



## **More Building**

### ***Supplementary Letters 1960–1975***

This PDF is one of a series designed to assist scholars in their research on Isaiah Berlin, and the subjects in which he was interested.

The series will make digitally available both selected published items and edited transcripts of unpublished material.

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# More Building

## *Supplementary Letters 1960–1975*

Most of these letters do not appear in *Building: Letters 1960–1975* (B), being later discoveries. More annotation may be provided later, but for now the texts are made available here for the convenience of readers. Sources are listed at the end of the supplement. Abbreviations and other editorial apparatus mostly follow the conventions adopted in the published volume, or those listed [here](#).

Several (asterisked) letters from the published volume are also included (with some cuts restored), in three cases because only carbon copies were previously available to the editors; since then top copies have come to light in the New York Public Library, which houses the bulk of the *New York Review of Books* archive, and manuscript additions and alterations made by Berlin are shown here [in this red](#). A fourth letter (19 March 1970) appears because the *Jewish Quarterly* published it in May 2021 (see sources at the end of this supplement), adding the passages cut in B. Three letters to Jean Floud are included (one not previously published, two from B with some cuts restored) to give a fuller picture of her and IB's discussion of Robert Skidelsky's book on Mosley than there was space for in the published volume. Passages restored in letters that appear in *Building* and some corrections are shown [in this blue](#).

The four published volumes include for the most part only letters written by Berlin, but where we have the other side of the correspondence, and have been able to secure the necessary copyright permission, the online supplements will also include a selection of letters written *to* Berlin, chosen for their interest and the light they throw on the context of the exchanges. At present the only examples in this supplement are the letters from Bryan Magee, George Kennan, Sam Sebba and Judith Shklar.

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TO JOHN SPARROW<sup>1</sup>

30 September 1960

Headington House

My dear Warden,

I enclose a Notice of Motion which Monteith has asked me to sign. I have done so, with qualms. I should prefer three-fourths myself, and if this is concretely suggested by someone, may rat.

May I make two suggestions – only suggestions, only suggestions –

(a) That dear Stuart<sup>2</sup> be put on the Domestic Committee – the appropriate home for all old Domestic Bursars.

(b) That Con O’Neill, now a widower, be elected to a £50 Fellowship. True, it is said that he is going away as Minister or Ambassador to Finland. Nevertheless he is a bachelor: a tremendous status: and although we could wait until he came back, he might be married then (so far as I know he has no matrimonial plans at the moment), and I think it would be pure gain to lure him back. I should therefore be prepared to conceal my knowledge of his impending move (though someone else may reveal it) and if revealed play it down.

All this will annoy Lionel Butler even more. If you are prepared to face that, so am I.

(c) When are we to meet? Would you please telephone immediately on receipt of this? Please?

Yours, with much *love*

Isaiah

<sup>1</sup> John Hanbury Angus Sparrow (1906–92), classicist and barrister; Fellow of All Souls 1929–52, then (1952–77) Warden. See E 798.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart Newton Hampshire (1914–2004), philosopher. E 792–3.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

\*TO ROWLAND BURDON-MULLER

[mid-March 1961, *manuscript*]

University College Hospital, London

Dear, dear Rowland

My little operation on my nose is over.<sup>3</sup> I am reading peacefully: the American doctors are said by my jolly Mr Musgrave here to have left their job on me very botched in 1944 – that is when I allowed the lunatic Mrs J. W. Garrett of Baltimore with whom later I became so bitterly brouillé<sup>4</sup> – to send me to Johns Hopkins hospital, whence all my sinus trouble & trembling eyelids began. I love the peace of private medical rooms, the discreet nurses, the [pro?]spect of leisure, the regular meals, hours, habits, all this suits me beautifully.

Aline has now left my side to go & attend to the removal of the tonsils of her son Philippe. Operation after operation. Small but annoying: your letter about Alan P-J & Weidenfeld ws *magnificent*. I don't understand about Rushmore's *devastating* effects: he seems to me a very uninteresting young man, of no special quality: why then this universal cuckoo in the nest effect? Brian and Alfreda? Douglas and John R.? Alan – P-J & his friends? What magical Don Juanesque power has [sc. does] this moustached feeble-wit possess? I wish you wd explain? perhaps if people give themselves to any single end, they succeed, no matter how few gifts they seem to outsiders to possess: like women who are clumsy & ugly but convinced of their irresistible attractiveness, do, if thy possess

<sup>3</sup> On 10 March 1961 IB underwent minor surgery at University College Hospital, London, to remove a nose polyp; a week later he was recovering at home: 'I had an operation on my nose which did me neither good nor harm. That is the most that can be expected of any operation and so I am quite content' (to Umberto Morra, 5 June 1961).

<sup>4</sup> Alice Warder Garrett (1877–1952), wife of John Work Garrett (1872–1942), US ambassador to Italy 1929–33; a renowned Baltimore hostess. We have not discovered why IB became *brouillé* ('at odds') with her.

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genuine nymphomania, produce great destruction. Cleopatra was probably fat and hideous. Is this it? I wish you wd explain.

Your description of Weidenfeld is a *masterpiece* worthy of being set beside the best description of a human being ever written by anyone: absolutely wonderful: the combination of levantine suavity & gaiety with amiable knowingness, the slyness, warmth, cosiness, lack of all inhibiting qualities – integrity, sternness – moral strictures of any kind – you get him *absolutely*, & in that guise I am glad to meet him myself. I met him originally as a dedicated Zionist, a worker in the vineyard, a secretary-to-be of Weizmann, & the dance he led *that* great man was something at once comical and disgusting. As a café society acquaintance, as a jolly gossip – at a Loelia Duchess of W[estminster]–Alistair Forbes–Mrs Kennedy level, why indeed not: but not as someone to deal with even in so impersonal, but still scruple & integrity requiring relationship, as publishing. Although *I* was always very well treated by him. And yet ...: & he treats his own pretty feminine staff very well, and yet .... I always enjoy meeting George W: always. But I feel a little like a respectable person with an addiction to bordels: or the old Folies Bergères: or pornography. Pleasure, yes, but with some slight shame to follow. When I am with people I truly love & respect, George W. is the last person I shd like to irrupt. He exactly – for me – is covered by the beautiful formula you once used of Victor Weybright: “not a person one would expect to meet in a private house”. But delicious scented Aida like Mediterranean zephyrs – I *quite* agree.

My last powerful experience was with the Russian delegates in Sussex.<sup>5</sup> You Oxford University student magazine founded in 1892, noted for its satirical style. The idea was that they shd send some people to meet corresponding British journalists, dons, M.P.s etc. for a “free” discussion of coexistence. There arrived Mr Adjubey, son in law of Khrushchev: Mr Surkov, the ex-secretary

<sup>5</sup> A thirteen-strong Soviet delegation arrived in London on 20 February, at the invitation of the Great Britain–USSR Association, for talks at Wiston House, West Sussex, on coexistence.

of the Writer's Union & Pasternak's chief persecutor, demoted for the repercussions of his efforts & the fame he brought his enemy, but still a power: Mr Zhukov, Minister of Foreign Cultural Contacts: the editor of *Pranda*, a Professor & lawyer or two & an obvious Secret Policeman who was obviously in charge of them all. "We" were: Fitzroy Maclean M.P.: Nigel Birch M.P. (C.) Christopher Mayhew M.P. Dennis [sc. Denis] Healey M.P. (Labour) John Strachey M.P., Profs Beloff & Berlin from Oxford, Alastair Buchan, the Foreign[?] editor of the *Times*, Kenneth Younger, the editor of the Manchester Guardian, Mr Crankshaw of the Observer, an economist or two, etc. You get the general "set up". The whole thing presided over by William Hayter. I didn't join them in the first two days: but I arranged for them all to [go to] the opening night<sup>6</sup> of *Fidelio* – a *splendid* performance with Jurinac & Frick & Hotter & Vickers conducted *incomparably* by Klemperer,<sup>7</sup> which the Russians apparently *resisted*: why music? why culture? they had come to discuss "coexistence" & this was an irrelevant interruption. However the very firm Quaker who was in charge said that all had been arranged, & firmly took them in hand. Once orders are issued they behave like Prussians or lambs. I went with Aline & Princess Schwarzenberg the Austrian Ambassadors & joined the party at the reception in Cov. Garden. A bunch of thugs they looked & were. In the bus on the way to the country house in which Germans used to be indoctrinated into British democracy<sup>8</sup> – & which is therefore full of German notices which annoyed the Russians – as well as that *Fidelio* was sung in German – in the bus,

<sup>6</sup> 24 February 1961, Royal Opera House, London.

<sup>7</sup> Otto Klemperer (1885–1973), German-born conductor, recommended by Mahler for his first conducting post; made famous in Britain by his long association with Walter Legge's Philharmonia Orchestra, of which he became Principal Conductor for life in 1959; guest conductor at Covent Garden 1961, 1962, 1963, 1969.

<sup>8</sup> Wiston House was the home, from January 1951, of the 'Wilton Park' forum for democracy, established by the British government in January 1946 to prepare German prisoners of war for democratic participation in their post-war government.

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Mr Surkov<sup>9</sup> began to tell me why Pasternak's mistress had to go to jail for 8 years for receiving money from P.'s royalties abroad.<sup>10</sup> She was described as a filthy whore; a woman engaged on subverting not only the financial but the moral politics of the Soviet State; a liar, a cheat, & an evil influence. I was told that while the English clapped their hands with joy when the bloodstained murderer Hammarskjöld<sup>11</sup> – the enemy of liberty & justice – murdered Lumumba,<sup>12</sup> they cried out with hypocritical horror when a squalid prostitute – who led a man of genius to write his worst book – the worthless Zhivago – was imprisoned for receiving stolen goods –

<sup>9</sup> Aleksey Surkov (1899–1983), Soviet poet and novelist, noted for his patriotic poetry during the Second World War; led the Russian delegation to England, February 1961; as First Secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers, prominent in the campaign against Boris Pasternak, which led to the latter's expulsion from the Union, and his inability to accept the 1958 Nobel Prize in Literature.

<sup>10</sup> Olga Vsevolodovna Ivinskaya (1912–95), Russian translator of poetry; muse and mistress of Boris Pasternak, whom she met in 1946 when working as literary editor for the journal *Novyi mir* (*New World*); she was arrested and sent to the Gulag 1949–53, probably because of her association with Pasternak, and after her release, on Stalin's death, moved to the writer's village of Peredelkino, where she worked closely with Pasternak as his literary assistant. In December 1960 she was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment, and her daughter to three, charged with keeping royalties from the sale of *Doctor Zhivago*. Before his death in May 1960, Pasternak had expressed fears about Ivinskaya's fate, and in the West her conviction was seen as a straightforward act of political repression.

<sup>11</sup> Dag Hjalmar Agne Carl Hammarskjöld (1905–61), Secretary General, UN, 1953–61, developed the UN's peacekeeping role, and invoked Article 99 of its Charter to initiate preventive diplomacy in the Congo crisis; killed in a plane crash in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), 17/18 September 1961, while trying to further diplomatic initiatives there.

<sup>12</sup> Patrice Émery Lumumba (1925–61) né Élias Okit'Asombo, Prime Minister, upon independence, of the Republic of Congo (formerly a Belgian colony); leading proponent of pan-Africanism, and of Congolese union; subsequently deposed, and murdered by political rivals in the breakaway Katanga Province, 17 January 1961. Lumumba had requested UN protection, and the Soviet Union held Hammarskjöld personally responsible for his death. Despite Soviet vilification, Hammarskjöld was posthumously awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1961.

100-000 dollars sent by the pimp Feltrinelli<sup>13</sup> through the spies he filtered into Russia for P's ill gotten royalties obtained by betraying his country – *then* the great British public threw up its hands in horror! Did I know with whom I was sympathising? this woman's husband committed suicide in 1941. Why? because he found her secret diary: containing no fewer than 74 – 74 he repeated in a voice of thunder which reverberated down that poor bus – *lovers!* *this* is the strumpet the British public felt sorry for, Lord Russell wrote about in the *Times* etc. etc. etc.<sup>14</sup> I cd only riposte by saying that I cd not check or deny their *facts*: the trial had not been attended by foreign journalists: but that (a) Pasternak was the second most famous author in the world now, never mind whether justly or not; anything touching him automatically obtained world wide repercussions; (b) nobody wd *believe* the Russian story, however true: for the motives for persecution were too great. *If, I said, the governor of Napoleon III, who had been denounced by, say, Victor Hugo, had put his mistress, Mme Sainte Beuve, a widow, in gaol for alleged currency offences, who wd have believed them? Karl Marx? One can imagine what he wd have written! or Herzen? or Mazzini?* They cd imprison “evil influences” (it is now plain to me that they mean to canonise Pasternak, who really *did* loathe them, on the principle of “if you can't beat 'em, join 'em”) as much as they wished: but the effect in the West cd be very melancholy. They wd alienate even the left wing intelligentsia, etc etc. So we went at it ding-dong till we got to Wiston House, *Wilton Park, Sussex*, & dropped to bed exhausted at 2 a.m. – On the next day we “debated” hammer & tongs. The Russians made nothing but loud propaganda speeches: they said the *Times* was a fascist

<sup>13</sup> Giangiacomo Feltrinelli (1926–72), Italian left-wing political activist and publisher – the first to publish *Doctor Zhivago* (in an Italian translation in 1957). Ivinskaya was a crucial intermediary in Pasternak's dealings with Feltrinelli.

<sup>14</sup> Bertrand Arthur William Russell (1872–1970), 3rd Earl Russell, Cambridge philosopher, political campaigner and Nobel laureate (in literature); he had expressed his ‘deep regret’ at the ‘savagely sentences’ passed on Ivinskaya and her daughter, which he attributed solely to the fact that ‘they were friends of Pasternak’ (‘Bad Habits in Moscow’, letter, *Times*, 30 January 1961, 11e).

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sheet – the poor foreign editor, Iverach Macdonald,<sup>15</sup> a most mild, temperate, if anything mildly pro-Soviet man, nearly had a fit: they said they didn't read the M. Guardian because it was a worthless liberal paper, the editor there & then left the meeting: they complained that the press had not given their speeches enough space: they read long intolerably dreary statements obviously made up in Moscow: “our” delegates, particularly the socialists were fearfully upset: I did not mind: this is mechanical behaviour for them, & after heaping horrible insults of a personal kind on us, they lunched & dined amiably, as if nothing were the matter. They feel at *war*: war has certain rules, e.g. sitting at common tables during truces: but as soon as the truce is over, one shoots to kill. It is difficult to get [across] to anyone not there, how very unnatural & inhuman these naturally quite human beings, artificially, under orders, become. It is not diplomatic but army training: I prefer the non-dissimulated to the white sepulchres like Surkov or Malik<sup>16</sup> whom I thought of *infinite* nastiness. The new ambassador, Soldatov<sup>17</sup> (appropriately so called) is *much* nicer. I enjoyed it all. I liked their language: I saw, or thought I saw, how and why they behaved as they did & what they wanted & why; & was instructed. I was amused during the visit to the Brighton Pavilion to a civic reception by the Mayor, to see that they *could* not decide if the Pavilion was comical or serious; to laugh or express admiration for this Bokharan-Chinese rococo fantasy:<sup>18</sup> I loved their insistence on a joint Communiqué, which neither side desired, to subscribe to [a]

<sup>15</sup> Iverach McDonald [*sic*] (1908–2006), Highlander and Russianist; foreign editor, *The Times*, 1952–65.

<sup>16</sup> Yakov Aleksandrovich Malik (190–80), Ukrainian-born Soviet diplomat, succeeded Andrey Gromyko as Soviet ambassador in London 1952–60; afterwards Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister and later (1968–72) Soviet ambassador to the UN.

<sup>17</sup> Aleksandr Alekseevich Soldatov (‘soldat’ means ‘soldier’) (1915–99), Soviet diplomat; succeeded Yakov Malik as ambassador in London 1960–6.

<sup>18</sup> The magnificent Royal Pavilion in Brighton was built for the Prince Regent, later George IV, between 1787 and 1823, and is extravagantly oriental in design. ‘Bokharan’ suggests a fusion of Arabic and oriental styles: the region of Bukhara in Uzbekistan straddles the ancient Silk Road.

few platitudes, because otherwise they wd be upbraided in Moscow for incurring expenses & doing “no work” etc. I complained to Surkov that I had just been described in a Soviet publication as “a shameful ignoramus with aspirations to knowledge of 19th[-century] Russian culture, expectorating filthy drivel & uttering unoriginal libels against Lenin”.<sup>19</sup> He laughed amiably & said that did not matter provided I was not called by the name of a beast e.g. a hyena, like T. S. Eliot, Hammarskjöld, Auden,<sup>20</sup> Gaitskell<sup>21</sup> etc. which *might* be fatal! So we parted. Much love to you, & do write again: your last letter was quite brilliant.

I.B.

TO EDWARD WEEKS

25 April 1961 [*manuscript*]

As from All Souls (in fact, Portofino, Italy)

Dear Ted

Thank you for your letter. No, indeed I’ve not been to Israel more than thrice in the last dozen years or so; altho’ having been away from it for a long time, & being curious, I may go soonish.

I *cannot*, alas, “do” Ben Gurion. I do not know him well enough: I disagree with him too often; I admire & think him terrible and splendid, but, like de Gaulle (whom he much resembles in dwelling

<sup>19</sup> Viktor Arsen’evich Malinin (1921–99), in a review of Franco Venturi’s *Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (London, 1960) in *Novye knigi za rubezhom po obshchestvennym naukam* 1961 no. 1 (January), 40–7 at 46–7, attacked IB for his introduction (later included in RT as ‘Russian Populism’). The passage to which IB refers runs: ‘this “specialist” is clearly a complete ignoramus when it comes to the history of Russian social thought. He solemnly and with great aplomb pronounces stupid things [...] right down to an unoriginal slander of Leninism.’

<sup>20</sup> W[ystan] H[ugh] Auden (1907–73), poet and writer; a close friend, from their undergraduate days, of IB’s lifelong friend Stephen Spender.

<sup>21</sup> Hugh Todd Naylor Gaitskell (1906–63), Leader of the Labour Party 1955–63; his brand of revisionist socialism, and his willingness to speak up for political prisoners in the Soviet Union, led to his being criticised by the Soviet press.

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with heroes of the past very vividly & seeing himself in dramatized historical perspective) he is not someone I can successfully describe. Churchill I didn't know at all; so that was just a review, another matter. B. G. – if at all, only posthumously, for reasons you will well understand – if then: but perhaps not at all. I wish I could tell you about Israeli culture; I know so little of it, I am ashamed to say. Yakov Talmon<sup>22</sup> of Jerusalem University (a historian known in U.S. for his book on 'Totalitarian Democracy') could tell you; or a nice man called *Ephraim Broido* who edits a highbrow periodical in Tel Aviv (the Israel cultural attaché – surely there is one – in Washington wd forward a letter: I haven't his address). he is much the most reliable intellectual “consultant”.

Till May!

yrs

Isaiah

Perhaps Trevor Roper's articles on Eichmann's trials in the Sunday Times are worth reproducing: I feel sure they will be.

TO JOHN PLAMENATZ

29 June 1961

Headington House

Dear John,

I read your long piece on Hegel<sup>23</sup> twice, and made two sets of notes on it. The first – alas, the more extensive (alas from my point of view only) – I lost. I read it again and made another set of notes, quite different from the first, not very extensive. On these what I

<sup>22</sup> Jacob Leib Talmon (1916–80), Polish-born Israeli historian; secretary to Palestine Committee, Board of Deputies to British Jews, 1944–7; lecturer, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1949–60, professor of modern history 1960–80; author of *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (1952).

<sup>23</sup> A typescript of “The Social and Political Philosophy of Hegel”, chapters 3 and 4 of Plamenatz's *Man and Society: A Critical Examination of Some Important Social and Political Theories from Machiavelli to Marx*, vol. 2 (London, 1963).

have to say is based. But first let me tell you that I think it the most lucid, scrupulous, honest and successful attempt to translate Hegel into intelligible prose – meant to be understood and not merely responded to – that I have ever seen. One may disagree, one may think, as I sometimes did while reading you, that the transference to the medium of plain English prose did some injustice to the depth and suggestiveness of the original in exposing its obscurity, dishonesty and mystification. But it is certainly the best treatment of Hegel in the English language – of that I have no doubt. The Hegelians simply write black on black – there is no attempt to translate into any kind of contemporary idiom. Findlay is an adaptation of Hyppolite, who is himself careful and useful, but not imaginative or critical. Foster uses words without interpreting them, and so on. In short I think you have done something difficult, painful but extremely worthwhile, and I wish to express my admiration and gratitude.

I felt the same about the paper that you delivered on Pascal and Hegel to the class this summer. I really was deeply impressed – and I thought that paper contained even more than the chapter which I return herewith. I hope you will publish it as a separate essay, not as part of a book, but as something on its own: it is well worth it.

On the other hand I think perhaps that you are a little too influenced by the brilliant Kojève. He asked himself, I think, what it was that Marx saw in the *Phenomenology* – how it would have seemed to him, not how it seemed to Hegel or his more faithful disciples, or even to us now. I met him for the first time the other day in Paris – he is a curious *maître caché*, [an] interesting, paradoxical, brilliant, not entirely open man – and asked him whether the treatment of master and slave in his book was really meant as a commentary or interpretation on Hegel's pages in the *Phenomenology*. He said, 'Of course not. I am not interested in finding out what Hegel meant or what Hegel said – that is archaeology and of no interest to me. I develop these ideas in order to account for how Marxists felt. I am a Russian, I ask myself why I went into exile – the answer was Communism and Lenin. Lenin

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was created by Marx. And they said that Marx was created by Hegel. I therefore asked myself what the Marxists took from Hegel and how it could be applied to the world that I knew.’ He is a remarkable man and his book has had a very large influence on modern French thinkers, but it is free variation on the Hegelian theme, not an interpretation; but of course it is much more intelligible, much more interesting, much more relevant than Hegel himself.

Having said all these things, let me come to the detailed points.

p. 29. ‘From how’. Perhaps it would be more elegant to say ‘from the way in which’.

p. 31. The concrete universal. This is a notorious monster. Certainly by universals Hegel does not mean class concepts, not redness, but something like the French Revolution or Christianity, which is ‘present’ in all its manifestations. Something which ‘develops its inner dynamic’ – the kind of phrase that historians like Trotsky, for example, and indeed plenty of others constantly use. It is obviously metaphysical. The very notion that there is something which is at once unique and yet materialises in various other avatars – more than a pattern, however elaborate, and less than a set of concrete events in time and space – is not, as you say, readily intelligible, and however metaphorical the phrases may be, the difficulty is in giving a literal equivalent. Leibniz is I suppose responsible for formulating the original chimera, in the form of demanding definitions of something wholly individual, yet wholly definable; but whatever is to be done to it, it cannot I think be condemned simply as an unintelligible version of class concepts. It is much more like the character of a man that determines his acts, where the character cannot be analysed into a series of specific dispositional characteristics of a causal kind.

p. 33. Do you not in fact speak of a man’s character as ‘present in each of his actions’? Or if not each, then some more than others. What then do these latter reveal? They are not ‘caused’ by ‘self’ or ‘character’: they express something. What do they express?

Something which it is impossible to denominate, except in its concrete manifestations. If you say that something is a characteristically Rowsean gesture or look, how can one comfortably abstract that which is Rowsean?

ditto. ‘For’ and ‘in’. Surely ‘for’ – ‘für sich’ – has some teleological flavour? What I am for myself is not merely how I appear to myself, but the direction in which the activity that is myself is tending, and this is also true of what I am for others. Without teleology the distinction between ‘for’ and ‘in’ tends to break down, as with phenomenologists. I may be wrong, but I feel convinced that ‘for’ for Hegel has something to do with the *part* that an entity *plays* in my conception (as opposed to the part that it plays in reality) and that part-playing is essential; the notion is not static, not merely founded on the distinction between static reality and static appearances.

pp. 40–1. You do not mention Hegel’s predecessors, but in this case I think it would be excusable to mention Vico, who said things which were so very startling and novel and similar to what Hegel is talking about in these pages. (What you say about the *Phenomenology* in relation to philosophy of history is very good indeed. So also is the notion of inventions posing as discoveries. This has again a great deal to do with Romantic philosophy, which in other respects Hegel was so very hostile to. About that I would like to talk to you very much indeed. I put emphasis – perhaps too much – on that in the talk with which I followed yours.)

pp. 56–7. Master and slave. I am not sure that [the idea that?] the future is good for slaves is not just Marx and Kojève, and not Hegel. That is certainly the Young Hegelian interpretation, which seems very remote in spirit from the master himself.

p. 70. Creon. Sartre, as you know, in his writings and in a recent article in *The Observer* said that Creon was more democratic and represented progress and the future, because he stood for the state as against tradition, family etc. Is this Hegel? Each – Creon and Antigone – stand for an exaggeratedly one-sided point of view, no

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doubt, but is Creon – the negation – *eo ipso* more advanced than the affirmation? Is not the order: affirmation, negation, then negation of the negation? But is the antithesis always more progressive than the thesis, or merely its correlate? And is this not the opposite of what Sophocles wants to say? (Sartre says that Sophocles was a reactionary traditionalist, for that very reason)

p. 86. Kant. The transition from the notion of liberty-terror to Kant is obscure in your pages. What is the virtuous will? Is that Kant too? And if not, whom does it refer to? What is the argument against the suppression of nature? That if nature is killed, then there is no driving force at all, no action? Or have I misunderstood? It is interesting that Condorcet, Saint-Simon and Hegel all maintained that ‘to do big things one must have a passionate nature’. Bridled by reason, no doubt, but the raw material comes from the passions.

p. 102. There is not quite enough, at least for me, on why ‘the concrete universal’ is a combination of incompatibilities. This is back to pages 31–3 really.

pp. 107–10. Of course you are right in attacking Hegel’s notion of a priori necessity – a non-analytic connection of stages – but I think perhaps that you underplay the notion of teleology in Hegel. After all, the proposition ‘Man seeks freedom’ is for Hegel an a priori truth, because man is definable in terms of specific purpose[s?], and the links between the various stages. This is the reason why, let us say, tribalism must break down and make place for civil society; why primitive integration is followed by more sophisticated disintegration, followed by integration at a ‘higher level’. All these ‘musts’ are surely due to his conception of man and everything else as determined by a drive to self-realisation which culminates in recognition of himself and everything else in the logically harmonious schema – a unique schema because dominated by the particular purpose which allows of no alternatives. Explanation for Hegel is certainly always in terms of non-causal, non-mechanistic categories: explanation must consist

in showing not only why things must be as they are, but why it is rational that they should be so, i.e. by demonstrating their place in a pattern which alone is ‘satisfying to reason’, whatever that may mean. This pattern is purposive, as I need not tell you, and from that the rest surely follows?

p. 116. Why should the illusion of recognition be as satisfactory as the reality? Surely it is like food. If the food is unreal, then, sooner or later, the consumer may become unhappy; his objective demand – the demand of his real body – will not be satisfied by subjective – illusory – satisfaction. As Freud’s unconscious wishes are not satisfied by the satisfaction of their rationalised versions. This applies also to the stoic and the sceptic. My notion about Hegel – but it may be wrong – is that man keeps trying to make rational interpretations – schemata – of the world in terms of this or that central principle or purpose or analogy. But reality keeps breaking in – and this is the dialectical process, the negation (arising from the effort to stuff in reality into too narrow a formula). The confident illusion is not weakness (your p. 116), but enters into conflict with the ‘real’ purpose of man. Appearances are not simply a weak version of reality, but a delusive summary of it. This causes dissatisfaction and revolt; this dissatisfaction and revolt, rationally stated, is a Hegelian ‘contradiction’.

p. 117. To deny that we may never succeed in finding a solution. That is certainly rationalistic optimism. On the other hand, if we allow that this may never happen, then rationalism in Hegel’s sense collapses, for the world then is not a cosmos; it means that no matter what you do, not all the problems can be solved simultaneously, not all the values – real values – satisfied compatibly with each other, etc. He makes it quite plain that he is trying to construct a theodicy, and this implies that some universal solution must in principle be possible, although it may not be visible to man at various lower rungs of the ladder of development; that is what makes the notion of progress an a priori presupposition of human nature in a Kantian sense. If it is true to say that man is necessarily rational, that rationality entails understanding

things, and understanding things is understanding what they are for the sake of, whither they are tending, what their point is, how the conflicts between them are soluble, then the notion of rationality presupposes the possibility of progress, and the proposition that the goal may never be reached is tantamount to saying that there are some questions which reason cannot answer, which for Hegel is virtually self-contradictory. If one is to deny this, what one must deny is the root of the whole thing – that ‘virtue is knowledge’, the Socratic premise, the idea that to all questions there are discoverable answers, and that in principle there could exist a situation in which anything was intelligible, everything compatible with everything else, etc. To deny this is to go against, plumb against, the whole European rationalist tradition. The first person really to undermine it, I think (apart from antinomian Christian sects) was (*malgré soi*) Kant (not Hume).

p. 120. Of course you are right: philosophies are not altered merely by their intellectual shortcomings – conditions alter and with them ideologies etc. But for Hegel surely conditions are philosophies, are beliefs. Institutions *are* attitudes. History is the history of thought in that sense. Therefore to say that a change of material conditions or political or social conditions is what kills one philosophy and stimulates the next is for him a false dualism, unless you concede that social, political, material conditions etc. are themselves both expressions of the Idea on the march – rational demands made concrete – [and?] the spirit activating itself in this or that form of life. That all this is mythology I do not of course deny, but without it I think Hegel is genuinely unintelligible. I think there is in him a curious oscillation, moreover, between (*a*) the notion of unique historical situations and processes, so that each philosophy, outlook, social structure only occurs once uniquely – each historic nation has only one appearance on the stage; China, e.g., has been done with for ever; and (*b*) the notion of ideal types – stoicism, the unhappy consciousness, etc. – which crop up again and again, so that the dialectical conflict between, say, stoical or sceptical doctrine and the demands of social life is

not confined to the world after Alexander the Great, but crops up again in Germany in the nineteenth century. Those who interpret Hegel in this way will point out that Hegel does not actually say that each stage is absolutely unique and that no doctrine can crop up twice, and that every outlook after it is done with can never arrive again. There is a grave muddle here, but it is Hegel's.

p. 125. Master and slave. I think that Hegel's argument (or is it only Kojève's?) – as against Aristotle's opposite assumption – presupposes that the desire for freedom is in some sense the desire to absorb, assimilate, dominate whatever appears as an obstacle. So long as something is outside me, as a lump of resisting stuff, I am to that extent not free – no matter whether that something is somebody's property, a foreign way of thought, an unsolved problem, a hostile army. Hence the desire to be recognised as a master and that whatever there is outside is now in some sense mine, part of my texture, internalised by me: recognised in that sense as master and not simply as a good boy. This is profoundly false, no doubt – and vitiated Marx's doctrine – but fundamental to both thinkers. The idea that recognition by equals as an equal is enough – so long as the equals remain genuinely independent of each other to some degree – is something that Hegel does not recognise; and it is this, I think, that leads to the mad element in him, in Marx and in Rousseau – the desire that everyone should be part of everyone else, that I alone should be master and every other individual in the world also should alone be master, because we all own each other and in that sense own a corporate whole, which is at once myself and everyone else in one. This seems to me a mystical religious vision applied to social life with ghastly consequences. Hence (p. 126) recognition by equals is not enough; it is only enough if we are all one indivisible whole, whatever that may mean.

p. 127. Masters don't work, slaves do. You are perfectly right in denying this. Perhaps it is just worth remarking here that the idea that progress consists in the revolt of the slaves, whom oppression and necessity *force* into the making of inventions that blow up their

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masters and enthrone their slaves, is due to Saint-Simon. Schumpeter, in the book that you know, is I think quite good on the idea that the degree of necessary cooperation with all members of society was gravely played down by Marx; that unless there was quite a lot of voluntary cooperation between masters and slaves, nothing would have happened; this applies equally to Hegel.

Self-estrangement is I think not just frustration but self-frustration, self-defeat – that is to say, a situation where you delude yourself into believing in rules as rational or good for you that in fact lead to frustrating consequences – where purposes are destroyed by the results of the means that you employ to realise these purposes, by a general *sic vos non vobis*<sup>24</sup> situation, where the result of your labours or thoughts undermines the thinker or worker. There is a deep difference between Hegel, who thought that *all* forms of differentiation between anything and everything – thought and object, one thought and another, one man and another – entails some degree of alienation (because in so far as you break up the original unity, you are already specifying and therefore falsifying), and Marx, who thought this was due solely to a specific stage in the history of production. This is of course a very profound change.

pp. 157–8. The bad acts of great men. I think perhaps you don't allow quite enough for Hegel's notion of great men as artists, men who understand the material in which they work, that is to say, men who are only moved by petty and local motives, but who, because they are great men, have willy-nilly a deeper insight into the character of their age and the needs of their time than others, and therefore perform big acts (it may be simply in satisfaction of their own personal needs), big because they cannot help thinking in such terms. Being a big man is precisely having this 'deep insight into the needs of the time', and when Mozart composes for money he produces a work of genius because he cannot help but express whatever he expresses in far profounder ways than is given to

<sup>24</sup> 'Thus you [make honey, bees, but] not for yourselves' (Vergil).

lesser men. That is why great men contribute to progress and are better tools of the coming of reason than accumulations of lesser men – because of their genius, not because of the conscious greatness of their purposes.

p. 162. For ‘how’ I should substitute ‘for the way in which’.

p. 165. Also one might almost quote Luther’s denunciation of reason as a whore – this is all very non-Hegelian. Yet, the idea of a self-imposed ideal – the dedication to a goal which is mine because I freely follow it, because it is right – is a version of freedom versus externally imposed authority; but you are quite right about grace as an element of acute non-freedom.

p. 168. Rights as ‘atomistic’ also votes.<sup>25</sup> Hegel surely means what T. H. Green and company meant, that rights are conceived as frontiers and walls, and as in some sense obstacles to and denials of interrelationships – positive freedom is doing that which fulfils my rational will, but *my* rational will is what unites me with the common endeavours of others, not what divides me, etc. Real will is social, not only because man is social (Burke), but because any idea of differentiation between individuals, each enclosed in his little body, leads to such notions as compromises, arrangements etc., but this ignores that the true subject is ‘we’ not ‘I’. This of course the Marxists and everyone else have followed. The very word ‘right’ is said to spring from a diseased condition of society, in which men are set against men by the[ir?] situation, which makes it inevitable for them to understand what they are, and distorts both their acts and their thoughts, and sets them against each other, instead of collectively against nature, etc. Isn’t that right? Isn’t that the argument which Bentham or Condorcet [would use?] – what Raymond Williams and Charles Taylor would say today?

p. 174. Again I think not enough allowance is made for teleology: teleological explanation really isn’t the same as causal. There is such

<sup>25</sup> This sentence seems insolubly garbled.

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a thing as teleological inevitability, which Hegel derived both from the Greeks and from religion – Christianity in particular.

p. 179. This is excellent, really excellent, and illuminates Hobbes versus Hegel very well.

p. 184. I am not sure about ‘wicked man’ in Hegel. Does he use the term? A wicked man is I suppose one who is incapable of understanding his own (social) nature. I am not sure that this doesn’t assimilate Hegel too much to stoics, Spinoza, etc. I think ‘wicked’ and ‘irrational’ are synonymous for him, but wickedness seems to me to imply the possibility of choice between good and evil, and somehow seems different from wise or effective, whereas for Hegel it is all assimilated.

pp. 196–8. I wonder if something ought to be said here about the specific difference in Hegel between *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*. What exactly does ethical life here mean? Is it only the name for the highest synthesis? Or for any form of social life which is ethical because social? Surely only the former.

p. 200. Hegel certainly uses the term ‘contradiction’ very very loosely indeed, but he uses it because all reality is for him spiritual in character, and therefore all the incompatibilities are in the end logical and not material conflicts. Conflict is not the creation of material factors but to be rationally translated into conflict between one-sided answers and the larger truth, and this I suppose has a logical flavour, once you get away from the notion that all the categories are logical because reality is spiritual and to be analysed in terms of thought. The word ‘contradiction’ really does become mythological, as in Marx: it simply means frustration, conflict, friction etc.

p. 201. Civil society and the family. I think again that, according to the teleological schema, the family must be broken up by criticism into uniform units of which civil society is composed – this is how the patricians were destroyed by the rebellious plebs etc. Hegel may well be wrong about what in fact happened, but his philosophy of

history is surely based upon the dogmatic belief that the unity of the family (as dignified for example by the Slavophiles) is broken up – must be – into the units of the Hobbesian state. No doubt the family in one sense goes on inside and after the Hobbesian state, but it gets shoved out of the centre of the picture: it is not characteristic. His remarks on the family seem to me analogical to what he says about the non-central parts played by art in the nineteenth century as opposed to the part that it played in the more ordinary organic society of, say, the middle ages.

p. 218. This is a masterpiece of elucidation and very good indeed. Of course the Hegel[ian] society is *the* society: the whole thing only works on the assumption of a single teleological process, but this seems basic to Hegel.

p. 219. The state as an individual. This notorious affair, something that I cannot resolve to my satisfaction. Of course you are right about the dangers of collective entities as ‘forming men’, or acting, or having causal efficacy; but on the other hand, the method of logical constructions by which you are theoretically able to translate collective nouns like the ‘state’ into the precise acts of all its ingredients, parts, namely the individuals, also breaks down. This obviously cannot be done, so we constantly have this Scylla of superpersonal monsters versus the Charybdis of trying to do without myths of that sort and analysing everything into specific acts, specific persons, specific times and places, which is in fact not feasible. So what is one to do? This is a problem for all empirical sociologists and historians, and although Hegel’s solution is clearly unsatisfactory, it is difficult to know what to substitute for it, don’t you think?

One criticism I do not propose to make – which others may – namely that the whole treatment is unhistorical and in terms of ideas, rather than Hegel’s own place and times etc. Never mind about Friedrich etc., all of whom are bound to say this: it seems to me that the historical significance of Hegel has been over-explained and the content of his ideas under-explained, and in this

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respect I think you are rendering a far far greater service than if you had gone minutely into the question of what the German middle class, German intellectuals etc. were like then in the eighteenth century, conflicts between theological and economic, political etc. aspirations, the depressed condition of the German principalities, the desire for unification, Hegel's own political evolution, etc. There are certain other omissions which perhaps could be added, and which you certainly could put in very easily indeed.

These are:

1. The whole notion of freedom in Hegel.
2. The position of coercion, the real will, the treatment of adults with children.
3. The non-timelessness of rules and laws.
4. The difference between Hegel's notion of the coincidence of private and public needs and rules and, say, Lenin's anarchistic conclusions.
5. The unhistorical nations versus the historical (the handing on of the torch).

1. Freedom. What does he mean by it? I have a feeling that, although you do not attribute any explicit re-definitions of it to him, it is a little too like Rousseau. It seems to me that the whole doctrine is unintelligible without the central concept being clarified – and that he means by freedom something very like making free with (I think I have said that above). Why is freedom the knowledge of necessity? Only because the necessity is internalised and becomes what a rational being cannot help wanting, in some sense of 'cannot help' in which the alternative is irrationality or madness – as one cannot help deducing the correct conclusion from the premisses in a syllogism. If the world became transparent to one in that sense, presumably one would be satisfied in understanding one's rational place in it – whether it was static order or a process. This is a sense of necessity accepted by Leibniz, by Hume, and struggled with by Kant. If this is indeed the heart of the matter as has been proposed by orthodox interpreters of Hegel,

something more needs to be said about its validity and implications. Only on this assumption freedom is equal to conquest (as one speaks of the conquest of space or of knowledge), and this equals understanding or knowledge. This is the Spinozistic interpretation of Hegel, I suppose. This sense of conquest is easily translated into literal conquest of a less rational nation by a more rational one, and an unhistorical nation by a historical one, etc., and it was obviously thought of in that sense by Marx, for example, in relation to the Slavs. It is difficult to think that Hegel would not have approved of the unification of Germany by Bismarck; for example, unity always equals order, centralisation, rationalisation etc. – provided it is the right kind of order and takes account of the true nature of reality instead of wishing to flatten things out as the Jacobin terrorists wished to. Political oversimplification is some form of lack of insight, but moving in the right direction and understanding the goal without understanding the nature of the stuff (humanity etc.) to which the goal is intrinsic or essential. Even if one admits that only the rational can be free, it does not follow, however, that to be free it is enough to be rational: it is a necessary condition (perhaps, though I do not believe even that), but not a sufficient one. If I know that the world is about to end in agony or that I am suffering from cancer, I am saved no doubt from the blundering steps of someone ignorant of this future, but am I much freer? Only on the assumption that to understand is to accept, that the inevitable, the rational, the desirable, the liberating are one, all of which surely needs some discussion?

2. Something needs to be said, surely, too about Hegel's notion of the fallacy of supposing any rules or laws to be timeless, in so far as this denies the doctrines of natural law in any form – even in the form that there are some rules which all or even most human beings have at all times recognised, and in virtue of which they are regarded as human beings, rules the recognition of which is part of the human essence (as some hold). It is something that even the most evolutionary, relativistic, time-bound thinkers do not explicitly accept. After all, most of them would concede that to

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want to destroy the world for the sake of relieving a pain in my little finger is incompatible with sanity – would be condemned by all human moralities as such, whatever their differences – and that in that sense there is some identity or at least continuity in the history of human thought, values etc. Would this of necessity be denied by Hegel? This seems fairly central to me.

3. I need not enlarge to you on the peril of coercion of adults, so far as they are regarded as immature, or – on the whole – language and the implications of ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’, the real will as opposed to empirical desires, etc. I think perhaps you have underplayed that too a little. Even if most people have misinterpreted Hegel on this, so much of his doctrine is rightly or wrongly attributed to him that the thing ought to be discussed somewhat, don’t you think? He was so very hostile to all forms of subjective conscience, resistance to authority, etc., that this is not merely temperamental or reactionary, but derives from or at any rate affects the doctrine itself to a very profound degree.

4. I wonder if something should not be said about the difference between your very convincing exposition of Hegel’s conception of the free and rational society – i.e. the state in which individual purposes coincide with the laws and rules and rational demands of the community as a whole – and, say, Lenin’s utopia in *State and Revolution*, in which the state is abolished, but apparently the same state of affairs prevails? You are certainly right about Weil’s highly exaggerated version of Hegel’s liberalism. I wonder too if something should not be said – but one cannot do everything and this is perhaps an absurd suggestion – about the contrast between the abstract schema of the ‘philosophy of right’ and the concrete discussions in Hegel’s minor works on which we once examined Pelczynski – the [topic?] is not after all totally irrelevant and has some bearing at least on the question of whether or not he was as favourable to the Prussian state as usually maintained.

5. I wonder if we ought not to expand your remarks about the peculiar way in which the torch is handed on by one nation to

another in the self-development of the *Geist*. You are absolutely right in condemning this as following neither from empirical study of the facts nor [from] any philosophical premisses to be found in Hegel himself. No doubt this is all dictated by the needs of the teleology, but the whole of the Hegelian tendency to aggrandise some nations at the expense of others – e.g. Germanic nations – no matter how broadly interpreted, derives from this. If there really is a march of the spirit in an irreversible direction, which may not be predictable, but can always be retrospectively demonstrated as having been necessary, then something like this must be imposed on history, and this is indeed what Spengler, Toynbee etc. have had to do, from the same interpretation of what it is to ‘make sense of’ history. I do not like to press more upon you, but do you not think it would be a thing to analyse, however briefly, what it is to ‘make sense of’ history, and what pitfalls this can lead to?

Having said all these things and asked you to do all these things, let me once again retract everything and say that I admire the whole thing very much indeed and think it far the best thing of its kind, and shall say so whenever and wherever I can. If you are too busy, don’t answer this enormous screed.

Yours,

Isaiah

Written & read through *much* too fast. Plenty of errors, misprints, idiocies. I do apologise!

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TO DAVID CARVER<sup>26</sup>

6 October 1961

Headington House

Dear Carver,

Thank you for your letter of 5 October. The account of your conversation with Surkov<sup>27</sup> does not of course surprise me in the least. They have made up their mind to do exactly what Crankshaw said they intended to do, and that is a decision taken well above Surkov's head, and he is merely the tough and cynical executant.

All that happened in that never-to-be-forgotten bus journey from Covent Garden at midnight to Wiston House was that after Surkov had revealed the full depth of Madame I[vinskaya]'s depravity, and other members of his party joined in about her financial dishonesty and acts likely to undermine the financial policy of the Soviet Union, etc., Surkov finally said, with a sort of crocodile smile, that perhaps she would not have to stay in prison all the eight years, or whatever it was – perhaps 'a year or two' (that is my recollection) would be enough. I said that one year was better than two, and six months better than one year, to which he rejoined nothing at all and spent himself on amiabilities about Baroness Budberg and other London friends.

I do not myself believe that anything done to expose Surkov will help Madame I. – I think they have made up their minds about that and Surkov is merely reproducing a carefully officially prepared line to which they all stick. He may, being an exceedingly clever man, have helped to work out the official version, but once it is adopted it ceases to be his property, and his personal fate has little to do with the fate of the victims. The only thing which could save them would be a change of heart on the part of some person

<sup>26</sup> Secretary of International PEN 1951–74. IB had joined PEN in 1961. The letter is about the Soviet mistreatment of Boris Pasternak's mistress, Olga Ivinskaya.

<sup>27</sup> Aleksey Aleksandrovich Surkov (1899–1983), head of the Soviet Union of Writers 1953–9.

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in real authority from Mr K[rushchev] downwards – and how that is to be compassed I have no idea. If the people I still preserve a tenuous connection with inside the Soviet Union are not to get into further trouble (they have had a good deal already – I do not know if I ever told you about my conversations with various semi-condemned writers), it were best if my name were kept out of this. But there is no harm in saying, perhaps, that Surkov, in general conversation with no one in particular, seemed to hold out hope of a shorter sentence owing to the general clemency and humanity of the Soviet authorities (or similar rot).

Yours sincerely,  
Isaiah Berlin

TO DAVID CARVER

12 October 1961

Headington House

Dear Carver,

Thank you very much for your letter and the excellent enclosure. I thought your talk absolutely appropriate and I hope it penetrates Surkov's thick hide to the necessary depth. But I fear he is a hopeless case. And so are they all, including Ehrenburg, who is falsely credited with civic courage. I am sure there is nothing more to be done at present; and it is very creditable that the sharpest voices were raised in England. I hope that you will have sent copies of your talk to the other national centres of PEN.

Yours sincerely,  
Isaiah Berlin

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*King David Hotel, Jerusalem*

*photo: Dan Amiel, Topview*

TO ALINE BERLIN

Wednesday [28 March 1962; *manuscript postcard*]

King David [Hotel, Jerusalem]

To-day I sat on committees from 9.15 a.m. till 8 p.m. Worse than Birnbaum<sup>28</sup> & sociology. I *wish* you were here! You might actually have enjoyed it. Mme Dreyfus<sup>29</sup> attends meetings *religiously* I go to San Martin on Friday.

love

Isaiah

*The second paragraph of the following letter appears at B 103–4.*

<sup>28</sup> Norman Birnbaum (1926–2019), US sociologist; taught at LSE 1953–9; Fellow of Nuffield 1959–66; on the founding editorial board of *New Left Review* 1960.

<sup>29</sup> Unidentified.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

TO A. J. AYER

9 July 1962

Headington House

Dear Freddie

I enclose a typescript which, as you see, contains an account of the views of an ‘underground’ Russian philosopher. Given that he is working on his own, in conditions which you have seen, he has obviously arrived at a position not dissimilar from some thinkers in the English-speaking world. His father was a splendid poet, who, you remember, after a long entanglement with Isadora Duncan committed suicide in 1925. I wonder if the authors of this review ought to be encouraged to write a brief note about the man to *Mind* or *Philosophy* or somewhere. If you think it is worth it, and wrote them a note to that effect, I think they would be excited and flattered. The document was given to me by George Reavey, Professor of Russian Literature at one of the New York universities, reachable via Max Hayward.

I hear that you were surprised by the attack in *Kommunist*. But this is all a very routine occurrence – I have had more than my share of similar treatment, and it makes no difference to what the next step is, as it depends too little upon one’s own opinions and entirely upon changes in the Soviet line. I heard from Frank Roberts,<sup>30</sup> who is just leaving Moscow, that your host Melvil is in a very gloomy state – a due, I gather, to having made himself too amiable to you, and not taken into sufficient account that Dee is a journalist. But I am told you have been called by an animal name, – say a hyena with a typewriter – past repentance.<sup>31</sup> One brief

<sup>30</sup> Frank Keynon Roberts (1907–98), KCMG 1953, diplomat; ambassador to the USSR 1960–2, to the Federal Republic of Germany 1963–8.

<sup>31</sup> In August 1948 the Soviet novelist Aleksander Fadeev (1901–56), one of the founders of the Union of Soviet Writers, famously censured Western writers: ‘If jackals learned to type and hyenas owned a fountain pen, they would probably create the same kind of thing that Henry Miller, Eliot, Malraux and the other Sartres have written.’ ‘Science and Culture in the Struggle for Peace, Progress and Democracy’, *Pravda*, 29 August 1948, 5–6 at 5d.

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article on Lenin's *Notebooks on Hegel*, claiming inspiration from them, would restore you to favour instantly, and if you were to say that it was I who opened your eyes to this valuable source of light it would mend my position too. If you don't do this we shall only be called fools for our pains by Sir Charles Snow, and, if you are brave enough to say it, Sir Solly<sup>32</sup> too. Whatever it is that makes such a course improbable will stand as a wall, believe me, for all future time between you and the Schaffs<sup>33</sup> and Melvils, however moderate, polite, amiable, etc., etc., etc. Some learn this early, some late, and some, I suppose, like dear Sebastian Sprott, never learn it at all – strange.

Yours,

Shaya

*From September 1962 till January 1963 IB was Ford Visiting Research Fellow at Harvard, living in Lowell House. He reached his destination on 19 September. The next day he sent a telegram to Aline:*

<sup>32</sup> Sir Solly Zuckerman (1904–93), Kt 1956, later (1971) life peer, scientist and public servant; Sands Cox Professor of Anatomy, Birmingham, 1943–68; Professor-at-Large, East Anglia, 1969–74; from 1974 President, British Industrial Biological Research Association; involved in many governmental advisory committees; as trustee of the Wolfson Foundation (1965–87), strongly opposed to IB's application for funding for Wolfson College.

<sup>33</sup> A reference to Adam Schaff (1913–2006), Polish Marxist philosopher, studied in Moscow 1941–6, returning to the University of Warsaw as the Director of the Institute for Philosophy and Sociology; was considered the main ideologue of Polish Communism during the 1950s, but gravitated towards a more revisionist Marxism during the 1960s, and in 1968 was removed from the Central Committee of the Polish United Worker's Party (the Communist Party of Poland).

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

TO ALINE BERLIN

12.18 a.m. 20 September 1962 [*telegram*]

Cambridge, Mass.

JOURNEY PERFECT BUT HAVE NEVER HATED ARRIVING  
BEFORE SHALL NEVER NEVER LEAVE YOU AGAIN LOW-  
ELL G24 BELOW ANYTHING YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED NO  
BATH CALCULATED INSPIRE FURIOUS WORK SITUATION  
ABSURD BUT MAY BE HAPPIER TOMORROW FEEL HOME-  
SICK GIVE PETER<sup>34</sup> DEEPEST LOVE

ISAIAH

*He also wrote her a letter<sup>35</sup> in which (in a passage omitted in B) he related causing a fire in his room with the electric water-heating element he had bought earlier:*

I plugged the water-heater (à la Valentine)<sup>36</sup> into the glass of Instant Ness<sup>37</sup> & answered the telephone: Mrs Leinsdorff<sup>38</sup> about her husband's<sup>39</sup> concert: when I finished, I suddenly felt smoke in the air. The bedroom, or rather bed, was in flames: a "defective" wire had ignited it. I put it out with water: the smell of burning wool blanket + mattress is very strong indeed. While I was wondering what to do, Perkins<sup>40</sup> walked in. He produced new bedclothes etc & asked me to dinner. I felt a little better. I sent you my telegram in

<sup>34</sup> Peter Halban (b. 1946), Aline's elder son from her second marriage.

<sup>35</sup> B 108–10: cf. later letters to his stepsons Peter and Philippe Halban (B 116–17, 127).

<sup>36</sup> Valentine Equipment Ltd is an electrical manufacturing company in Reading.

<sup>37</sup> Nescafé.

<sup>38</sup> Vera Graf Leinsdorf (*vi*) (1935–??), Brazilian-born violinist; 2nd wife of Erich Leinsdorf (next note).

<sup>39</sup> Erich Leinsdorf (1912–93) né Landauer in Austria; conducted at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, 1957–62; Music Director, Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1962–9.

<sup>40</sup> Elliott Perkins (1901–85) taught history at Harvard 1937–69; Master of Lowell House 1940–63.

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the depth of black despair, but I must say it is being parted from you, not the horror of the room, which now looks bleak & small (I shall enjoy complaining to Arthur,<sup>41</sup> & so White House about this!) that does it.

*By chance, it was when IB was dealing with the fire that Kay DeLuca,<sup>42</sup> who had just been appointed as his secretary, first encountered him. In 2019, now Kay J. Lisle, she recalled the experience. Her memory is that it was she who extinguished the fire:*

I was twenty-one years old, newly married and living in Harvard married students' housing. I went to the Harvard Employment Office and was sent to Lowell House to become someone's secretary. Women were not allowed to enter Lowell House then – so I had to be checked in. I remember climbing the stairs to a particular room; hearing shouting, I knocked on the door and a wild-looking man flung the door open and waved at his bed. It was on fire. He was attempting to make a cup of tea with one of those curly implements one sticks into a cup of water. I put the fire out. I couldn't make out much of what he was saying, but he picked up a dictaphone and put it in my arms and showed me the door. Outside was a woman who was mature and may have been more competent. I said, 'I believe I got the job!'

It took a while before I got used to his voice and the speed of his speech on those dictaphone tapes. I believe he was writing something on Kerensky. He would ask me to do errands occasionally – like going to Leavitt and Pierce<sup>43</sup> to pick up his cigars. Often when I would return to his room to deliver whatever I had typed he would say: 'Call Aaron Copeland, call Nathan Milstein, call

<sup>41</sup> Arthur Meier Schlesinger, Jr (1917–2007), writer, academic and commentator. See A 629.

<sup>42</sup> Kay Johnson DeLuca (b. 1940), née Kay Lenore Johnson, anthropologist, m. 1st 1960–2 Louis Samuel DeLuca (a Harvard graduate student), 2nd 1964–86 Edwin Stewart Dethlefsen, 3rd 1993 Peter Grim Lisle; later assistant professor of anthropology, Franklin Pierce College (1972–8), and Dean of Admissions, Colby-Sawyer College (1981–5).

<sup>43</sup> Then and now a tobacconist in Harvard Square, Cambridge.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

Leonard Bernstein.<sup>44</sup> Get Arthur Schlesinger on the phone. He wants me to go to the Kennedy<sup>45</sup> White House this weekend.’ Those are the closest words I remember. It was great fun. He would dictate gossip letters to people at All Souls which were very entertaining.

I attempted to arrange travel to a lecture somewhere in the Midwest. He said he hated to fly. I tried to do as he asked – though I don’t think train travel was very good then. When he arrived back in Cambridge, he raged that they had picked him up in a helicopter!

A small anecdote about an amazing man.<sup>46</sup>

TO ALINE BERLIN

12.18 a.m. 20 September 1962 [*telegram*]

Cambridge, Mass.

JOURNEY PERFECT BUT HAVE NEVER HATED ARRIVING  
BEFORE SHALL NEVER NEVER LEAVE YOU AGAIN LOW-  
ELL G24 BELOW ANYTHING YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED NO  
BATH CALCULATED INSPIRE FURIOUS WORK SITUATION  
ABSURD BUT MAY BE HAPPIER TOMORROW FEEL HOME-  
SICK GIVE PETER DEEPEST LOVE

ISAIAH

<sup>44</sup> Aaron Copeland (1900–90), composer; Nathan Milstein (1904–92), violinist; Leonard Bernstein (1918–90) composer and conductor.

<sup>45</sup> John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917–63), US President 1961–3.

<sup>46</sup> Email of 9 January 2019 to Henry Hardy.

MORE BUILDING

TO ALINE BERLIN

Friday 21 September [1962, *manuscript*]  
But too late to go to-day. Last post, 7·30 pm

G. 24 Lowell House, [Harvard,] Cambridge, Mass.  
Tel: 491. 3470

Dearest Aline,

Gradually I am becoming used to “it.” The room is a room. Now that my books are on shelves, the T.V. is up, I have pots & pans, a kettle, cups, Instant coffees, Triscuits; I have consumed a Jumbo steer T-bone steak with Individual (or is it Chef’s) salad, I feel better. Very well, no bath: young Gombrich<sup>47</sup> will buy me a 2<sup>d</sup> hand refrigerator (50 dollars). At the moment I have a cold: last night I coughed & had a fever: to-day no fever. On Monday I go to N.Y.: dinner Marietta:<sup>48</sup> with Nabokov,<sup>49</sup> Sterns,<sup>50</sup> Behrman,<sup>51</sup> Schlesinger, etc. this will be “the dinner for Isaiah” – no mention of Ronnie<sup>52</sup> – & I don’t suppose I’ll see them until you come.

I have carried out my programme literally. Telephoned *nobody*. Not Mrs Constable<sup>53</sup> or Gilmores:<sup>54</sup> so far I am absolutely alone

<sup>47</sup> Richard Francis Gombrich (b. 1937), Harkness Fellow, Harvard, 1961–3; Lecturer in Sanskrit and Pali, Oxford, 1965–76; Fellow of Wolfson, 1966–76; son of the art historian Ernst Gombrich (B 213/3).

<sup>48</sup> Mary Endicott (“Marietta”) Tree (1917–91) née Peabody, US socialite and Democrat political activist; m. Ronnie Tree as his 2nd wife.

<sup>49</sup> Nicolas Nabokov (1903–78), composer and cultural administrator. See A 627.

<sup>50</sup> Isaac Stern (1920–2001), Russian-American violinist and committed Zionist, and his wife, arts benefactor Vera (1927–2015) née Lindenblit, m. 1951 (his 2nd wife).

<sup>51</sup> Sam(uel) Nathan Behrman, (1893–1973), US playwright. See E 786.

<sup>52</sup> (Arthur) Ronald Lambert Field (“Ronnie”) Tree (1897–1976), English gentleman of American descent and independent means.

<sup>53</sup> Olivia Constable (1901–87), née Roberts, wife of the curator of paintings at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, W. G. Constable (E 578/2); both were English.

<sup>54</sup> Myron Piper Gilmore (1910–78), Renaissance scholar, Professor of History, Harvard, 1954–74, Director, Harvard University Center for Italian

here: I don't want to offend, & wonder how both to remain incognito & not cause too much *froideur*.<sup>55</sup> The telephone does *not* ring: I am in bed with my cold, quite comfortable (beds are not made on Sats or Suns) + Nescafé, Bagels (nice circular Jewish quasi-rolls) & a little red caviare: at 1:05 *Trovatore*<sup>56</sup> will come from station WNAC. Total solitude is something new: I am not used to it, & it is a good thing I had my cold now, as it will start one off on a quiet routine. I read my 'work books'. A secretary<sup>57</sup> comes on Wednesday. I shall return late on Monday & pay my respects to the official colleagues – no social implications – on Tuesday. It *was*, I think, a mistake to come: like Aron's<sup>58</sup> article in *Figaro*: but I shall turn it to (intellectual) profit.

Emotionally I am numb: don't wish to see anyone: Maurice<sup>59</sup> expects news of Harvard: I shall not discover any for a *long* time. Opposite me some students play Bach–Vivaldi–Corelli–Purcell *all* day: 8 or 9 hours on end. Very stupefying. Yesterday I went to Leinsdorff's *first* concert: the Boston ladies everywhere: a unique spectacle of subdued wealth. He is *not* a marvellous conductor. I thought the *Eroica*<sup>60</sup> wd never end: it is all Wagnerized & drawn out in a dull falsely-sweet Viennese *Suczazit*<sup>61</sup> way. From the back he looks – & his gestures resemble – R. Aron. The Laughlins<sup>62</sup> found me there. They don't connect with Harvard so I am safe. I

Renaissance Studies, Villa I Tatti, Florence, 1964–73; and his English wife Sheila née Dehn (1917–95); they married 1938.

<sup>55</sup> 'Coolness'.

<sup>56</sup> Giuseppe Verdi's 1853 opera *Il trovatore*.

<sup>57</sup> Presumably Kay DeLuca (see above).

<sup>58</sup> Raymond Aron (1905–83), French sociologist, philosopher, political scientist, author and journalist; columnist, *Le Figaro*, 1947–83; Professor of Sociology, Sorbonne, 1956–68.

<sup>59</sup> (Cecil) Maurice Bowra (1898–1971), classicist; Warden, Wadham, 1938–70; Professor of Poetry (1946–51) and Vice-Chancellor (1951–4), Oxford. See E 789.

<sup>60</sup> Ludwig van Beethoven's 3rd symphony.

<sup>61</sup> A sugar-free sweetener.

<sup>62</sup> Henry Alexander Laughlin (1892–1977), publisher (The Riverside Press and Houghton Mifflin), and his wife Rebecca Lord Laughlin.

## MORE BUILDING

said I cd not go to a meal this Sunday because I wd be having flu (which is so) but next Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup>. It is to be arranged. So far I have not (I am *delighted* to say: you don't believe me: but it is true) met a single acquaintance in the street. Long may this last. In a monastery one shd live in a cell.

I really think of nothing but you: perhaps if I met people & did not suddenly decide that real life was possible in Europe alone, & did not treat America as a kind of machine, utensil, for pleasure or work or interest – but essentially an *unreal* society, a source of amusement or information or money or interest, but not a taken for granted reality at all – always a stage or theatre, everything in inverted commas, wonderful taxi-drivers, terribly human human beings, everything simpler & more exaggerated than life – perhaps if I did not think this (as you do too to some extent) I might not think about you & the house at every moment free from work or sleep – all my meals are consumed *alone* – lunch yesterday at a drug store in Boston, dinner at 6.15, before going to bed with my temperature of 101 at St. Clair's in Cambridge – delicious buttermilk & cinnamon toast – & all this is quite new. We'll see how long it lasts. If I succeed in working hard & well, I shall find out something new about myself. My *first* visitor has just entered (after Perkins) – a plumber who says there is a leak in the bathroom “around the base of the pedestal”, he has offered to fetch me some food from the drugstore (“some peanut butter sandwiches or someth'n?.) they *are* nice: but not quite human beings: “human contact” is not possible.

How are *you*? Does Philip keep you going? Do you see Sparrow, Stuart, James?<sup>63</sup> To look on Oxford as '*life*' & Harvard as a Trappist monastery is v. funny. Nobody will believe it. As soon as it breaks down (I *suppose* it will – but perhaps not?) I shall report it at once. Am I mad to live like this? I think not. It *will* be funny if & when

<sup>63</sup> James Bysse Joll (1918–94), Fellow and Tutor in Politics, New College, 1946–50; Fellow, St Antony's, 1951–67; Stevenson Professor of International History, London, 1967–81.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

Iris Origo<sup>64</sup> comes here in Oct. & none of *her* friends will know that I am in Harvard at all! That is *my* fantasy. Keeping away from Edm. Wilson<sup>65</sup> is my greatest piece of austerity. My temperature is 99.7 – the window *is* open – the outside temperature is 66.8 – I feel like an astronaut. How *wonderful* it will be to talk to you to-morrow!

love

Isaiah



*Isaac Stern, 1963*

<sup>64</sup> Iris Margaret Origo (1902–88) née Cutting, Anglo-American writer and biographer.

<sup>65</sup> Edmund Wilson (1895–1972), US critic and essayist; associate editor, *New Republic*, 1926–31, book reviewer, *New Yorker*, 1944–8; ‘a man, as you must know, of passionate loves and hates, likings and dislikes, admiration and contempt’ (to Jeffrey Meyers, 14 June 1993).

MORE BUILDING

TO ALINE BERLIN

26 July 1963 [*manuscript postcard*]

K. D. Hotel.

It is all v. much itself. EL-AL arrived 1½ hours late – waiting for non-existent connection in Zurich where we went from Paris. Non-V.I.P. reception – *great* relief (you don't believe me & I *am* already offended). However car took me to Jerus. where I arrived back of stage in the middle of the Beethoven Trio No 2. op 1. Stern v. nice but slightly offended because I do not follow him to *all* concerts: esp. in Artists Colony – a kind of Les Baux – which I am sure Alix<sup>66</sup> & Bethsabée<sup>67</sup> love but I wd hate (even more than you). After concert, party, tout Jérusalem: convenient for seeing various Yigals<sup>68</sup> & Tsurs,<sup>69</sup> but you wd have gone mad. *Not* hot! 80% *Everyone* asks after you: love or snobbism they do. Shall write tomorrow.

I.

<sup>66</sup> Alix Hermine Jeannette de Rothschild (1911–82), nee Schey de Koromla; first wife (1937–56) of Guy de Rothschild.

<sup>67</sup> Baroness Bethsabée de Rothschild (1914–1999), philanthropist.

<sup>68</sup> Referring to Yigal Allon and Yigael Yadin. Yigal Allon (1918–80) né Peikowitz in Kfar Tavor, Palestine; a field commander in the Haganah, the underground military organisation of the Jewish community in Palestine (the Yishuv). The Haganah was founded in 1920, and became the core of the post-independence Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Later Allon was one of the founders of the Palmach (Plugot Mahats, 'strike force'), the elite force established by the Haganah in May 1941; Commander-in-Chief of the Palmach 1945–8, and later a general in the IDF; a leading figure in the Ahdut HaAvoda–Poalei Zion workers' party; Minister of Labour 1961–7; Deputy Prime Minister 1968–74; interim Prime Minister February–March 1969; Minister of Foreign Affairs 1974–7; architect of the Allon Plan, formulated directly after the Six-Day War, which outlined a territorial compromise as the basis for Israeli–Arab coexistence; m. Ruth (1919–2016) née Episdorf. Yigael Yadin (1917–84), né Yigal Sukenik, active in the Haganah when young; Chief of Staff, Israeli Defense Force, 1949–52; thereafter an archaeologist; m. Carmela (1921–76) née Ruppin.

<sup>69</sup> Referring to Jacob Tsur (1906–90) né Tchernowitz in Vilnius, Lithuania; Israeli diplomat (ambassador to France 1953–9) and Zionist leader; president of the Israel Festival 1964; m. 1928 Vera (1909–2002) née Gottlieb.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

– I see the ideal: conceived in terms of Charles<sup>70</sup> taste. All planes full for 5<sup>th</sup>, but there is hope. I hate offloading people.

TO ALINE BERLIN

27 July 1963 [*manuscript postcard*]

K. David H.

They *are* beginning to close in a bit, the telephone rings etc. but I have grown bold, hard etc. & explain that I am leaving in ½ hour: not sure for where: my “manager” – i.e. Kollek<sup>71</sup> – only knows. In fact I go to Herzlia to-day: whether for 2 days or 4 depends on hotels: I don’t want to impose myself on Wade-Gery<sup>72</sup> for more than 2 nights. Mr Wolfson’s windows versus Chagall.<sup>73</sup> love to Peter, Philip, your mother<sup>74</sup> etc. I mean if you are writing to Crans.<sup>75</sup> I dare not write there direct, but *may*.

love,

Isaiah

<sup>70</sup> Chaim (sometimes ‘Charles’) Weizmann (1874–1952), chemist and statesman; President of the Provisional Council of the State of Israel 1948–9; first President of Israel 1949–52. See E 799.

<sup>71</sup> Theodor (“Teddy”) Kollek (1911–2007), mayor of Jerusalem 1965–93, one of IB’s closest and most faithful friends in Israel. A 626–7.

<sup>72</sup> Robert Lucian Wade-Gery (1929–2015), diplomat; First Secretary, Tel Aviv 1961–4; Fellow, All Souls 1951–73.

<sup>73</sup> Sir Isaac Wolfson (1897–1991), baronet 1962, businessman and philanthropist, later (1966) eponymous benefactor of Wolfson College, Oxford. Marc Chagall (1887–1985), Russian-born French Jewish artist. Chagall’s 12 stained-glass windows depicting the 12 tribes of Israel (photo above) were installed in the synagogue on the Ein Karem campus of the Hadassah Medical Center, Jerusalem, in 1962. ‘Mr Wolfson’s windows’ are those by David Hillman (Wolfson’s childhood contemporary in Glasgow) in Jerusalem’s Renanim synagogue, which were sponsored by Wolfson. IB seems to mean that Herzliya is a poor substitute for the King David Hotel as a place to stay.

<sup>74</sup> Yvonne de Gunzburg (1882–1962) née Deutsch de la Meurthe.

<sup>75</sup> Swiss ski-resort where Hans Halban lived at the time.

MORE BUILDING



TO ALINE BERLIN IN PARAGGI

Monday [29 July 1963?; *manuscript postcard*]

Hotel Sharon, Herzlia Israel  
Aspettare Arrivata<sup>76</sup>

To say that all is peaceful & quiet here – that one *can* get people on the telephone – then my aunt *never* tries to reach me – that the Propes<sup>77</sup>–Kollek-complex works with lightning efficiency – wd be inaccurate. Still I *am* sitting *in* the swimming pool in the sun, covered with shallow water while writing this. Undivorced French Goy ladies wander arm in arm with handsome mixed up Israelis. Much emotional tension.

love

Isaiah

I miss you terribly. But am glad you're not here.

I shd arrive in Rome on the 5<sup>th</sup>. S[anta] M[argherita] on 6<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> 'To await arrival'.

<sup>77</sup> (Aaron) Zvi Propes (1904–78), born in Jelgava (now in Latvia), founder in 1961 of the Israel Festival, an annual international cultural event.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

TO ALINE BERLIN

Monday [29 July 1963?; *manuscript postcard*]

Sharon Hotel, Herzlia

The only terrible place – for me – although I love it – is Jerusalem. Telephones, Scholems,<sup>78</sup> Mrs Roth<sup>79</sup> etc. Two nights with Wade-Gery = escape & privacy. And even here, despite Important Persons (& even Sterns), peace. I sit by & in the Swimming Pool all day & read. But the hubbub of voices pleases me. I *shall* leave on 5<sup>th</sup>, TWA & come to P[araggi] on 6<sup>th</sup>.

TO ALINE BERLIN

2 August 1963 [*manuscript postcard*]

King D. Hotel, Jerusalem

Thank you *very* much for your letter. I cannot write you one, because you are moving, it will get lost: & if sent to [Pensione] Argentina may get there after me, which wd depress me – you wd not read it in the intended frame of mind. I have read Stuart on Spinoza<sup>80</sup> again & it has had a v. calming effect on my nerves: the place is overrun with people: not enough brown ones for you. Propes. Mrs Stern! Kollek alone is sweet & civilized.

love

Isaiah

<sup>78</sup> Gershom Gerhard Scholem (1897–1982), German-born Israeli philosopher and historian; professor of Jewish mysticism and Kabbalah, HUJ; m. 2nd 1936 Fania Freud (1909–99).

<sup>79</sup> Presumably Winifred Margalit Roth (1894–1989) née Davis, wife of Leon Roth, first professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem..

<sup>80</sup> Benedict de/Baruch Spinoza (1632–77) né Benedito de Espinosa, Dutch Jewish rationalist philosopher whose naturalistic views (often regarded in his time as atheistic, for all that he spoke of ‘God or nature’) on a wide variety of topics were an important part of the C17th background that ushered in the Enlightenment.

MORE BUILDING

Elat OK for Michel.<sup>81</sup>

TO GEORGE KENNAN

n.d. [mid-October 1963; *manuscript*]

The Reform Club  
As fr. Headington House

Dear George

How are you? How is your family? I had to come to London to-day & could not go to your first lecture, but I'll be there on Thursday. Wd you like a) to telephone & make a date for a peaceful *rencontre* b) come to lunch on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> with Annalisa<sup>82</sup> (*without* the Warden of Wadham: he was very obstreperous: but he clamoured to meet you: & indeed perhaps gave you pleasure.) c) dine in All Souls on Nov 3 (Sunday)<sup>83</sup> when Ld Halifax demands to meet you: & you can see my colleagues exhausted after a private feast the night before.

No need to answer: if you would just ring: we have to lunch with Pasternak's sisters who live in Oxford on Thursday so I shan't hang about much after your lecture. I do hope you are well. I hope to have communicated some guilt – spontaneously as he realized – to the Master of Balliol about your economic condition.

Love

Isaiah

<sup>81</sup> Michel Jules Strauss (1936–2021), Aline Berlin's first son, stepson to IB; director, Impressionist and Modern Art Department, Sotheby's, 1961–2000.

<sup>82</sup> Kennan's Norwegian wife Annelise Sørensen Kennan (1910–2008). IB gives her name in one than one version, not including the correct one.

<sup>83</sup> During the period in question 3 November was a Sunday only in 1963 (and 26 October was a Saturday).

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

TO ALINE BERLIN

2 December 1963 [*manuscript*]

*Idlewild*

T.W.A. Lisbon Lounge. New York.

Darling Aline,

I have just seen your mother: Mr Hammond<sup>84</sup> showed *no* signs of leaving: your mother was very nice to him, but when he ordered a hamburger, expressed some disdain: saying that she did not care for it: however he seemed not to mind, & thought her “a very dear old lady”: they got on very well indeed: so he wd not go away. After that we discussed Peter, Philip etc. & your mother as always, showed a great deal of v. good *sense*: one shd on no account *underrate* her intelligence & penetration: she feels we ought to see the Valabrègues<sup>85</sup> perhaps in S. Francisco: I am very tempted: she speaks Russian after all. I wish I had not scribbled very guilt laden notes to all these discontented ladies: I wish to see none, as you know; but see no great reason for being on bad terms or displaying too much discourtesy. But it annoys you: so I shan’t: or ask *you* to deal with them: or what? It is all v. trivial. But you make a sort of issue: at least I hope you are enjoying yourself this week.

Now really serious matters:

1) *Please renew* your U.S. *visa*. I didn’t: so I had to get a “waiver”: 10 dollars & humiliating relegation to the back of the queue: questions like “I see you are a “Sir”. That’s important? Is it higher than a Lord?” (*literally*): if I had not been a Sir I shd have been delayed longer. One needs a bit of paper stuck in: the stamped visa is *not* enough. Hammond, thank God, is *not* coming to California: I am left to my own devices. Much better. I shall *certainly* meet you in S. Francisco. My 4:30 TWA flight is 1½ hrs late: hence time to write this in N. York: the atmosphere is *heavy* with speculation

<sup>84</sup> Mason Hammond (1903–2002), Pope Professor of the Latin Language and Literature, Harvard, 1950–73.

<sup>85</sup> Cousins of Aline on her mother’s side.

## MORE BUILDING

about Ruby<sup>86</sup> etc: it is all ghastly & squalid: steadily Stavisky-like<sup>87</sup> atmosphere: like Rachman–Ward<sup>88</sup> on some some Colossal world scale. Speculation about Ruby as part of the underworld et cetera.

About *Greece*. I think the cruise might be O.K. Or will you feel inadequate to Professor *Dodds*?<sup>89</sup> Aline, darling, as Joe<sup>90</sup> wd say, why must you feel these strange delusions & fantasies? People may regard you as proud, unapproachable, grand, incapable of communicating with common people etc. – the old Alix complaint of pedestals from which she hoped various apes wd haul her down – but *insignificant*? Cinderella? is it that we cannot function à deux? as I used to have mute myself when out with Maurice; but I did not require much *respect* for M. as a result: only embarrassment. You'll have to tell me what to do. I feel there is a *mechanical* fault somewhere: not a psychological one which my instinct shd guide me about. I love you *much much* more than you love me: that cannot be helped, I suppose. I am, now, miserable without you. And shall *not* enjoy myself, till you come. I'll now write a card to *another* lady: Rosie:<sup>91</sup> & say we look forward etc. I wish you wd write & say something *nice*. Please please do.

Isaiah

<sup>86</sup> Jack Leon Ruby (1911–67) né Jacob Leon Rubinstein, nightclub owner who on 24 November shot Lee Harvey Oswald, who had assassinated US President J. F. Kennedy on 22 November.

<sup>87</sup> Serge Alexandre Stavisky (1886–1934), French swindler.

<sup>88</sup> Percé ('Peter') Rachman (1919–62), notoriously exploitative London landlord; Stephen Thomas Ward (1912–63), society osteopath. Both were involved in the 1963 Profumo affair.

<sup>89</sup> Eric Robertson Dodds (1893–1979), Regius Professor of Greek, Oxford, 1936–60.

<sup>90</sup> Joseph Wright Alsop (1910–89), US journalist. See E 786.

<sup>91</sup> Lady (Rosemary ['Rosie'] Margaret) d'Avigdor-Goldsmid (1910–97), wife of Sir Henry Joseph ('Harry') d'Avigdor-Goldsmid (1909–76), banker, bullion broker and Conservative politician (MP 1955–74).

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

[*PS on back of envelope*] 11·45 am London time: I've got over it. no scars. я тебя люблю – that is why all is *so well*. I look forward ‘ОЧЕНЬ’ to our “free” ХОЛИДАЙ ТУГЕЗЗЕР, ЭЛОУН.<sup>92</sup>



*The stamp on the envelope for the second letter of 2 December 1963 (below)*

TO ALINE BERLIN

2 December 1963 [*manuscript, in same envelope as previous letter*]

P.A.A. 101.

Darling Aline,

I enclose the two letters I took to London because I found them in my tray – cd not exactly dictate answers to Mrs U[techin] – & felt I must not trample on feelings gratuitously. I cannot remember what is inside them – read them by all means – in your mood at the airport it looked as if you thought I kept billets-doux squashed

<sup>92</sup> The Cyrillic reads ‘ya tebya lublyu’ (‘I love you’); ‘ochen’” ‘very much’; ‘kholidei tugezzer, eloun’ (transliteration of ‘holiday together, Aline [why not “Алин(а)” (“Aline/Alina”)]’).

## MORE BUILDING

in my pocket as an intimate act – all I have left is a long letter from an Oxford priest about Natural Law which I shall read now – The plane is just about to get off – I love you *passionately* but I feel that *you* feel that I am an old roué bachelor, beckoned by all sorts of middle-aged *femmes fatales* – casting sad looks of a comical kind – a musical comedy situation – & that this farcical image ruins our best moments. Perhaps it does not matter – let it. I can only be sure of *my* feeling – If it is not sufficient to liberate you from farcical feelings, what can I do? If you wd only manage my life for me I shd be *delighted*. I want *no* independence – If you tell me whom to see, when, for how long, etc. I'll accept that with relief & amusement – *nothing* is serious in my life except relationship to you – I suppose to my mother – & in a third, far distant place, work. Even Stuart is as *nothing* compared to the most trivial transaction at home. Since you own me so totally: don't mock me! I love you more, I suspect than you either know or really want perhaps. But it is no good. It will always be so. The airplane is just starting.

delay of 5 mins, because too many aircraft in the air  
Isaiah.

TO ALINE BERLIN

Tuesday. 3 December 1963 [*manuscript postcard*]

[Huntington-Sheraton Hotel, Pasadena]

There is a distinct resemblance to Accadia.<sup>93</sup> *Not* my form of life: it is *hell* being in P. & not in Los A: everything is an hour away: & I may, in despair, see Rowse:<sup>94</sup> but I think not. I *am* rather tired: to

<sup>93</sup> The Accadia (now Dan Accadia) hotel in Herzliya.

<sup>94</sup> (Alfred) Leslie Rowse (1903–97), Cornish-born historian and poet; fellow, All Souls, 1925–74; Rowse felt rejected when he failed to be elected Warden of All Souls 1952, and became convinced that his colleagues there, and in the University at large, were determined to underrate his achievements, which for him included identifying the 'Dark Lady' of Shakespeare's later sonnets, a claim

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

fly from 11 a.m. – To travel from 9·30 a.m. G.M.T. until 10 p.m. Los A. time – is not a pleasure. The N. pole is only 12 hours. I am v. grateful for your telegram: will Peter suffer from paranoia? Yes, of course. Your mother was charming.

Isaiah

a film in the TWA: hell. & very funny

ЛЮБОВЬ<sup>95</sup> is v. exhausting.

TO THE EDITOR, *THE OBSERVER*

*published* 15 March 1964, 11

Oxford

Sir,

In Mr Carver's letter of last Sunday on 'Mr Surkov and PEN'<sup>96</sup> he speaks of a promise given by Mr Surkov to me in connection with Madame Ivinskaya's release. While I am in full sympathy with Mr Crankshaw's views, and those of the PEN as expressed by Mr Carver, in this entire matter, I feel obliged to set the record straight.

that 'became emblematic of the failings exhibited in the later stages of his career as a whole – a high handed way with the evidence, disdain for the work of other scholars, vituperative responses to criticism, unshakeable belief in his own genius' (Stefan Collini, 'Look Back in Pique', *TLS*, 23 May 2003, 3). In one anecdote he asks a fellow diner in All Souls 'Do you know *Tudor Cornwall* [Rowse's 1941 book]?'; the diner indicates his neighbour: 'Do you know Stuart Hampshire?'

<sup>95</sup> 'Lyubov'' ('love').

<sup>96</sup> 8 March 1964, 30: 'Mr Surkov may perhaps remember the promise he gave to Sir Isaiah Berlin on the occasion of a visit to England organised by the Great Britain/USSR Association, that Madame Ivinskaya would be released from prison within a few months if the interventions by writers and organisations such as PEN on her behalf were stopped.'

## MORE BUILDING



*Olga Ivinskaya in 1937*

Mr Surkov, in the course of a conversation during, I think, a bus ride in England, did bring up the matter of Mme Ivinskaya's arrest. So far as I recollect, he spoke of the possibility that she might be released much sooner than at the end of the period to which she had been sentenced: but he certainly made no 'promise', and was obviously in no position to do so. This is all, to the best of my recollection, that occurred.

An inaccurate story, purporting to give the gist of this conversation, later appeared in at least one British newspaper. I did not attempt to correct it at the time, since the exchange of views between Mr Surkov and myself had been casual and private, and not intended for publicity. It may well have been a recollection of this story that led Mr Carver to think that a 'promise' had been given. I am, of course, as sorry as Mr Carver and Mr Crankshaw that our hopes have proved groundless.

Isaiah Berlin

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

TO ROBERT SILVERS

2 June 1964

All Souls

Dear Mr Silvers,

First let me say that I enjoyed meeting you a very great deal, and am very sorry that we should be divided by an ocean; that, according to Richard Wollheim, you will be coming here in August, when I shall be in Italy, and I shall therefore have no prospect of seeing you again for some time. If you and I and Richard could dine together we should, I think, spend an exceedingly satisfactory evening – indeed, any two of us would I think do so, but I could wish that we could all meet. Will you be here after September? I shall be at Stanford for two days on 5 October and then will have to fly straight back home – I shall return to the United States at the end of March next year.

Secondly, all hope is not yet gone that I may yet write something about Stuart Hughes I have now finished his very short book and he does say a number of things which are sufficiently provocative to deserve comment. I will try and write something in the summer – July or August. Perhaps I shall fail: if so, I shall let you know. I hear that Miss Mary McCarthy thinks that the *Times Literary* review of Miss Arendt's notorious work was written by 'a lawyer who had failed in politics, and obviously a Jew': I am, I suppose, not at liberty to reveal the name of the author:<sup>97</sup> but if he is a lawyer he is so only marginally, he has never been in politics, and is very, very far from being a Jew – so much for our old friend[']s perspicacity. Did you read it? It was an interesting piece and rose above the polemics of the *Partisan Review*. One must, I suppose, not ignore such squabbles: if one thinks of the level at which the early associates of Marx, and indeed, the Master himself, wrote against each other, that was pretty squalid too; and yet the consequences, whatever one might think of their value, were not negligible. Still,

<sup>97</sup> John Sparrow.

MORE BUILDING

it seems extraordinary to me that mere obscurantism and desire to cause pain should get anyone so far, but perhaps I am not right about this.

At any rate, I wish we could meet again soon.

Yours sincerely,  
Isaiah Berlin

TO ROBERT SILVERS

13 July 1964

All Souls

Dear Mr Silvers,

It was very nice to hear from you and I really shall attempt to produce something apropos of Stuart Hughes, and on the other book which you were kind enough to send me. I have just completed an enormous review for the *Political Quarterly* – too long for them to print probably – on Macpherson's book on Hobbes; and as he is a fanatical Marxist and has replied to all his other reviewers – except those who praise him without qualification – with the greatest vehemence and violence, I tremble. However, the review is written, the sword drawn, and I must do something more peaceful and academic for a while. But I really shall try and produce something for you. All that you say about the *Partisan Review* and the enormous past history of scores to settle, stabs and counter-stabs, and memories of who joined the Party when, and why and when they left it, and with whom and for whom, and who displayed what cowardice in what crisis, and what betrayals there were, etc. is, in general outlines, familiar to me. I realise that the whole thing was simply the occasion for the outburst of long-accumulated resentments, and that the main subject of Miss Arendt's book was buried underneath all this. And I am exceedingly amused by the thought that the *TLS* review was written by Hampshire and myself, jointly. I do not know Mr Lionel Abel: but if you see him, you can assure him on the best authority that neither Hampshire nor I wrote a word of it, nor knew that it was to appear; although by dint

of careful enquiry I have discovered who the author is, naturally after having had to take oaths of the most fearful sacredness not to reveal his name (it is a man). He is, in case anyone wishes to know, remote from all the persons concerned, remote from Nazis, Jews, political theorists, the intelligentsia – it was an original and imaginative move on the part of the editor to send this particular book to him – and what he wrote came from his inner consciousness, influenced by, so far as I know, nobody: the author is the most independent human being known to me: this is the only clue which I am allowed to give. Mary McCarthy – (how could she think, or anyone else, that either Stuart Hampshire or I would describe her as ‘the egregious Miss McCarthy’) – told the editor of the *TLS* that she supposed it to be a Jewish lawyer disappointed in politics. Nothing can be further from the truth. There has been a very arid correspondence about all this, I gather, in the *TLS* as to what was meant by ‘the darkest hour’ for the Jews. I am sure Miss Arendt imagines herself as a kind of Rahel Varnhagen and the first-class row boiling round her as a kind of great romantic collision between Schiller and Goethe and Schlegel and Hegel, etc. It has been a fearfully squalid personal imbroglio and the central issues of the whole thing – for I suppose there were some – have been buried under very dreary personal insults and counter-insults. I cannot bear to answer reviewers, even when they are insulting and mendacious. I am sure that Mary McCarthy, let alone Miss Arendt, would have been better off if they hadn’t. It really would be nice if we could meet again soon. You will not be coming to England before I come to the United States in April? I hope that you will.

Dictated but not signed by Isaiah Berlin

P.U.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Patricia (‘Pat’) Utechin (1927–2008) née Rathbone, IB’s devoted, long-serving and long-suffering private secretary 1961–5 and 1972–97.

MORE BUILDING

TO THEODOR ADORNO

22 October [1964]

Headington House

Lieber Freund,

It really is time that you paid us a visit. It would give me and your old friends great pleasure.

May I suggest: (1) that you come and deliver a lecture here next January – MacLennan says that you would find February difficult, but I myself may be going off to the United States in March; but the second week of term, say between 25 and 30 January, would be suitable for a lecture or a class – whichever you prefer. The normal hour for a lecture would be 5 p.m., and one could invite members of the audience (which is always painfully small) to ask questions – but most of them are too shy to do so. If you have a class, then of course a far more real interchange occurs; on the other hand the congregation is more homogeneous and perhaps less interesting. This I will leave to you. Any day that week would be suitable, but in order to get it into the *University Gazette*, I should be grateful if you could let me know within a fortnight or so. In this immovable University – impervious to anything but the inevitable explosion which will surely one day occur – the only fee likely to be paid is £10, plus first-class fare from London. But your *logis* will be looked after – I hope, indeed, that you will stay in our house, which you will find warmer than a college or even than a hotel: if that is for some reason impossible, I will take you a room at the Randolph, where you will not freeze to death, as you certainly would in All Souls. People would certainly want to meet you here – both old friends like Sir Maurice and Sir Ronald – however grand we have all become since you have known us (including yourself, I mean) – and also young para-Marxists whom we now breed freely and peacefully.

(2) Sir Thomas Armstrong, who is Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, would like you to deliver a lecture in London

while you are in this country – do do this, for it would give great pleasure and be very good for English civilisation.

(3) Covent Garden is about to put on *Moses and Aaron*. It really would be a very noble thing if you could write a piece about that, either to be published independently, or to be included in the special programme which will be printed for this occasion – the general subject of course we should leave to you, but what I suppose is required is to convey to the untutored reader the general significance of this work; and anything you wished to say about its genesis and the nature of its composition, or whatever appears to you to be significant or interesting. This of course would be suitably recognised, both by [an] appropriate fee and the special gratitude of the Board of Directors of the Royal Opera House, of which – surprising to say – I am a member; indeed, I am charged by my colleagues to invite you to do this. The length of the piece has not been specified, but I imagine that what they would like is about a thousand words or so – about that, one could ‘negotiate’. The work is to be put on sometime in the summer, and Georg Solti is to conduct. The production is by Peter Hall; it may travel to Israel and be performed in the Negev Desert: what Schoenberg would have had to say about that is not clear – but the dances round the Golden Calf can there be made only too realistic. Do say yes to all these things: they would all represent large forward steps in the path of the dialectical *Praxis*.

Yours ever,

Isaiah Berlin

PS The subject of your Oxford lecture: since my auspices only cover social and political philosophy, i.e. what is still to this day not regarded in Oxford as philosophy at all – could it be ‘The Idea of Progress’? I gather this is one of the subjects which you might wish to speak on. Anything to do with Hegel or Marx in their social and political aspects – however broadly interpreted – would do very well.

MORE BUILDING

PPS There are persons who say we must spell the name of the opera (which is to be given in a new English translation) as *Aron* and not *Aaron*, on account of the *Moses und Aron* – twelve letters – *Reihe*. Is this really essential? *Moses and Aron* looks very queer in English – *Aaron* is, as you know, normal. Would the shade of the composer really be perturbed – would the manes come and punish us all? And even if it did, must we quail?

TO THEODOR ADORNO

12 December 1964

Headington House

Lieber Freund,

Thank you very much for your letter; also for the kind messages which you sent via our unique mutual friend Nicolas Nabokov, the last living liberal Russian intellectual, after whom there will not be any anywhere any more.

Now to business. Your lecture in Oxford: the only difficulty about dates is that I am entitled to, and propose to take the fullest possible advantage of (I cannot deny), two sabbatical terms beginning in September 1965 and ending in March or April 1966. So, alas, I shall not be here in the autumn of 1965, and cannot, therefore, invite you for that date. So what are we to do? Since the so-called spring ('Lent') term is not possible, and if I am right you do not wish to come in the summer, must we put it off until the summer of 1966? It is a very long way away, and the idea of progress will have suffered some severe buffeting before then unless I am much mistaken. Still, I see no way out: but if you do, please tell me and I shall arrange things accordingly if I possibly can.

*Moses und Aron*: George Steiner has lent me *Quasi una Fantasia* vol. 2.<sup>99</sup> Do you think that, if I could persuade him, he would make

<sup>99</sup> A muddled reference to Theodor W. Adorno, *Quasi una fantasia: Musikalischer Schriften II* (Frankfurt am Main, 1963).

a good translator of this piece, which would then appear, for example, in *Encounter*? If he does it, he will feel it incumbent upon him, I am sure, to add something of his own – perhaps an elaborate introduction of yourself and the composer and the work to the British scene. I have a feeling that Solti does not really like the work, and was bullied into doing it at Covent Garden more or less by me, and that when it achieves its *fiasco d'estime* it is my head that will roll. But that matters little: my head has rolled before and come to very little harm thereby. But to return to the important point: would you like me to approach George Steiner and ask him to undertake this task, and would you like to see your article appear in *Encounter*, which is, as you know, our only decent periodical of the right *niveau*? Or would you prefer another translator – say Peter Heyworth, who I believe is now in Berlin, and if so will you approach him yourself? – the reception by *Encounter* is more or less guaranteed: I have spoken to Lasky and can vouch for our old friend Stephen Spender (did you never meet him with me in Oxford before the war? If not, I display astonishment). Or if neither of these translators please[s] you, would you be able to suggest another? On all these points I should be grateful for light. I shall discuss this with the directors of Covent Garden anyway, who will naturally take a warm interest in anything to do with Moses, on Wednesday: I shall do my best to get something done. I feel rather like Liebknecht telling Karl Marx what steps are being taken to acquaint the German public with his revolutionary texts – except that it cannot be denied that both you and I, at the moment, live more comfortable lives than these representatives of the revolutionary bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century.

Talking of which, what am I to say in a review of Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*? I have not read it yet, but because I find his company so stimulating I promised to do so, and now shiver before the task of reading it, for it looks to me a formidable and punishing work.

Please let me know about these things.

Yours sincerely,

Isaiah Berlin

MORE BUILDING

TO GEORGE KENNAN

4 September 1965 [*manuscript*]

Pensione Argentina, Paraggi

Dear George,

You say that your letter calls for no reply: but indeed it does. And I was overjoyed – I mean this as literally as such words warrant – to receive it. On all grounds: because any word from you establishes an area of private relationship and speaks directly, at least to me (and “private faces in public places are wiser and nicer than public faces in private places” as Auden once wrote) – and I am very pleased and grateful by your still continuing belief in my “feel” for Russian life and culture (I suppose it *was* a culture?), when I have done so little about it for so long. But believe me – believe me I beg – what delighted me far more than even this – egoist as I am & with some natural vanity, surely, – is your desire to return to our old love. Do not abandon her! I feel like Turgenev when he *begged* Tolstoy to return to literature – so ill received by T[olstoy] who cared for nothing but moral regeneration and despised Turgenev to boot – but you won’t take it so. I still think, & indeed feel deeply & absolutely convinced that you could write an immortal masterpiece on the Russian Revolution, which (a) deserves it (b) cries out for it. Here is the event which altered our entire world & us especially: half a century has passed: At a similar remove from the French Revolution – what had not already been written for & against & more or less objectively too: Mignet, Guizot, Louis Blanc, Lamartine, the beginning of Michelet & lots of others – & we? Only chapters in popular histories – one or two learned & serious essays – memoirs – W. H. Chamberlain & – Carr: and now Conor Cruise O’Brien – who is a far better writer than Carr or Deutscher but passionately engagé, will do something to it too. I believe in objective truth: I believe that when we say that Halévy or Klyuchevsky are truthful and dependable historians whereas a Pokrovsky or Belloc or the leader writers of Voprosy Istorii are not, we mean something which would be intelligible to

any educated man, say, since the Renaissance. The Russian revolution & its antecedents – (of course you are right – no Russian history without literature is thinkable: it should not be, of any country: but in the Russian case, this is very obvious) is an Andromeda surrounded by dragons, chained to some appalling rocks, in need of a Perseus: the Gorgon’s head is to have lived in & retained vivid recollections of the Soviet Union: this + understanding what, say, Dvoryanskoye Gnyezdo, Byesy,<sup>100</sup> The Cherry Orchard are about (any fool knows what Fathers & Sons or Gorky is about) are the sine quibus non: & your other gifts – I don’t mind if I do make you blush – are unique in the world: literary, intellectual, moral, political: *nobody* in the western world – apart from Russians who are pro tanto hopeless at this – can detect, as you can, ‘Toot Russky Dookh.’<sup>101</sup> ‘Toot Roos’yoo pakhnet’ in patterns of events, books, men, lives & acts & forms of self-expression. Well then! Wohlauf!<sup>102</sup> Not a day, week, year spent on this would be wasted. God knows I am in a somewhat analogous boat – tied down as I am by my official chair at Oxford, I *must* do my other stuff: but I shall never be happy, like all the unfortunates injected by this unique nostalgic affection, until I return to Belinsky & Co. And your ‘mission’ – das Angegebene – is, because of your marvellous attributes & temper, correspondingly greater. So there! Dixi et salvavi animam meam.

That the revolutionaries, cadets and all, madden you, I understand. Especially the noble S.R.s: But to live under an old, hated despotism – loathed by the world & filled with self-hatred & a very squalid and transparent self-deception or just lies, is not like any western life either: When we meet – I hope very soon indeed – would you remind me to tell you, if you haven’t heard it, Karpovich’s story of the priest’s revolutionary son: &

<sup>100</sup> *A Nest of Gentlefolk* (Turgenev), *The Devils* (Dostoevsky)

<sup>101</sup> ‘Тут Русский Дух, Тут Русью пахнет’ (‘Here is the Russian spirit, here is the smell of Russia’), a slight misquotation of ‘Там русской дух ... там Русью пахнет!’ (‘There is the Russian spirit ... there is the smell of Russia!’), line 41 of Pushkin’s poem ‘Ruslan and Lyudmila’ (1840). Cf. B 10.

<sup>102</sup> ‘All right!’

## MORE BUILDING

Dostoevsky's sentiments recorded in Suvorin's journal circa 1881: I am sure you remember it: when he dreams he overhears a conspiratorial conversation & wonders *why* it would be regarded as monstrous to tell the police. I *shall* try to defend the silly old intelligentsia to you: Pipes, e.g., has got them very wrong: your great uncle grasped this better: they *were* superficial about what was to be done: & the manipulation of human lives: but he speaks of the *uniquely* horrible revelations about the crime & idiocy of fanatical monism in politics and morals: if so fantastically acute an observer as Tolstoy could think the solution *so* simple, the situation needs some explaining: I do look forward to talking about all this (I am very ignorant of the nineties).

As to Princeton: the grimmer, the bleaker, the darker, the better for *me*: for I have an awful lot of work to do, & Oxford is too soft & undermining. That Harvard is uglier but has intellectually more "useful" people – for you or indeed me too – is true. For me it is (after conferring incredible favours on me & doing an *enormous* lot for me) too competitive: people are too sharp: too self-improving, too unable not to look over their shoulders to see how fast X or Y is getting on with *their* "stuff": too ambitious: honourably, industriously ambitious: unbogus: unstuffy: but puffing and panting all the same: & so far as the Russia in 19<sup>th</sup> century is concerned (*why* do I so hate the 20<sup>th</sup>?) not so terribly good either: still, I do see what you mean: frequent visits, full intellectual utilization – but to *live* there – hear the whirring – no! do let's talk about that too. Oh dear! I am terrified (what arrogance to put it that way! Tolstoy *was* offended with Turgenev, even Lord Snow, who is an ignoramus and a Philistine, gives his letter, idiotically – as an example of "magnanimity") that you *will* be tempted into public life: in which your position, morally & personally, is, again, like all else about yourself, if you don't mind my saying so, unique. Don't let the sirens capture you! You really could – can – transform the West's image (horrible word) of itself by adducing true facts and unanswerable interpretations.

Enough. My handwriting alone is too terrible to cause you to be subjected to this torture & logorrhoea any longer. I apologize. I

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

arrive, I hope, on the 17<sup>th</sup> September. On the 21<sup>st</sup> arrives Aline & we move to 57 College Road West: in between times, 4 days, I shall stay at the Princeton Inn, if they have a room: & try to find out what I am expected to do. I am always nervous of new experiences: my self confidence is a minus quantity: unlike the S.R.s.

yrs

Isaiah

Love to Anna Lisa. We do look forward ...

TO ALINE BERLIN

*Friday Morning & Afternoon* [17 September 1965, *manuscript*]

The Carlyle, New York

Darling Aline,

Here I sit, waiting for Dean Rees<sup>103</sup> of the City University of New York who wants to see me “*urgently*”. The journey went well: it shook a bit over Canada, otherwise, O.K: On arrival (2 hours late) I telephoned Stern who had forgotten – I knew he would – but displayed enthusiasm – I said I wd go in after dinner – his old Jewish mother<sup>104</sup> was there – & so I starved from 3 pm till 11 pm: & then bought delicious rye bread & cream cheese, & feasted on this in your mother’s kitchen & again in the morning (6 a.m) & washed up & behaved like the Herzog<sup>105</sup> Jews: but it is a photographic novel, & not art: & I am for Zhivago<sup>106</sup> & against

<sup>103</sup> Mina Spiegel Rees (1902–97), mathematician, Professor and Dean of Graduate Studies, City University of New York, 1961–7.

<sup>104</sup> Clara Stern (1896–1980) née Jaffe studied voice at the St Petersburg Conservatory, and began teaching her son the piano when he was six.

<sup>105</sup> A reference to Saul Bellow’s novel *Herzog* (New York, 1964).

<sup>106</sup> Boris Pasternak’s novel *Doctor Zhivago* (Milan, 1957; London/New York, 1958).

## MORE BUILDING

Mary McCarthy,<sup>107</sup> Bellow,<sup>108</sup> & the minute description of physical detail which amuses, fascinates, obsesses & embarrasses one, but is not art & is a reduction of human experience, deliberately, to units of not very good quality. I also rang Stuart, who spoke in a special strangled voice: I go to Princeton at 4 p.m. to-day – deposit the heavy luggage (one waits an *hour* for it in the Customs).

At this point Dean Rees came. Financial discussion. She has just left. Madame Stravinsky<sup>109</sup> has asked me to lunch at 1:30: because she is exhausted she has had to go to see the doctor at 12:30: I telephoned & said if she was *so* weak it wd be *cruel* to impose myself. She insisted, but feebly: so I'm not lunching there: & am free. Marvellous. I can walk the streets of New York. I cannot *help* liking this city: the taxi driver (Clarence Z. Rosenberg) asked me if I thought philosophy was better than science for his young son at City College: I gave him All Souls as my address in case his son visits Oxford "Are you a Jew?" he asked "Why?" I said "yes". "Because I find it easier to talk about things that I really find interesting to a Jew" he said. He took an interest in the dictating machine & said a few words into it. "What is a Sir" he asked? Was you a hero in the war? etc. All this I find touching: & do not think I shall ever find it cloying.

Peter rang up. He cannot dine with Mrs Hampshire but will see me before: & is free all day to-morrow: so I'll spend it with him more or less. This city exhilarates me at once: like Italy does us both: Princeton will probably depress me. The car is here. I am taking Peter's books to him: & must now write your mother a note to thank her. I get on *very* well with the maid. I cannot wait till Tuesday: my work begins Thursday: I shall be in a state by the time you arrive but shall control myself. I am very happily married: this

<sup>107</sup> Mary Therese McCarthy (1912–89) novelist, critic and social commentator.

<sup>108</sup> Saul Bellow (1915–2005) né Solomon Bellows, Canadian-born US playwright and novelist of Russian Jewish descent.

<sup>109</sup> Vera Stravinsky (1888–1982), nee de Bosset, dancer, costume designer and painter; Igor Stravinsky's long-time mistress, then second wife (he was her fourth husband).

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

is rare: apart from D. Cecil – but he said *nothing* on the wireless – who, really? I don’t mean Gardiners’<sup>110</sup> quiet lives: but “people of our kind”? Evie & “Backer”?<sup>111</sup> I really do *love* you: *much* more than you me but I prefer it so: After all I did the wooing: bell rings

I must be off

love

Isaiah

*The next letter is badly typed and somewhat garbled: IB’s corrections are inadequate, but the sense is mostly clear enough.*

TO ROBERT SILVERS

12 October 1965

Headington House

Dear Bob,

Thank you very much for the memoir of Mandelstamm<sup>112</sup> and the letter of translation.<sup>113</sup> I have the book on his prose which is written by a professor here whom I know – I know him and his work and it is a good book.

<sup>110</sup> Patrick Lancaster Gardiner (1922–97), lecturer, Wadham, 1949–52; fellow, St Antony’s, 1952–8; fellow and philosophy tutor, Magdalen, 1958–89; best known for his work on Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard, and for encouraging a renewed interest in German idealism among British philosophers in the 1960s. IB admired his fastidious taste. His wife (m. 1955) was Susan (1934–2006) née Booth.

<sup>111</sup> George Backer (1903–74), Jewish Democratic politician, Zionist, publisher and editor of the *New York Post* 1939–42, and his 2nd wife Evelyn (‘Evie’) (1905–71) née Weil.

<sup>112</sup> The Russian name transliterates in the system we use as ‘Mandel’shtam’ (the form used in Henry Hardy’s editions of IB’s works), but is usually spelt ‘Mandelstam’ by English writers. It is variously spelt by IB and/or his typists ‘Mandelstam’, ‘Mandelstamm’ (the original German form) or ‘Mandelshtam’. In 1980 IB and RS differed about how to spell the name in IB’s memoir of meetings with Russian writers, settling on ‘Mandelstam’.

<sup>113</sup> Possibly a reference to the preceding letter: perhaps he intended ‘your letter on the translations?’

## MORE BUILDING

I ought not to be allowed to write about poetry. Everyone knows I know nothing about it. Still, something ought to be done about ‘acquainting the public’ with this exquisite, beautiful, severely disciplined, very undecadent master – on the contrast, a writer with a kind of Landorian ideal of life in part and his dreadful fate with the trial of his friends, persecution of the dictator, and diseased torture hounding in the camp, sordid and dreadful death, ought to be commemorated.<sup>114</sup> So I will do my best. The person who really ought to do it is, I suspect, Maurice Bowra, who will be quite annoyed at my doing it, or, indeed, touching on the province of Russian poetry at all; although I did once do a small piece on Pasternak for [*Partisan Review*]<sup>115</sup> years and years ago of which I am not entirely ashamed. The Lowell translations look all right. Unromanticised in the wording sometimes, but I must look at the originals.

Anyway I can do nothing before I deliver those horrible New York Columbia lectures,<sup>116</sup> and then I have to go to Europe for a week. During the European journey I shall scribble something and send it to you.

The philosophy anthology<sup>117</sup> is much more tricky. It is a perfectly worthy enterprise, but under the wrong label. It is as if an

<sup>114</sup> Evidently a garbled transcription, though the sense is more or less clear. IB appears to be saying that the public should be made aware of Mandel'shtam and his remarkable qualities, and of the contrast between his liberal ideals (reminiscent to some degree of those of Walter Savage Landor) and the dreadful fate he suffered: his friends were put on trial, and he himself was persecuted by Stalin; he was sent to a prison camp, where he was hounded by his jailers, suffered torture and disease, and met a sordid and horrible death.

<sup>115</sup> **‘The Energy of Pasternak’**, review of Boris Pasternak, *Selected Writings*, *Partisan Review* 17 (1950), 748–51.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Two Enemies of the Enlightenment’ [J. G. Hamann and Joseph de Maistre], the Woodbridge Lectures, Columbia University, New York, 25–8 October 1965.

<sup>117</sup> *Russian Philosophy*, ed. James M. Edie, James P. Scanlan and Mary-Barbara Zeldin, with the collaboration of George L. Kline (Chicago, 1965), 3 vols. IB dictated a 2,500-word review, of which a very imperfect transcript survives in

[anthology of] American philosophy appeared containing works by Jonathan Edwards, Washington Irving, extracts from Melville, Poe, Emerson, Thoreau, Henry James, Channing, Niebuhr, Paul Elmer More, winding up with a statement about American pragmatism by an unknown professor from the University of Kansas. Some of the pieces might be quite interesting, some written by gifted essayists, critics and theologians, but philosophy? There did exist academic Russian philosophers: one or two are reproduced here – I ought to have added Santayana and Ralph Barton Petty – but it wasn't much good. Dutch academic philosophy (and Portuguese and Swiss) exists too, but an anthology would not be of absorbing interest. This the authors haven't done; they have done the other. They have simply taken bits and pieces from 'penseurs' – who are none the poorer for it. One of the authors is a conscientious, decent, hardworking hack who has always been very nice to me and provided me with material which I tell everyone to read, but never felt curious [enough to read] myself (I have never made use of it), so what am I to say about all that? However, given time, not too long this time, I shall prepare a piece for you – by December, I hope. Then de Maistre early next year; that surely can wait.<sup>118</sup>

Meanwhile, when are we to meet? Why don't you come here? November would be best, when I am back from Johns Hopkins, i.e. the second week of that month. Do suggest yourself. Stuart <whom you will have seen yesterday> and I will welcome you with [the] greatest warmth, as you know, and Aline<sup>119</sup> too. I daren't speak about Mrs H.<sup>120</sup>

Yours,  
Isaiah

his papers. He corrected barely more than the first tenth. The transcript is available online as **'Russian "Philosophy"'**.

<sup>118</sup> His review never appeared.

<sup>119</sup> Aline Elisabeth Yvonne Berlin (1915–2014) née de Gunzbourg was married to IB from 1956 until his death in 1997.

<sup>120</sup> Stuart Hampshire's wife Renée, whom IB viewed considerably askance, describing her to Aline as 'a monster' (B 123/2).

MORE BUILDING

TO VERA STERN

22 October 1965

Princeton University

Dearest Vera,

Thank you very much indeed. On the very next night Madame V. and Rostropovich appeared at Princeton in place of Miss De Los Angeles, who was indisposed in Europe. He played the piano, she sang. She appeared in the same splendid flaming red dress and sang some agreeable Tchaikovsky and some magnificent Mussorgsky (scored for a bass voice) – of all the sopranos in the world she holds a soprano which is emotionally nearer a bass than anyone else – is this an insult? Believe me, I do not wish to insult her – you think I am a little mean to her, but now our friendship is sealed by the fact that unexpectedly they saw me again – embracing – kisses – vows of eternal friendship – and I hope to see them again in New York, or at least him. Relations between them appear to me to be obscure.

But this is really a letter – forgive it being typed. If I hadn't had it typed you wouldn't have been able to read a single scribble, let alone word – to thank you for true friendship, true consideration, being so nice to us both, and in general, for being as and what you are. I must not go further for fear of awakening Isaac's no doubt never wholly dormant jealousy – at least I hope it is not dormant – no doubt jealousy is a base emotion, but its death is a sad occurrence in anyone's life surely – and to ask when you will be back again and when it is that we can meet again peacefully – after I have delivered my Columbia lectures next week, I shall be a new man, carefree, gay and with an unimpeded broad Russian soul. Unless you fear that this may grow to excess – which it may – please let me know here or at the Carlyle, but better here, for the Carlyle forwards very little, and usually to the wrong address.

Thank you again very much on Aline's behalf and my own.

Yours, with much love

Isaiah

TO ROBERT SILVERS

2 March 1966

Headington House

Dear Bob,

Goodness me – what a city you live in – the publicity given to my very routine arrangement with the City University of New York by which I come for three or four months – and not every year – seemed to me fantastic. I have seldom had a nastier week than that in which that odious vignette of my appearance, character, habits, origins, appeared in the *New York Times*,<sup>121</sup> plus an article by Alistair Cooke in the *Guardian*<sup>122</sup> which, in the guise of jolly banter, and [ ] humour and agreeable chaff, was one of the most odious pieces ever written about anyone by anyone. I feel inclined – like my colleague Cauter in *All Souls* – to rush into print with memories of Alistair Cooke’s broadcast in 1940,<sup>123</sup> which he is certainly seeking to forget. But I shall do no such thing. I shall behave like Barzun,<sup>124</sup> in a restrained, gentlemanly, severely Henry-Adams-like manner. What could have stimulated the *NYT*, of all newspapers, to this hideous exhibition of intolerable vulgarity? My letters are divided into genuine concern about my feelings (this pleases me very much, although it does not comfort me) and crocodile tears about the indignities to my person – and naive, sincere congratulations upon having attained such a measure of public appreciation. I find it difficult to answer the last without hurting feelings.

The Oxford Lowell affair was grotesque.<sup>125</sup> No doubt these campaigns ought to be better organised, but there really was a rush

<sup>121</sup> Leonard Buder, ‘Sir Isaiah Berlin, Philosopher, to Join City University in Fall’, *New York Times*, 8 February 1966, 1.

<sup>122</sup> Alistair Cooke, ‘An Appointment in New York for Sir Isaiah Berlin’, *Guardian*, 9 February 1966, 11.

<sup>123</sup> Untraced.

<sup>124</sup> Jacques Barzun (A 48/3).

<sup>125</sup> Robert Lowell’s failure to be elected Oxford’s Professor of Poetry: see B 362/2.

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of Philistine xenophobes to the polls, and Stephen Spender's letter about the clergymen and cricketers brought out to vote for Blunden was not at all inaccurate. They will learn: Blunden is inaudible, has nothing to say, and despite his air of sweetness and Georgian innocence is a not very estimable character. I remember having a row with him, quite unexpectedly, in the early 1930s, when he displayed sympathies for Hitler – admittedly of a rather confused kind – because of a certain feeling that he and Hitler ultimately stood for the same rural values, were both front fighters in the war, and did not much like sophisticated intellectuals, Jews etc. in the corrupt centres of international culture. But I am very sorry for Lowell: it is disagreeable to be defeated in these circumstances, and it is the fault of whoever in Oxford originally promoted his candidature. No doubt he can be elected later, and no doubt he will not wish to stand; whether a 'draft'<sup>126</sup> is possible I simply do not know. I thought of writing to him, and then I thought I wouldn't, for what would it have been possible to say? Only to say how awful it all was, and how silly, and how unimportant, but at the same time how discreditable.

The essay on Russian philosophy is still lingering in my mind. I have not abandoned it, although at the moment I cannot write anything, but it will reach you in the end. It will not come to you, alas, in March – I cannot do it then and I apologise humbly for this. You must ascribe it to a long fit of depression induced by the New York press, and the consequences of it in the British press. Never have I had to make a personal statement before, through the 'wire agencies'. I felt like Sir Charles Dilke, and still do. In fact I am involved in hideous intrigues connected with the possibility of funding a new college more or less for scientists – once that comes to an end, I shall be free to write the article (and one on something else as well, I seem to remember).

Stuart wrote a marvellous piece on Wittgenstein for the *New Statesman* – his piece on Sade I did not admire so much, but do not

<sup>126</sup> Meaning unclear: perhaps an election managed by enthusiasts without Lowell's active participation.

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tell him so. The piece on Wittgenstein is almost worth your reprinting. He seems to me in a melancholy state too. But you are not – you are living in the centre of things – and I do not mean this ironically – this truly is a backwater – I like backwaters, but perhaps an occasional small breeze to stir it would not be out of place.

I have received a letter from Norman Birnbaum telling me that Lichtheim has not landed his job at Essex after all. That depresses me. Everything depresses me at the moment, but with the capacity for ultimate optimism of our dear old race, I shall doubtless rise from this present mood. It will be very nice indeed to see you in New York. All kinds of old friends of yours came to a party given by Stephen to celebrate his silver wedding, his birthday, his son's twenty-first, all simultaneously. The point of the party was not to invite Mel Lasky, which he successfully did. Weidenfeld, on the other hand, was there to underline this fact, and still the spectacle of elderly Labour and Conservative cabinet ministers, doing extraordinary contortions to the sound of what seemed to be tomtoms, did induce a vaguely pro-Soviet mood in me. I must repress this. You and I and Barzun and Hester must defend Western values. I shall do so at Cornell when Stuart, Conor Cruise O'Brien, Shils and Northrop Frye discuss scholarship and morals. You must come. Everything of this kind is at once grotesque, embarrassing, quite interesting, unnecessary, and ultimately not altogether discreditable to the human race.

Yours,  
Isaiah

TO GEORGE KENNAN

21 March 1966

All Souls

Dear George,

Thank you ever so much for making me a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the National Institute

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of Arts And letters as well. It really is much more than my due. When I saw who the other persons elected were I was sure that, if there had been proper competition for this, I should have been properly blackballed. What you said – do you remember, in the hallway of your own house? – about the marvellous penetration and fearless honesty with which the members of this distinguished body rejected the unworthy, makes me feel that I am exceedingly lucky to have scraped in. Anyway, I am most grateful to you and to Arthur, and shall attempt to do nothing disgraceful, and to live up to a proper standard of intellectual and personal respectability. I wish I could say that my vanity was wholly unaffected by this: it is not – I am delighted, and shall flush with genuine pleasure when the American Ambassador crowns me. It is much nicer, of course to receive more than one is due, but it seldom happens, and I owe it all, as much else – my entire American academic career, in fact – to you. It is too much to be put in words, or in anything else, so far as I can see. I had better stop before my feelings brim over too far.

Yours,

Isaiah Berlin per BJK<sup>127</sup> [...]

TO ROBERT SILVERS

1 June 1966

Headington House

Dear Bob,

No; I should imagine that Maurice Bowra would *not* have anything to say on Tertz, the trial etc. He does not follow these things much – he confines himself to translations and the past. <I have asked him. No go.> Nor, as you say, would Hingley or Hayward have anything very fresh that they have not written already. I think there are perhaps people in New York who could

<sup>127</sup> Baillie Jean Knapheis (b. 1941) née Klass, born in Winnipeg, IB's personal secretary 1965–7; m. 1963–4 Brian Knapheis, 1967 Christopher Tolkien; editor of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Father Christmas Letters* (London, 1976).

do something – Matthewson, for example, who seemed to me quite intelligent when I once heard him read a paper; or a young semi-Marxist called Stanley Mitchell at the University of Essex in Colchester, who has been to the Soviet Union fairly recently, and saw people there. He would certainly be more imaginative and honourable than many – though I do not know quite how intelligent he would be, or how good his writing would turn out to be, but you might try him.

◁I have a better idea. There is a v. informed & imaginative Polish poet called *Wat* at, I think, Berkeley Cal. who cd do this *excellently*. He is a socialist, was in a Soviet jail which he did not hate, & knows the scene. Alexander Wat.▷

I had a very jolly visit from George Steiner, who gave me a very exhilarating account of his visit to New York, to visit Conor Cruise O'Brien – he was brought over together with Cate – I have not seen the latter since the article on All Souls ◁I suppose *propter* as well as *post*. But I took no steps. C. is hideously neurotic about all this▷ – I agreed with Stuart, quite apart from his justice or injustice (of course he was broadly right on essentials) – he is too ill-natured, fanatical and wooden. I cannot really make out about Cate. On the one hand, he is a sort of implacable inquisitor, who rejects all pleas for mercy, cuts off heads, if they do not pass some mechanical canon or test. The book on the European left is really no good – it sees nothing from the inside, and is a product of hard work, method, and not a bubble of sympathy or imagination, and a fanatical exclusion of all human issues, as if he had taken a vow not to rest, not to smile, until all enemies of the people had bitten the dust. And yet he has human feelings. He suffers from hostile reviews by outraged left-wing writers, who feel that he is an intolerably embarrassing ally ◁& a Commisar▷, and cannot understand why they attack him. His vision really is removed from anything ideal – there may have been mechanical Jacobins and mechanical Bolsheviks like that, but it is rare in England, and frightens those with whom he comes into contact. Not me, I say bravely, because I rather like him, and think he is [a] poor thing, who may do well through sheer energy and realisation of not too

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great resources, someone who will always stumble about blindly in a world he will never understand, kicking things over, making enemies. I don't really know what it is – lack of heart, I think, and the self-imposition of some intellectual straitjacket, blinkers, goggles and apparatus. Everything he says is predictable, all he has has been sacrificed on some political altar. It is in a way heroic, but the result is bitter, flat, second-rate, narrow, the very opposite of anything one could call humane – and is sometimes vulgar and cheap to a degree. He is what is called a funny boy who could act as a minor Commisar. If you are going to use him, do use him carefully – only give him bodies whose heads you really do wish [to] cut off (or heroes to praise by equally mechanistic methods,) not books or writers likely to be maimed by Procrustean methods. With all this, I get on with him, and like him, and am fearfully sorry for him. I think he will always be miserable, always misunderstand everything systematically, always be a victim of some frightful formula or other, understand nothing, and be suffering perpetual astonish-ment and painful surprises; he is the victim of a very *very* deep paranoia, quite different in temper from either CCO'B or any other left-wing writer in English today. Rather far gone. Still, I may be mistaken. Perhaps I am just writing under the impression of his – it seems to me – over-abstract, over-mechanised book, which I am glad not to have had to review. (I thought it 3–4<sup>th</sup> rate. But don't tell anyone! Criticism hurts him more than most. And I hate making enemies.)

Now as to Sinyavsky again – would not Edmund Wilson take an interest in all this? He would have done, ten years ago. He could write something exceedingly interesting and morally satisfactory about it. So, at an inferior level, could Herbert Read. They are both of them fearless, clear about their own moral position, and that, in this instance, is, I think, more required than being informed by long experience of the cold war from either side. (Or A. Wat (see above))

As for my piece ... I have not a moment of time. At the moment I am plunged into intrigues which will probably end in nothing about the new college that I am supposed to be planning.

Mr Mazlish of MIT has suggested to me that I might ask for his book for review – [*The Riddle of History: The Great Speculators*] from *Vico to Freud* – but I will take a year and a half over that (I warned him) so better not. There is a film about Akhmatova, talking of my literary prospects, of the three funerals – the official one in the cathedral, the ‘civil’ one in the Writers’ Union, and the real one in her village. The film is under lock and key in Moscow, and those who made it were somewhat demoted in their official positions. But there is an American girl here who swears that they are so avid for foreign currency that they would sell it for a reasonable sum to any respectable institution, e.g. a University that might want it – an English one rather than an American one, but if there were an American backer, it could probably go through the intermediacy of an English one. If you have any ideas on that, I could pass them on. If you want material on Akhmatova, there is a girl called Amanda Haight, who was with her almost until the end and of whom she was genuinely fond (she came to Oxford with her) who could certainly do something. If you want me to put her in touch with you, I shall do so, but you will have to tell me.

What was Rorimer’s real name?<sup>128</sup> I am pleased to hear about the visit of Kenneth Clark. Yes, I think it *was* more interesting at Frau Varnhagen’s house. (Have you seen the appalling book about her by Hannah Arendt? It is actually the worst of her books; like Maurois’ book on Disraeli, it is a very unsuccessful ‘identification’.) It was hell at Dorothea’s house – she was very heavy, sentimental and pornographic, hung around F. Schlegel’s neck like a huge albatross, except that he did not notice, and was quite fond of her in a detached way, and they wrote an improper novel together. Henrietta was the best, quite gay, though with heavy moments. We should have been fearfully bored with these receptions; on the other hand we would not have suffered the agonies of incompatibility and the intolerable mixture of sensitive and imaginative and smart, crass and successful brutes – – the nightmares that I, too, have gone through at the addresses you

<sup>128</sup> Rohrheimer.

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mention. All these ladies had strong personalities, unlike their New York equivalents, and to some extent tamed the guests; when the Russian ambassador or a traveller from Paris met the German writers and composers and diplomats there, they restrained themselves, and there were no Prussian officers or officials throwing their weight around, and blowing up at politically unorthodox views. Who was Elisa van der Recke [sc. Elisa von der Recke]?

I think Mr Friedenthal could perhaps write a book about the salons of Berlin; if she read German, Mary McCarthy could – or even Minna Curtis, someone with plenty of time, not anxious to be original all solemn. The best book about Rachel is by Spenlé, alas dead. He was an obscure professor in somewhere like Bordeaux. You need a kind of intellectual David Cecil, who reads German, but such persons do not exist. Imagine the sense of outrage of someone like Lichtheim, or even Nettel (I think he reads Russian, but not Polish), at being told that the description of what happened in these salons is in some ways historically more influential and important than what Proudhon said or the controversy between Bernstein and Kautsky – and that it set the tone for German literature for a century, and so for European literature in our own time. Weimar had an enormous effect on everybody, and not for the best, but far greater than anything done in Paris or London or Moscow. The 1930s were extremely German. Still I must not maunder on.

Come to London, and to Oxford. You would like it here. In July we are gone – come to Italy and visit us. We would be really made happy if you did.

Yours,

Isaiah

⟨If I do get the funds to build a College, I shall die of terror & my own folly. Poor Stephen: he now feels besmirched by C.I.A. though he did nothing wrong.⟩

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FROM GEORGE KENNAN

2 September 1966

Hotel Regina, Venice

Dear Isaiah: –

God knows when you will receive this letter, but it is not important when or where it arrives. I am moved to write it because I am, at long last, in the midst of M. Venturi's grim and relentless book,<sup>129</sup> and I am troubled, once again, by my failure to respond as Venturi certainly does, and as I suspect many of the rest of you do, to the annals of the Russian revolutionary movement of the XIX century. I wrote you once before along these lines. In doing so again, I do not mean to pursue anything like a controversy – merely to communicate a bewilderment and to invite the sort of understanding which you, with your Catholic sensitivity and perception, have never – to my knowledge – denied to any honestly-held view from any quarter.

Recognizing to the full the selflessness and strength of character and, if you will, personal purity of many of the Russian populists & S/R's [Social Revolutionaries], I find them tiresome, philosophically childish for all their intricate philosophizing, repulsive in their savage intolerance, colourless, and presumptuous. I feel for them the same sort of distaste that Gibbon experienced for the early Christian ascetics. Herzen commends himself to my sympathies primarily by the complexity of his relations with the opposite sex, and by contrast with what [*rest of letter missing*]

<sup>129</sup> Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution* (London, 1960; New York, 1966), with an introduction by IB, reprinted in RT as 'Russian Populism'.

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TO MICHAEL MORAN<sup>130</sup>

19 September 1966

Headington House

Dear Mr Moran,

First of all I must thank you for your kind remarks about my lectures; I delivered them with great nervousness, and am glad that you liked them.

I read your piece on Coleridge with the greatest interest; I had to read it rather rapidly, but I do want to make a few comments on it if I may. Firstly, let me say that it seems to me to be one of the most perceptive pieces on Coleridge that I have ever read in English. No doubt Richards is very interesting too, and the occasional pieces by Humphrey House, but, in general, people who have written about Coleridge have either not had any philosophical insight, or not known the degree of his indebtedness to the Germans.

I wonder if you know a book by Lovejoy – the last that he ever wrote – whose name I cannot remember.<sup>131</sup> It mainly deals with Schelling, to whom he is of course not very sympathetic, but whom he treats with great scruple and fairness; he gives evidence of whole pages of Schelling copied out consciously or unconsciously by Coleridge. Indeed I think there is literally nothing original in Coleridge's basic views; what is original is the application – I think this is also your view – to a theory of poetry or art in general, in the particular way that he made it, and the 'infusion' of the personality of Coleridge himself – the quality of his own vivid self-expression and the authenticity and first-handedness of the whole

<sup>130</sup> (John) Michael Patrick Moran (1935–2016), assistant lecturer in philosophy, Keele, 1960–2; lecturer in philosophy and intellectual history, Sussex (where IB attended some of his lectures), 1962–88, professorial fellow, Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus, 1989–93; academic adviser to Rauf Denktaş, President, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, 1991–2000.

<sup>131</sup> Berlin is referring to Arthur O. Lovejoy's *The Reason, the Understanding, and Time* (Baltimore, 1961).

thing, which is very different from some of the German theorists. But idea for idea, this can all, I think, be found more or less literally both in Schlegel and Schelling. ‘The Great I Am’ and the Primary Imagination, in different terms, are all there. Lovejoy stresses the importance of Jacobi, now almost utterly forgotten, but in his day, according to Lovejoy, more famous than anyone other than Kant. Certainly his theories of the intuition correspond almost precisely to certain strains in Coleridge. It is the Anglican parts, or, generally, the more Christian elements in Coleridge (although there are, of course, analogues among the Germans), that often are, it seems to me, fairly original; and you are quite right to emphasise all that, and certainly the notion of the clerisy – a kind of Saint-Simonism, of a very English sort, which is peculiar and unique.

The thing I was going to emphasise particularly, however, is this: should you not perhaps go a little more into the whole division of reason versus understanding – what you quite rightly call the laudatory as opposed to the pejorative names for the two ‘faculties’? I do not know where this begins, but from the beginning of roughly the second third of the eighteenth century the Germans begin to distinguish two faculties or methods or approaches or casts of mind – one analytic, scientific, tending towards the division of nature and everything else into uniform, artificial units, or pulverizing, deathly – bad; the other synthetic, creative, intuitive, organic, full of insight, delving into the essence of things, etc. etc. – good. This is certainly not Kant’s division of reason and understanding; but it is there in the Schlegels, in Schelling, in Fichte, in Hegel, in Maistre, and in a perverted form entered into a good deal of Nazi patter; ‘analytic’ as a term of abuse – as indeed it is more or less also used by Burke – with all its aesthetic, ethical, political and theological implications, was certainly an important phase of European thought. French Catholic reactionaries by 1815 are full of it. Bergson is only the most eloquent, though not the clearest, expositor of it. I do not know of anyone else who, in English, has stated this so plainly. The difference between secondary imagination and fancy revolves

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around this, and so does every anti-positivist doctrine since that day.

I am off to America now for four months; but at the end of that, when I am back in England in January, I should greatly like it if we could meet and discuss these matters. For I know few people who are interested in these matters, and am always glad to meet anyone who is; especially as you have shown such extraordinary insight and, if I may say so, knowledge and imaginative understanding in this matter.

Yours sincerely,  
Isaiah Berlin

TO GEORGE KENNAN

30 October 1966 [*manuscript*]

Hotel Blackstone, 50 E 58th Street, New York

Dear George

How are you? I do hope, entirely well: it is very very nice & (very characteristic, if I may say so) to write to me as you have. I'd love to see you anywhere anywhen, as you know. I *like* New York (odd: but, I fear, true) but I loved Princeton to: & was very happy there. I cannot come on Jan 31<sup>st</sup>, for I shall, by then, be back in Oxford (we leave on Jan 10 approx.) But shd love to come on Dec. 9 at 12: thank you ever so much. I am sorry not to hear about Swift: the last commemoration of him I attended was in Moscow: in 1945: 200 years after his death: the speech was by Zaslavsky: it attacked the British Empire: were you there? I remember it *vividly*.

yrs

Isaiah

§ TO ROBERT SILVERS

26 June 1967

Headington House

Dear Bob,

Here is quite a decent piece by old Talmon, with most of which I agree. I enjoyed I. F. Stone's piece very much.<sup>132</sup> I agreed with that too – perhaps he somewhat underplayed Nasser's addiction to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, which he did after all reprint in something like a million copies, and the work done by all those Nazis in Egypt – one might say that Arabs cannot be blamed for using every anti-Jewish weapon that they can find, given their state of mind, but the facts ought perhaps not to be concealed.<sup>133</sup> Of course Stone is right, and the only hope for the Jews is Levantisation, and not as an outpost of Western values, culture etc., which anyway only highly Westernised Jews, German, English, American etc. (not Russian or Polish) want them to be, and which they certainly will not be, and have no business to be. Edmund Wilson<sup>134</sup> in all this, conversing with Agnon,<sup>135</sup> must have been too enchanting and characteristic. As for the Jewish sociologists in New York, blowing out their chests and glorying in the fighting men of Israel, I can well imagine that this would irritate you or anyone else; the same persons did exactly the same with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade<sup>136</sup> in Spain, or indeed any other uniform, whether Communist, National, American or Zionist, which produced fairy-story effects – transformed their rags into shining armour and healed their wounds, and made the flesh seem whole.

<sup>132</sup> Isidor Feinstein ('Izzy') Stone (1907–89), left-wing US journalist and author.

<sup>133</sup> Gamel Abdel Nasser (1918–70), second president of Egypt 1954–70.

<sup>134</sup> Edmund Wilson (1895–1972), one of America's leading literary critics during the mid twentieth century, and a regular contributor to the NYRB.

<sup>135</sup> Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888–1970), leading Israeli writer, awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1966.

<sup>136</sup> During 1937, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade fought for the Spanish Republic against Franco's forces in the Spanish Civil War.

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It may be a vulgar and maddening phenomenon, but this is how slaves and liberated slaves behave, and it is in the end not a reason for not liberating them. It is what the whole ancient world felt about the Japanese victories in 1905,<sup>137</sup> and what poor old Deutscher<sup>138</sup> and many like him felt about Trotsky on his white horse and military uniform. Not to feel superior to this is not possible for you or me, and I expect I shall have to explain it patiently all to Stephen.<sup>139</sup> Stuart<sup>140</sup> will need no explanations. The really extraordinary phenomenon is France, with de Gaulle and the Communists on one side, Sartre on the other. Extraordinary.

Are you really not coming here? My desire to go to Russia in September is ebbing. Once in Italy I know I shan't move, but don't tell the Lowells<sup>141</sup> just yet (perhaps). I think perhaps this is the moment to go – the forces of darkness are a little bit too much in the ascendant; Lord Snow<sup>142</sup> and Sholokhov<sup>143</sup> are on top, and the fate of the persecuted Jewish intellectuals is too painful. One cannot meet them, and if one does it will do them no good, and cause them to be denounced, however innocent their behaviour. Perhaps next year would be better. Do come here in July!

Yours,  
Isaiah

<sup>137</sup> The Russo-Japanese War, 1904–5, led to a series of humiliating defeats for the Russians and contributed to the 1905 Russian Revolution.

<sup>138</sup> Isaac Deutscher (1907–67), a Polish Marxist journalist and historian, and Berlin had an acrimonious relationship, chronicled by David Caute in *Isaac and Isaiah: The Covert Punishment of a Cold War Heretic* (2013).

<sup>139</sup> Stephen Spender (1909–95), Kt 1983, English poet, novelist and essayist, was a close friend of IB for many years.

<sup>140</sup> Stuart Hampshire (1914–2004), Kt 1979, leading Oxford philosopher, close friend of IB since the 1930s.

<sup>141</sup> Robert Lowell (1917–77), one of the leading American poets of the post-war period and a key figure in the founding of the NYRB, was married to Elizabeth Hardwick (1916–2007), a writer and regular contributor to the journal.

<sup>142</sup> Charles Percy Snow (1905–80), Baron Snow 1964, British novelist and scientist whose Rede Lecture in 1959 initiated the “Two Cultures’ controversy.

<sup>143</sup> Mikhail Aleksandrovich Sholokhov (1905–84), Soviet novelist and winner of the 1965 Nobel Prize in Literature.

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TO ROBERT SILVERS

17 July 1967

Wolfson College

⟨What a screed! & on this writing paper! don't read all this stuff until you have absolutely *nothing* else to do. Thank you for you Talmoniana & Tuchmaniana. Neither is your cup of tea (& mine only out of conviction, not personal passion).⟩

Dear Bob,

I have, as Richard will doubtless have told you, had a conversation with him about the Middle East. He is very firm in his views and, given a fez or tarbush, would be a worthy representative of the Syrian government, far more eloquent and convincing than anyone they have at present seen at the United Nations, doing rather better than Mr George ⟨Tomeh?⟩<sup>144</sup> – I have forgotten his surname – who does their business for them.

In the meanwhile I am engaged in a correspondence with Arnold Toynbee which I am trying to shunt off on to Talmon. I sent Philip Toynbee the very same piece I and Mrs Tuchman sent to you. Toynbee – the old man, I mean – loved it (he came to stay with his son and read it there), and after years of embarrassed silence so far as I am concerned (he used to know me quite well at one time, and used to ask me to collaborate with him towards the end of the war, which I used courteously to decline: I really find him in some ways quite unbearable) broke his silence and sent me a copy of his letter to Talmon. A correspondence will now ensue between them which will make quite a decent-sized volume one day; like Gide and Claudel letters, these will doubtless be of interest to scholars. He tried to engage me in a similar enterprise – Arnold Toynbee, I mean – but I am not prepared to play. I would if I had more respect for him: he is a very gifted and in some ways even

<sup>144</sup> He is right. George Joseph Tomeh (1922–2004) was Permanent Representative (Ambassador) to the UN of the Syrian Arab Republic.

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rather nice man: but he is madly vain, steeped in medieval values, hates the modern world, industrialism, colonialism, imperialism, rationalism, and therefore Communists, atheists, Jews, positivists, Trevor-Roper etc., and really holds a T. S. Eliot kind of outlook, plus an element of breast beating about the fearful iniquities of the West versus the East, and therefore a kind of Vichysois, slightly George-Kennan-like, belief that anything the East does is natural revenge for the indignities and cruelties of the West, which the West must take patiently and as a deserved punishment for its betrayal of the spirit. All this I find immensely distasteful, although I think that he is an excellent writer, with a genuinely large horizon, and I have a certain respect for anyone with that kind of sweep who doesn't try and hide himself in minute scholarship from the great issues of the past and present. That, I suppose, is why, for example, the admirable Momigliano has some respect for him – Momigliano who is the most left-wing of our cosmic historians and in the matter of the Middle East passionately and uncompromisingly anti-imperialist and pro-Israel. Of course all that you say about refugees is right. Stuart assures me that Dayan, when he said he was not interested in refugees, did not mean that they were inconvenient cattle, to be disposed of somehow, and not human beings. Whatever he may have meant, the Israelis have an obligation in this respect, and if they behave badly, this has to be said. I replied to Toynbee's letter in manuscript and kept no copy and I have received a huge screed in manuscript from him, full of compliments, which embarrassed me. He is mainly concerned about the Jews not building the Temple in the sacred area and destroying the mosque of Omar and the mosque of Aksa in the process, which he rightly supposes would not be well received by the world at large and might indeed excite some anti-Jewish feeling. He does not think that the danger of this great act of vandalism is immediate, but he thinks that fanatics etc. might soon start working towards that end and wishes to record his dissent. If that were the only danger facing the Israelis they would be well off indeed. I have never heard anyone suggest that the Temple might be re-erected; indeed I have an idea that one has to wait for the Messiah for that

to happen; and unless Toynbee offers himself in that role – the marks of the Messiah as you know are known to Edmund Wilson alone – we are not in grave danger.

At the same time I feel that Israel is being surveyed (e.g. by you) too critically: (a) on the old Marxist ground of being subjectively innocent but objectively a block to progress, (b) on [the basis of] what might be called a kind of Marxist anti-nationalist recidivity to which corresponds liberal anti-Marxist recidivity. Let me explain what I mean.

⟨1) This is simple enough: E. H. Carr, Deutscher etc: the Africans and Asians are struggling towards the light. Many ugly & cruel things are bound to occur in the course of this, whether owing to Western crimes or not. These are horrid bubbles on the wave of the (desirable and inevitable, but anyway desirable,) future (see Mrs Lindbergh on the Wave of the F.). Anything that obstructs this is to be resisted. Israel is a Western protuberance (whatever its virtues & however “subjectively” decent its aspirations) because it is technologically advanced in the midst of backwardness, therefore inevitably the last (we hope) thrust of neo-colonialism or imperialism. To defend it is to retard progress. Arab nationalism is an inevitable, if regrettable, concomitant & even stimulus to Arab social emancipation. Like the Menshevik Georgian Republic it is objectively counter-revolutionary. It must go. Richard is not remote from all this.

I hope this is not a caricature. I really don’t think it is. The point is that Arab nationalism is a progressive force: or at least a natural protest against humiliation & injustice. Israeli nationalism is reactionary because at best it is culturally tied to Western capitalism & white hegemony. Kibbutzim are a petty agrarian escapist utopia: some sort of petit Trianon – German musicologists or Russian dentists as farmers: Marie Antoinette as a milkmaid, pathetic, unreal, false consciousness etc.

Sartre disagrees: but tougher leftists are consistent. The Jews are a caricature of their own persecutors: & must perish, at least politically, with them. So, I conjecture, the internationalists of, say,

The Tribune who look on troubled Jewish Communists and chauvinists in Marxist clothing.

2. More complicated. And interests me far more. I feel this: that most problems are judged in terms of some explicit or implicit ideology or “position” or absence of position (e.g. R. Aron: Tocqueville: acute but not at home in *any* firm outlook: incapable & unwilling to influence action or even ideas in any definite direction). Now then: let us say one begins as a Marxist: then one condemns petty nationalisms: even the Jewish Bund (cf Plekhanov’s “Zionists who are afraid of sea-sickness”. Quite apt & funny). Hence anti-Zionism of an acute & violent sort (e.g. Meyer S[chapiro] in the twenties & thirties: & all those now on the Ford Foundation, Congress of C[ultural] Freedom, Encounter, C.I.A. etc.): but then what about Kibbutzim? how can one deny their social and moral value? that, plus Jews as victims of Germans, British, State Dept., etc. – Palestinian settlers as honest anti-capitalists, among the insulted, the oppressed – on the correct side of the dividing line? There follows a less or more reluctant, slightly grudging concession that maybe *these* are, more or less, O.K.: Meyer delivers lectures in Jerusalem: left wing Jewish academics from England perform a Hegira: when they return they cannot curse: all but Deutscher who does: & so in a slightly bemused way, like Sartre & Mme de Beauvoir, they bless. *But*: as soon as cloven hooves appear – the Israelis misbehave about something, refugees or sabre-rattling, the old Marx asserts himself in the semi-converts: & they speak more fiercely about Israeli misdeeds than they would about Iraklis or Egyptians who are victims of imperialism & whose vices must be allowed for accordingly. *Similarly*: if one starts from an anti communist position (as say, I do) the opposite happens: Soviet oppression is trampling on men: the fanatical pattern itself is mad & destructive & degrading. Ah but what about Yugoslavia? Burma? Third World? Well yes, perhaps, given the ancien régime, etc. these are improvements. But as soon as Djilas goes to gaol, or Gomulka threatens the Jews, one snaps back to “it *is* a horrible system all the same” – one does not receive each piece of news about communist enormities, trials, tortures, Russo-German pacts

etc. with agonized reluctance – but on the contrary, as only too likely to occur, given the original denial of basic human interests or ideals on which the whole awful thing was built.

This works both ways: & so I observe ‘I told you so’ reactions – beyond their shortcomings – against the Israelis by the Marxists or para Marxists: & ditto against communists, however mild, revisionist, truly egalitarian by anti-Marxists anxious to pounce on deficiencies & inevitably pulled back to the original ideological framework in which they feel, in the end, most at home. I have an idea that liberals who praise Tito or left wing socialists who praise Israel do so as a conscious concession, to be withdrawn at the slightest sign of misbehaviour: & even when they go much further & dilute their liberalism or socialism with other ingredients & become mild & syncretist, there *is* a tendency to recidivity: to hark back to the old orthodoxy: Jews in arms, defeating, dominating, perhaps maltreating natives – blacks, browns, etc. revives recollections of imperialists shooting down helpless aborigines: Tito cracking down on Mihailov, Nasser employing real Nazis & ex-S.S. men revives militant liberalism & loathing of flash dictators. This is in part what the poor Israelis (as I see them) will pay for in New York: & among the old pro-Arab sentimental British district commissioners & Freya Starks & Nuttings: not the size of their actual misdeeds (measured in terms of ordinary standards such as wd apply to neutrals, about whom there is no special feeling – say about Burmese or Brazilians) but the extent to which they deviate from some stereotype originally directed against their establishment, this will determine degrees of indignation. So it seems to me. They will be judged by ideal standards: the others by easy going “real” ones. No one is as suspicious of Jews as Jews: no one will make such efforts to escape suspicion of undue bias. All this being said: Talmon & Mrs Tuchman are not Mazzini & Harriet Beecher Stowe: & can be left to what Nabokov calls Hourani Polanyi Masani.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Albert Hourani (F 292/6), probably Michael Polanyi, possibly Minocher Masani.

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Why don't you come to Via Gave, Paraggi, Santa Margherita Ligure? S.M. 88441? to see Stuart & Prof. Hart – the provincial Englishman as Cal L[owell] called him? & despite Nabokov's now real distaste for U.S.S.R – he evidently hated being there – if you & Cal go, let me know in time: if this doesn't work, I may go to Israel (whither Nicolas *pants* to go: *his* Russia is *there*) to which I've stoutly refused to go thus far: I don't like joining in celebrations even if they are in respectable taste: I *would* go if there was a job to do: but at present I shall leave that to Weidenfeld who is their chief factotum here: for once out of sincere feeling: the dozen contracts for books are really only a by-product: his Zionism is his most estimable & disinterested human quality. I wonder what Mr Payson<sup>146</sup> thinks.

Love to Richard & to the Lowells: I have just had a word with Lowenthal who is pro-Lasky & poured scorn on poor Stephen: I do think there is a dearth of *some* human quality in *real* communists (not those briefly in the thirties): whether current or ex- – don't you! there *is* a suicide of some sort somewhere: & they avenge themselves on the world forever after: even dear N. O. Brown

Do come to Italy.

yrs

Isaiah>

*In 1967 Graham Greene proposed in a circular letter to all honorary members of the American Academy–Institute of Arts and Letters,<sup>147</sup> of whom IB was one, that they resign collectively over the institution's failure publicly to oppose the Vietnam War.*

<sup>146</sup> Charles Shipman Payson (1898–1985), businessman and lawyer in NYC, father of Weidenfeld's 3rd wife, Sandra Payson.

<sup>147</sup> The American Academy of Arts and the National Institute of Arts and Letters were sister institutions (merged in 1976 as the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters), with foreigners as honorary members.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

TO GRAHAM GREENE

18 September 1967

Headington House

Dear Greene,

I am very sorry to have received your letter only now in Oxford, from which unfortunately it was not forwarded to me in Italy. I am not sure that my views on the war in Vietnam altogether coincide with yours, but at any rate I wish it would stop at once, immediately, everywhere, without victories. I have gone on record on these issues in language as clear and forcible as I can make it.<sup>148</sup>

But the proposal in your letter concerns only the American Academy–Institute of Arts and Letters. All the members of it that I know – American members, I mean – are bitterly against the war in Vietnam and [I] certainly do not conceal my views; and any [sc. at a] meeting of it that I attended – last year – this was very clear indeed. Robert Lowell, George Kennan, Meyer Schapiro are only a few of these: those who talked that day were deeply committed and articulate in this matter. I don't think that Nevins's<sup>149</sup> exposition means anything much or has any relation [to reality] now. In the City University of New York, in which I worked, the professors and lecturers continually organised protest meetings, marches etc. – indeed the mood in academic circles, at any rate on the East Coast, was to the left of, say, Walter Lippmann.

In these circumstances I cannot see what is to be gained, except a gratuitous insult to decent persons, if one demonstratively resigns from a body whose general attitude is morally sympathetic and

<sup>148</sup> In his contribution to Cecil Woolf and John Bagguley (eds), *Authors take Sides on Vietnam* (New York, 1967: Simon and Schuster), 20–1; repr. as 'Taking Sides on Vietnam' at B 601–2.

<sup>149</sup> The historian and journalist (Joseph) Allan Nevins (1890–1971). Greene's circular letter quoted Nevins's 1966 presidential address to the Academy, which stated that 'It is not a proper function of the Academy and Institute to concern themselves with [...] political events.' Elsewhere Nevins made clear his support for the Vietnam War as a necessary element in the fight against Communism.

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politically absolutely decent. You may disagree with me and think it nevertheless right to resign; I should understand that and respect it. If I do not accept your invitation, it is not either because I believe in continuing the Vietnam war (although I would not know how it is to be stopped immediately, save by measures which might lead to massacre in South Vietnam, which seems to me no better than what is going on now), still less because I believe in the ivory tower. I do not propose to follow your method of action, but I warmly applaud your motive in writing: what the Americans are doing is stupid & wrong.

Yours sincerely,  
Isaiah Berlin

*In reply Greene wrote that as a result of IB's letter he and Herbert Read had delayed the letter of resignation until an attempt had been made to secure a statement from the Academy. He also declared himself less pessimistic than IB about the prospects of ending the war. Neither the statement nor the mass resignation was forthcoming, and on 19 May 1970 Greene resigned in a personal protest.<sup>150</sup>*

<sup>150</sup> Georgetown University, Graham Greene Papers 2, Box 1, Folder 1. *The Times*, 27 May 1967, 27f. Norman Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene, Volume Three: 1955–1991* (New York etc., 2004), 561–2.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975



New York's Dy 1868 פלוני נאות בדגן באר-שבע  
**THE BEERSHEBA DESERT INN**  
 THE MOST MODERN AND EXOTIC HOTEL IN ISRAEL  
 120 AIR-CONDITIONED SUITABLE ROOMS AND SUITES, A DESERT OASIS,  
 SWIMMING POOLS, TENNIS COURTS, SPORTS  
 HORSE, CAMEL AND DONKEY RIDES

Alice reads how she lives the desert  
 reservation is remote  
 Talmon to coffee in  
 9 pm I  
 Desert Inn: Beersheba  
 Prof. Talmon

0.40 STRAITS OF TIRAN  
 ISRAEL ישראל

I cannot write you his ruler  
 display postcard. Jerusalem is marvellous  
 beautiful; sunny & grand & noble,  
 after being a kid of Biedermeier-  
 Schwab, Mo Finlay, + New Sch. of Paris R.  
 which I quite liked, but still not much (בדיוק).  
 Political life out of the world: remote  
 from the opinions, mankind, still preoccupies  
 anxious, not at all jubilant or blown out  
 with the promise or expansionist, but still  
 warlike & <sup>nationalist, localist,</sup> clearing sun in local politics,  
 -not of the same race as American tourists  
 who find her easy; divided between those who  
 have spent to work the whole lot. The middle, as the  
 to the soldiers. These from English speaking countries are the best.

Berlin  
 Robert Silvers Eye  
 c/o  
 New York Review of Books  
 250 West 52nd St  
 New York City  
 N.Y.  
 U.S.A.

The stamp and some of IB's deletions obscure parts of the original conclusion of the PS: 'De[sert Inn] & whatever is remotest [from Prof.] Talmon & coffee [...] at 9 pm. I f[...] Dep[...]'

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§ TO ROBERT SILVERS

New Year's Day 1968

The Beersheba Desert Inn

I cannot resist sending you this rather disloyal postcard. Jerusalem is marvellously beautiful: suddenly very grand and noble, after being a kind of Berlinian Charlottenburg – Gombriches,<sup>151</sup> Mo Finlays,<sup>152</sup> + New. Sch. of Social R.<sup>153</sup> – which I quite liked, but Stephen wouldn't (& didn't). Politically they live out of the world: remote from the opinions of mankind, self preoccupied, anxious, not at all jubilant or blown out with their prowess or expansionist, but totally provincial, localized, & sunk in local politics – not of the same race as American tourists who find them uncanny; divided between those who are ready to become Sparta & those who abhor this. The nicest are the students & the soldiers. Those from English speaking countries are the worst.

I.B.

Aline sends love. She likes the Desert Inn: & whatever is farthest from Prof. Talmon.

<sup>151</sup> Ernst Hans Josef Gombrich (1909–2001), Kt 1972, Jewish refugee from Vienna, one of the best-known art historians in post-war Britain, was married to Ilse Heller (1910–2006), Czech pianist.

<sup>152</sup> Moses Finley (*sic*) (1912–86), US-born ancient historian, was married to Mary (née Moscowitz) (1907–86), a schoolteacher.

<sup>153</sup> The New School for Social Research was founded in New York in 1919 and became a home for many well-known refugees from European Fascism in the 1930s, including Hannah Arendt and Erich Fromm.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

TO JEAN FLOUD<sup>154</sup>

Postmark 19 June 1968 [*manuscript*]

[Albany, London]

Dearest Jean,

This morning<sup>155</sup> The British Academy Committee met on the Skidelsky<sup>156</sup> case: Lionel Robbins said ‘But he *will* improve the image of Mosley.<sup>157</sup> Mosley is to me incarnate evil. If he came into the room I shd walk out at once. I cannot vote for this.[?] However we voted: & gave it him: Herbert delivered a noble liberal oration:

<sup>154</sup> Jean Esther Floud (1915–2013), née McDonald, educationalist, sociologist and college head; taught sociology at the University of London (LSE and Institute of Education) 1947–62; Official Fellow of Nuffield 1963–72; Commission of Inquiry into Oxford University (Franks Commission) 1964–6; later (1972–83) Principal, Newnham, Cambridge. She married, 1938, the civil servant Peter Floud (1911–60), who was alleged to have had connections with the Oxford spy ring to which Jenifer Hart had belonged. Her friend Robert Skidelsky described her in an obituary as ‘one of Britain’s leading educational sociologists’, her career ‘a triumph of brains, charm and presence over class and gender prejudice’ (*Guardian*, 5 April 2013, 38). JF got to know IB through her work on the Franks Commission, had many intellectual interests in common with him, and became one of his most intimate friends. This letter was written to her in New York.

<sup>155</sup> 19 June.

<sup>156</sup> Robert Jacob Alexander Skidelsky (b. 1939), later (1991) life peer; historian; Research Fellow, Nuffield, 1965–8, British Academy 1968–70; later (1970–6) associate professor of history, Johns Hopkins. Skidelsky had applied for financial assistance from the Thank-Offering to Britain Fund in order to pursue his biographical research into the life of the British Fascist leader Oswald Mosley. The fund’s origins (B 228/2) made Skidelsky’s choice of research topic a sensitive one, and caused serious problems when his biography of Mosley was published in 1975 (see supplement to A). The Fund was administered by the British Academy, and IB was one of its patrons with Lionel Robbins, Ernst Chain and Hans Krebs. JF argued strongly against Skidelsky’s application, but never raised the issue with him directly, and their close friendship remained undisturbed.

<sup>157</sup> Oswald Ernald Mosley (1896–1980), sixth baronet; Fascist politician; founder of the anti-Semitic British Union of Fascists 1932; interned during the Second World War as a security risk.

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about the truth & no prejudice about subjects etc. The two representatives of the German Jewish donors sat there like timid rabbits, not daring to intervene in a debate between the great (Robbins) and good(?) and wise (Herbert & Wheare). They were a little shocked by Herbert's refusal to consider their feelings to which I, coward as I am, nevertheless finally gave voice: & said I wd nevertheless vote for the award: but tell Skidelsky that he was a monster of insensitiveness not to show any sign, in the interview, of the peculiarity of the application. He promised in the course of the interview to give details of Lord Nuffield's support of Mosley: but he *will* exaggerate his, M's, brilliance, intelligence, public spirit in the 1930ies: those who knew him in his socialist phase thought him personally odious: Keynes didn't but ... I don't wish to lecture you on M. [...]

I. [...]

TO THE EDITORS OF THE *NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS*

Published 20 June 1968

[Headington House]

Mr Miller's<sup>158</sup> attempted correction of my facts is either irrelevant or mistaken. The two circles of which he speaks, and the very cool relationship between them in the early 1830s, is, perhaps, the most familiar of all pieces of knowledge in the field of nineteenth-century Russian history of ideas. There is not a textbook, however elementary, Soviet and non-Soviet, which does not dwell on this celebrated fact. But it has no bearing upon my description of Herzen towards the end of the 1830s and beginning of the next decade. Mr Miller (relying I fear on some popular exposition) says that Herzen returned to Moscow only in 1842: but this is not the case. He was, it is true, fully pardoned only in 1842, but he was allowed to live in Vladimir by 1838, from which he paid several clandestine visits to Moscow, and he returned to Moscow more or

<sup>158</sup> Martin A. Miller, to whose letter in the same issue IB is replying.

less openly in late summer of 1839. In December he went to St Petersburg and met Belinsky before the year was out; a correspondence between them began almost at once; Belinsky's notorious 'reconciliation with reality' caused a rift, ended only later in 1840. From then on there is an intimate relationship between them which remains uninterrupted despite Herzen's exile to Novgorod in 1841. By 1843 Granovsky, Turgenev and Belinsky all saw a good deal of each other: they all stayed together in Herzen's house in the country. It was during this time that the most passionate disputes about Hegel, Schiller, Schelling etc. occurred; it was the period of Granovsky's famous Moscow lectures, which marked the first great split between the Slavophiles and the 'Westerners'. It was this group of writers of which Herzen was one of the leaders. According to Strakhov, an accurate reporter of Russian ideas, Herzen's philosophical ascendancy was recognised at this time by Bakunin, Belinsky and Granovsky. Mr Miller, who thinks that Herzen remained in exile until 1842, naturally assumes that he could not have met Bakunin on his return, since Bakunin emigrated in 1840. I do not know whether Mr Miller reads Russian. If not, Mr E. H. Carr's excellent biography of Bakunin (pp. 79–89) could inform him that Herzen was immensely impressed by Bakunin, whom he met sometime in 1839–40, and that, whatever Herzen's opinion of Bakunin's moral character, the personal bonds between them were lifelong. Indeed, it was Herzen alone who made it possible for Bakunin to go to Germany in 1840, by lending him a sufficient sum of money; and it was Herzen who saw him off at St Petersburg, and thereafter followed his writings and career in the West with rapt attention, as his letters testify. These were the companions of Herzen's intellectually formative years, the society in which the Russian intelligentsia was born, as Mr Miller could learn if he turned to the classical work on this subject, Annenkov's *A Remarkable Decade*. The fact that Bakunin physically left it, although he remained in correspondence with its members, is neither here nor there.

There is, of course, no reason why anyone but specialists should take any interest in the identity of Herzen's intimate friends during

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these years: of these men, with of course Ogarev;<sup>159</sup> while the names of earlier friends (the ‘circle’ before 1834), e.g. Sazonov, Pocheka, Noskov, fade out of Herzen’s letters. But since Mr Miller challenges my thesis, I am bound to restate these facts. The fact that Belinsky or Katkov (whose family were old friends of Herzen’s parents) lived in Petersburg, while Granovsky and Herzen lived in Moscow, did not prevent them from living an intense common intellectual life, sustained by correspondence and frequent visits. It is for these friends that the letters and articles from Paris after 1847 were written. These are ‘the men of the forties’ to whom, all his life, Herzen was conscious of belonging. So much for Mr Miller’s ‘glaring factual error’. I do not wish to question Mr Miller’s good faith: he clearly thinks he is exposing a terrible howler. The facts, however, are what they are. Mr Miller’s apparent ignorance of them does not alter them.

[Isaiah Berlin]

\*TO JEAN FLOUD

5 July 1968 [*manuscript*]

Wolfson

Dear Jean:

[...] when you are moved by indignation you write particularly well: it is a marvellous and just indictment: and shd be read by Herbert and raise issues of principle and moral taste without which (last) morality cannot occur (there, the sentence ends grammatically after all).

I did vote for giving S. the money: although Herbert said he could not see, given my stated view, why I did. Lionel Robbins started off by saying that to him Mosley was the incarnation of evil: that if he entered a room, he, Lionel, wd leave it at once. Sayers<sup>160</sup> did not say this: but cast doubts on the importance of the subject.

<sup>159</sup> This passage appears to be garbled.

<sup>160</sup> Richard Sidney Sayers (1908–89), Cassel Professor of Economics, London, 1947–68.

Wheare (chairman) said nothing. Herbert spoke eloquently to the effect that a true and competent account of Fascism was a service not only to the truth but to those who wished to understand & avoid the evils in question. The two chief promoters of the fund were there. One remained silent but voted with the other who spoke forcibly in favour of S. (who in the interview said he *would* write about antisemitism, Lord Nuffield's<sup>161</sup> contributions to the movement, etc.) on the ground that the victims cd only gain by a careful analysis: a warning that even able, interesting, sincere men etc. cd cause such disasters & become so vicious. After this I did, plucking up all my tiny stock of courage, I did say that it *was* embarrassing that Mosley *would* emerge in a better light than that in which we liked to think of him: that there was a problem: Lionel said he was impressed by Herbert's cogent arguments, & wd not oppose; Sayers too: I voted in favour because – given the donors' views – I could not see how we cd defend refusing S. given that we thought (a) that he was good enough (b) that the dangers of fascism in England were not such that the truth shd be suppressed pro tem: (c) that where the case is dubious, it was best to lean towards no censorship. But I remained guilt ridden (not difficult for me) & attacked Herbert with some acerbity when we had lunch in a Wimpy later. If you had been there & spoken as you wrote, you wd have won I think, even against dear (*dear?*) Herbert. Stuart & Wollheim think we cd not but have done as we did. [...]

I wrote to Skidelsky before receiving your hot words & summoned him: I told the committee I would: & tell him about the moral reservations which all of us had in very varying degrees. I wonder if he will come: I warned him that I wd moralize. I shall tell him that he must atone for his moral obtuseness by going

<sup>161</sup> William Richard Morris (1877–1963), 1st Viscount Nuffield 1938; pioneer British motor manufacturer, Chairman of Morris Motors Ltd 1919–52; a major philanthropist, founder of Nuffield College, Oxford; in 1930, during the Depression, he was persuaded by Oswald Mosley to give substantial financial support to help found Mosley's New Party, in the belief that it would reinvigorate the economy and society; but as Mosley's Fascism became plainer, Morris withdrew his backing.

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beyond the course which John P[lamenatz], in his testimonial (or silly Max B. in his) promised he would do. Aline does I think agree with you. So, of course, do I. Yet I distrust my feelings: & wd lean towards abstract liberalism (which lets in thugs?) so long as I can persuade myself that there is no real danger. I wd do the same, I suppose, for some rabidly antisemitic anti-Zionist if I thought he had something true & important to say. Thus do we crumble & Weimar fall: but I don't think it is yet time to line up & resist the enemy. I did do my best to persuade the German Jews *not* to call it "Thank You" Fund: but the 1938 Fund: they are refugees from the Kristallnacht. In the end it was called Thank Offering to Britain Fund[:] idiotic but a tiny bit better, I suppose. I negotiated the whole thing & so feel particularly upset – & promised to deliver the Thank Off. Lecture in 1970:<sup>162</sup> I cd do it on Skidelsky's book I suppose & try to expose its moral inadequacies: odd taste *that* would be in. Still. [...]

I. [...]

\*TO JEAN FLOUD

7 July 1968 [*manuscript*]

[Postmark Oxford]

Dear J.

[...] I read Herbert & Jenifer bits of your Skidelsky indictment: Herbert is genuinely deaf to the nuances of the situation: Jenifer on the whole agreed with you: so did Diana Trilling: Lionel, I thought, rather less. I saw no harm in telling them of what you, Aline, Bob, I, Herbert, etc. felt about this imbroglio. To-morrow I see Skidelsky: I cannot *order* or even urge him to write this rather than that kind of book: but I can preach to him about what Mosley means: why I cd not be in a room with him. [...]

<sup>162</sup> He didn't.

I am about to write to Herbert officially about senior/junior Oxford rapport:<sup>163</sup> nothing about discipline: but something about listening to undergraduate criticism of curricula: and about the reasonableness of their resistance to the idea that they should be treated as recruits for technological forces: Trotsky's labour battalions: the Left is deeply divided on this: the ideal of full developed human beings seems vaguely classical, reactionary, Tory to some: or rather it is theoretically accepted but only after the horrible wars are over: when the enemy has been routed: after the corridor of the dictatorship of the good: when, we all know, it will be too late. *Anti-amateurism can take hideously technocratic forms: the Fulton Report is at once feeble & anti-humane: the troglodyte Hunt who wrote it lives in a Chesterish sort of cavern. Reading Russian radicals in the sixties – who also protest against polite class ridden culture – & encourage revolt & outrageous behaviour & explosion: in the simple belief (shared, I suppose, by Cohn Bendit etc.?) that once the "consumer" society is blown up rich full human lives – a world Kibbutz full of natural affection & natural justice, follows – is the old fairy tale: dragon slain: the heroes lose their hideous disguises & live happily for ever after. How does one *show* that this is naive & it all costs seas of blood not followed by the reign of universal love? This is what the miserable centrists, the contemptible moderates, the crypto-reactionary sceptical intellectuals have always agonized over. Popper, Hayek, are too dogmatic & too conceited & removed from the actual lives of the people they are prescribing for: & blind, complacent, &*

<sup>163</sup> In 1968 Herbert Hart chaired the University's Committee on Relations with Junior Members, a subject largely overlooked in the Franks Report of 1966, but which had become acutely important in the interim. Hart's report, published 1969 and duly implemented, proposed reform of the disciplinary system, and ways of involving students more in the running of the university; it contributed to the quelling of student protests that had, for the most part, already run their course. IB believed strongly that student opinion should be consulted more often, and listened to with greater attention. He did write to Hart, but not until 10 October.

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scholastic. Chomsky<sup>164</sup> is too irresponsibly utopian. Whom shd one follow? I long for leaders: I am a natural hero worshipper: I long for a flag: I should readily suppress truth, sign petitions supported by specious reasoning, attack old friends, behave like a partisan, if I found a cause or a leader I wholly believed in: perhaps I can only say this so confidently because I know I shall not find such a one: no feet to sit at [...]. I have seen Skidelsky:<sup>165</sup> he is clever & nice but understands nothing about people or movements. I have lectured him & told him you & I were both “worried”. [...]

I.

TO GEORGE KENNAN

9 December 1968 [*manuscript*]

As from Wolfson College Office, Oxford

Dear George

Let me first say how delighted I am that Oxford has acted in a proper – if obvious – fashion (it is in the Times to-day.)<sup>166</sup> in offering you a degree.<sup>167</sup> It almost makes up for their failure to do this for De Gaulle in 1946 when all the other great commanders were honoured – as Alexander I of Russia was in, I think, 1814 or 15. Nor is there anyone among your co-honorands of whom you need – or we need – feel embarrassed: no rich barbarians, no ephemeral politicians, no bad but famous poets etc. So it is all highly satisfactory. We much look forward to seeing you & Annalisa. We leave for New York – for my biennial stint there – in mid-February (till Mid-May) – when will you be giving the Chichele

<sup>164</sup> (Avram) Noam Chomsky (b. 1928), influential US linguist, philosopher, pioneer in psycholinguistics, and astringent political activist and commentator; joined the faculty of MIT in 1955, and has taught there ever since; John Locke Lecturer at Oxford 1969; a consistent and active left-wing critic of US foreign policy, adamantly opposed to the Vietnam War.

<sup>165</sup> i.e. on 8 July: a postscript?

<sup>166</sup> Not found.

<sup>167</sup> Hon. DCL, conferred on 25 June 1969.

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Lectures?<sup>168</sup> Before mid-February or after mid-May, I *hope*. I'm still waiting to get an ordered copy of your book about the students. (I thought your memoirs beautifully written – but you know that – & profoundly moving: nobody now writes about Russia now as you do. This is, if you'll forgive my saying this, a difficult and perhaps painful love affair – but this is what rubs the system & causes pearls to grow. To transmute one's inner life into works of art – stones cut into shapes for men to look at and be moved by, is given to how many? & how many men in public life?) I hope All Souls behaves itself: Oxford went through a mild turmoil – of which All Souls was the unjust target – but this is very small beer compared to the real catastrophes of Paris or Colombia or Berkeley or Rome. It is as if 1848–9 had *also* broken out in Copenhagen: owing to the forces of imitation: not the real thing. I expect it will be peaceful by the time you come. It will be very nice to see you – & talk to you.

Yrs

Isaiah.

\*TO ROBERT SILVERS

30 May 1969

[Headington House]

Dear Bob,

I am delighted that you have recovered and long to tell you all about Chomsky here. The reception is by no means uncritical although masses of students come. To his lecture on 'The Intellectual and Post-Industrial Society' fifteen hundred persons came in Oxford – I presided as competently as I could. It was very like an exposition in the middle 1930s, full of charm, lucidity, acrid ironies and with the most over-simplified kind of Marxism I ever heard on such an occasion. He really does think that United States foreign policy is *entirely* dictated by business interests – stated in a

<sup>168</sup> On 'The Marquis de Custine and the Russia of 1839'.

sophisticated form this could perhaps be made not too unpalatable; but in the form in which he gives it, it is exactly like one of the Gollancz Left Book Club pamphlets:<sup>169</sup> his voice, his manner, his charm, his singularly irresistible personality that hallows it all. I am about to have a long conversation with him about the Middle East. His views I am sure will be noble, simple and tranquil, like Winckelmann's<sup>170</sup> conception of classical art – but not related to verifiable empirical facts. I love him more than ever and spend time with him, but his grasp of empirical reality is not very strong. I beg you not to pass this on, but when he solemnly informed us at dinner that the reason for the recall of George Kennan by Dulles<sup>171</sup> was that he was too friendly to the Soviet Union – when in fact he had to return because he said that [the] Soviet regime was worse or as bad as the Nazis, at the airport in Berlin, as you recollect (a fact which Ch[omsky] seems absolutely astonished to hear) – this seemed to be not altogether untypical. Still I thought his lecture was an event. Mrs Floud did not; she liked him personally but thought that the content of his remarks reminded her of the crudest and most naive & simplified form of Marxism, which she had once followed uncritically (though, she says, never as blindly as C[homsky]) and had reacted against in due course. And indeed there is a curious mixture of subtlety and sophistication about theoretical matters, great moral charm and authority, extreme unrealism, dogmatic assurance (the philosophers here refuse to accept his doctrine, either linguistic or philosophical), sense of mission, purity of soul and almost a hatred of empirical reality (his views on the actual aspirations of Arabs, negroes, American liberals

<sup>169</sup> Publishing venture begun by Victor Gollancz in 1936 to counter the rise of Fascism: among its cheaply produced editions, aimed at working people, was George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London, 1937).

<sup>170</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68), German archaeologist and art historian, a pioneering figure in the development of art history as a discipline and in the understanding of Greek and Roman art.

<sup>171</sup> John Foster Dulles (1888–1959), lawyer and Republican statesman, Secretary of State under Eisenhower 1953–9, a strong advocate of the nuclear deterrent in the Cold War.

etc. are very very eccentric indeed. He is a moralist: but a terribly bad observer). If he had stuck to the proposition that intellectuals should always tell the truth, never play being politicians, never temporise or compromise, however utopian or unrealistic their ideas, that would be much better. As it is the boys love it – at least the radical ones – and everybody over twenty-seven is highly sceptical. [...]

Yours ever,  
Isaiah

Wheeler Bennett is looking forward to his article for you on the Trott book by Sykes.<sup>172</sup> He is justifiably indignant about D. Astor loony article in *Encounter*.<sup>173</sup>

TO ROBERT SILVERS

15 July 1969

Wolfson

Dear Bob,

We both enjoyed your visit very much indeed, as you may have noticed. And indeed a certain amount of affection and peace reigned between everyone present, which is not always the case. [...]

Diana is still engaged in explaining that nothing could have conceivably been further from her intentions than the remotest suggestion that anyone she spoke to should be persuaded in any way to even give a thought to not contributing to your periodical.

<sup>172</sup> John Wheeler Wheeler-Bennett (1902–75), historian, official biographer of George VI; British government service, NY, 1939–45; Fellow, St Antony's, 1950–7; Historical Adviser, Royal Archives, from 1959. He reviewed Christopher Sykes, *Tormented Loyalty: The Story of a German Aristocrat Who Defied Hitler* (New York, 1969), the US edition of *Troubled Loyalty: A Biography of Adam von Trott zu Solz* (London, 1968), in the NYRB, 11 September 1969, 37–40, under the heading 'The Man Who Did Not Kill Hitler'.

<sup>173</sup> David Astor, 'Why the Revolt against Hitler Was Ignored: On the British Reluctance to Deal with German Anti-Nazis', *Encounter*, June 1969, 3–13.

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Evidently the notion that there might have been some element of propaganda in her and Norman P's remarks to Stephen and me that evening has sunk very deep into her conscience. If you do publish something by Lionel this will expose him in his turn to criticisms by *Encounter*. All this I view with undisguised pleasure. Thank you for sending me Noam's answer. I did not think particularly well of Lionel Abel's piece – I thought he scored some points, and is, on the whole, an honest and independent man, and his attack was not vicious or mechanical along any party line, but I thought Noam's answer was noble, dignified and at least three-quarters convincing. The idea that great powers must behave barbarously, if that is what Abel meant, and that one must accept a kind of Machiavellian universe in which huge cruel forces constantly collide with each other and men are destroyed because of some inevitable sociological law [by] which vast beasts wander about in the political jungle, and cannot but try to gore each other, is, as you imagine, something that I reject with both hands. It is clear to me that if I have to vote on one side or the other I vote with Noam, even though he goes too far for me, and I think is in some ways a naive Marxist, and tends to misinterpret both his opponents and the complex nature of the facts (particularly, of course, about Israel: the excellent left-wing poet Oz with whom I spent a happy evening, who is a friend of Noam's, certainly does not think that the idea of a bi-national state is anything that can be advocated not merely as a short-term, but even as a middle-term, solution (as a long-term solution, an ideal, yes) ‹& I agree.›. He really is a very nice man, and if he could be imported to New York, he really would help to discuss the problem with honest left-of-centre characters, and indeed very left-wing ones too, in a much more honourable way than any official propagandist.

My only real point of difference with you is I think that you think that Rodinson has written a book that it is useful to read – and Noam thinks it too – I confess that I have not read it properly because I am nauseated both by the style and the attitude, apart from what one knows about the man. Must I read it? Is there really something in it which one ought to take to heart? It looks to me

like an extremely intelligent piece of crypto-Stalinist, mechanical interpretation, and on the whole not so much false and misleading as contemptible. Is this too strong? Meanwhile, I go on teasing Stuart about Israel – he professes to be *strongly* for it, but in fact is worried by any deviation from what he takes to be a truly socialist line – and tends to defend rather terrible Moral Rearmiers, like Mayhew, because he is a member of the Labour Party, and he shrewdly suspects that I am not. Anyway, I will discuss all this *à l'outrance* with him in Italy next week, when he comes to stay with us for about ten days. The opinion of him in England is really disgracefully unjust, and one day I shall write an indignant piece about it, when it can do no harm. As for Pasternak's *Blind Beauty*: I shall read it in Russian – it seems to me a weak work, not really worth writing about, for I think it does his reputation not merely no good, but actually some harm, in spite of the very serious and respectful reviews it got in the British Press, solely because of its authorship. John Gross's book is extremely pleasure-giving. As for dear George Lichtheim: when I asked Stuart whether he could repeat to me his long lecture to him, at 'your' party, about Habermas, nothing emerged at all. I wish you would force these people to write things down in clear and modest prose, and just humble themselves to the task of exposition of unfamiliar doctrines, instead of lofty allusions and knowledgeable gossip. <This is what Hamann, my obscure hero, said God had done in his sacred books: & he reproached Kant, an old friend, with declining to humble himself to the Almighty's level.>

I long, some time, to write something for your periodical (if only for the sake of Diana T.), but I am absorbed in new discoveries about Vico. Do come and see us in Italy in summer if you can – it really would be worth your while to take a special flight with no other thought at all; come to us, stay a week and go back, if that is all you can do. Believe me it will do you good physically, and perhaps even in other respects – I say cautiously – to be in that most beautiful country, away from the Xerox machine <– better than even the West Indies. Besides you wd find dear Marietta in Naples.>

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With much love,  
Isaiah

PS I have ordered the Hart Report to be sent to you: Appendix A, or whichever it is that discusses the students, is the one worth reading. (Have you read a *violent* attack on Harvard students in the London Times of 12<sup>th</sup> July? by Holroyd, author of L. Strachey? Too much for even me.)

TO JOHN SPARROW

15 July 1969

Headington House

Dear John,

You must surely know, whatever you may say, that a letter from you (I do not say 'such as yours', because to put a letter into a class, or any personal relationship into general terms – 'such friendship as yours', 'the type of relationship that I have with you' etc. – seems to me to destroy almost all that is of value; I need not enlarge on that – 'such a sensibility, intelligence etc. as yours' would easily grasp the point) gave me pleasure without end. Not only because every time one offers something in a public market one remains skinless, and peculiarly vulnerable, for a time at least, and any mention of one's name, particularly in public, causes one to wince, criticism of course is terrible, and even praise in one's peculiar condition is something that one tends to look in the mouth; but you must know all this yourself too well, nor do I believe those who say they never read reviews (like Virginia Woolf or Iris Murdoch). I say it because you are a very incorruptible and very fastidious critic, and friendship does not blind you to the object and its properties. You may say, and you do say, that this is not the kind of subject with which you can claim expertise; that your approval may be motivated by moral and political agreement etc. All this may be so, but your sense of quality – of what's what – of what comes up to standards of the finest possible differences

between the fourth-rate and the third-rate, or the first-rate and that which transcends it – is as acute as any that I know (general term again! but here I think in place), and therefore this kind of sentiment from you does something – indeed a very great deal – to counteract the appalling self-depreciation and lack of confidence from which I have suffered all my life, and from which I suffer still to an extreme degree. I never think that anything that I do is *any* good – this is not an exaggeration. That is why after every lecture or talk I have ever delivered, I am possessed by a strong sense of shame. I feel the jig is up, they can see through me, it's no good going on, these are hollow words, the whole thing is a pathetic fraud. This may be an exaggerated description, but nothing less than that quite describes the humiliation that I constantly suffer. If anything critical is said I always believe it to be absolutely true and probably an understatement, however indignant I may feel; this seems a contradiction, but it is so. If praise is uttered I feel it to be genuinely more than my due – the critic must have missed something, he must be thinking of something else, or be particularly well disposed towards me, or wish to prop me up in what he sees to be my pathetic condition, etc. I despise no one so much that harsh words from such a quarter do not affect me at all, nor respect anyone so much that I think praise from such a quarter is literally just. You may imagine therefore, that however much I may think that you have overpraised me – and I do – I am infinitely grateful for a gift which I genuinely need, if I am to go on. I have a feeling that, as David Cecil<sup>174</sup> has so often said about himself, having never been in fashion, I am now distinctly out of it; that what I write about and what I say is so remote from the mood and the language, whether of professional philosophers or passionate advocates in universities, or the press, that I am thought of as a respectable relic of an obsolete period. Of course I console myself

<sup>174</sup> (Edward Christian) David Gascoyne Cecil (1902–86), son of the 4th Marquess of Salisbury, and grandson of the 3rd Marquess, the great Victorian prime minister; fellow, New College, 1939–69, Goldsmiths' Prof. of English Literature, Oxford, 1948–69; one of IB's lifelong friends.

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with the thought that posterity – someone, one day – will perceive in things that I write a thin rill of a civilised tradition, gone underground perhaps, which connects me in however small a way (and I am not suffering from false modesty in saying this) with various thinkers whom I respect. But this is true of all minor poets, writers etc., hence your words lift me, I do not know for how long, from such self-pitying contemplation to the thought that perhaps I *have* got something to say, perhaps my adversaries are not as formidable and certainly not as intellectually impressive as they seem to some – perhaps what I am doing is not useless, perhaps one ought to go on and on and do what I am doing now, which is to publish my collected works in paperbacks, one by one, instead of an impressive shelf like ALR. Hence my gratitude. That is only one reason for it. The other is wholly personal – I am absolutely delighted that you should have written me this letter and shall never, never forget it. And there may be real truth in it – a grain – two grains – I feel it may have been worth it after all.

And now the old friends and the dinner party: 5 November is no good to me for then I have a College meeting as I do on the first Wednesday of every month; 19 November I have to address an audience in Cambridge; 12 November would be excellent, but would you not consider Tuesday the 4th, 11th or 19th [sc. 18th?]?

Yours, with deep devotion, my dear old friend (this is the opposite of the usual occasion – but it is a true and apt description)  
Isaiah

TO SANDRA WEIDENFELD

n.d. [*dictated c.12 August 1969*]

As from Paraggi

Dear Sandra,

You asked me to ‘send a sketch, anecdote, reminiscence, any sort of literary effort’, but I can do none of these for I cannot draw, my memory is unreliable, and I cannot claim to be a man of letters.

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Let us therefore simply say this about George (I have sent my page, as requested, to Tony Godwin):

George's love of life, his eager and unquenchable curiosity, his exuberant sense of pleasure and capacity for giving it to others (together with a scintillating irony free from all rancour, bitterness, intolerance or self-righteousness) is a source of vitality without parallel in a society in some need of it. He is one of the sharpest social observers of his time, with a marvellous, highly exhilarating sense of social farce; indeed his sense of the ridiculous at its most inspired is a genuine expression of creative imagination. With all this he has a firm sense of reality, and is deceived neither about others nor about himself. His immense social success has not entailed a compromise with his basic loyalties, which have remained unaltered, despite all temptation during his rise to fame and fortune. Gaiety, rich social fantasy, acute social realism and love of life may not be everything; but they are a very great deal.

Isaiah Berlin

Yours ever,

[Dictated by Sir Isaiah (who will be returning to Oxford at the beginning of October) and signed in his absence p.p. S. A. Belsten (Mrs)]

TO DAVID CARVER

18 November 1969

Headington House

Dear Carver,

I am, of course, deeply touched by the great honour – great and astonishing – which the Executive Committee of the English Centre of PEN has done me in proposing that I become President during the coming year. And I apologise the more deeply for having delayed replying for so long – this is, apart from the general chaos of my life, due to my effort to persuade myself that it would be right to accept: but the effort has not been successful thus far, although, if only for reasons of pure personal vanity, I have done

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my best. There are three obstacles which I feel bound to draw your attention to.

1. The usual one – of lack of time: I am now hideously divided between administrative duties in trying to help to build a new college in Oxford, and various teaching obligations as well, and come up to London more and more seldom. Whereas I think you ought to have a President who is more easily accessible and can turn up more frequently than I should be able to do to Committee meetings, receptions, lectures etc.

2. I feel that the President ought to be a real writer whom other writers recognise as being truly one of themselves, as all the former Presidents seem to me to have been – whereas I am a writer only by courtesy. My contributions to literature as such are nil – I have done very little if anything for the common reader. I feel this strongly: I should feel something of an impostor if I spoke in the name of writers, true imaginative writers, whether novelists or poets or historians.

3. At a time when so many writers are persecuted and the voice of PEN should certainly be raised in the hope, however often disappointed, that this will help the cause of humanity and freedom, it is desirable that the President of PEN should not be viewed with particular disfavour by any of the governments whose activities need to be attacked or criticised, and whose behaviour it is desired to modify. I have a suspicion that in the Soviet Union I am regarded with some disfavour – anyone who writes on Russian literature and does not adhere to, or at any rate, refrain from criticising, the official Soviet line is regarded with peculiar disapproval, not to say hostility: you know this well. Moreover I have refrained thus far from criticising the Soviet government openly for its oppression of writers and artists because I discovered that various persons, including the poet Akhmatova, as well as members of my family who remained in Russia after 1917, suffered probably, in part at least, because of alleged association with myself. It may be that this phase is over, or at any rate not as acute as it was: however it is a risk that I dare not take, hence my silence about some of the most outrageous acts of that wicked

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government. It seems to me that if I became Chairman of the British Centre it might give the Russians some apparent excuse for denouncing us as ideological enemies: they might do that in any case, but one is anxious not to provide them with any gratuitous excuse for doing it.

These are my reasons: I wish they did not exist. They seem to me pretty conclusive, but if you do not think so, please let me know, for I should like to be of help.

If it is not improper to ask, have you thought of e.g. Angus Wilson or Stephen Spender or Iris Murdoch? They seem to be worthier candidates than I am. Nevertheless I really am deeply flattered by your invitation and this will remain so whatever decision is reached.

Yours sincerely,  
Isaiah Berlin

§ TO ROBERT SILVERS

9 December 1969

Headington House

Dear Bob,

I enclose a pamphlet by RISE – R stands for revolutionary, I for Israel, S for either students or socialists and E I have no idea, not executive or anything too ferocious. It was lent to me by a perfectly nice young man at present in Oxford, originally from Poland, and when you come to England, although we cannot alas dine with you and Stephen, I should greatly like you to meet three or four of these young men. They are left-wing socialists, not mad, in touch with various Arabs (though that does little good) opposed to Matzpen – which is the anti-Israeli group of whom there are not more, so they say, than twenty-five persons in Israel and some ten abroad (but they write to *The Times*, send affidavits of horror stories

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to various other newspapers, etc.) – and think Chomsky’s<sup>175</sup> solution totally unacceptable. (I haven’t written to Noam yet about his piece – I suppose I ought to, but I keep putting it off for various reasons; for what can I say but that I love him but think his ideas hideously unrealistic and to that extent a source of ungratuitous irritation to the real Israeli left?) But before you go to Jerusalem it would be nice if you could have an hour or so with these extremely attractive young men, who are not clever but morally quite impressive: in particular the novelist Oz,<sup>176</sup> the philosophers Margalit<sup>177</sup> and Moked,<sup>178</sup> the biologist Chen<sup>179</sup> and perhaps the Prof. Ettinger,<sup>180</sup> who must have left Russia somewhere in the middle 1930s and is a professor in Jerusalem and a most knowledgeable and intelligent, lively man. I could drag them up to London, since you will have little time, if you tell me when you think you will be free before the actual flight, to which I look forward enormously, and so does Aline. As for what happens at the other end, it does not matter. It will right itself I feel. Your nursemaid is said to be called Sachs<sup>181</sup> of the English Department of the University of Jerusalem – not, so far as I know, known to me. Ryan’s<sup>182</sup> piece seems to me rather good – he was long underestimated both by Richard<sup>183</sup> and Stuart. I feel vindicated – we backed him all along.

Love,  
Isaiah

<sup>175</sup> Chomsky has been a critic of US foreign policy and of the state of Israel since the 1960s.

<sup>176</sup> Amos Oz (1939–2018), one of Israel’s leading novelists and intellectuals.

<sup>177</sup> Avishai Margalit (b. 1939), leading Israeli philosopher, long-time friend of IB and regular contributor to the NYRB.

<sup>178</sup> Gabriel Moked (b. 1933), Israeli philosopher and literary editor.

<sup>179</sup> David Chen (b. 1937), Israeli educationalist.

<sup>180</sup> Shmuel Ettinger (1919–88), Israeli historian.

<sup>181</sup> Arieh Sachs (1932–92), Israeli literary academic.

<sup>182</sup> Alan Ryan (b. 1940), British philosopher at Oxford and then Princeton, and a regular contributor to the NYRB. The piece was “The ‘New’ Locke”, published the previous month.

<sup>183</sup> Richard Wollheim (1923–2003), British philosopher.

Poor Noam. He will, however unjustly libelled, remain a disputed figure in the histories of ideological chaos of our time.

\*TO ROBERT SILVERS

2 February 1970

[Wolfson]

Dear Bob,

The Wadham agony continues.<sup>184</sup> The fact that the *New Statesman* today should have said something about how Freddie's withdrawal plunged them all into chaos and how Prof. Hampshire is waiting in the wings will not improve matters.<sup>185</sup> **all this must come from some enemy** I have an awful feeling that, in the end, the Left will vote against Stuart and this **may** seal his fate. For them he is (**& always was**) a Bloomsbury intellectual, too well dressed, too *soigné*, too refined altogether – the Right **wing** and the Old, which is much the same, will think that he will be too bored with the details of administration, which is far from true, in fact. I hope to God he gets it. I pray for this daily and hourly but do not feel optimistic. He has done better than Freddie – what mild pleasure this bleak reflection gives him I do not know, but it is insufficient.

I have read Bar-Hillel now and it is a pathetic and touching document. I understand his feelings quite well and still his positive

<sup>184</sup> Wadham College was in the throes of appointing a new Warden in succession to Maurice Bowra, due to retire in August. Stuart Hampshire was a contender for the post, but the College had a long tradition of electing from within its ranks, and A. J. 'Freddie' Ayer, an honorary fellow since 1957, had been widely tipped to succeed Bowra. IB was unduly pessimistic about Hampshire's chances, perhaps because he so wished for his success.

<sup>185</sup> In his 'London Diary' column in the *New Statesman* (30 January 1970, 143), Anthony Howard observed that the Wadham process 'seems to be taking an interminable time'; the withdrawal of A. J. Ayer, 'the most-fancied candidate', had left the field 'totally clouded and confused, though Professor Stuart Hampshire (now of Princeton) is said still to be visible as a late-runner on the outside rails'.

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proposals are not related to any possible reality, any more than Noam's. For example: he wants to limit immigration in order not to frighten the Arabs. Why? Everyone knows that in normal times immigration will proceed at the present pretty low rate; but if there is a pogrom in South Africa or the Argentine – let alone Russia – then, of course, these people will want to immigrate much as the French Jews want to at present – not the old **French** families but those who have filtered in during the 1930s and 1950s. Are they to be stopped? If the frontiers are to be established, this should surely be enough. Nobody in their senses supposes that 11 million Jews can immigrate: if Zionism means that it is the *duty* of every Jew to go to Israel **or be politically identified with it**, then it is, of course, **unacceptable & idiotic** – even I have denounced this at no less an establishment than Isaac Stern's Foundation in New York in the presence of Sidney<sup>186</sup> and some exceedingly fanatical Zionists without being contradicted. [...] I do not believe that there are propagandists who foam at the mouth in the Messianic manner and speak of the ingathering of all the Jews into a mighty kingdom spreading over Jordan, Syria, Egypt etc. from the Euphrates and the Nile. I think he is tilting at an enormous windmill, poor man, but if he has this image before him then I do not wonder that he strikes out at it. He is, in a sense, perfectly right in saying that Zionism **as a** movement has achieved its goal and should be declared fulfilled and obsolete – **the rest, being** properly left, is natural sentiment and desire to help, etc., as in America for Ireland of the 1920s, only more so [...].

On the other hand, as far as rights of the dispossessed Arab natives are concerned, he pushed principle beyond reason. It is not a happy thing to be a minority. No doubt this shouldn't be so and everyone should be very nice to everyone else and minorities should not have to claim rights, which should be accorded to them freely, generously etc., but we know that minorities suffer in some

<sup>186</sup> Sidney Morgenbesser (1921–2004), John Dewey Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University 1975–99; much prized by IB for his warmth and famous wit.

degree everywhere. Hence to increase the number of Arabs in Israel, by whatever means, seems to me to ask for misery for both sides. Ideally, of course, bi-nationalism would be splendid, but we know that this is not to be for, at any rate, half a century, while wounds heal. The wrongs of the refugees have to be weighed against the right (and even more the desirability) of making Israel a viable community. Hence, the laying down of *any* principle – that everyone born in what is now Israel's territory should be allowed to come back; or that they should not be allowed to come back; or that all Jews have a right to come back in whatever numbers; or that only those whose mothers pass the religious test etc. should be allowed to come back; or any other generalisation whatever – seems to me likely to cut across actual concrete needs and situations and to draw blood unnecessarily. [...] **This is true of some of** the old leadership – e.g. the lady for whom you naturally care so little – **they** see their people as surrounded by implacable enemies; **or by powers** who will do nothing for them; **they** are suspicious of everyone, **and** want all their kinsfolk in every country to stand up and be counted, and devote themselves to one task and one only: the up-building of the State of Israel against all other claims, principles, ideals. **These are** the old, eschatological, **post-Marxist** pioneers whose analogues are old Marxists, Trotskyites, Maoists etc. etc. All that will pass. **The** possibly sometimes far less **morally** attractive, but politically and even morally saner, sabras<sup>187</sup> and other un-inflamed characters, equidistant from Begin and Deutscher (who are very similar to each other in some ways, **and** were brought up under very similar conditions and with very similar ideals) will, if they are allowed to survive at all, come to terms with the Arabs; **otherwise there will be awful slaughter**. Bar Hillel's appeal to the **Great Powers** to impose a solution is **very** German again. He is obviously a very decent, upright man but the imposition of any kind of rectilinear schema upon that tangled growth would be a terrible vivisection. [...]

<sup>187</sup> Hebrew term applied to Jews born in Israel.

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In the meanwhile, I suffer for Stuart: an unnecessary number of wounds – as if some number were necessary – have been inflicted upon him lately and by his own country, too. There is, perhaps, something in being a cosmopolitan after all.

Yours ever,  
[Isaiah]

TO GEORGE WEIDENFELD

17 February 1970

Wolfson

Dear George,

I cannot think who could write a good Life of Turgenev. No one in England, I think. (This sounds very bald but I really cannot think of anyone in even the Troyat class. The last life, by Freeborn, was of very moderate merit.) But in America it could, perhaps, be done by Irving Howe – I do not know how much of Russian (as opposed to Yiddish) he knows. If Mr Kyril Fitzlyon (né Zinoviev), whose wife, you will remember, wrote that book about Mme Viardot, were more of a genuine man of letters, he might do it. Otherwise perhaps Pritchett? He has an affinity to Turgenev and knows a little Russian, I think, and anyway the material is pretty widely obtainable in other languages. Still, a Russian scholar would be best. If only Edmund ... but that is hopeless. The best American scholar on final thoughts who could do it properly would be Rufus Mathewson of Columbia University: a very intelligent and sensitive writer who could produce a near masterpiece. Whether he would is, of course, another question. I hope to see you before this letter arrives tomorrow morning.

Yours ever,  
Isaiah

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

\*TO ROBERT SILVERS

19 March 1970

[Wolfson]

Dear Bob,

Thank you so much for your excellent letter of February 25 – if I have not replied before now this was due to the fact that I fell sick and was constantly in and out of bed for about three weeks. And now I must spring into intense activity – on Wednesday I have to preside over a lecture by our old friend, Scholem,<sup>188</sup> who is lecturing about early Hassidism – what more terrible fate could be conceived for these simple-minded old holy rollers and shakers than to be dissected and scrutinised by a neurotic, contemptuous, old German Gelehrter? Do you think that what happened to the hippies and the Chicago Seven<sup>189</sup> will one day be so treated? Which reminds me that George Lichtheim<sup>190</sup> wishes to dine with Gerhard and Jean Floud and me – I have warned Aline that this will be too much for her – which reminds me: George has written an article in *The Times Literary Supplement*, it is impossible it should not be by him – on Habermas<sup>191</sup> etc. – which is of monstrous length and is very polite about Popper who is very pleased, but apart from gossip about who were late and who were early pupils, and who

<sup>188</sup> Gershom Gerhard Scholem (1897–1982), German-born Israeli philosopher and historian widely regarded as the founder of the modern academic study of Kabbalah; first professor of Jewish Mysticism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

<sup>189</sup> Seven defendants charged by the US federal government with conspiracy, incitement to riot, and other offences related to anti-Vietnam-War and countercultural protests that took place in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

<sup>190</sup> George Lichtheim (1912–73), German-born Jewish intellectual who wrote on modern European history and the history of socialism and Marxism. He was indeed the author of ‘Marx or Weber? The New “Methodenstreit” in Postwar German Philosophy’, *TLS*, 12 March 1970, 269–72. *TLS* authors were then unnamed.

<sup>191</sup> Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929), leading German philosopher and sociologist.

owed what to whom, who answered whom when, there is absolutely no meat at all, so that while each individual sentence is quite clear and the quotations are quite well translated, absolutely nothing it says is either true, or false, or interesting, or dull, it was as if the old horse had been lured back into the circus, and is overwhelmed by the familiarity of all those figures and exclaims with pleasure at this clown or that, at this string of sausages, at a new trapeze act, and is prancing and snorting happily all over the place.

On Sunday morning I set off with Aline for New York where we arrive on Sunday afternoon – the Blackstone – and where I stay until the morning of the 25th when I fly to Ann Arbor then Columbus, then back to New York for the weekend, then Princeton, Philadelphia, then back to New York to some awful political conference summoned by Prof. Richter<sup>192</sup> at which I am cut into very small pieces by Chuck Taylor<sup>193</sup> summoned from Montreal especially for the occasion, so far as I can see. On this occasion, there appear R. Wolff,<sup>194</sup> Macpherson,<sup>195</sup> Ronnie Dworkin,<sup>196</sup> old uncle Plamenatz<sup>197</sup> and all; I then deliver a rousing lecture on April 6, and back to Oxford on April 8 or maybe 9, where I collapse again. Hence I would rather talk about your Zionist theses when we meet. Is Elon coming? Can I have a talk with you and him and Sidney and Noam etc.? Very briefly I am in favour of rigorously demarcated frontiers, beyond which Israel will not be able to expand, to allay Arab fears. But not of controlled

<sup>192</sup> Melvin Richter (1921–2020), historian of political thought.

<sup>193</sup> Charles Margrave (‘Chuck’) Taylor (b. 1931), Canadian philosopher whose doctoral studies were supervised by IB at Oxford; taught at Oxford and McGill.

<sup>194</sup> Robert Paul Wolff (b. 1933), American political philosopher.

<sup>195</sup> Crawford Brough Macpherson (1911–87), Canadian political philosopher and historian of ideas.

<sup>196</sup> Ronald Myles (‘Ronnie’) Dworkin (1931–2013), US philosopher, jurist and legal scholar who taught at Harvard and at Oxford; a regular contributor to the NYRB.

<sup>197</sup> John Plamenatz (1912–75), Montenegrin political philosopher who succeeded IB as Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at Oxford.

immigration because the moral basis of the state is not an asylum for refugees (who, as such, cannot claim a state) but the strange survival of a scattered community, which has mysteriously preserved national attributes, which survive but in a diseased form and breed terrible Steiner<sup>198</sup>–Arendt<sup>199</sup> fantasies, without a territorial base, and develop normally only if they are given it: as seems to have been shown in practice. My favourite Hess compares this to those grains of wheat found in Egyptian tombs which when replanted after 3,000 years, bloomed. It may, in a sense, be a great bore that this has happened, but it has. This being so one cannot ask a sovereign state to promise to limit its immigration; even though in fact, as you say, this makes no difference. There is a certain minimum of face which cannot be lost without inflicting too much collective humiliation. The Arabs of all people understand this excessively well. Internal chauvinism is another matter. I wish I thought that it is only a function of being beleaguered: even if it is, it will grow, which is a very bad prospect. Elon's words in the *New York Review* seem to be perfectly right<sup>200</sup> – what I do not believe is that the Arab States would have allowed this gradual trickling back, although to offer it would no doubt have been excellent for the record. Compensation should, of course, have been offered, and has been offered, but in so low a

<sup>198</sup> (Francis) George Steiner (1929–2020), British literary critic who wrote widely on Jewish culture and literature.

<sup>199</sup> Hannah Arendt (1906–75), German-born American political philosopher best known for *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). IB was not an admirer of her or Steiner's writings on the Holocaust.

<sup>200</sup> Amos Sternbach Elon (1926–2009), Israeli journalist, author and regular contributor to the NYRB. In a review article written after the Six-Day War Elon observed: 'Should there be a Jewish State? [...] During the past decade this argument has become irrelevant and certainly impractical, and today it has become largely obsolete. Immigration to Israel has come to a standstill. Two-and-one-half million Israelis are now a nation, cohesive and resourceful, whatever the argument over Zionism. For Israelis, the issue is not one of theory, but one of physical survival, of individuals as well as of a community. There is no other place to go, as there was for the French community in Algeria' ('The Israel–Arab Deadlock', NYRB, 1 August 1968, 14–20 at 14–15).

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voice that nobody heard – this is what I said to Golda<sup>201</sup> when you were there, and she made Eban<sup>202</sup> say it again, but it was again said in somewhat muffled accents. I do not believe that the Arab nations would have rejected your individual re-emigrants; and I do not believe that after 1956 there was the slightest hope that the small minority of refugees would have been allowed to trickle back, and that this would have been regarded as sufficient, or that they would have been allowed to state freely what it is that they themselves wanted to do, or indeed that they would have known, subjected as they were (perhaps to some extent also as Jews in the refugee camps in Germany were in 1945–7) to steady propaganda, some of which they resented, but most of which they certainly swallowed quite naturally, too. I don't think that Joseph Johnson<sup>203</sup> – to whom you talked when he was there: he was a very amiable man – had any idea what would happen if a free choice were given to the refugees – his figures were perfectly reasonable if you assume that a real free choice could have been allowed these people. The probability of that, however, seems to me too low. Do you think that I over-estimate the pressure put on the refugees by their leaders, by agents of Arab States, etc.? I do not think so. The fact that they are used as political pawns does not make their condition less pitiable, or monstrous, and absolve Israel from their duty to offer to do something of a major kind for them. Israel's major blunder, both moral and political, was, of course, after the Six Day War not to come out with some tremendously magnanimous proposal, whereby they declared themselves prepared to take back some reasonable numbers of refugees and offered to raise an enormous sum of money – far more than they could possibly afford – something that would put them to genuine financial risk and strain the very existence of the State, if they are

<sup>201</sup> Golda Meir (1898–1978), prime minister of Israel 1969–74.

<sup>202</sup> Abba Eban (1915–2002), an Israeli diplomat and politician who served as Israel's foreign affairs minister.

<sup>203</sup> Joseph Esrey Johnson (1895–1990), US government official and president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

not to repatriate them in the empty parts of the Fertile Crescent. I do not doubt both these proposals would have been flung back in their faces by the Arabs, who by this time were, I think, in a totally exasperated and somewhat lunatic state – still, the offer would have been made and could have been repeated over and over again and perhaps might, in some form, have been accepted. This certainly would have eased the situation, morally, not only politically: what I do not believe in is that any large influx of Arabs into Israel could have ended in anything but the most terrible political indigestion, to put it at its lowest. That Jews cannot and should not govern Arabs seems to me absolutely plain. I do not believe in a peaceful symbiosis even under the most liberal idealistic administration, entirely consisting of Bar-Hillels<sup>204</sup> and Lewontins.<sup>205</sup> In the long run all kinds of things are possible, but it is in the short run that people suffer and die. Hence my general belief in partition, and distrust of artificially created multi-national and multi-racial states, however right they are in principle. This I am prepared to argue and argue. Of course the problem of Arabs in Palestine is something that the Jews have shut their eyes to in a very ostrich-like manner from the beginning. Maybe they can defend this, and of course the people who tried to preach a bi-national state, the decent old professors, Bentwich<sup>206</sup> etc., plus one or two people in the left-wing Kibbutzim, were protesting against something very wrong and fatal, but there was something pathetic and remote about these people and their position – more like nice old anarchists, shaking their fists against the existence of the police and the army, and forbidding any violence against them, when obviously what had to be done was some radical transformation – the very partition scheme which Noam thinks so wicked, and

<sup>204</sup> Yehoshua Bar-Hillel (1915–75), Israeli philosopher; member of the left-wing Movement for Peace and Security formed after the Six Day War.

<sup>205</sup> Richard Charles ('Dick') Lewontin (1929–2021), US evolutionary biologist and geneticist and social commentator; regular contributor to the NYRB.

<sup>206</sup> Norman de Mattos Bentwich (1883–1971), British barrister and legal academic, was the British-appointed attorney general of Mandatory Palestine and a lifelong Zionist.

indeed the United Nations resolutions of 1948<sup>207</sup> which precipitated bloodshed which British policy had rendered unavoidable, it seems to me. If at this stage the frontiers of the United Nations Jewish Palestine had been guaranteed by the powers which were then on reasonably good terms with each other, if the United Nations then had sent troops against the advancing Arab armies as they did in Korea, the whole military growth of Israel need not have occurred, and the country could, I think, then have been neutralised and made into an Austria. Once it was clear that military adventures were to be tolerated in that part of the world, the Jews felt abandoned, looked for allies, went to Suez, took the West Bank, and did everything that people do who think that one false step on their part may lead to their total extinction. That they were morally obliged to recognise that they were responsible for the creation of refugees, and owed these people restitution, is clear, whether they fled of their own accord or were pushed over the border or whatever happened: politically I do not think it would have done them the slightest good. The desire to remove them, if need be by extermination on the part of Arabs – from the highest to the lowest, with the exception of the few *politiques*,<sup>208</sup> Tunis, or Egypt, or Lebanon, or Morocco – was already at its height by the end of the 1930s. That is why I think that the plight of the refugees and the fate of the West Bank Arabs are human problems of the first order, which the Israelis are both morally wrong and unwise to try and push under the carpet. What makes me pessimistic is the thought that even if they behaved with utter virtue their general prospects would not have been improved, no kind of gestures or even concrete acts will begin to melt the

<sup>207</sup> UN Security Council resolutions early in 1948 called for an end to violence in Palestine, and implementation of the General Assembly's Resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947 (to which IB must here refer). This resolution proposed a plan for the partition of Palestine: it was accepted by the Jewish but not the Arab side, and the failure of either the British or the UN to enforce it contributed to the outbreak of hostilities that followed the termination of the British mandate at midnight on 14 May 1948.

<sup>208</sup> 'Unprincipled politicians'.

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hatred of so many. When they say that it is the existence of the refugees that has created this, this, alas, is not true, plausible as it sounds. It exacerbated it, it gave it a focus, it created a heroic terrorist mentality, but the Arabs I talked to in Amman in 1934 – and certainly the Palestinian Arabs, Lebanese and even the Lebanese I met in 1947 were bubbling with hatred. I am still in favour of the Israelis evacuating the West Bank, or at any rate saying that they are prepared to do so on certain conditions; as for the creation of a Palestinian Arab political entity now in the bosom of Israel – that seems to me a pure Manchukuo,<sup>209</sup> a puppet state which Fatah will either sabotage or take over, and whose resistance will be regarded as merely a piece of Israeli trickery any decent Arab was bound to reject with indignation. Am I mistaken? Is there really something that Israel can do today which will ensure both a degree of peace and [solve] the whole problem of survival? I wish I thought so.

Yours,

[Isaiah]

PS I am glad that I shall see you soon. Stephen's letter about dinner with you and Stuart and the Lowells was most exhilarating.

TO HAYME MARANTZ

28 May 1970

Wolfson College

Dear Mr Marantz,

Thank you very much for your letter of 22 May. I am glad that you think that the principle of the incompatibility of values clears up Machiavelli's position. I do, indeed, think so too: and did about five years ago read a paper to this effect which was mimeographed (to the British Political Studies Association, which met in Ox-

<sup>209</sup> The puppet State maintained by Japan in Manchuria (north-east China and inner Mongolia) 1932–45 in order to legitimate Japanese military conquest and colonial exploitation of that region.

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ford)<sup>210</sup> and propose to send this paper, amended (I have by now spoken to a good many universities in this sense in public lectures), to a symposium on Machiavelli to be published under the auspices of a Harvard Foundation in Florence.<sup>211</sup> There I work out the very positions that you have, unaided, reached in the course of your short, but very penetrating, note to me. If I can lay my hand on my original mimeographed sheet, I will send it to you. My thesis is indeed that Machiavelli was virtually the first person to declare (without doing so explicitly) that there were two incompatible moralities – the Christian and what he represented as the Graeco-Roman – and that not only rulers, but presumably citizens too, had to choose between them, for they were conceptually incompatible, not merely unrealisable [together] in practice. He thought, as you know, that one could restore the past – that the Roman republic could be restored with enough will, energy, resources. As for whether a Christian way of life could be realised, he, it seems to me, neither knew nor cared, but, I suspect, thought this quite impractical, given human nature as it must unalterably be. So my conclusion was that Croce was wrong in saying that Machiavelli divided politics from morals, for what he divided was one moral world from another – not at all the same thing. That this is the application of what you are kind enough to call my insight to the problem of *The Prince* and the *Discourses* I fully realised when I wrote the paper. I seem to myself to be always saying the same thing.

Yours sincerely,  
Isaiah Berlin

<sup>210</sup> IB's paper was read on 26 March 1963 at the conference of the Political Studies Association held at Exeter College, Oxford, on 25–7 March. The date of 1953 that he assigned to it when it was first published, in a volume marking the 500th anniversary of Machiavelli's birth – as 'The Originality of Machiavelli': Myron P. Gilmore (ed.), *Studies on Machiavelli* (Florence, 1972), 149–206 – is an error. The essay is reprinted with many corrections in AC.

<sup>211</sup> Villa I Tatti, The Harvard Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, of which Gilmore was Director.

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\*TO ROBERT SILVERS

29 May 1970

[Wolfson College]

Dear Bob,

I feel that some kind of report is owing to you by this time. [...] Sir Maurice telephoned to me, saying, 'Bad news. Mrs Stone, wife of Lawrence Stone, told Stuart that he was not wanted in Wadham and spread stories about the hostile reception that is waiting for him.' Absolute nonsense. We are all most eager. The only person who is hostile is Stone's friend Pat Thompson,<sup>212</sup> who is mad, enraged, determined to make trouble. I hope Stuart believes none of this. I have told Thompson what I think of him. He made a scene, etc. [...] One man can do a lot of harm and inflict a lot of wounds, and this, I fear, may happen. However, in the end, Stuart's beauty of character will (I know this to be an incontrovertible truth) quell opposition. Still, it was not entirely without a certain mild maliciousness – I will not say pleasure, but interest – that Sir Maurice communicated this horrid intelligence to me. It is, on the whole, best that you not know it, otherwise it will be thought a kind of spreading story; Stuart will think there is more in this than meets the eye; Renée will think that there is a campaign, etc., none of which is true. But it is as I thought about Stone – happy in Princeton he may be, and it may not be his fault so much as his awful wife's, but a certain envy grips all academics at a certain stage of their life, particularly those who, having failed in a given place, observe others succeeding in what they regard as their own particular preserve. None of this is news.

Secondly, Cal: I think all is well. He began by rather disliking Sparrow, and still dislikes All Souls, the dinner jackets on Saturdays, the fact that it is all too much like school, too much silly formality and general nonsense. But I am sure he is right **to take**

<sup>212</sup> Arthur Frederick ('Pat') Thompson (1920–2009), Fellow and history Tutor, Wadham, 1947–87.

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the job at Essex which will only occupy him two days a week, otherwise he can live peacefully in London, which is surely the best thing for him now. He would have gone to absolute pieces in New York, I am sure. His lecture to the audience in Oxford under my almost non-existent auspices was a wild success – about 700 persons came, more than for Chomsky, fewer only than, I think, to Boulez: he was not displeased; he read his verse, answered questions. I said that he literally needed no introduction and simply said ‘Mr Robert Lowell’. I meant this as a compliment. However, I saw that Cal was perhaps not entirely pleased: he made a slight reference to the fact that usually one can start off by making play of the Chairman’s remarks in introducing the speaker, but in this case it was, alas, literally impossible to do so. From this I detected a certain minute degree of disappointment. So I woke up to my obligations and in closing the lecture paid him appropriate compliments. Well received. After that he went to a party at our house, at which he met all kinds of revolutionary students, which I think he enjoyed. [...]

In my next instalment I will discuss Noam, and the new committee for Arab–Jewish understanding. It is thoroughly to be approved of and **also** seems to me a grave mistake. Now I must see my next visitor, in fact my next three visitors who are sweltering in my poor secretary’s room next door.

Yours ever,  
[Isaiah]

TO ROBERT SILVERS

18 August 1970 [*manuscript postcard of rhinoceros*]

n.p.

Dear Bob,

It was extremely nice to see you in Paraggi – do come to see us in Oxford in the autumn & let us know – here I am taking a 19<sup>th</sup> century Cure in a 19<sup>th</sup> century établissement: but then I am a 19<sup>th</sup> century man, at least I long to return to Mazzini & Michelet, if not

actually to Wagner & Marx. Martin Malia & Stuart will be upon us at any minute now: time was when Martin was to the left of Stuart: but visits to Moscow, even more than students, have driven him into ferocious defence of learning & rigid academic scruples against populism of any kind: which makes Stuart uncomfortable. If you want to look at something which really made me sick – & which Noam *ought* to see – look at the quotidien Libanais *Le Jour* (Beirut 6<sup>th</sup> August) which prints an interview with Jean Luc Godard on his forthcoming film *Jusqu'à la victoire* which he defines as the destruction of Israel by El Fattah.<sup>213</sup> I wish I didn't get so worked up: but the thought of another (Russian) jackboot on the Jews – however sinful or mistaken, destroys all hope of anything. Yet the old sadistic O.T. God is quite capable of such Caligula like behaviour. Can you console me?

Isaiah.

TO ROBERT SILVERS

9 April 1971 [*manuscript*]

Headington House

Dear Bob

Stuart is *well*. He says that Steiner's T. S. Eliot lectures, printed in the *Listener* are a huge success & quite terrible. Why is this? The elevation of Sir S. Zuckerman & R. Blake to peerages are also

<sup>213</sup> An article, not an interview: Jean-Luc Godard (b. 1930), ‘“Les idées détruiront l'État d'Israël”’ [“Ideas will destroy the state of Israel”], *Le Jour*, 6 August 1970, 4. The ‘quotation’ used as the title derives from this sentence in Godard's text: ‘Que plus la marche sur Tel-Aviv sera longue, plus les idées changeront, qui permettront de détruire enfin l'État d'Israël’ [“The longer the march on Tel-Aviv, the more ideas will change, and they will make it possible finally to destroy the state of Israel”]. For the Palestinian political party El Fattah (usually called ‘Fatah’ in English) and for Godard, the ‘victory’ of the film's title (*Until Victory*) is the destruction of Israel. After most of the fedayeen who were to appear in the film were killed by Jordanian soldiers in the 1970 Black September conflict, the film was left uncompleted, but much of its footage was incorporated into *Ici et ailleurs* [*Here and Elsewhere*] (1974).

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subjects of wry comment. Solly cannot now be stopped till he attains a dukedom. Reactions to these honours are worthy of some very acid satirist. Equally Sir Maurice's, & Sparrow's.

I enclose a letter for R. Craft whose 5<sup>th</sup> Av. address I have alas forgotten. I shall telephone on the 15<sup>th</sup> –

yrs

Isaiah.

TO ROBERT SILVERS

1 September [1971] [*manuscript*]

Paraggi

Dear Bob,

Thank you for everything: letters, proofs<sup>214</sup> (can you *really* want to print it *all*? What will your readers say! I can just hear some of them exclaiming, & justly, I fear, that there is a limit to learned logorrhoea – I've corrected *very* little – Stuart has been over it & dissipated it a tiny bit too; at the moment he is here, so are Marietta & Roy Jenkins; R.J. is amiable & civilized & a little cagey: but he is what is called a very good, undemanding, unpompous guest. Marietta does, I suspect, pine for a little more social life than we provide: Stuart & Malia are very funny together: Malia is excited by Stuart's left wing sentiments, Stuart suitably shocked by Malia's religion & academic conservatism. They get on: & Sparrow will be here at any moment – & then Gaby Cohen from Israel, & then Cyprus & so it goes on. I *wish* you came to Cyprus: it will be even odder than the Diaghilev–Stravinsky memorial service which we went to – by the anti-Stravinskian black lifewriter: Bob Craft has written me two very sad & touching letters – he must *not* know that we ever in the same motoscafo as the hated Lifar. I hear you read an essay on Fathers & Sons by Turgenev's editor & later enemy,

<sup>214</sup> Of 'The Question of Machiavelli', *New York Review of Books*, 4 November 1971, 20–32; repr. of part of 'The Originality of Machiavelli', published in Myron P. Gilmore (ed.), *Studies on Machiavelli* (Florence, 1972: Sansoni), 149–206, and in AC and PSM.

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Mikhail Katkov, written in about 1862: very nasty & intelligent: his chief points being that Bazarov & the nihilists, so far from attacking rhetoric, phrases, pretty words, embellished life – in the name of the bleak stern truth, science, ruthless realism, harsh candour, are themselves phrase-mongers: what they peddle is *not* science – there *are* no real students [of] science in Russia – but popular science invoking trash – Büchner, Moleschott, Vogt: not chemistry or physics, but tracts which misuse popular scientific slogans for social & political radicalism: & the nihilism is more anti-intellectual revolt against true knowledge, reason etc – & has no positive programme, only crude barbarous cries against civilization, decency etc – partly due to the protestors being the children of clergymen – priests – an ignorant degenerate *caste*, with no vocation, isolated from life & suffocating its progeny. Reactionary & interesting stuff – must be best right wing criticism of the shy liberalism of the middle roaders: Turgenev's terror of the young, exaggerated fear of being unfair to them is itself represented as leading to a distortion of the truth which a braver & more independent rationalist would state less tremulously. Malia drank it all up. *When* do we meet? I am very glad you are in love. It is a heavenly condition, whatever its difficulties & agonies – & when it ceases the owl of Athena really does come down, & life writes its grey on grey, as old Georg Hegel (as Italians call him) once said –

Love

Isaiah

PS [...] Cd you send my corrected proofs (with the changes marked) photostated, to Gilmore in Florence<sup>?</sup> or to his secretary? please.

IB

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TO GEORGE WEIDENFELD

21 October 1971

Wolfson College

Dear George,

I really am grateful to you.<sup>215</sup> Meyer [Weisgal]<sup>216</sup> read to me this morning the text of the appropriate passage, which, whether it corresponded to the facts or not, does at any rate eliminate what appeared to me to be an entirely imaginary account of his first meeting with me. In fact I met Meyer in 1940 and not 1942, and we were introduced by Arthur Lourie.<sup>217</sup> He came to see me once or twice in 1941 about things like the *Struma*, *Patria* etc.,<sup>218</sup> with and

<sup>215</sup> For the background to this letter, see the letters to GW of 29 October and 1 November below.

<sup>216</sup> Meyer Wolf Weisgal (1894–1977), Polish-born Zionist, emigrated to US 1905; editor of books and newspapers, producer of plays; national secretary of Zionist Organization of America 1921–38; Secretary General of US section of Jewish Agency for Palestine 1940–6; Organising Secretary of American Jewish Conference 1943; Chaim Weizmann's personal political representative in the US.

<sup>217</sup> Arthur Lourie (1903–78), South African lawyer, political secretary of the Jewish Agency in London 1933–48 (for part of this time under Chaim Weizmann), a Zionist activist in the US during the war.

<sup>218</sup> The desperate desire of many European Jews to reach Palestine, and the reluctance of other countries, particularly Britain, to allow this, led to a number of marine disasters. In November 1940, 3,600 East European Jews reached Haifa in three ships, only to find that the British classed them as illegal immigrants and proposed to deport them to Mauritius on board the *Patria*. While the refugees were being transferred between ships, Haganah agents (led by IB's cousin Yitzhak Sadeh, E 29/5) mined the *Patria* in an attempt to disable it. The explosion was more powerful than intended: of the nearly 270 dead, over 200 were refugees. Initially the Irgun (E 12/5) were suspected and the Haganah's role was revealed only years later. The *Struma* was an unseaworthy ship chartered in 1941 by Revisionist Zionists in Romania to carry nearly 800 illegal Jewish immigrants to Palestine. The ship broke down in the Black Sea but managed to reach Istanbul. Weeks of argument between Turkey and Britain followed about whether, and if so how, any passengers would be allowed into Palestine; meanwhile almost all remained aboard. On 23 February 1942 Turkey towed the

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without Mr Louis Lipsky.<sup>219</sup> So that the scene at which Dr W[eizmann] first introduces him to me is entirely apocryphal. But that is not, of course, what worries me most: I thought that if the original version were kept anywhere where it might be seen by an unfriendly, or even an amused, eye, it would suggest a degree of irresponsibility on my part, and could by unfriendly persons be interpreted as positive disloyalty, a charge which would almost certainly be generalised, and used over and over again. The only way in which I could stop this would be by suing Meyer for libel – not a course of action I could dream of undertaking, save for the sake of public interest. I imagine that this must have been a fearful nuisance to you, and must have cost a good bit. If so, would you allow me to make a contribution towards it? I should be very glad to do this as it relieves me from a sense of nightmare. It really is appalling to think that one is perpetually menaced by total invention on the part of perfectly well-disposed persons. Do let me know what you would like me to do, and in the meanwhile once again let me offer you my warmest gratitude.

Yours ever,  
Isaiah

TO GEORGE WEIDENFELD

29 October 1971

Wolfson College

Dear George,

This letter is simply for the record (you need scarcely read it), in case the matter ever crops up. It needs *no* acknowledgment, but is

still-helpless ship back into the Black Sea. The next day the ship exploded, leaving one survivor. Later information suggests it was torpedoed by a Soviet submarine acting under orders to sink all neutral shipping in the Black Sea to prevent goods reaching Germany.

<sup>219</sup> Louis Lipsky (1876–1963), Polish-born US Zionist leader, journalist and author; President, Zionist Organization of America, 1922–30.

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simply for your files and mine. I will send a copy to Meyer for his (I suspect largely imaginary) files.

Thank you very much for going to all this trouble, but I do assure you that this is not a trivial matter, unfortunately, and it could have had deleterious consequences.

Yours ever,  
Isaiah

TO MEYER WEISGAL

29 October 1971

Wolfson College

Dear Meyer,

This is *purely* for George's files and will go no further. I merely thought I ought to record this, just in case by some hideous accident your story sees the light – in Jerusalem, in London, in New York, or wherever. I realise, of course, that you do not think it nearly so grave as I do, but believe me I am right, and {that} the fact that I am innocent would not prevent ill-wishers from exploiting your statement in all kinds of ways which I leave to your fertile (in this case, I fear, slightly over-fertile) imagination. Let me offer you renewed devotion, and warmest friendship as always.

Yours sincerely,  
Isaiah

⟨Just give this to Rinna<sup>220</sup> to hide: & I shall sleep soundly.⟩

<sup>220</sup> Rinna Samuel (1921–2014) née Grossman, journalist, editor and author then working for the Weizmann Institute of Science at Rehovot, where she edited the Institute's magazine, *Rehovot*.

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TO GEORGE WEIDENFELD

1 November 1971

Wolfson College

Dear George,

When I saw him at the Dorchester a few days ago, my friend Meyer Weisgal showed me a copy of his memoirs, which your firm is to publish. He told me that he mentioned me in his book several times, and proceeded to read one of the relevant passages to me. I am not sure what other mentions of me the book contains, but the only passage that I came across horrified me. The substance of it, so far as I recollect, was that the late Dr Chaim Weizmann introduced me to MW in New York in 1942; that when I heard his name, I pulled out a little pocketbook and said something to the effect that I knew who he was, he was number something or other, which I pretended to read out, and that he was in correspondence with ‘a chap called Agronsky’ and that his letters were opened by the British censorship in London and sent on to the addressee. From this MW had learnt for the first time that his letters to Mr Agronsky were, in fact, intercepted – something he did not know before, and was obviously interested to learn.

I should like to make it clear that this story is not so much inaccurate as totally devoid of foundation; that it did not merely not occur, but could not have occurred for reasons given below; and that, in fact, it must rest on a total lapse of memory on the part of our friend Meyer Weisgal. I do not wish to blame him in any way for saying something that he evidently believed to be true: but I wish to record the fact that it is wholly imaginary and obviously exceedingly damaging to myself. Such indiscretion, particularly in wartime, is rightly regarded as culpable in the extreme, even if its motives are not sinister. The impression given is that I casually passed on a piece of secret information illicitly to a friend of a man whom I admired; the information may have been trivial, but this does not make the breach of both duty and principle less

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discreditable, in my view. Anyone reading this passage would rightly regard me as lacking in loyalty and discretion, or both.

Now, as to the facts. I was, in fact, introduced to Meyer Weisgal not in 1942, but in 1940; in Washington, by Arthur Lourie, whom I had known before the war and who was at that time working for the Jewish Agency in the United States. In 1941, Meyer Weisgal called on me on at least two occasions to protest about the *Struma* and *Patria* incidents, and I remember very clearly reading to him Lord Cranborne's statement in the House of Commons, which somewhat allayed his natural indignation. By 1942, he therefore knew me well enough not to have to be introduced to me by anyone. As for the comic turn with the little book, and the 'number' which MW imputes to me, I cannot, of course, recollect doing any such thing, but one's memory is fallible, and although I do not like to believe that I made so fatuous a joke, it is harmless and I cannot, and do not propose to bother to try and, disprove it. What *is* inconceivable (and not merely imaginary) is that I should have mentioned a correspondent of MW to whom I discovered that he had been writing through intercepted letters. I never worked for any intelligence agency, either during the war or at any other time. So far as I recollect, I have never in my life seen any document that came from an intelligence agency. Nor was I connected in any way with censorship, intercepts or anything of this kind. I therefore could not have possessed the piece of information which I am held to have divulged. Hence my certainty that the story is without foundation rests not merely on my own memory but on conclusive evidence.

I should like to record all this, since if the story were published it would represent me in a highly unfavourable light and, for all I know, make me liable to official prosecution. The fact that I am totally innocent of what has been attributed to me does not offer me any other than private moral comfort. Since my reputation is not a matter of total indifference to me, I should be greatly obliged if this figment were eliminated from the book. I have no doubt that Meyer Weisgal will be only too glad to do this, as he is a friend of the truth and not merely to you and me, and that you will be

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similarly minded. I hope I have made my position entirely clear, and that neither he nor you will think that I am making a mountain out of a molehill.

Yours sincerely,  
Isaiah Berlin



*Colonel Cheng-Ki-Tong by Nadar*

TO THE EDITOR, *JEWISH CHRONICLE*

[*published* 12 November 1971]

You will not be astonished to hear that I have absolutely no thoughts about the year 2000. As a futurologist I am quite

hopeless: the crystal ball becomes clouded over immediately; I fall asleep and dream about the past, and a pretty imaginary past, sometimes. The only thing of which I am absolutely certain is that your valuable publication will still exist then – of course it may have to be printed in Chinese characters, but what is that to us? Did not Colonel Tcheng-Ki-Tong, Chinese Military Attaché in Paris in the 1880s,<sup>221</sup> in a book called *Les Chinois peints par eux-mêmes* (Paris, 1884: Calmann Lévy) write: ‘Take all the peoples you want: at the end of four or five generations they will be completely naturalised; the Jews never! They remain what they are everywhere they go, attached to their religion, their character and their customs, and from the point of view of general history it is a fact not without importance that there is a particular species which remains unaltered in the midst of a population of four hundred millions?’

The entire passage is found on pages 273–6, and is worth looking at. If someone translated it for you, it might be worthy of appearing in the pages of your periodical.<sup>222</sup> All I know is the extract quoted to me in a letter from an old friend. The amusing thing in the whole passage is that the sect of, I suppose, Jews is called Thiao-Kiu-Kiao and this is translated as ‘la secte qui arrache les nerfs’.<sup>223</sup> In this respect at least it seems to have remained unaltered.

[Isaiah Berlin]

<sup>221</sup> IB ascribes the passage to an unidentified eighteenth-century Jesuit quoted by Tcheng-Ki-Tong, but in fact it appears outside the quotation and was therefore written by the author.

<sup>222</sup> An English translation by James Millington, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, was published in London in 1885 (see pp. 192–4).

<sup>223</sup> ‘The sect that tears out the sinews’, from Genesis 32:32: ‘Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh in the sinew that shrank.’ IB perhaps understands the phrase to mean ‘the nerve-racking sect’. It occurs in the quotation from the Jesuit (note 1), and the translation may be his rather than, as IB states in the published text, Tcheng-Ki-Tong’s.

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TO JEAN HALPÉRIN<sup>224</sup>

18 November 1971

Wolfson College

Mon Cher Cousin,

First of all forgive me for this coldly typed letter, but my handwriting is now beyond the powers of even the most expert cryptographers.

Let me tell you how very, very distressed I was to hear that your brother was no more. He came to see us in Oxford, as you know, and I found him charming and civilised, and delightful to talk to. Indeed this applies to your entire family: you know well what I think of it. There is never anything to say when genuinely tragic events occur, so forgive me if I do not go on. Every time I go and see my aged mother I tremble about this very thing. Some people welcome the approach of the end: especially those who are very tired of life and simply want to close their eyes for ever; but I have never felt this. Perhaps one day I shall – indeed I hope I do. It is a terrible thing to see people die who are still full of life and passionately desire to go on living. Myself, if I could do it, I should confer immortality on everyone – this is regarded as a horrifying idea by many people, but not by me. I will not go on, except to say that I send you my warmest possible feelings, and that on no account must you acknowledge this ever, in writing or in any other way, but only believe me. [...]

Yours ever,

Isaiah

<sup>224</sup> Jean Halpérin (1921–2012), Swiss academic, great-grandson of Horace de Gunzbourg (grandfather of IB's wife Aline).

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TO GEORGE WEIDENFELD

28 November 1971 [*manuscript*]

Headington House

Dear George,

Raimund [von Hofmannsthal] said something. Then Aline and you had a talk on the telephone; I now remember that in your last letter to me about Meyer [Weisgal]'s<sup>225</sup> book you had said that he had been *consistently* loyal to you: I should, perhaps, have inferred something from the underlining. But I see that I am under some sort of cloud in your breast: why? I gather that I have been – since I feel innocent enough – {been} libelled by someone – or perhaps a whole lot of people: but, believe me, I don't know, & Aline doesn't know what I (we) are alleged to have said, implied, expressed. I should be glad and relieved to have it out: not only because it is painful to be misrepresented, but because I truly delight in your company: admire you (particularly your unswerving and fearless attitude about Israel, often in difficult and provocative circumstances) and wish to remain friends: I know what *I* feel when bad blood carries reported obiter dicta wide about me by various persons: especially Maurice Bowra (who said some really terrible things: but our friendship survived), Freddie Ayer et al. Do let us meet: I shd be grateful if we cd meet at say the Ritz at tea time on the 30<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday – or six p.m. on 13<sup>th</sup> Dec (Monday) or 14<sup>th</sup> or before lunch on the 15<sup>th</sup> – or whenever you are free & I am in London: wd you ring Oxford 56711 & ask your secretary to tell mine – I shd be truly grateful. It *cannot* be anything grave: yet I am afflicted with distress. *What* can I have done?

yrs

Isaiah

<sup>225</sup> A Weidenfeld author.

TO ALINE BERLIN

Monday 20 December 1971 [*manuscript postcard*]

King David Hotel, Jerusalem

It is very cold: for once I was *not* met – muddle with Ruth’s driver, travelled happily in a shared taxi with 2 charming S. Francisco doctors, a man from Moscow who knew Hayward,<sup>226</sup> an [*sic*] Moroccan jeweller & a heavily bearded, disapproving, silent Rabbi. Very enjoyable. Here everyone is ill. Herzog<sup>227</sup> is paralysed (haemorrhage of the brain) & may not live. Sambursky<sup>228</sup> has pneumonia. Harman arthritis of the heart. Ida loved your card & thought it absolutely right of me to “dissuade” you from coming: she realises that people here are a bore. I have nothing to do & nobody to see it or-day. Marvellous. Rome will be *very* nice.

IB.

<sup>226</sup> (Harry) Maxwell (‘Max’) Hayward (1924–79), Russian scholar and translator; fellow, St Antony’s, 1956–79.

<sup>227</sup> Jacob Herzog (1921–72), Dublin-born Israeli diplomat, rabbi, legal expert, and scholar; son of an Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Ireland, later of Israel, and younger brother of Chaim Herzog (1918–97), later (1983–93) sixth President of Israel; served as Israeli Ambassador to Canada (1960–3) and adviser to four of his country’s Prime Ministers (Director General of the Prime Minister’s Office 1965–72); remembered by IB for his ‘cool, subtle and powerful brain, a pure and warm heart, nobility of character and a simple and untroubled moral vision that sustained and preserved him in the inner conflicts that must, sooner or later, afflict all sensitive persons caught in the problems of public life’ (from ‘Yaacov Herzog: a Tribute’, preface to IB’s *Zionist Politics in Wartime Washington: A Fragment of Personal Reminiscence* (Yaacov Herzog Memorial Lecture; Jerusalem, 1972), 3.

<sup>228</sup> Samuel (Hebrew ‘Shmuel’) Sambursky (1900–90), German-born Israeli scientist and historian; physicist, HUJ, 1928–59; 1st director, Research Council of Israel, 1949–56; dean of the science faculty, HUJ, 1957–9; founded Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science 1959, prof. 1959–70.

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*Georges Sorel*

TO THE EDITOR, *THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT*

[*published* 14 January 1972, 40]

Wolfson College

Sir, – Your correspondent C. J. Fox (January 7) suspects me (I cannot imagine why) of being unacquainted with *The Art of Being Ruled* by Wyndham Lewis. Had I wished to add to my already over-long text, I might have described my only meeting, nearly forty years ago, with Wyndham Lewis, in the course of which I asked him whether he still admired Sorel. He said something to the effect that it had been a passing fancy; Sorel's attack on democracy was, for him, more than offset by an unfortunate addiction to Bergson; both he and Hulme had tried to interest Eliot and Pound in Sorel, in vain; Eliot had quite rightly preferred Maurras, who was a far better antidote to formless Romanticism.

I make no apology for not referring to Wyndham Lewis's early infatuation with Sorel, on which virtually every English-speaking commentator on him has remarked (and of which Mr Fox makes far too much), but I regret to have been able to say so little, partly through ignorance, on Sorel's considerable influence in Italy – not

only on anarchists, Fascists and Futurists, but on the ideas, e.g., both of Croce and of Gramsci.

Isaiah Berlin

TO THE EDITORS, THE *NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS*

22 February 1972 [*published* 6 April 1972, 36]

I do not disagree with anything that Professor Kenneth Burke<sup>229</sup> says in his letter and the relevant chapter of his book to which he refers. Indeed, his view of the ‘rhetoric’ advocated by Machiavelli and the spectrum of pressure, stretching from violence to persuasion, seems to me original, important, and true. Moreover, I think Professor Burke to be entirely right, against Cassirer, in his conception of the relationship of the last chapter of *The Prince* to the rest of the treatise.

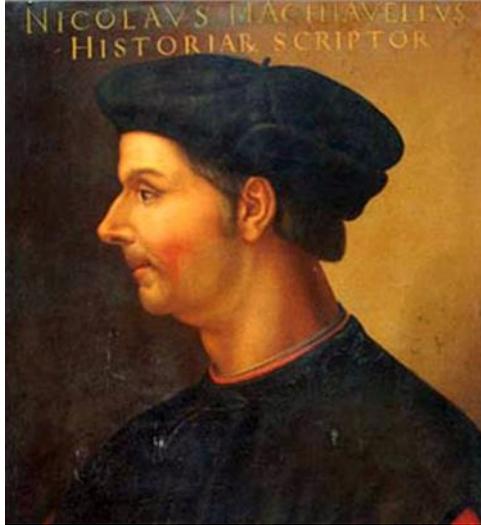
The purpose of my article was, however, to find an answer to a problem different from that with which Professor Burke is concerned, namely, what it is that so deeply shocked so many readers of Machiavelli, who did not react similarly to equally tough-minded sentiments in Thucydides or Aristotle or the Old Testament and later writings. My answer to it – whether it is right or wrong – does not seem to me to conflict with anything in Mr Burke’s argument. It is directed against the interpretations of those who believe either that Machiavelli had no moral position at all, or that he allowed the possibility of creating a successful secular state founded upon, or compatible with, the institutions or basic tenets of Christianity or of the secular beliefs that derive from it, or even the possibility of a kind of compromise between these ways of life (such as has historically obtained). Machiavelli does not seem to me to hold a realistic position; but it has enough truth in it to have upset many

<sup>229</sup> IB’s letter was published with that from Burke to which he is replying as ‘An Exchange on Machiavelli’, *New York Review of Books*, 6 April 1972, 35–6.

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generations of readers. This is a different thesis from Mr Burke's, but seems to me wholly consistent with it.

Yours faithfully,  
Isaiah Berlin



TO THE EDITOR, *WORLDVIEW*

23 February 1972 [*carbon; published without top and tail July 1972*]

Sir,

I should be glad to believe with Mr James Reston<sup>230</sup> that God is not mocked and that the crimes of statesmen and of peoples obtain their just due at the hands of history. But I find it difficult to divorce myself from the thought that, at any rate in the long run, it is the conquerors and the big battalions that determine the verdicts (despite some shining examples) of historians. Over a century and a half ago, Immanuel Kant wrote, 'If those revolts which gave Switzerland, the Netherlands and Great Britain their constitutions,

<sup>230</sup> James Reston, 'Not by Power Alone', *Worldview* 15 no. 7 (July 1972), 15–16. IB's letter appears immediately after Reston's on 16.

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and which are now praised as so felicitous, had failed, historians would see in the execution of their originators the deserved punishment of major criminals' (from an essay entitled 'That May Be All Right in Theory, But It Does Not Work in Practice', 1793).<sup>231</sup>



*James Barrett ('Scotty') Reston (1909–95)*

Alexander, Scipio, Julius Caesar, Charlemagne won their wars; our history books would have been very different if they had not – not merely because events, the course of human history itself,

<sup>231</sup> [Now (2024) 231 years ago.] 'Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis', *Berlinische Monatschrift* 22 (July–December 1793), September, 258–9: *Kant's gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, 1900–), viii 301: 'wenn jene Empörungen, wodurch die Schweiz, die Vereinigten Niederlande, oder auch Großbritannien ihre jetzige für so glücklich gepriesene Verfassung errungen haben, mißlungen wären, die Leser der Geschichte derselben in der Hinrichtung ihrer jetzt so erhobenen Urheber nichts als verdiente Strafe großer Staatsverbrecher sehen würden.'

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would have been different, but because the judgements of the world upon them are part and parcel of this course and would have been very unlike the conventional wisdom that would have resulted from their failures. Could anyone doubt what 'the verdict of history' of every journalist and schoolmaster and the vast majority of educated men would have been if Napoleon had successfully invaded Russia and England and established his laws in his entire empire for any length of time? If Hitler, or even the Kaiser, had won their wars?

There is a story, perhaps apocryphal, of a Belgian who, after his country had been invaded in 1914, and resistance crudely repressed by the German armies, asked a German officer whether he was not afraid of the judgement of history. 'No,' the officer is alleged to have replied, 'for we shall write the histories.' Victors are seldom judged: the defeated, the minorities, the persecuted sometimes leave memorials of themselves in the light of which later generations modify conquerors' accounts of their successes. But this does not happen often: the Romans won, but the writings of the Jews are there to testify against them; Europeans exploited and humiliated the Chinese, but now there are Chinese writings to shame their descendants, whose own histories used to record little or nothing of this. There is more hope at present that this will not automatically prevail, because the enormities of our own century have been such as to provoke indignation within the ranks of the conquerors themselves. This is still new, but it does offer hope for greater justice in terms of those deeply held human values that have not altered all that much in the course of the centuries. Yet the price that we, in this century, have had to pay for this more universal awakening of the moral conscience has been appalling.

It is, I think, this sense of outrage which Mr Reston has in mind; and although I am somewhat sceptical of its efficacy, I share his attitude: I should like this doctrine to be true, even though history does not afford too much evidence for it.

Yours faithfully,  
Isaiah Berlin

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FROM JUDITH SHKLAR

18 October 1972

[Harvard]

Dear Isaiah,

Thank you very much for the essay on Machiavelli. It finally reached me after trying to catch up with me all over New England this summer. I thought it quite brilliant even though I do not quite agree with your conclusions. As an illumination of all the possible ways of thinking about Machiavelli, it seems to me a terrific tour de force. In the end, however, I think there are other reasons for finding Machiavelli a bit scary than the one you suggest. I think there is something frightening about his irony. I mean by that his essentially stage-managing of historical situations consisting of one bloody scenario after another as a pure spectacle. In any case, I was so pleased that you sent me the essay, and I really enjoyed reading it a great deal.

As so often in the past, I want to mention a pupil to you. We gave a year's scholarship to Oxford to a Mr Thomas Sargentich. I tutored him in political theory for two years, and he is really a very good young man. He would very much like to meet you and perhaps become your pupil in some way or another. I don't know if that is feasible or even worth your while, but it would be very kind of you at least to see him if you can find time. In any case, I promised him that I would write you on his behalf.

Will you be in America at all this year? If so, I hope that I shall not miss you this time. I am enclosing a piece I wrote last year. It was fun to write, and I hope that you will find it fun to read.

With best regards,

As ever,

[Dita]

## אוהד הציונות

זה עתה ראיתי את תגובותי של מר יליוֹמור על הרצאתי לזכר הר"ר צוג שהוא לכם לפרסם אותם ב"הארץ". הפעה בין מר יליוֹמור לבני נראה כה גדול שאינני רואה אפשרות לזכות ראיוֹנלי בינינו. לכן אינני מציע להפריד או להגיב על טענותי בדבר מניעי השקפותי, אם כי הן נראות לי משוללות יסוד.

אמנם אני חייב לתקן שנים מעיור תל הגסים ביותר את העובדות. לא נשלחתי לארצות־הברית כדי לנסות להשתוק ביקורת יהודית או ציונית של המדיניות הבריטית. ב־1941, ב־היותי קצין אינפורמציה, הייתה הביקורת מסוג זה מועטה. החל מ־1942 היה תפקידי היחיד לדווח על הלכי דעות, ולא לשכנע מישהו לדיבר כלשהו ועוד פחות לרכז את רגשי ההתנגדות שמדיניות הספר הלבן יצרה למעשה בין כל יהודי ארצות־הברית בעלי תודעה ואוהדיהם.

מר יליוֹמור מייחס לי באופן אישי דעות בהן התווכח החוגים האנטי־ציוניים ביותר של פקידות ממשלת בריטניה. זוהי האשמה נתעבת וידידועה ככזבת לעמתי הלא־יהודים הבריטיים והאמריקאים בתקופת הלמחמה וגם למנהיגים הציונים של תקופה זו אשר הכירו אותי כאותה מושבע של התנועה הציונית בכל הומנים, עובדה אשר לא נסתה להסתייר מאף אחד. דבר זה מסתבר אמילו מקריאה שטחית של הרצאתי — וכך בדאי הבינו בשעתה את עמדותי אנטי־ציונים באר"ב ובאנגליה כ־אחד.

ישעיהו ברלין

אוקספורד

TO THE EDITOR, *HA'ARETZ*

[13 November 1972]<sup>232</sup>

Oxford

Sir,

I have only just seen the comments of Mr Yellin-Mor on my Herzog Memorial Lecture, which you were good enough to

<sup>232</sup> Published in Hebrew translation, *Ha'aretz*, 17 November 1972, 26 (see above).

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publish in October. The distance between Mr Yellin-Mor and myself seems to me so great that I see no possibility of a rational argument between us. I do not, therefore, propose to refute most of his charges, baseless as they seem to me to be, or react to his allegations about my motives and outlook, least of all by speculation about his own.



*Nathan Yellin-Mor*

I owe it to your readers, however, to correct two of his wildest misstatements of fact. I was not sent to the United States to attempt to muzzle Jewish or Zionist criticisms of British policy. In 1941, when I was an information officer, there was little criticism of this sort. From 1942, my sole job was to report currents of opinion, and not to persuade anyone of anything, least of all try to moderate the indignation which the White Paper policy produced among virtually all conscious American Jews and their well-wishers.

Secondly, Mr Yellin-Mor attributes to me personally views held by the most anti-Zionist circles in British officialdom. This is an odious imputation, known to be false both to my British and American non-Jewish colleagues during the war, and to the Zionist leaders of that period, who knew me to be thoroughly sympathetic

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to the Zionist movement at all times, a fact which I did not seek to conceal from anyone. Even a cursory reading of my lecture will make this obvious – it was certainly so to anti-Zionists, both in America and England, at the time.

Yours truly,  
Isaiah Berlin

TO BERNARD WILLIAMS

3 December 1973

Headington House

Dear Bernard,

I enjoyed your letter very much indeed, and am glad to have provided the occasion for it. We couldn't go to Weidenfeld's party for Freddie, really because the invitation for it arrived literally on the morning of the day – but we couldn't have gone anyhow. As for George, anything about him is always indelibly comical: in his obituary of Ben-Gurion, or the account of the sickly smile he produced at Rab Butler's anti-Semitic cracks at the Booker Prize. What makes one smile at the mere mention of the name? After all, he is a shrewd, imaginative, well-read, knowledgeable, energetic publisher, with wide horizons – a central figure in the intellectual establishment – not exactly a public entertainer or a mere literary *maitre d'hôtel* – why, in Aristotle's sense, has his personality no weight, only lightness? Is there a total absence of a moral centre? Please tell me when next we meet.

And when do we next meet? I have no plans for coming to Cambridge, nor you, alas, to Oxford, in the very near future: London? I shall be there on 8 January, but, alas, after the meeting of the Section I have to go elsewhere for an endlessly lengthy meeting which may last all day. Won't you get Tony to invite you to the St Thomas's Dinner, when I am to be Herbert Nicholas's guest? That would be much better than nothing – on Saturday the 15th – the day after – for a general assessment of where we are and what we are to expect, personally and intellectually (All Souls –

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Magee – I really must talk to you about that). If you cannot manage Oxford, then would you and Patricia stay here for a night or two between 3 and 12 January, when I shall be alone and grateful for a visit? Not that Aline would not be delighted too, but you see what I mean?

Yours ever,  
Isaiah

FROM JUDITH SHKLAR

10 December 1973

[Harvard]

Dear Isaiah,

While you may have forgotten it, I still remember that I have at least something like \$90 of yours which you left with me to buy and send you books that you might want from America. Surely there must be something you would need or like, and I would be delighted if you would let me know because I cannot after all sit on your money for ever.

The other reason for this letter is that I have gotten myself involved with a quarterly called *Political Theory* which is a serious academic journal entirely devoted to publishing articles on political theory. If either you yourself (which would of course be the best of all possibilities) or any of the people, especially young people, whom you know at Oxford would like to send us any contributions we would be delighted. We prefer them to be no more than 25 pages long, but are flexible. Moreover, we promise prompt answers, which is more than most journals will do in these days.

I hope I am not putting you to any trouble, but I thought that you must know so many people that it might not be difficult for you to get the word about this journal around. I think in fact you are on the board of editors, but don't let that weigh on you.

With best regards,  
As ever,  
Dita

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TO QUINTIN HOGG

14 December 1973 [*manuscript*]

Wolfson College

Dear Quintin,

My warmest congratulations on the overdue honour which this university – moving at a rate somewhere between that of a snail and a tortoise – has at last offered you. You deserve it and more, if I may say so, as much for your fiery and unquenchable courage and uncompromising assertion of principle at a time when flexibility and accommodation are regarded as identical with profound political and social wisdom & statesmanship – as for your scholarship and public service and political eminence.

True, your appreciation of the kind of philosophy I used to dabble in before the war is regrettably imperfect: like other good & otherwise perceptive men – like Bolingbroke, for example – you weren't aware that you were living during the greatest advance of philosophy, logic, ideas about the world – for many centuries (in our case since, say, Leibniz). And this, as it always does, had some very decisive, social and ethical (and theological) side-effects, and played a crucial part – whatever one may think of its results – in what English speaking countries think & feel about the way we live & should live, and what we believe. I suspect you think all this is trivial logomachy, remote from the central moral and metaphysical issues – the soul, God, the ends of life – which agonise everybody, sooner or later, if they think at all.

If (as I suspect) you think this, you are – in excellent company – mistaken. But one cannot have everything: and you are & have enough and more than enough to be a bright undimmable light – now and then a fire – in a season of moral & political dimness and a craving for the grey, the colourless, the mediocre, [and this] is glorious enough: & I offer you a forty year old affection and admiration. There now: you must forgive (as a Christian how can you decline?) this immoderate, uncalled for, illegible effusion. On

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*no* account shd you even briefly acknowledge it if you don't wish to embarrass

yours ever

Isaiah B.

TO ROBERT SILVERS

27 February 1974

Wolfson

Dear Bob,

Thank you very much indeed for your letter. You are perfectly right about the effect upon me of my mother's death.<sup>233</sup> Although she was ninety-four and died peacefully and recognised no one before she died, yet it is as if a large part of the framework within which I live had suddenly disappeared overnight, leaving me exposed to winds and indefinable forces. But the whole of my childhood, the very firm framework in which I was brought up, which was a very conscious part of myself until now, has suddenly receded into some kind of historical past – is now broken off by a kind of gulf and has become somewhat abstract. This is very strange and unsettling and I cannot get used to it at all. Being an orphan at the age of sixty-four is ridiculous, but it is precisely what I feel. [...]

Soon, soon we meet, that makes me very happy.

Yours ever,

Isaiah

<sup>233</sup> On 3 February 1974.

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TO ROBERT SILVERS

5 April 1974

Headington House

Dear Bob,

[...] The *Daily Express* has started a campaign against Wilson's personal honesty, plainly modelled on Watergate. I somehow doubt if such things can be duplicated successfully, but, as the British Embassy used to say, and most of its reflective pieces used to end, 'the future alone will show', which they sometimes varied with 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating'.

What a marvellous time we had together in New York. Truly!  
<It is the *greatest* pleasure to Aline & me –>

Yours ever,

Isaiah

*On 21 April 1974 Sam Sebba<sup>234</sup> wrote to IB about Marie Berlin's death:*

I felt the need to write to you – not to commiserate nor to convey to you any of the conventional words of comfort and courage – but to say how lucky we, the sons of that generation of Russian Jewish Matriarchs, were. They had those outgoing dispositions which radiated charm and confidence, happiness and an unceasing 'joie de vivre'; and above all they knew how to bridge the generation gap, to inspire the young with a sense of security, and to imbue them with worldly wisdom; and even though, in their later years, some of them may perhaps have been a little exasperating – as indeed my late Mother was during her last illness – they must surely be remembered for all those outstanding qualities which endeared them during their lifetime, lived to the full.

<sup>234</sup> Sam Sebba (1915–2003), came from Riga like IB and knew him before they met at Oxford, where Sebba read law at St John's 1934–7, and took his turn as President of the Jewish Society. Like IB, he attended St Paul's School.

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On arrival in England at the age of ten, I was taken to your Mother's house in the Addison Road area and to Ida's flat in Sinclair Road;<sup>235</sup> what better introduction could a young boy have had – to inspiration and example, to devotion and thought, and what better memories can remain after nearly 50 years?

TO SAM SEBBA

29 April 1974

Headington House

Dear Sam,

[...] You are quite right. We were lucky. Our mothers were conceived in a firm, and indeed heroic, mould; they had positive values of a kind that, despite all our sophistication and the changes and reversals through which we have lived, still linger in you and me – perhaps more than linger – as we grow older I suspect we grow closer to them, not further. The security was extraordinary; the moral and social and personal values were warm-hearted, positive, life-enhancing, and above all held with not only unswerving firmness but with immense courage which overcame all resistance and all crises. Our mothers were certainly exasperating at times; they bullied us without wishing to do so; they failed to understand our doubts and deviations; but even that gave one a firm standard to judge things by; when we deviated, we knew at least what we were deviating from, and how far, and why. This is why a good many persons without a moral base of their own tended to join e.g. the Communist Party in the 1930s – we were fortunate not to be tempted to march with that inhuman battalion. And so far as there is a moral base in Israel, it surely comes from this Russian Jewish culture, which those who have not actually grown up in it cannot, I am sure, fully understand. I see that

<sup>235</sup> 33 Upper Addison Gardens and 57 Sinclair Road, near to one another and to St Paul's School in London W14. Ida Samunov (1887–1985) née Volshonok, IB's aunt (younger sister of Marie Berlin), was widowed after the death of her husband Yitzhak Samunov (1886–1950), with whom she had emigrated to Palestine in 1934.

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Laqueur<sup>236</sup> is to write the life of Dr Weizmann: he was exactly like that, too – he belonged to the generation of our parents and his immense confidence and dignity, and monolithic quality, came from precisely these roots: Laqueur will not convey this – we shall get a perfectly sound record of his public activities, but as a conception of character it will – at least by you and me, and a few other such – be found painfully lacking, I am sure.

How well do I remember your visits to us – in Upper Addison Gardens and Sinclair Road – that talk we had about Napoleon once, based on a book by Sheridan Somebody,<sup>237</sup> which you were reading at the time. Sinclair Road! That really does dredge up marvellous memories. Ida is, as you know, still alive, in Jerusalem – next time I go there I shall tell her about your letter and memories of that particular past. I was profoundly moved by your letter, and most grateful for it, and wish we could see each other sometime; do you never come to Oxford?

Yours,

Isaiah

TO JOHN HABAKKUK

12 May 1974 [*carbon copy sent to John Sparrow*]

[Headington House]

Dear Mr Vice-Chancellor,

May I inform you that I intend to retire from my post as President of Wolfson College in the course of the academic year 1974–5, most probably before the beginning of Trinity Term 1975, but in any case before the beginning of Michaelmas Term of that year. This decision has been made known to the Governing Body of the College, and I understand that it proposes shortly to submit the name of the person whom it would wish to recommend as my

<sup>236</sup> Walter Ze'ev Laqueur (1921–2018), prolific US historian born in Germany. He did not publish a biography of Weizmann.

<sup>237</sup> Untraced.

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successor for the consideration, in the first instance, of the Trustees of Wolfson College, and, if approved by them, to the Hebdomadal Council for its consideration. The Vice-Gerent of the College will doubtless be in communication with yourself on this matter in due course.

Yours sincerely,  
[Isaiah Berlin]

PS [*to cc to John Sparrow*] My successor will in fact, I believe, wish to enter upon his duties during the Easter vacation of 1975. I have been offered the Presidency of the British Academy: as you know, I have only one further ambition in my uneventful life, and if that helps towards realising it, why, then, I suppose I should not hesitate: though it is by no means a sinecure, and rough waters from the Left are, I gather, expected ... My dear old friend, what do you advise me to do? I have never failed to take your advice, save once, and even then I thought you were perfectly right but I had no real choice in the matter (if you are curious enough to know to what it is I am referring, ask me at our next meeting – I shall have my answer ready).

Do advise me,  
I.B.

TO ARTHUR LEHNING

15 July 1974

Wolfson College, Oxford

My dear Lehning,

I remember vividly the first occasion on which I learned of yourself and your work. Shortly after the end of the Second World War my friend and colleague Douglas Cole told me about the archives of the Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, which he had had deposited in the Bodleian Library. He described some of the contents, and the name of Bakunin cropped up, and this naturally caused him to mention your name.

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I must begin by explaining that Cole, whose entire life, as you know, was devoted to the cause of social justice, and who, in common with other true socialists, believed in the principles of internationalism and the breaking down of walls between men, who-ever and wherever they might be, was temperamentally devoted to England, its history and its traditions, and looked on all foreigners with insular suspicion and distaste. He was for years one of the few Englishmen whom foreign socialists knew and admired, and came to see when they were in England; he attended international conferences; he took part in international socialist work; but he remained a little Englander at heart, and it needed exceptional qualities on the part of Frenchmen, Belgians, Dutchmen, Germans, Scandinavians, Italians, and particularly Americans, to gain his confidence or affection.



He spoke of you with warmth and admiration, although I am not sure whether he had so much as met you at that time; but despite his theoretical adhesion to social democracy, he loved

anarchism and anarchists because he cared for liberty more than for efficiency or organisation, and liked generosity, both of personal character and ideas – even when these took wildly eccentric and visionary forms – far more than bureaucratic virtues or ability in matters of theory or the organisation of knowledge: qualities with which he himself was well endowed. He reacted to social and political opinions emotionally – as we all do, however much we may rationalise our attitudes – and while he admired Marx and wrote about him more intelligently than most of his contemporaries, he disliked him a great deal, as indeed he did Lenin: he had to remind himself that Lenin ‘saved the Revolution’, a position from which, at least in conversation, he retreated in later years (I can speak only on the basis of my personal memories of him, principally from the 1940s and 1950s). Anarchism seemed to him the most humane, morally admirable of all types of socialism, even at its most utopian. He spoke with enthusiasm about Bakunin – an enthusiasm he keeps carefully tempered in his history of socialism – and with great respect of your own life and work.

I trusted Cole’s moral intuitions implicitly. Consequently, when we met, I was delighted not to be disappointed in any degree. If anything he had underestimated your unswerving dedication to what you believe to be true and right, your concern for liberty and justice, absence in you of dogma, of scholarly jealousies and secret hatred, from which even the greatest scholars are not always free – your profound understanding of the moral essence of the revolutionary thinkers with whom you are concerned, Babeuf, or Filippo Buonarrotti (he deserves the Italian spelling), Blanqui and Herzen, Marx and Bakunin – all the nineteenth-century enemies of despotism, capitalism, militarism, nationalism, the world of exiles and émigrés, which despite the sordid intrigues and quarrels and violent, often absurd recriminations, despite the personal shortcomings of individual revolutionaries or reformers and the confusions of their personal lives, the hysteria and fanaticism that occasionally broke out, even their follies and occasional crimes, remain, as I am sure you will agree, a nobler, more courageous and more disinterested company of men and women – a greater moral

## MORE BUILDING

asset to mankind – than even the best of those whose power they wished to destroy.

Movements of liberation do not merely seem, but are, more inspiring and noble during the years of struggle than after either failure or success, which lead to compromise and betrayals; and historians of ideas and others who are engaged on reconstructing the world historically are bound to be affected by the quality of these men's feeling, the power and attractiveness of their ideals, the dedication and, at times, martyrdom of their lives. I felt this when, as a mere dilettante, I was trying to write about Russian radicals in the 1840s.

I found a ready response to this, if I may say so, in yourself, who, since you are a deeply serious and infinitely scrupulous researcher, indeed a great scholar, understood these things more profoundly; and this attracted me to your works and conversation, and inspired me to further work in this field. If I do not do it, it will not be your fault, but solely that of my own shortcomings. Whenever we have met – on either side of the Atlantic Ocean – this has been a source of unalloyed intellectual and personal pleasure to me. Your humanity, your integrity, your standards of learning, are a source of pride to your country and your movement, and to the entire world of scholarship, not least to your personal friends, among whom I am proud to count myself.

But apart from my admiration for your work and your life and character, there is another, profounder, source of sympathy that creates a bond between us: your deepest concern has always been, if I am not mistaken, with the cause of human freedom. The fundamental sense of this much abused word, in my view, is freedom from chains, from imprisonment, from enslavement to other men – all other senses of freedom are an extension of this. Men do not live only by fighting evils. They live by positive goals, individual and collective, a vast variety of them, seldom predictable, at times incompatible; unless men have a reasonable degree of freedom to choose between them, without frustrating the similar freedom of other men, their lives will lack purpose, and, in the end, they will lose all that makes them human. This is a view

which my friend Professor Chimen Abramsky has attributed to me in words better than those I have ever used, and I am happy to accept them as a true formulation of what I believe.<sup>238</sup> Unless I am profoundly mistaken, you think this too, and your entire life and work has been a monument to this belief, and you have seen through efforts to dilute it, or turn it into its opposite, in theory and practice. This creates a bond of sympathy between us which I am happy to acknowledge.

You told me that you found All Souls College an agreeable place to belong to and work in. I only hope that the Fellows of that College were aware of whom they were entertaining. Long may you live for the benefit of scholarship and your admirers and friends.

I am glad to have been given an opportunity to say all this to you – for I could not say it to your face without embarrassing you acutely – but it is only those who are likely to be embarrassed by direct praise, however justly deserved, that one can love and admire.

Yours ever,  
Isaiah Berlin

*Published in Arthur Lehning in 1974 (Leiden, 1974: Brill)*

<sup>238</sup> Somewhat comically, IB here attributes to Abramsky two passages from *Four Essays on Liberty* ('The fundamental sense of freedom is freedom from chains, from imprisonment, from enslavement by others. The rest is extension of this sense'; 'Men do not live [...] at times incompatible': L 48, 93) which Abramsky had just quoted approvingly to IB in a letter (11 July 1974) as mottoes for 'Isaiah Berlin's Academy'. Abramsky had not said explicitly that he was quoting IB, who, having forgotten his own words, took them to be Abramsky's. To Abramsky, also on 15 July 1974, he wrote: 'As for the motto [*sic*] you ascribe to me, I daresay, could have said, and I am moved and delighted by it. Thank you very much. [...] I must write a letter in praise of Lehning. I shall shamelessly plagiarise from your formula.'

MORE BUILDING



*Leonard Schapiro (1908–83) at St Paul's School  
in 1926: he and IB were contemporaries there*

TO ROBERT SILVERS

[Early September 1974, *manuscript*]

Paraggi

Dear Bob,

Yes, of course, you are right about Leonard S[chapiro]'s attitude: it is only that to be a legitimist *now*, and believe that revolutions are avertible by the 'charisma' of royal descent, has a quaint ancien régime innocence about it, which sits curiously on a great grandchild of the ghetto (as opposed to my lot, & I daresay yours, i.e. grandchildren). But of course he is preferable to mechanical university reviewers or journalists; the interest & almost sympathy for Bukharin stems from his image as Danton vis a vis Stalin as Robespierre (or much worse) – *and* the fact that he was *not* a rootless cosmopolitan, almost an intellectual, and appealable to by Mme Mandelstamm etc. – which still doesn't single him [out] for me: *what* is [sc. does] his reputation as a theorist of note depend on? Have you *tried* to read his theoretical works? I know, as the Russian proverb says, where there is no fish, a crab will count as a fish: but still, compared even to Parvus or Gramsci

it is all nothing at all. Still, Leonard is preferable to Chr[istopher] Hill on the Russians – the review of Ulam<sup>239</sup> was a non-review: poor Tucker is harmless to the movement, but Ulam has some bite: he made it all *sound* old hat Marxophage patter which it is far from being: it *has* a flavour of its own.

We were visited by Lord & Lady Drogheda – I rather think they found conditions a bit rough: not villa-like enough, during their ten days: then Malia & Momigliano: (we led off with Hart & Mrs Floud) the former, as always, full of original points of his own – e.g. the Slavophiles' (& Dostoevsky's particular) debt to sentimental German pietism for which all the stuff about the Greek Fathers of the Church is a mere facade (70% true at least), and denunciations of Althusser as a fraud (I suspect true) and the Frankfurt school as an ocean of undehydratable verbiage (music to *my* ears) – & Arnaldo who reported on the fact that Peter Brown has left his wife (who is very nice & sympathetic), has received offers from the Princeton Institute & 7 other U.S. institutes + London University – what will he do? The only two true jewels in the All Souls crown are Dummett & he: both thought tedious bores by the Warden; Mom[igliano] coached me carefully about the lectures I am to give in Venice on the 11<sup>th</sup>, whom to like whom to hiss at (nasty ex-fascist clericals etc.) – I am v. nervous of lecturing in my English to Italian *laureati*, *what* is the good of being so old, & Brit. Academy etc., if one trembles before “foreign” students – and Italian academics? Stuart was here too. – *he* has no more natural authority or Gombrich-like weightiness than I. Richard passed by – gay & with a marvellous gift for turning all his friends and acquaintances into figures in a Rossini–Anatole France comedy. His twins were gay too.<sup>240</sup>

Love

Isaiah.

<sup>239</sup> Christopher Hill, ‘The Monster and His Myths’, review of Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879–1929*, and Adam B. Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era*, NYRB, 24 January 1974.

<sup>240</sup> Richard Wollheim had twin sons.

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TO JEAN HALPÉRIN

20 September 1974

Headington House

Cher Cousin,

Thank you very much for – in the first place – your wife’s charming and moving obituary of Milhaud. I admired him greatly as a man, and listened with great pleasure to his works, particularly the early ones; those written in the last twenty years of his life seemed to me fluent, eloquent, warm-hearted, highly civilised episodic writing – not musical journalism exactly, but an outflow of rich but not very self-critical talent. But perhaps I am mistaken: perhaps he is a greater composer than I think, and {that} your wife is right – that he was indeed the greatest living composer after Stravinsky – Stravinsky himself was, as always, ironical about his, as he was about all his contemporaries’, works; he preferred Boulez year

– perhaps because he was younger and remoter from himself. He had nothing but scathing remarks about Les Six – but then he was scathing about Wagner and Berlioz and at times Beethoven too, so that does not count.

Thank you also for telling me about Boussidan – I shall certainly try and look at his *Haggadah*<sup>241</sup> next time I am in London. I have had a letter about this from Tammuz<sup>242</sup> – I am most grateful for his suggestion.

Yours ever,  
Isaiah

<sup>241</sup> *Haggadah*, etchings by the painter, printer and calligrapher Ya’akov Boussidan (b. 1939), illustrating the text of the Haggadah and verses from Genesis, was exhibited worldwide, and published in facsimile in Tel Aviv in 1967.

<sup>242</sup> Benjamin Tammuz (1919–89), Israeli artist and writer, contributed an introduction to Boussidan’s etchings.

Happy New Year כוה"ט<sup>243</sup>



*Ya'akov Boussidan*

<sup>243</sup> כוה"ט' [usually *sic*] ('KVCH"ט') is an acronym of 'כתיבה וחתימה טובה' ('ktivah v'chatimah tovah', 'A good writing and sealing'), a traditional Jewish New Year's greeting referring to the belief that on Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) God's judgements of our conduct in the old year are written in a Book of Life, and on Yom Kippur, after ten days of repentance, they are sealed in it.

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TO JOSEPH BRODSKY<sup>244</sup>

30 September 1974

Headington House

Mileishii,<sup>245</sup>

I would prefer to write in Russian too, but since my handwriting is indecipherably illegible and I have no Russian typewriter available, we are reduced to 'business English', as you rightly call it.

Piatigorsky: I am only too ready to help, having heard about him from many quarters, but my college pays no one anything except one or two academic officials who also teach elsewhere, etc. All my colleagues are paid by the University and not by the College. But if even some degree of hospitality would help him I will do my best to persuade my college to do something about that. The only objection is that if he does become a member of my College, other colleges, which could pay him, will find it only too easy to avert their gaze from him on the ground that he already has a college connection, etc. I will not go on bothering you with all this bureaucratic *fatras*.<sup>246</sup>

And now I must go to the Auden commemorations. I am ready to go to Westminster Abbey, where a memorial will be put up to him in Poets' Corner, with Byron, Tennyson etc. – he would have thought this satisfactory. I shall not, however, attend a reading of his verses plus a chorus singing a setting of his poems composed by Britten – the only friend with whom he irrevocably quarrelled. I do not think that he would actually have minded even that – he

<sup>244</sup> Iosif/Joseph Aleksandrovich Brodsky (1940–96), poet; born in Lenin-grad into a Jewish family; recognised by Anna Akhmatova as the most gifted lyric poet of his generation; sentenced to internal exile in the Archangelsk region for 'social parasitism' 1964–5; involuntary exile from the USSR 1972, settling in America; poet in residence and visiting prof. at Michigan, Columbia, Cambridge and elsewhere; Five College Prof., Mount Holyoke, 1986–96; Nobel Prize in Literature 1987.

<sup>245</sup> 'Dearest'.

<sup>246</sup> 'Tangle'.

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did not object to tributes – but equally he would have forgiven such old friends as myself the avoidance of gratuitous embarrassment. Stephen Spender is organising it, inevitably; but I have no doubt his attitude towards it will be as sympathetically ironical as yours, mine or Auden’s own.

How are you? When are you coming here again?

Yours – на веки вечные<sup>247</sup> –

Isaiah B.

TO PETER HALBAN

3 December 1974

Headington House

Dear Peter,

I am glad to hear that you are well and reasonably happy. So am I, after the alarms and excursions that preceded the opening of the college,<sup>248</sup> about which I shall tell you when I see you in three weeks’ time or so – it is a story worth telling.

I am very sorry about Janson-Smith:<sup>249</sup> once I heard that he had been absorbed by the OUP I suspected that something was wrong with the entire outfit; I didn’t think that Mrs S<sup>250</sup> would behave all that well, and wondered what would happen. It is a great bore for you, as you enjoyed the job, I know; but all publishers and publishers’ agents are, as you know, in a frightful flap at the

<sup>247</sup> ‘Na veky vechnye’ (‘For ever and ever’).

<sup>248</sup> Wolfson College’s new building on the river Cherwell was officially opened by the Chancellor of the University, Harold Macmillan, on 12 November 1974. Some of the alarms and excursions referred to by IB are mentioned in his **speech on that occasion**, printed in *Lycidas* [the college magazine] 3 (1975), 3–6.

<sup>249</sup> (John) Peter Janson-Smith (1922–2016), literary agent, who had recently moved to OUP’s London office in Dover Street as a commissioning editor. Peter Halban had worked for Janson-Smith’s agency 1972–4, but had taken leave of absence to visit Israel, where he subsequently lived until 1986.

<sup>250</sup> Mrs (Janson-)Smith, Peter’s 3rd wife (m. 1957) Celina Wieniewska (1909–85) née Miliband, Polish-born translator.

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moment, and all kinds of hideous economies and contractions are going on all over the place, and the air is full of justified plaintive cries from excellent and worthwhile persons. I don't know if you have any ideas about what you would think it practical to do, but we can talk about that when we meet – since you are enjoying living in Israel so much, there's obviously no need for a precipitous return. I have no concrete thoughts in my head, but if there were something for you to do in, or in connection with, Israel, perhaps you would prefer that? The University of Jerusalem is always looking for people who are not hideously expensive in connection with this and that, and there may be something in that direction. Anyway, I will do nothing before I have spoken to you, and we can survey possibilities in what is called a calm and objective spirit (not a mood too widespread at present in Israel, it seems to me – nor anywhere else for that matter).

The British PM,<sup>251</sup> I must say, has gone out on the longest limb of any incumbent of that office in a pro-Israel direction – it will do him no good with the Foreign Office or quite a lot of members of his party: but may offset some of the obvious obstacles to his entrance to heaven. As my old scout in All Souls is alleged to have said, about me, to a colleague of mine, at the end of a long period of service – 'I suppose no one can be all bad, Sir': Wilson, like me, has his good sides, I suppose.

Ys with love

Isaiah

TO ROBERT SILVERS

10 December 1974

Headington House

Dear Bob,

I can imagine the Eban meeting very well: he delivered a much more fiery address, ostensibly on Weizmann, in fact to an

<sup>251</sup> (James) Harold Wilson (1916–95), UK Prime Minister 1964–70, 1974–6.

imaginary crowd filling Madison Square Gardens, in fact in London, to some 150 members of the Hampstead Jewish bourgeoisie, totally converted, who cheered his every word. I proposed a vote of thanks in what was, I fear, considered insufficiently dramatic and rather too unconcerned a fashion, which did not rise to the full horror of the crisis. Perhaps they were right: but the temptation to deflate the conventional rhetoric can be very strong. Yet the crisis is genuine, and the Jews do well to be terribly worried.

I long to see you. We shall be in London (Albany) on 16, 17 and 18 December, and I return to Oxford on the morning of the 19th, when I have to attend interviews for a Fellow in Mathematical Logic from 1 o'clock till 6 p.m., and at 6.30 I have to go into 'conference' with my successor, Harry Fisher, until 8 p.m. On the 20th you leave for New York, and Rostropovich arrives to give a concert at Wolfson. At the crack of dawn on the 21st Stuart and I and the Spenders and the Annans fly off you know where. <So time is short: but it is unthinkable that we shd not meet for a proper period of time.>

Would you dine and sleep the night on the 19th? If you want to see Stuart, could you contrive to come to Oxford earlier that day and see him before dinner? We could ask him to dinner, but I should somewhat prefer to keep you to ourselves – though this is not imperative if you cannot see him at *any* other time and want to do so. The only other time I would have free would be between 12 p.m. and 6 p.m. in London on the 18th, if you would prefer that. Let me know which and I shall act accordingly.

Yours ever,  
Isaiah

*In January 1975 an exchange took place with Bryan Magee about his and IB's strongly opposed views on Israel.*

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TO BRYAN MAGEE

7 January 1975

Headington House

Dear Bryan,

Your p.c.<sup>252</sup> to hand. I myself am by now totally confused about your position on Israel. Are your alternatives ‘secular state’, i.e. dissolution, versus extinction? – the last merely being a more savage form of the former. Or is Resolution 242<sup>253</sup> the alternative? I have talked to some tough doves in Israel, who seemed to me entirely reasonable and very moderate indeed. But the issue of the Union<sup>254</sup> is surely whether Israel should commit suicide or not? The Union *did*, I am told, invite one or two notoriously doveish Israelis here to speak, but they refused, I think rightly, to discuss the question of whether it would be best for Israel to disappear. I have no idea who the main speakers are. You know what happened in Cambridge last term on this?

Would you be free to have a drink on 16 January at, say, 6 p.m., at the Athenaeum or the Ritz, whichever you prefer?

Yours sincerely,  
Isaiah

*Magee responded on 10 January:*

My dear Isaiah,

My position on Israel is the same as it always was. I can oversimplify it in four sentences. Sentence one: Although the creation of Israel was a great wrong against the Arabs, and ought

<sup>252</sup> Not found.

<sup>253</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, adopted 22 November 1967 after the Six-Day War, called for Israel’s withdrawal from the occupied territories.

<sup>254</sup> On 13 February 1975 an ‘Arab–Israeli Debate’ was held at the Oxford Union. The motion was ‘That Israel should be replaced by a secular state of Palestine.’ The main speakers were Said Hammami, British spokesman for the Palestine Liberation Organization, and BM.

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not to have happened, there is no practically acceptable way in which it can now be undone. Sentence two: The most desirable thing, therefore, is that the Arabs should accept the continued existence of Israel. Sentence three: The fact has to be faced, however, that this is to ask more than most human beings generally, and Arabs in particular, find tolerable, and therefore would have to be balanced by massive concessions to the Arabs by Israel, bigger than anything they have yet been prepared to contemplate. Sentence four: Only the kind of deal outlined in my sentences two and three, involving as it does huge sacrifices by both sides, can ensure both the survival of Israel and the attainment of peace in the Middle East.

Carrying on from my sentence four, I think that only an approach which sees the Arab point of view and genuinely sympathises with it can secure their acceptance of Israel's existence – which is what I meant when I said that my kind of pro-Arab is objectively Israel's best friend.

I'd love to have drink with you at the Athenaeum at 6 p.m. on Thursday 16 January. If the argument between us becomes too violent, no doubt they will throw us out.

Yours sincerely,  
Bryan

TO BRYAN MAGEE

15 January 1975

Headington House

Dear Bryan,

Thank you for your letter. I do not believe your position to be founded on rational grounds, but then perhaps Dr Popper is right after all and no value judgements can in principle be so. But if you really believe that the United Nations committed a grave crime in 1948, and that, after all that had happened between 1933 and 1945, it was the lesser evil to leave the Jews in Palestine to the mercies of the Arabs (for this was the only feasible alternative – and was, in

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fact, the one adopted), which would have deprived Israel of the only claim to legitimacy that it could possibly possess – then, I think, you should change your position on [the?] racing card [*sic*], and explain that you support the position of the more moderate followers of Arafat. Otherwise you will ensure that the gap between you and any other opponents of the motion will be so wide as to create inevitable confusion in their ranks – and that is something that they have a right to protect themselves from. In short, I shall not argue about your position, from which I am sure that you cannot be shifted by perception of either facts or the moral consequences of the policy you advocate. But I do think that your allies could well exclaim ‘Non tali auxilio, non defensoribus istis’<sup>255</sup> – the least you can do is to warn them of the line you are likely to take – if you told this to the other side too, they may not bother to speak, since I have no doubt whatever that you could put their case, at least three-quarters of it, far more persuasively – I mean convincingly and ably and sincerely, and without the emotional claptrap which on some occasions both sides are apt to employ.

All foreign rule is hateful. But do you feel similar emotions about Poles in Germany, the Czechs in German Bohemia, the Iraqis in Kurdistan, the Poles in Danzig, etc.? Do you think that the millions of displaced persons of 1945–6 should or could go back to their original homes? But there – I promised not to argue. At the Athenaeum we must discuss why it is that even the universities in England look so contemptuously upon the arts and honour them so seldom, and when they do, so capriciously (e.g. Oxford this year).

Yours,

Isaiah

<sup>255</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid* 2. 521. The beginning of the next line, ‘tempus eget’, is understood: ‘The occasion does not need help of that kind or defenders such as those.’

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TO ROBERT SILVERS

30 January 1975

Headington House

Dear Bob,

I am inclined to send this<sup>256</sup> to Izzy, but do not wish to offend him or draw even the tiniest droplet of blood. I imagine he is, where Jews are concerned, incurable, feeling as he does that his love for them justifies him in hitting Zionists on the head – since clearly his image of them is identified with their most reactionary and strident New York Jewish supporters. It is surely absurd to ignore the dangers to Israel of Arafat's state, even if they have brought it about and it is inevitable (about which I am not sure); quite ridiculous to ignore the mood of the vast majority of Israelis – anxiety, fear of war, desire to compromise if this is at all feasible, i.e. if the Israeli maximum can be made to coincide with the Arab minimum – that is what I found on my recent visit virtually everywhere outside extreme *Likud* circles. Equally absurd to say that Suez was designed to prevent Egypt from acquiring the Canal resources for its own development – the business about the British lifeline and the image of Nasser as a strutting dictator at the old game of defying the democracies and getting away with lawless behaviour was certainly what the Conservatives and most of the British working class felt – Eden, after all, was passionately pro-Arab at this stage; the French were concerned only with Algiers; the Israelis were genuinely driven to distraction by the bombs thrown against children within their then awkward frontiers. What is all this about enfeebling Egypt? This does seem to me crude Marxist claptrap, worthy of Chomsky but not of Izzy. However, I have tried to put it all very mildly to dear Izzy in my letter (*not* An Open Letter to I. F. Stone from Sir Isaiah Berlin, President of the British Academy – nightmare thought); if you think I can send it

<sup>256</sup> IB enclosed a copy of a draft letter to Stone dated 28 January 1975, of which a slightly revised version, dated 13 February 1975, appears (with cuts) at B 589–92.

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to him I will do so, but I would rather he did not know I had asked you to ‘vet’ it. A short scribble from you in reply will be enough.

The conferences in Israel were very boring – but we enjoyed the company of the Spenders, the Hampshires, the Annans and Chuck Taylor – the last was particularly charming and exhilarating, and understood the ‘tough doves’ in Israel particularly well. I was delighted by the fact that Lady A. and the Hon. Misses A. (two) brought their baptismal certificates with them, for I don’t know what mysterious contingency: Noel, to do him justice, did not. The Spenders behaved angelically: Gaby found Sharm-el-Sheikh not beautiful enough.

Yours ever,  
Isaiah

TO GEORGE WEIDENFELD

18 February 1975

Wolfson College

Dear George,

Forgive me for returning once again to an old topic. I keep getting enquiries about Herzen’s *From the Other Shore*, from friends and strangers, mainly professors in the United States, but also students in England and America. I must have had two dozen such, in the last two or three years, and I replied briefly that I do not know whether or not it is out of print, but since I only possess one copy myself, I can do nothing for them. Blackwells tells me that the book is certainly out of print – at least, no new copies are obtainable anywhere – and that second-hand copies are very difficult indeed to obtain, and that they are searching for one for me (they regard finding two as an entirely Utopian impression). In the circumstances, would you consider either reprinting or

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releasing the copyright? Almost any paperback firm would, I think, be glad, even in these days, to reissue it.<sup>257</sup>

I hear that you have been dining with Metternich, and I long to hear what you think of his Middle Eastern schemes. We have had a major fuss about Bhutto, no one is speaking to anyone, and Trevor-Roper finds it difficult to enter the portals of Wolfson since it houses the infamous Richard Gombrich. I feel no great sympathy either way, and am glad, for once, to observe this row from the sidelines.

Have you read I. F. Stone's article in the *New York Review*? I was annoyed and distressed by it and propose to write and tell him so. Have you been privileged with a copy of Menuhin's letter on UNESCO? High-minded twaddle from that noble and pure, not applied, spirit. If his advice were followed, blood would flow quite soon.

Yours ever,  
Isaiah

*Sources*

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Joseph Brodsky: Beinecke Library, Yale, GEN MSS 613, Box 2, Folder 56

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Graham Greene: Georgetown University, Graham Greene Papers 2, Box 1, Folder 2

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Quintin Hogg: Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge, GBR/0014/HLSM 1/1/7

<sup>257</sup> In 1979 Henry Hardy reissued it at OUP in Oxford Paperbacks, and IB's introduction was reprinted with a new postscript as 'A Revolutionary Without Fanaticism', *New York Review of Books*, 19 April 1979, 16–21, and later (with further revisions) in POI.

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George Kennan: George F. Kennan Papers, MC076, Public Policy Papers, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library (Box 5, Folder 5, and **online**)

Bryan Magee: his papers (currently in the possession of Henry Hardy)

Robert Silvers: New York Public Library, **MssCol 23385, Series I: Robert B. Silvers Files 1955–2016**, by courtesy of the Manuscripts and Archives Division, the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. Those marked § first appeared in ‘The Israel Letters’, *Jewish Quarterly* no. 244, May 2021, 67–87. We are indebted to David Herman, who edited that selection, for allowing us to plagiarise his notes, and for other assistance. We are greatly indebted to Tal Nadan of the NYPL for her help. Thanks too to Richard Davenport-Hines for ready interpretative aid.

Vera Stern: Library of Congress, Isaac Stern Papers, Box 14

Wardens of All Souls College, Oxford (John Sparrow, Patrick Neill) and John Habakkuk: IB’s file at All Souls

George Weidenfeld: Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Berlin; Thomas Harding, author of *The Maverick: George Weidenfeld and the Golden Age of Publishing* (London, 2023: Weidenfeld and Nicolson), to whom we are most grateful, kindly supplied copies of letters from the Weidenfeld & Nicolson Records, C1615, Manuscripts Division, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library, and from George Weidenfeld’s private archive, London

Edward Weeks: University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Center, Edward Weeks Papers, Container 3.1

Other letters were supplied by their recipients