.

He was very unhappy, and left for Sweden. He was very highly regarded in Göteborg, wrote two works on Swedish philosophy, which was a very very remote subject, as you can imagine, and finally ended up in Yale, where he was worshipped for a great philosopher. Tremendous regard for him. He was a learned man. His books – I'm not a great admirer of his, but he was certainly a distinguished philosopher.

GC Is that tradition still kept?

IB Absolutely. Mind you, what they are accused of now is becoming narrower and narrower and more and more specialised. But the specialisation is to do with what they believe, with analysis, and not learning. Sheer philosophical learning, knowing the history of philosophy, is quite respected but is not required. It is required less

than I would think is actually necessary. Myself, I am rather in favour of it.

GC Of what?

IB Knowing the history of philosophy. It's not needed.

GC Not needed? I mean, your experience, over a period of fifty years or so ...

IB More than that.

GC At least.

IB Soon sixty.

GC Pardon?

IB It will soon be sixty, yes.

GC When you have to judge a young student, at the age of eighteen, nineteen, twenty, at least you can judge his solidity in learning, in quite a safe way.

IB Yes.

GC When it comes to the history of philosophy, understanding philosophy ...

IB What Descartes said, yes.

GC Is it a danger to judge a student – whether he can think philosophically?

IB That is the sole purpose of the entire discipline in Oxford. Knowledge is not enough. Nobody can get a first class in either Greats or Modern Greats by knowing ...

GC I know.

IB ... what these people say. By just expounding.

GC And those who got first class ...

IB Or second class.

GC ... or second class, and pursued academic careers ...

IB In philosophy?

GC In philosophy. Usually the promise was fulfilled?

IB Oh, quite.

GC Cause there are ...

IB It's too general a question. Let me see, who were they in my time?

GC I'm not thinking about the shining lights, but ...

IB No. The ordinary tutors. No, there are plenty of mediocrities.

GC Who might have been very brilliant for a year or two.

IB They were not necessarily brilliant. You didn't need brilliance.

GC I know.

IB Just a certain intellectual solidity, a capacity for understanding arguments, for defending positions, a little bit – a combination of capacity for drafting, which is what solicitors have, and a capacity for arguing, which is what barristers have. The combination of these two qualities was probably sufficient. You could be a dull philosopher, perfectly well, and still get a fellowship, provided you had some intellectual power. The whole purpose was to develop intellectual power, not to impart knowledge. Analytic power and power of argument. I'll tell you a story which Macmillan tells, quite amusing. There was a philosopher in Balliol, when he was young. This man was called J. H. Smith, and afterwards became a not very distinguished professor of philosophy here. He was a tutor at Balliol.

He gave lectures. He would begin as follows, according to Macmillan, who went to them. I don't know whether he did philosophy. He probably did. 'Gentlemen' – there were no ladies then – 'doubtless some of you will pursue interesting careers. Some of you will manage great landed estates. Some of you will enter His Majesty's forces. Some of you will take the cloth and go into the Church. Some of you will go to the Bar.' That's what people did, Englishmen, in those days. 'Some of you will enter the Civil Service. And the Diplomatic Service. I can assure you that nothing in these lectures will be of the slightest use to you in any of these callings. But if you persist with my course, and remain to the end, there is one thing I can promise you that you will derive. You will always know when a man is talking rot.' [*laughter*] That is Macmillan's story. It's quite amusing. That was the purpose. The capacity for critical approaches, for some kind of destruction of what might be called naive traditionalism, or believing what your nurse told you. Everything that Mrs Thatcher is against.

GC Now, what happened, and I think it happened partly in your early days ...

IB Mind you, it didn't have that effect. All of my colleagues were always trying to upset young men and make them think – make them give up ideas which they had. They all emerged dogmatists, exactly the opposite – it did not have that effect.

GC [*unclear*]

IB No. They all emerged absolutely uncritical, probably. They enjoyed it. The number of people who enjoy doing philosophy in principle is very small. The number of people who did it was too great. It was not a proper discipline for most people. It didn't really suit them. And some of them were tormented by doing a subject which they did not begin to understand from beginning to end. That happened quite often. Quite able people. My still living colleague Hicks, who got a Nobel Prize in economics, a famous economist, he did Greats in Balliol, or no, maybe PPE. He did social studies, and got a second. And he got the second because of philosophy. He never recovered from it. He took up economics, naturally after that, and he always tried to philosophise a bit. He never liked it. He

regarded it self-consciously as an enemy subject. Quite a lot of people do that.

GC You were in a period ...

IB People who were no good at philosophy, but were made to do it, have become persecuted about it.

GC What happens when there is a new wave, let's say somebody who was attracted to logical positivism, or to the Vienna school, and is young, wants to pave his way in the University, and the majority of the fellows in philosophy are in a different school. It can happen.

IB Oh, yes. It happened quite often. If there is a collision, and if the tutor is any good, he realises that there is something too difficult here, and he tries to send the man to some other tutor who is more sympathetic. That can happen.

GC It can happen.

IB Yes.

GC But ...

IB Not too often.

GC Not too often.

IB Usually, the pupils are persuaded by the philosophers of their point of view. You have to have a great deal of – a forceful character to resist a tutor who holds entirely different views, but on the whole the trouble with Oxford philosophy in the 1930s was the great variety of views. They argued with each other, but they were on quite good terms. Someone like Collingwood holds very different views from someone like Ryle. So you could be confused. But you could always go to all lectures. If you went to lectures and were influenced by the lecturer, your tutor was impressed. None of the teachers of philosophy are so fanatical as to reject ...

GC Is it so?

IB In my time, perhaps one or two, very few, said, 'It's all nonsense, what you are saying.' There could be – one might say, 'I think this could happen.' It didn't. The trouble was different, but towards the end of the 1930s most Oxford philosophers began to think the same things that they do now. Now there is an orthodoxy [?] of a kind of linguistic analytical kind, and it's rather difficult to be an Oxford philosopher and not believe in any of this. There are a few.

GC Political philosophers ...

IB Ah, they can differ. They can differ as much as they like, but in what's called the straight philosophy, they are all the disciples of Russell and Moore, and partly of analytical philosophy, of formal logic, and the rest of it. They just are. The whole lot. Not only in Oxford. Cambridge, Oxford, London, everywhere. There were no Hegelian philosophers of any reputation.

GC And in your day?

IB There were. Certainly.

GC Did [*unclear*] start as a Hegelian?

IB Before the First World War, yes. More or less, idealists, yes. There was Professor Joachim; Joachim was certainly a Hegelian. There was [G. R. G.] Mure, who became Warden of Merton after the war, who wrote books about Hegel. There was a man called [W. H.] Walsh who became a don here – became one in – came back [from the war] to be one. Maybe he did teach in Merton [yes]. No, he did teach. He was a Hegelian.

GC Was the Locke Prize the tip of [?]?

IB Yes.

GC And it's every year?

IB Every year.

GC Is this a good examination? If you can, if you observe ...

IB No, you've got to be very good, to have nerve [?].

GC Why?

IB I got half of the Locke Prize [1931]; the other half was won by a man called [Sidney] Budden [of Merton]. It was – I got the Locke ...

GC You said half.

IB Because somebody else got the other half.

GC Ah, I see.

IB Two people got the prize. Equal. Next year, the two philosophers were A. J. Ayer and John Austin, who were certainly the ablest philosophers they had. Neither got it, because the professors could not bring themselves to think that what these people wrote was any good. There was straight prejudice and blindness. That happened.

GC It happened?

IB Yes.

GC But it's not the order of the day.

IB No.

GC Usually, what happened to you, I mean the ...

IB I was more conventional, probably. But the point is that they didn't. And that was a scandal. There was a man called Plamenatz, afterwards, who was Professor [of Social and Political Theory] after me.

GC [*unclear*]

IB Exactly.

GC He was failed in his doctorate, for the only book which was any good in that subject for years – it was published. He got into this College, All Souls, on the strength of his book, because we had a new kind of fellowship, which were called theses, where you could get in on something written. Not an examination. And he was elected on that, and it was failed by sheer prejudice by the examiners. That can happen.

GC Plamenatz was more a historian of ideas.

IB No.

GC He was not ...

IB He was not a philosopher. He was a political thinker.

GC Yes.

IB He was not a straight philosopher. The book was not straight philosophy. But the people who – the first book, it was called something like *Freedom of Consent and Political Obligation* [*Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation*, 1938], which he wrote in 1936, before the war, as a graduate student, for a doctorate. He was at Oriel. It was a very good book, and it was failed by Charles Morris, who was an idealist from Balliol, and I don't know who the other man was, but it was a scandal, again. It could happen.

GC But as a rule, everyone who got a Locke Prize became a fellow, or ...?

IB No, certainly not. My colleague John Hilton, who became an archaeologist, and then went straight to the Intelligence Service – he's still alive, a perfectly good spy for the last fifty years – he got John Locke. I have no idea who got it after him.

GC Yes. You didn't need to get it to get a fellowship.

GC [*unclear*] Does it still exist, by the way?

IB Yes.

GC Is there another topic, or ...?

IB What?

GC For the essay.

IB It's not an essay. Exam. Examination.

GC Is it an examination?

IB Yes. It's not an essay.

GC You have to reply to two questions.

IB Three papers.

GC Three papers.

IB At least. You used to. Straight exam.

GC And yet you can demonstrate originality or ...?

IB Yes, certainly. You can always demonstrate originality. Various papers. No thesis. Now it may have changed. I can't tell you what happened after the war. I'm telling you about my time. But there is something called the T. H. Green Moral Philosophy Prize. That's done on an essay. That's also what I mean.

GC Did you go to the Aristotelian Society and ...?

IB As a don, certainly.

GC But as a research student did you too?

IB What?

GC As a student.

IB No, you couldn't.

GC Only for ...

IB Only for dons. Not for students. Only for the professionals – not for professionals, but for ...

GC A research fellow can go ...

IB I know people from the public, [*unclear*], private philosophers. It wasn't confined to academics, but in effect, it is.

GC But from what I see, from several books I read, not now, academic life for you, in those societies, was not less important than the daily university life.

IB What is the difference? What distinction are you thinking of?

GC I thought – that was probably my mistake – that even when you were a student, during your last days of studentship, you also – you personally and others – you were active in societies.

IB Oh, yes.

GC You gave papers and ...

IB Yes.

GC But that was not very passive. I mean an ordinary, an active academic life, an ...

IB Certainly. If philosophy was your – by this I mean, by the end, was probably what you took, was most interesting, but you went about other societies, debating societies ...

GC But it could be that it included submitting papers.

IB Outside philosophy?

GC No, in philosophy.

IB Oh, yes. You read papers, there was an undergraduate philosophical society called the Jowett Society. If you wanted to shine, that's where you shone. Certainly. Dons came to it. That was part of the way to become a philosopher. They noticed talent.

GC So that was for undergraduates?

IB Yes, that was an undergraduate society, which dons were allowed to come to. But there was a philosophical society, only for dons [the Oxford University Philosophical Society].

GC And that was the Aristotelian ...?

IB The Aristotelian was in London. That was not in Oxford. The Aristotelian Society is a national society.

GC Yes, I know. And did you go frequently to the Jowett Society?

IB Certainly. I was the President of it in the end.¹ Of course, oh, absolutely; at least – and I became seriously really interested. Went to every meeting that I could. It met – I don't think it met every week; it may have done.

GC And that's what I have in mind. And that was not less important than your duties in the University.

IB Oh, what duties did I have?

GC As a tutor.

IB What?

GC Well, I was thinking of [teaching?].

IB Yes, but that's the same thing. Still was philosophy. But also ancient history, of course, and afterwards economics and politics, which I never really even taught. Oh, no, but you mustn't distinguish

¹ In Michaelmas Term 1930.

interest in societies and what you did technically with your tutor. They overlapped. Your tutor would go to the same society, he would talk to you afterwards about what you heard, it was all part of the same life. It was a very very active philosophical life there was in Oxford in my day, and I think it still is.

GC Yes, I can assure you.

IB And there still is.

GC I observe this among the students [?].

IB There still is, these days.

GC Now it's mainly among the PhD students, the DPhil students.

IB Yes, they are called BPhil, not DPhil.

GC And there is the DPhil, too.

IB Yes, but it's of no interest. The BPhil was invented after the war.

GC Yes, but ...

IB It comes – the standard is that of a DPhil. There is a DPhil, but that means you write a thesis. In the BPhil you write a very short thesis, and papers. The BPhil is where you go to seminars, where they get to know each other, that's where they argue. DPhil you write in a little room by yourself.

GC I wanted to tell you that I am impressed by the new phenomenon, that the DPhil students are now getting to know each other and very active in societies.

IB In philosophy?

GC In Oxford. In philosophy, yes.

IB DPhil? Could be. Used to be BPhil.

GC They have meetings, and they go, and ...

IB Dons came. Dons were taken [appointed] on the strength of the BPhil. They never needed a D. Never.

GC That I know.

IB In the old days they didn't need anything. Just a First in Schools, Examination Schools. but now you need – you have to do a BPhil. That takes two years. DPhil, or maybe B. I wonder why. Because they probably want to take a job in America. The DPhil counts [there] ...

GC The DPhil. Well, the DPhil now counts in England as well.

IB I don't think so.

GC In other universities.

IB Well, not for philosophy. In other universities maybe. No, in philosophy the BPhil was enough, everywhere. Look, remember there are no first-class philosophers outside Oxford, Cambridge, London. It's a very sad thing. Not really. There are competent philosophers, but the leading philosophers are accumulated here. Cambridge is no longer what it was, Oxford is no longer what it was, but it is still the leading philosophy in the West. Still.

GC And lately it is attracting many, many students, from all over the world.

IB Not as many as it used to.

GC Really?

IB Nothing like. The glorious period was immediately after the war, when Austin dominated the scene. People came from all over the world. It was then called Oxford Philosophy. That's what it was called. For about six or seven years, it was simply terrific. It had a reputation – the entire English-speaking world – and it was Austin

who made it. When he died, it melted. I don't think there was anybody in Jerusalem, for example, who was here at that time.

GC No.

IB I don't remember. Nobody.

GC No. It took time for Israeli philosophers to come to England.

IB But Israel was ruined, philosophically, from the beginning.

GC I was going to ask. [*unclear*] You were on the one hand active in the Friends of the Hebrew University, and then the board of governors. Did they try to consult you, to try to interest you in the problems of the Department of Philosophy in Jerusalem?

IB No. Never. I read two papers there. I read two papers in Jerusalem.

GC Yes.

IB And then that happened two or three times. But look, remember: the man who created the philosophy department was a man called [Hugo] Bergmann. He was an old-fashioned German philosopher of the same kind and formation as Cassirer. He was the pupil of Brentano, in Prague, he was very learned, very nice, and no doubt very saintly.

GC He was my teacher.

IB He was your teacher, and he knew an awful lot, I'm sure, and he was a very lucid, probably, and careful expounder, and probably knew Kant and Hegel backwards. All that's true.

GC [*unclear*] And that was his merit.

IB In what way?

GC He was clear and simple. Unlike [Nathan] Rotenstreich.

IB No, but Brentano was clear and simple.

GC He always tried to [*unclear*]. And he was a real capable teacher.

IB I know he was.

GC And from this point of view he was unlike all the other philosophers.

IB He was the only Jewish pupil of Brentano who was not converted to Christianity. The rest were. Karl Kraus was man [?], somebody else ...

GC I know.

IB They all became converted. Bergmann was already a Zionist when he came to the Karl University [Universita Karlova, Prague?]. Anyway, I'm sure that he was all right, but I don't think that he believed in argument much. He believed in *beki'ut* [knowledge of texts as opposed to *harifut*, logical ability]. He believed in learning. You just had to know what the great men thought. Then came Leon Roth, who did a quite good job of translating the classics, and he was a perfectly competent Oxford philosopher of his time. He came from Manchester, or Liverpool, or somewhere.

GC I thought he was from Cambridge.

IB No, he was here. Leon Roth was at Exeter. I don't know who his teacher was there, but he was an Oxford philosopher of the early 1920s. He wrote a good book on Descartes and Spinoza [*Spinoza, Descartes and Maimonides*, 1924]. He could argue. But broadly, he too really believed in exposition. And there's a very good parody of him in a French novel called *Oxford and Margaret*, by a young Frenchman here, who was at Exeter, called – wait a minute, his father was a famous publisher [Joseph Arthème Fayard].² The publishing house still exists. *Oxford et Margaret* [1924], it was called. It was about a lady called Margaret, who had love affairs at Oxford. Very amusing little

² He may mean the grandfather, Jean François Arthème Fayard, who founded the firm.

description of Oxford in his day. [Jean] Fayard, his name was. Well, he was the son of the famous [publisher?], Whether he's still alive I don't know [1902–78]. Well, he'd be eighty, at least [eighty-six]. He has a character who is in fact Leon Roth. And somebody argues – says something philosophically, and Leon Roth says to him [*falsetto*], 'Descartes thought this and Spinoza thought that, and you deny it, do you? You think the opposite?' 'I must say yes.' That's – yes, Leibniz did not do that. He was very much like a Talmudist. *Kakatum*, as is written. Classical philosophy expanded. And these people generated Rotenstreich.

GC Not Roth.

IB Only Bergmann.

GC [*unclear*]

IB Perfectly. Roth was a perfectly competent provincial philosopher of his day. You could learn a great deal from him.

GC For the Israeli students he was of real importance, because, you know, the students in those days came with rather unclear ideas.

IB Oh, no, he was a very competent – a perfectly good teacher, very clear.

GC He thought the real goal was definition, and he forced them [?].

IB I'm sure he did.

GC For this purpose he was superb; personally he was not popular.

IB I don't know, I never knew him very well.

GC Batya [GC's wife] thought that he was her best teacher.

IB Probably was. Now look, he was a perfectly well trained, learned, serious, honest man. He was a good schoolmaster, really. He was a schoolmaster, but he was a first-class schoolmaster.

GC If you'd seen the papers that he marked, the way a don here ...

IB First-class schoolmaster.

GC But I mean on the whole his balance ...

IB He was a Fellow of the British Academy. Became one. People thought that – people like Ryle were extremely indignant that he did. Thought nothing of him. And he became very excited about Camus after the war. Camus as a moral philosopher, which at least was original. Well, that was quite all right. It meant something. Oh, yes, certainly, I respected him for it.

GC Did he tell you why he left Israel? Did he discuss the whole problem? (It's outside, no, it's a car outside.)

IB Did he what?

GC When he left Israel.

IB No.

GC Because it was quite ...

IB Political. It must have been political in some way.

GC He was disappointed with the state of Israel.

IB What was wrong with it? Nationalism?

GC He was an Ahad Ha'amist.

IB He was an Ahad Ha'amist.

GC He was a pure Zionist, and the dream was not implemented the way he saw it.

IB What was wrong? Not enough ideology?

GC Not enough ideology, *étatisme*. I never discussed it with him.

IB Too political, I see. I think I must have talked to him about that. I think I was – I saw him in an angry way. He did denounce Israel to me, he did.

GC Then he was disappointed with the way life in England went on; the point was ...

IB Of course. Nothing happened to him here.

GC He bore in mind ...

IB He was not taken up. Nobody paid the faintest attention to him as a philosopher. He may have taught somewhere, but ...

GC And England was not the same any more.

IB Evidently. And nobody respected him as a philosopher.

GC For him it was a real sad ...

IB Nobody respected him, and he had to be – he must have taught somewhere.

GC I'm not sure, I think he was ...

IB London somewhere, no?

GC He had independent means. I think his wife ...

IB That could be, but he may have, yes.

GC He lived near Cambridge.

IB That's right, I remember. He must have gone to – done a bit of teaching on the side in Cambridge.

GC He was very unhappy.

IB Yes.

GC It's a sad story.

IB Obviously ... He wrote on Camus.

GC And it's a pity for the University, because he was a good teacher.

IB No, he was a perfectly – he was second-rate but he was a perfectly good solid disciplinarian and schoolmaster. And why not? For a place like Jerusalem.

GC He taught mainly Greek philosophers.

IB Of course.

GC Law [*unclear*].

IB Yes. Ethics.

GC I'm not sure how up to date he was in twentieth-century thought.

IB Not very.

GC I don't think he – I think he even didn't take any interest in logic.

IB No, in his day modern philosophy as [it] is now was not well thought of in Oxford. He belonged to a pre-1914 English tradition, but it was a better tradition than the German tradition, which was a little bit too overladen with ...

GC But still, Oxford and Cambridge are still unique.

IB Perhaps.

GC I don't know of any other university, even in the States, that really treats the study of philosophy the way you ...

IB Harvard does.

GC Harvard does.

IB Yes. So does Princeton, so does Berkeley, and lots of other universities in America. They really do.

GC They really do.

IB Twenty universities do, out of many; yes, absolutely. So when philosophers go to America or Americans come here, it's complete – no friction, they know where they are. They feel totally at home.

GC Yes, that I know.

IB For that reason. The discipline is the same discipline. Absolutely. The enemies are the same enemies.

GC All right.

IB French philosophers, Italian philosophers, German philosophers have no idea what's going on. No contact.

GC I think that the French are the most isolated.

IB Or Italians. Well, French philosophers are of course influenced by Heidegger.

GC By Germans.

IB Oh, Germans, certainly.

GC Sartre didn't read English.

IB I don't doubt it.

GC I know.

IB He just didn't, I see.

GC He did what he read in German [?].

IB Exactly, certainly. He was Alsatian, after all, and his name was Schweitzer [no: that was his mother's maiden name]. His grand... – he was a great-nephew [nephew] of Albert Schweitzer.

GC I was taken aback by it – not a word.

IB Quite.

GC You see, the order of the day was going to Germany, after – he was teaching; I mean, Raymond Aron [?].

IB Went to Germany.

GC Went to Germany, and then taught philosophy in high school; he replaced Sartre when Sartre went to Germany.

IB I understand.

GC But Raymond Aron knew English well.

IB Very well.

IB But not philosophy. But he didn't know philosophy.

GC Perfect.

IB Perfect. He didn't [?].

GC He and Maurice[?] Aron. [?] also spoke perfectly.

IB But he didn't do philosophy, Raymond Aron.

GC Ah, he didn't?

IB No. He wrote a book on philosophy of history, but that's about all. That he got from Germany.

GC That he got from Germany.

IB Entirely.

GC I thought he was a friend of Yankelevich, or something.

IB Oh, that may be, but his formation was German. Yankelevich was also from the German formed, in spite of his Russian origin. [?] Bergson up to a point.

GC Was there any ...? I remember that he became a sociologist.

IB He was called a sociologist, but really politics. He was a high-grade publicist. He was not a great thinker.

GC [*unclear*]

IB Very.

GC I mean the exposé.

IB Marvellous. An extremely clever man. Tradition of Tocqueville.

GC What?

IB He had the tradition of Tocqueville.

GC But when you come to philosophy in France, it's always a German.

IB No.

GC Until the Second World War.

IB No, it began in the seventeenth century, after all.

GC Ah, no, I speak ...

IB Nineteenth. Bergson was not a disciple of the Germans.

GC No.

IB I don't know whom you've read.

GC I'm speaking of the generation of Sartre and Raymond Aron, those who studied in the twentieth century.

IB Yes, they went to Germany. That is correct. England – America and England didn't exist. William James meant nothing to them.

GC No. And I don't know if they knew the name.

IB Exactly.

GC And to this day I believe that they are very late ...

IB Now it's half and half. There are positivists in France. Not many, but they exist. But let me tell you, you are quite right; there was an attempt made by an ex-Jesuit called Leslie Beck, who was a Catholic brought up in Sorbonne, to try and organise a meeting of French and English philosophers, in a place called Royaumont, where there was a favour famous intellectual centre. They came, and the gulf widened: instead of being bridged, it became much wider. They hated each other. After Merlau-Ponty appeared with photographers, Ryle couldn't bear it and began saying, 'The continentals think [this and that].?' The continentals. There was no contact whatever. Freddie Ayer was there. People spoke French. Some of the English spoke French quite well. No contact. Not the same.

GC And other fields?

IB There are bridges. There is my friend Montefiore in Balliol, who knows French extremely well, and [is] a great friend of the French philosophers.

GC Freddie knew French.

IB Freddie knows perfect French. His father was Swiss. Perfect French: he used to lecture it in Paris. But – and he was all right, he was quite – he was brilliant, and so on, but he had no real contact with any French philosopher. No friends.

GC It's inconsistent. I mean, in your days, in the 1940s, 1950s, there were no philosophers in France?

IB In the English sense?

GC Pardon?

IB In the English sense? No. The only one, Merlau-Ponty, had a certain influence on phenomenology. He was not entirely unknown. Husserl. Freddie had nothing to do with that.

GC No?

IB Nothing. Freddie was a narrow, devoted logical positivist.

GC But he met some French philosophers.

IB He may have met these people, but he had no business with them.

GC That he was a logical positivist, yes.

IB And he remained one.

GC I know.

IB And they were not. And the result was that he had no – not much intellectual contact.

Side B

IB Come to do philosophy in Oxford. Americans, Canadians, Australians, the White Commonwealth. Latin Africa [?]. Occasionally people would come from Latin America. Italians, French – I don't know of a single case of a French philosopher learning philosophy here. Coming to study English philosophy. Entirely unknown.

GC You know, even in other fields that I know, there seem to be less. They follow, they invent new schools ten, twenty, thirty years after.

IB Other people. Oh, who? The French. Well look. Nobody now in England has ever heard the name Yankelevich. There's no need to hear it, and in fact nobody has. Ask any English philosopher, 'Does the word "Yankelevich" mean anything to you?' Means nothing. 'Does the word "Laland" mean anything to you?' It means nothing.

GC But if there was, you would have translated. After all, English philosophers knew French, and ...

IB Some did.

GC Some, all right. And had they discovered ...

IB Yes, well, Bergson was translated.

GC And even [?].

IB [1:14] Could be, certainly, not much of a philosopher, but still. Mainly a historian of – philosopher of science in a way, historian of science.

GC And ideas.

IB Yes. I'm trying to think what other French philosophers were translated, if any. In the twentieth century there was a man called Raymond Polin, who was an authority on Locke. He came to Oxford and talked to people about Locke: that was scholarship.

GC There are no great philosophers in our day[?]. There are sociologists or theorists of literature. You have there the Derridas, and the Lacans.

IB They are all called – Derrida – they're all supposed to be philosophers.

GC Yes, or no, but they are translated.

IB Yes. Because if you ask who was the greatest, the only French philosopher of the twentieth century who ever crossed the Channel – Bergson certainly, Merleau-Ponty did: he was read by Charles Taylor and various other people. Husserl was read a bit in England, but among French – certainly people I met – what's his name? Who was the Jewish philosopher who wrote about Kierkegaard? *Études kierkegaardiennes* – whom I knew, quite a nice man whom I used to meet in America. Nobody in England had ever heard of him. Jean Wahl – totally, name not known. I met him and I rather liked him, because he was quite a nice man, but ... Eric Weil, who was a German philosopher in France, meant nothing here.

GC He was a good teacher [*unclear*].

IB I'm sure.

GC He came to Israel for a year once. He was Professor at Lille. He wrote a book.

IB About Hegel, wasn't it?³

GC All right. Now, when did you first vote?

IB Politically? Wait a moment. I'm trying to cast my – when was I first entitled to vote? When I was twenty-one, I think it might have been. Don't think it was eighteen. May have been. But if so I certainly didn't vote when I was at school, or my first year at Oxford. I certainly voted in 19... – wait a moment, I voted for the representatives of Oxford University. I don't think I voted before I came to All Souls.

GC Only once you could.

IB Before that, yes; 1932, I could, no, that year I couldn't – there was no election then.⁴ There was an election – 1929 I couldn't; 1931

³ *Hegel et l'état* (Paris, 1950).

⁴ There were general elections in 1929, 1931 and 1935, and a by-election in 1937: bit.ly/oxford-mps.

there was a famous national government. Let me tell you who the Oxford candidates were.⁵ No idea. Nobody known. No known people.

GC So then you voted only for the Oxford candidates, not ...

IB Then I voted for the ones of the City of Oxford. I don't think I did, no. [*unclear*] the University candidates very much.

GC And you got [*unclear*].

IB Oh yes, oh Lord yes, in 1931 I don't know, the same ones, they're always the same in Oxford. Single transferable vote. It was not like any other kind of system. The top Conservative candidates were Hugh Cecil and Professor Charles Oman from All Souls.

GC Who were the other candidates?

IB Let's see, the Liberal candidate was Gilbert Murray. The Labour candidate was Professor J. L. Stocks from Manchester, who had been at Oxford. Hugh Cecil used to roll up an enormous vote. Gilbert Murray came next. But all the second votes for Hugh Cecil went to Oman, who used to get the bottle vote, and was elected. So they sat in Parliament together all through.

GC Both of them?

IB Certainly. Absolutely. Until – wait a moment – the first time that was broken was when Hugh Cecil became a peer, became a Lord of Quickswood [Baron Quickswood, 1941], went to Eton as Provost [1936].⁶ Then we had an election [1935] in which A .P. Herbert was an Independent candidate. And he actually defeated the nominee of the Conservative caucus, which had an elected candidate for Oxford since the days of Charles II. The Conservative candidate was the Principal of Hertford College, a very nasty man called [C. R. M. F.] Crutwell, who forfeited his deposit. That was unheard of. The

⁵ The MPs elected in both 1929 and 1931 were Hugh Cecil and Charles Oman. Gilbert Murray was runner-up both times.

⁶ He left the Commons in 1937.

Conservative caucus was destroyed in 1934 [1935]. Was there an election then? Round about then. There was some kind of election when Macdonald [sc. Baldwin] resigned [1937].

GC When Baldwin ...

IB When Baldwin, yes. About then. The Conservatives came in – a big vote.

GC Either 1934 or 1935 [1935].

IB That's it. A. P. Herbert was elected in place of Hugh Cecil. Then finally their man went, and then we had a very exciting election in which the official Conservative candidate was the Regius Professor of Medicine, Sir Farquar Buzzard. The Churchillian [Independent Conservative] candidate was Professor [Frederick] Lindemann, and the Popular Front candidate was [Arthur] Salter, who then was – came fresh from the League of Nations, and was a Liberal [Independent]. The chairman of his committee was Cole. And then of course the famous election⁷ was in 1938, which was [Alexander: 'Sandie'] Lindsay and [Quintin] Hogg. That was entirely on Munich. We all voted like mad then.

GC That was what I was going to ask. In 1938 certainly you were very involved.

IB Deeply involved.

GC And you voted for an issue, and not for the man.

IB Absolutely.

GC Earlier, was it also for ...?

IB Also.

GC And you voted Liberals?

⁷ For the constituency of Oxford, not Oxford University.

IB Myself?

GC Yes.

IB No, I voted Labour.

GC Labour, from the ...

IB Certainly.

GC From the very beginning?

IB In the case of 1935 there was just a Popular Front Candidate. Liberals and Labour chose the same man [Patrick Gordon-Walker, Labour], just as they did Lindsay [Independent Progressive] afterwards. In 1938 it was the same: Liberals and Labour were combined. Plus [?] the Conservatives, plus Macmillan. [08:46] And Heath and all these people. All of them voted against Hogg. They came down to Oxford, they made speeches. Heath was President of the Union, so that didn't arise. I voted Labour in 1945, and ceased to vote Labour after that, because of Bevin's Palestine policy. Entirely for that reason.

GC And when Harold Wilson was a candidate?

IB When Wilson was candidate – wait a moment, I'm now talking about the election – oh, this is future elections. I think I voted Lib[eral], I voted in every direction. I don't think I ever voted Conservative, but I voted Liberal, to prevent them from forfeiting their deposit. Simply as a kind of sympathy vote. I did not vote for my pupil Monty Woodhouse, who was number two in the Home Office, who was member for Oxford and then⁸ became head of Chatham House. I knew him very well.

GC [*unclear*]

IB Oh, certainly. I taught him, at New College, certainly. No, I couldn't vote for him. Who else did I vote for?

⁸ He was head of Chatham House before he was MP for Oxford.

GC And lately, when the SDP and ...?

IB I was an SDP voter, as you would expect.

GC Now, in the 1930s ...

IB I never voted Labour again. Certainly not. It was a long time. As long as Bevin was there, I couldn't. Who succeeded Bevin? Bevin died when [1951]?

GC Morrison succeeded him before he [Bevin] died. He [Bevin] became very ill.

IB But there was no election.

GC No, there were elections in 1950, and then immediately again in 1951.

IB Wait a minute. First there was Attlee, then there was ...

GC No, Attlee was Prime Minister all along.

IB When, until ...?

GC 1951.

IB Until 1951.

GC And in 1950 there were elections. And they came back with a reduced majority.

IB Who, Labour?

GC Yes.

IB And in 1951 Churchill, who did I vote for. Who did I vote for in 1951? Liberal, I'm sure. Whoever it was, there was no longer the University vote. That was abolished in 1951. Then we had 195[5].

GC [*unclear*] when Macmillan was a candidate. After all, Macmillan was a liberal Conservative.

IB Oh, certainly.

GC So you might have voted for him.

IB I might. But I don't think I did. I liked him, I was a friend of his. but I didn't vote for him, no. You could easily have done that. I can't remember who the others were. The candidates were very dim, for the City. Who were they? They were nobodies.

GC The Liberal, was it Jo Grimond?

IB What? No. Who?

GC The head of the Liberal Party [Clement Davies].

IB Oh, in Parliament? Well, this ...

GC I was thinking about the candidates in Oxford.

IB Yes.

GC Would you take into account [*IB begins answering (appropriately) here, before hearing the key word of the question*] the personality of the candidate?

IB I'm afraid I do. Some people don't. I'm always criticised for it by serious people. I do.

GC You wouldn't vote Labour, probably, if you had – if Bevin [?] a good candidate here [?]. Even if there was one. You choose sometimes for political ...

IB If there was, yes. But if there was a very good Conservative whom I greatly admired, I might have voted for him, certainly. I was not bound by any party. I was a floating voter. I did not vote for the St Antony's candidate – what was his name?

GC Evan Luard.

IB Evan Luard. I thought he was too dull. Too conventional. He was quite a nice man. But I can't remember who defeated him – was it Woodhouse?

GC Monty Woodhouse the first time.

IB Yes.

GC And I can't remember who it was the second time. The second time apparently was a good – [John] Patten.

IB Who is now in Parliament.

GC He defeated him the second time. The first time it was Monty Woodhouse. Now, during those dates, do you remember this famous debate on King and Country? You know, in the Union?

IB Oh, I can tell you about that. The original debate about King and Country I never heard of. Probably it was, I don't know, I can't remember who took part in it. The Union was not at the centre of my interest. Some people probably did pay attention. That was the occasion when I think it was Oliver S..., not Oliver, and it was – who were the people? [C. E. M.] Joad. Joad was against [13:48] King and Country.

GC And I think that Hogg was ...

IB No, Hogg did not ...

GC Didn't Hogg come from outside?

IB Yes, but I don't think he took part in the original debate. Did he [yes]? Original debate?

GC Or the second one.

IB Second, possibly. But wait a second, [?]. I'm just trying to think. In the first one, certainly Joad on one side, and I think somebody

rather unimportant was on the other [Quintin Hogg]. Two of them, perhaps, like Edward Stanley. [?]. Anyway, I don't think it appeared – then, why it became notorious is because Randolph Churchill printed a leading article about it all, splashed across the pages of the *Daily Mail*. That's why it became an issue. Then, when the second debate occurred,⁹ about expunging [?], then there was frantic excitement. I was already at All Souls. That was in spring 1933. I was elected in the autumn of 1932.

GC Maybe it was later.

IB No, it was not, it was in 1933. The very next term, after the original term, spring 1933 – may have been summer, but not later.

GC Are you sure it was 1933? I thought it was later.

IB I think you'll find it wasn't. And I remember going to vote. I couldn't get into the hall, because there was an enormous number of people milling outside. Tremendous excitement. It's as if England was going to be declared a republic. And my colleague, now Lord Jay, came running about with a huge kitchen knife, and might have stabbed somebody at any moment. Frantic excitement. I went for – I remember I had a guest to dinner at All Souls, who was a man called Mead, who afterwards won a Nobel Prize in Economics. Professor, and so on. James Mead, an old friend. And oh, yes, that was quite a business.

GC Now, all this series of events ...

IB That's when Communism got going at Oxford. About then.

GC But during those years you had – did you remember Ethiopia as an issue?

IB Very much! Very strongly, let me tell you. Absolutely. It was a deep issue. People were very strongly and highly –nearly everybody, all my junior colleagues at All Souls, other than Hogg and

⁹ Three weeks after the first (which took place on 9 February 1933). The heavily defeated resolution was proposed by Randolph Churchill.

Wilberforce, who were Conservatives, were very anti-Italian. Now I'll tell you a story. Simon was Foreign Secretary.

GC Yes.

IB Simon was a fellow of All Souls. He used to come here at the weekends quite a lot. The junior fellows – the conversation at All Souls was entirely free. And these politicians used to come down with their friends, Simon and Halifax, Geoffrey Dawson, Amery. There was a man called [Arthur] Steel-Maitland, who died [1935], Conservative Minister for a long time, and then who else? Lionel Curtis, who created Chatham House, that was a group. Dugald Malcolm, who was head of the South Africa Company after Rhodes. They brought people like Buchan and Lothian [?], everyone you could think of. And Boer generals, all kinds of people, Smuts. They talked absolutely freely in front of the junior fellows. In their own rooms, they plotted. But at dinner and after dinner, the conversation was absolutely free. The people could ask them questions, and the junior fellows always outnumbered the senior ones, and they were quite arrogant. A lot of chutzpah. And one day we surrounded Simon and said, 'Why do you not impose world sanctions?' He said, 'You young men want to impose world sanctions. I can tell you why not. Supposing we do, then Mussolini may fall. And then what? Communism?' He said it. He would never have said it. It was never reported. It remained buried in All Souls. Christopher Hill was then at All Souls. He heard it. He was a Communist then. Nothing, never leaked. It would have done him incredible harm. It never leaked. Clear principles were observed in a mysterious way. Very English. Couldn't happen in any other country. I can't imagine France – radicals not reporting what reactionaries said. But it was exciting to have been in All Souls then, because you learnt – you knew how the governing class governed. It all became – one discovered a great deal about the methods and the people, and how they talked. What they said. The whole texture of the government of England was revealed here.

GC But It really was, it's not a legend.

IB No. I don't say that knowing that kind of thing, but more than Cliveden, yes because they – nobody knew who the guests were, certainly. I mean, the real Munichites were here.

GC The young generation, the young fellows, most of them were anti?

IB Yes. Most of them were anti. Let me try and recite to you who they were, and then you'll see. Who was I elected with? Immediately before me, three years before me, Sparrow and [Denis] Rickett, both Conservatives. Rickett as a civil servant. Then Jay and Bowen, socialists. Then Quintin Hogg, Conservative, and Goronwy Rees, left-wing. Then, with me, Wilberforce, Conservative, [Patrick] Reilly, Foreign Office, and the third, myself. Then Austin, voted Labour. Then came Con O'Neill, who voted Labour, and was in the Foreign Office. Resigned over Munich. The only personal member of the Foreign Office who resigned, because he was the third secretary in a Berlin, and [Neville then thought that?] this was too much for him. And with him [Anthony] Wozzley, voted Labour. Then came Christopher Hill, the only Communist, and a man called [Richard] Latham, the son of a famous judge in Australia, drove a lorry for the Spanish republic [*laughter*]. Then came Stuart Hampshire, clearly Labour, and a man called Routh, Labour. Then came A. J. Brown, an economist, Labour, and a man called [A. D. M. Cox, don't know how he voted, but he was an historian. Then came Fawcett, J. E. S. Faucett, Labour, I'd say he was Liberal, maybe, or Labour. Then, with him, a man called – what was his name? [H. W. Davies] – who was in fact, it turned out, killed in the War, turned out to be a Communist. Anyway, this is from Balliol, philosopher. And Rohan Butler, probably Conservative – maybe Conservative, maybe not. It's not clear. And then came the War. That's the [incomplete] list.

GC Few Conservatives, I mean the majority were Labour.

IB Absolutely.

GC In the 1930s.

IB Absolutely. Clever boys were Labour.

GC The Conservatives were not necessarily appeasers, or ...

IB No. That wasn't it. Quintin Hogg was, but that's another story.

GC Now, in those debates, I wonder ...

IB I can tell you who was not elected to All Souls. Not elected were [Edgar Trevor] 'Bill' Williams, whom you wouldn't know, who was Secretary[?] at Rhodes House. Wilson – Harold. Trevor-Roper. I'm trying to think, people who afterwards became well known. A man called Frank Figgures, whom you wouldn't know, he became a Civil Servant, he was sort of ECO, EC[?] [KCB, CMG], all that. Sir Frank.

GC Freddie Ayer was not.

IB Yes. He was not in my year. I defeated him, I regret to say. And [Paul] Gore-Booth was not, he was also the same year. And Tommy Hodgkin. Never forgave me for defeating him.

GC They were all the same year.

IB Freddie Ayer, Tommy Hodgkin, Gore-Booth, the same year. Yes. Certainly. A man called Adler, who afterwards went to China as a Communist. Sol [*which GC bears as 'Saul'*] Adler.

GC Ah, yes, I know who that is. The parasitologist.

IB That's right, his brother.

GC Shaul.

IB He was Solomon.

GC Shaul Adler.

IB Solomon.

GC Saul.

IB Saul is the brother. Saul is the scientist.

GC He was a parasitologist.

IB Exactly. His brother. Only because he was the guest of his brother. Sol – S-o-l – Adler was a Communist, he was in New College. He was an economist in England, didn't get on with people, clever boy, really, Yiddish-speaking, and went to America, where he taught, and then during the war he went to China with the American mission, was very Communist. Came back to Harvard, became a Professor at Harvard, and during the McCarthy period came back to England and worked with Joan Robinson in Cambridge, and then went to China, disappeared, and worked for Mao. And he's still there. And he invited Saul to visit him, that's what you are thinking of.

GC Now, among your friends did you have any close friends who were appeasers?

IB No.

GC Could you predict ...

IB No. Nobody.

GC Is it because people who were your friends couldn't be appeasers, or ...

IB It just didn't work that way. There were people who took no interest in politics, who, should we say – oh, I don't know, my friend Bernard Spencer, a poet, my friend Stephen Spender, who was on the left, of course. I don't know, I'm trying to think who was uninterested in politics – in the 1930s, mind you – totally uninterested. Anthony Blunt, in 1934, had no interest in politics, but was – who would not have been an appeaser – by that time of course already a Communist. [25:31] Who did I know in those early years? I've forgotten who my friends were.

GC People who are on the left, or [have a] certain kind of political attitude.

IB Leonard Schapiro. Man of the right. Appeasement, no. No Jew could be.¹⁰

GC No.

IB Well, Hore-Belisha probably was, but that's another matter.

GC I'm not sure.

IB Not sure, but certainly Sassoon was. Philip.

GC But, among the Conservatives.

IB Herbert Samuel was. He made a speech in the House of Lords, in 1938 or 1939, in which he said, 'The words of Mr Churchill are those of a melee run amuck.' Herbert certainly was.

GC That's late.

IB That's late. If you look it up in Hansard – I remember the 'melee run amuck'.

GC Among the Conservatives, what would make one appeaser or anti-appeaser? Was there something in their making? Could you generalise?

IB No. I think partly of course people who hated Communism.

GC Among your friends.

IB Oh, Geoffrey Dawson. That was all anti-Communism. Straight anti-Communism.

GC That's natural, that's political.

IB Better Germany than Russia. Otherwise, extreme fear of war, which is again quite rational, if you like. Pro-German sentiment,

¹⁰ But see on Herbert Samuel below.

people who just – Boase, President of Magdalen, liked the Germans. He was an appeaser of the typical kind. Chips Channon, who was another friend of mine, adored the Germans and the Wittelsbachs in Bavaria, and all that. I'm just thinking who the appeasers were, in Oxford. The head of Queen's College, [Robert 'Robin' Howard] Hodgkin. Tommy Hodgkin's father. Typical appeaser. He was a Quaker by origin, but he was expelled by the Quakers because he was in favour of the Boer War. He made a famous statement in 1940. He was sitting at his High Table, and there was Ettinghausen there, and he said, 'You know, if the Germans win' – not even, about April of 1941, maybe it was already June – 'it may not be so bad. After all, in France after 1870, they recovered pretty soon after that. It was pretty awful, but nothing like what they feared.' Then he suddenly saw Walter Ettinghausen and he said, 'I suppose it won't be quite so nice for you.' A good remark. Not quoted by Ettinghausen, but Guy Chilver, who was a friend of mine at Queen's, quoted that to me afterwards. Showed what a horrible man he was. Hodgkin.

GC Of course to be Conservative but to be anti-appeaser, but on Spain, would support ...

IB David Cecil. My greatest friend, a passionate Conservative, violent anti-appeaser, and all his brothers, his own brother, the whole lot. 'I don't [?] my country' [?]. That was the line. 'I don't know what is happening.' Passionate.

GC But that wouldn't imply necessarily ...

IB Sparrow, the Warden of this College, a rock-red[?] Conservative, 100 per cent anti-appeaser. He was a friend of mine.

GC But it wouldn't imply necessarily that in Spain he would support ...

IB Oh, yes, that he supported Franco. Of course. Oh, yes, nothing to do with that. Churchill did to start with; Duff Cooper, to begin

with, but my father in 1938, he said exactly what Blum said. ‘Shame and relief.’¹¹ Relief, after Munich. I felt no relief.

GC But one can see ...

IB Yes, of course one can see. Blum said it.

GC And abdication was an issue?

IB Not really. People felt very strongly. It was entirely a joke to me. Somebody in Exeter Common Room threw a glass of wine at somebody else. And so on. It was talked about.

GC But you didn’t ...

IB I didn’t feel the slightest – no feelings. Roy Harrod went around the London to Oxford train, canvassing people in the compartments, which they – yes, when it suddenly appeared in the papers – about Mrs Simpson, what they felt. He found that most of them were in favour of the Prince of Wales.

GC It wasn’t ...

IB No, it wasn’t an issue for me. I was very pleased when he resigned. I thought that – I already felt that he had been a terrible menace. The Nazi connections were known. He’d been to Germany. It was clear that it was that way. I had a feeling that ...

GC Again among the Conservatives, Anglican and Catholics, according to your observation, what influenced their politics? Or – I’m trying to find out other kinds of generalisations, nobility and middle class, or graduates and – is there any difference in general between graduates and Etonians and Wykehamists?

¹¹ Léon Blum (1872–1950), Prime Minister of France 1936–7, March–April 1938, and December 1946–January 1947, the first Jew and socialist to hold that post; pragmatically supported Daladier over the Munich Agreement, September 1938, while professing himself unhappy with the methods by which it had been achieved. He wrote that he was ‘divided between a cowardly relief and shame’ (*Le Populaire*, 20 September 1938; cited in *The Times*, 21 September 1938, 10b). [B 329/2]

IB Yes. In relation to politics? [No.] Otherwise, yes, very considerable.

GC Otherwise. I could have known.

IB I'll tell you exactly. Politically, no, you can't say that. There were Wykehamist socialists in London – why not? Hayter voted Socialist.

GC Crossman.

IB Crossman of course. And Jay, Douglas Jay, and Gaitskell.

GC Gaitskell. And even [?].

IB [?] certainly.

GC There are lots of them.

IB There are. Oh, a lot.

GC I got the impression that Winchester produced more socialists than Eton.

IB Very likely. Much more earnest. More morally involved. Etonians are more light-hearted and more detached and more sardonic. In that sense more cynical. I'm trying to think of Etonian socialists. They existed, of course.

GC There are, certainly. There are.

IB Now. But then, for example?

GC I think Dalton was, wasn't he?

IB Dalton, yes. And now there is that maverick, you know who I mean, Tam Dalyell. You know, at Balliol.

GC Ah, yes.

IB Dalyell. He's Etonian.

GC Is he a real one? Yes.

IB Independent, that's what they are. That's the point. Total Independence, that's what they rather admire. Then who else from Eton? In those days. Etonian socialists. They certainly existed. Freddie Ayer.

GC Ah, he was a socialist.

IB Certainly. Absolutely. Right. Let's stop here.