



More Enlightening

Supplementary Letters 1946–1960

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The series will make digitally available both selected published essays and edited transcripts of unpublished material.

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More Enlightening

Supplementary Letters 1946–1960

The letters in this document do not appear in the second volume of Berlin's correspondence, *Enlightening: Letters 1946–1960* (London, 2009).

The letters from this period to Aline, his wife from 1956, were mostly¹ excluded from this volume by her wish, but she later changed her mind about allowing her letters from him to appear, and several were included in the third volume, *Building: Letters 1946–1960* (London, 2013; see B xvi). She wanted his passionate side, missing from the previously published letters to others, to be documented. The earlier letters were added to this supplement in January 2024 with the permission of her surviving children, to whom the editors are most grateful.

The other letters that appear below are mostly late discoveries which might have been included in the book had they come to light in time.

Some annotation has been provided (especially for the densely peopled letters to Aline), much of it copied or adapted from the published volumes to save readers having to look it up. Further notes may be provided later, but for the time being the incompletely annotated texts are made available here for the convenience of readers. Abbreviations and other editorial apparatus mostly follow the conventions adopted in the published volumes, including those listed [here](#). The persons most frequently referred to in the letters to Aline appear in the following list. The incomplete versions of their names in the left-hand column are not annotated except on first occurrence; rather, these names can be assumed to refer to the individuals in the right-hand column unless otherwise stated.

the Ape	Alexander Schneider
Alan	Alan Pryce-Jones
Alice	Alice James
Alix	Alix de Rothschild
Ava	Ava Waverley
B.B.	Bernard Berenson
Betty	Betty Harcourt
Bill	Bill Deakin

¹ A few extracts, shown here in this green, were included in the editorial commentary.

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Cecilia	Cecilia Dick
Clarissa	Clarissa Eden
Diana	Diana Cooper
Goronwy	Goronwy Rees
Guy	Guy de Rothschild
Hans	Hans Halban
James	James Joll
Joe	Joseph Alsop
Judy (M.)	Judy Montagu
Liz	Elizabeth von Hofmannsthal
Marcus	Marcus Dick
Marietta	Marietta Tree
Maurice	Maurice Bowra
Michel	Michel Strauss
Miriam	Miriam Rothschild
Nabokov	Nicolas Nabokov
Nin	Nin Ryan
Our [Great] Friend	Alix de Rothschild
Pam	Pam Berry
Patricia	Patricia de Bendern
Peter	Peter Halban
Philip	Philip(pe) Halban
Philippe	Philippe de Gunzbourg
Pon	A. P. d'Entrèves
Raimund	Raimund von Hofmannsthal
Rheims	Maurice Rheims
Ronnie	Ronald Tree
Rowland	Rowland Burdon Muller
Sas[c]ha	Alexander Schneider
Stuart	Stuart Hampshire
Tess	Teresa ('Tess') Rothschild
Mrs W.	Vera Weizmann
X	Jenifer Hart (sometimes, in the right context)

Archival sources are listed at the end of the PDF (and in some cases at the foot of letters).

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

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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: see for example the letters from George Kennan in this supplement.

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Letters from A. J. Ayer © the Estate of A. J. Ayer 2025

Letters from George Kennan © Princeton University 2021

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FROM A. J. AYER

15 June [1946]

Wadham College, Oxford²

Dear Shaya

I am sorry I started this. It is just the sort of thing that we wanted to avoid, and have successfully avoided so far. But since I have started it, and you seem to be worried, I had better explain what I meant. I said you were disingenuous because although I don't or didn't believe that you told me anything that was untrue, I felt that you had deceived me by concealing from me the fact that Penelope had remained in Paris and the fact that you were in communication with them both. I considered this a deception because I understood that we had made a gentleman's agreement to exchange vital information of that sort; and from the fact that you said nothing I inferred that you were as much in the dark as I. If you did not think that there was any such agreement, or realize that I thought so, the charge of disingenuousness does not hold: but I still think it was slightly unfriendly of you not to have given a me the clue, for which I was obviously searching, to Patricia's motives. However I appreciate your desire to remain neutral, and you may have thought that I was better informed than I was, or still am for that matter. And I have never wished to suggest, or for a moment believed, that you did anything to engineer the break.

What you will be told in Paris that will make you very angry, I have no idea at all. But I do ask you not to believe anything about me, whether it is something I am supposed to have done or something I am supposed to have said, without having first checked the story with me. I will tell you the truth: and in that sort of way I am honest though you are reported to think otherwise. But in any case there is nothing that you don't know already, except certain facts about my relationship with Penelope, which didn't seem to me to affect the main issue and which I withheld from you

² Where AJA was Dean at the time. IB annotates: 'From Sir Alfred Ayer, 1946. The topic is his relationship in that year with Lady Patricia Douglas & Mrs (Penelope) James Douglas.'

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out of respect for her. And here I may add that my behaviour to Penelope *after* I returned from Paris was guided solely by what I conceived to be in her interest. She may now think differently, and if she does I was to that extent wrong, but she wasn't made to think so at the time. But I can't develop this point until I know how much she herself wants told. For my part I am willing to hear that I behaved foolishly and gracelessly, but I insist on the fact that I was serious throughout.

Don't be too unkind to M^r Boyers[?]. He is bogus but not offensively so, and in his way rather engaging.

yrs

Freddie.

P.S. If you want to understand my part in the affair you must realize that the Don Juan simile doesn't hold.

TO DIANA COOPER³

15 November 1946 [*manuscript*]

New College

Dearest Diana,

Like everyone else I seethe with frustrated indignation – frustrated because there is no one in particular I can vent it on. Personal feelings apart, it seems to me idiotic that precisely at a moment when the General is returning & no one here has any real links with him, this change shd be made. No doubt there is some splendour in leaving at a moment of apogee, with nothing but golden opinions falling in a golden shower on one's head – with not a cross word from any party or interest or person, and you can continue to live an enchanted life at Chantilly, still it *is* a lunatic act on the part of the Foreign Office – I know nothing of the facts, no

³ Diana Olivia Winifred Maud Cooper (1893–1986) née (Lady Diana) Manners, famous in Edwardian society for her beauty, was a highly successful actress, society hostess and autobiographer. When her husband was created Lord Norwich 1952 she retained the style 'Lady Diana Cooper'.

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doubt one mustn't jump to unsupported conclusions – but prima facie it does seem queerly irresponsible. I have become a remote & ineffectual don & should have views. Like Sir J. Simon,⁴ I am inclined to say that my blood literally boils. It will cool a little if & when due recognition occurs. I have no animus against Sir O. Harvey – he is a nice, gentle, inoffensive high minded liberal with a Chinese expression – & all I remember of him in Washington is that he addressed an American official called Dr Berle, an enemy to England & the head of the State Department's Secret Service – under the impression that he was talking to me. A really absurd cross purpose talk occurred – you will agree nothing is ever funnier – on the lines of "I have often read your telegrams, you know". Dr Berle who suspected as much went green & said "really?" – 'oh I am not in the American Department, of course, but they come round, you know, they come round' etc. & finally turned to his other neighbour & said "What an intelligent man Mr Berlin seems to be". Consternation. Explanations. Frightful embarrassment. My name always lands me in things of that kind. I have at last obtained my lunch with Mr Churchill who was very genial & sang musical hall songs after lunch: he spoke with some warmth about Lord Halifax⁵ & indicated certain weak spots – I long to repeat the magnificent turn on all this when I see you – when oh when will that be? – when in a mild fit of loyalty I said 'but hasn't Lord H. always led a rather sheltered life?' he said 'don't you be too sure about that' & enlarged on this too in sweeping strokes. I have just returned from Ditchley where there were: The Straights, Joe

⁴ John Allsebrook Simon (1873–1954), 1st Viscount Simon of Stackpole Elidor, GCVO; barrister and Liberal politician; Lord Chancellor 1940–5; Fellow of All Souls 1897–1954.

⁵ Edward Frederick Lindley Wood (1881–1959), 1st Earl of Halifax 1944, statesman; secretary of state for foreign affairs 1938–40, UK ambassador, Washington, 1941–6; elected chancellor, Oxford, 1933, and hon. fellow, All Souls, 1934.

Alsop,⁶ Judy M.⁷ & some Americans. I don't believe that our plot is going too well: so at least the new Mrs T. whispered in a tense manner: yet they seemed to me getting on like houses on fire. Joe's newspaper articles of 1946, much blown upon at the time, have become the official policy of the United States: & he is justifiably pleased. I really like him very much: he was piqued at being told by Judy that he talked more than I do: apart from that all went off without a hitch. Ronnie⁸ is deliciously happy: & Marietta⁹ is sweet & good. But I cannot see her getting off with Ronnie's friends in Society: & I am not clear what the effect of that will be. Judy was charming: gay, very amusing, full of irony & very very quick. I wish Joe wd act for his own & the general good. Victor¹⁰ too I saw, & he is conspicuously happier than ever before: Tess¹¹ is very sweet & gentle & nice to one, but embarrasses me as some high minded Wykehamists do: the air loses oxygen, breathing becomes difficult, the forces of life ebb, & loquacious as I am, the words cleave to my mouth. In short I have an idea that she is perhaps, dare I say it, a prig: tremulous, sensitive, lovelorn, devoted, anxious, public spirited, and governessy, uneasy, tortured & a prig. Terribly in love, in a sense very happy, terrified of Barbara, passionately anxious for Victor's friends no longer communicate with her, filled with

⁶ Joseph Wright ('Joe') Alsop (1910–89), journalist. See A 617–18.

⁷ Judith Venetia ('Judy') Montagu (1923–72), daughter of Hon. Edwin Montagu and Venetia Stanley; later (1962) married Milton Gendel.

⁸ (Arthur) Ronald Lambert Field ('Ronnie') Tree (1897–1976), English gentleman of American descent and independent means; m. as his 2nd wife 'Marietta' Peabody (next note). The Trees were good friends of the Berlins.

⁹ Mary Endicott ('Marietta') Tree (1917–91) née Peabody, US socialite and Democrat political activist; m. Ronnie Tree (previous note).

¹⁰ (Nathaniel Mayer) Victor Rothschild (1910–90), 3rd Baron Rothschild, zoologist (Director, BOAC, 1946–58; Chairman, Agricultural Research Council, 1948–58; Assistant Director of Research, Dept of Zoology, Cambridge, 1950–70). He had married his second wife, the former Teresa Georgina ('Tess') Mayor (1915–96) on 15 August 1946.

¹¹ Teresa Georgina ('Tess') Rothschild (1915–96) née Mayor; Cambridge graduate who worked at MI5 during WW2, where she became a close friend of Stuart Hampshire, and also met Victor Rothschild (m. 1946).

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rumours of what Barbara says of her (I don't doubt it is unrepeatable) & in some queer way devitalizing, not in relation to Victor, who is obviously unpersecuted & at peace, at least relatively, but vis a vis me for example. Perhaps I am no good with the insecure or the oversensitive. I like her well enough to have a sort of abstract respect for her donnish qualities: but I am uncasy with her. I wish it weren't so. Oxford is bleak & cold & not itself yet – there is an atmosphere not of slow recovery but of a breathing spell between two crises. It is very extraordinary about Dr Dalton: 'they have shot our fox' said a Conservative M.P., I feel genuinely terrified of Sir S. Cripps's ruthless honesty & tenacity of purpose, & think with wild longing about Italy & France, Paris and Rome and Chantilly from which I feel fatally divided by the cold dank grey mist which is much older than the College rooms it sits on & has long killed any possible enchantments of the Middle Ages or anything else. And I hear Evelyn W. has written a book on corpses. But when does J. Julius come? & when shall I see you?

My love
Isaiah.

TO DIANA COOPER

21 January 1947 [*manuscript*]

New College

Dear Diana,

And now I am in bed with 'flu, and it could not be more melancholy. Yesterday I had to decline Lady C.'s summons because I had to lecture at 12 – far too many people come, not a word do they understand, but lecture rooms tend to be warmer than their sordid unheated lodgings – they are reduced to the condition of the emaciated haggard students in Dostoyevsky or V. Hugo – the kind that have burning eyes & buy rusty pistols for political assassination – only ours aren't very spirited. I am sure John Julius is better off in Strasbourg at the moment. *Any* joke *any* lecturer makes is wildly well received, so that I kept mine in fits of

easily purchased laughter & felt deeply ashamed afterwards for currying favour at the expense of the dignity of the subject. After that God, quite rightly I must add, punished me by shooting sciatica into my shoulder & some unknown virus into the rest of my system. But if by some strange luck I were to visit – on Friday for example, wd you be there, in London I mean, could I visit you in the Dorchester at tea time? it may alas not be possible but I shall swallow a much larger quantity of much stronger drugs if it is. The thought of Paris is infinitely remote in this very H. G. Wellsy atmosphere – the procession of dull shiny reputable remorselessly boring remorselessly information-avid faces thoroughly well adapted to modern life, with spare parts & contractable frames, not hard nor soft but like something out of plastic not exactly bogus, not exactly genuine good dependable bakelite with not a spark nor a glimmer anywhere. Oh dear I cd go on like this too long. If Friday is no good don't, I pray you, trouble to answer. I shall probably continue ill – All my love & to L. de V.

Yours

Isaiah.

Your Xmas card was very like my colleagues: Particularly the Ouistiti, proprement dit.¹²

In the autumn of 1947 Winston Churchill asked IB to read and comment on a proof of Book I, 'From War to War, 1919–39', of The Gathering Storm, the first volume of Churchill's six-volume personal history of The Second World War (London, 1948–53). IB wrote some comments on the proof itself, but also submitted an overall report, which appears as an appendix to this supplement, and is the subject of the following letter.

¹² 'Marmoset, properly so called'.

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TO WINSTON CHURCHILL

15 November 1947 [*manuscript*]

New College

Dear Mr Churchill

I enclose my scattered comments. I apologize for their unorganized character, & greatly hope that the dry & sometimes pedantically critical fashion in which they are written will be taken by you as evidence of the occupational infirmities of my trade rather than as donnish strictures. I enjoyed reading the text more than I can say, & admire it vastly: & took it that you only wanted me to give frank comments wherever I thought that improvements could be made. I shall, if I may, return the actual text next week, with a good many marginalia: & I shall then try to compute by how many words the book could be shortened if the passages I have marked with a star were relegated to appendices. I do wish to say again how greatly I esteem this honour which you have done me – & how much I enjoyed the delicious luncheon with which you started me off on this delightful labour.

yrs sincerely

Isaiah Berlin

CHAQ/2/3/14, fo. 2

Six weeks later Churchill wrote to IB from his Moroccan retreat:

FROM WINSTON CHURCHILL

25 December 1947 [*carbon*]

Hôtel de la Mamounia, Marrakech

Dear Mr Berlin,

Thank you so much for all the work you have done which is of much use to me. I do not agree with all your comments and will presently send you back my various rejoinders. In a great many cases I am accepting your suggestions.

I now send you the first six chapters which, as you will see, have been completely remoulded. I have not yet decided to leave out the

political stuff, though I agree it is a little off the track. I should like to know how you think the new first six chapters run. Personally I feel they fit together much better than they did before. However please state exactly what your view is upon them and to what extent your first impressions have been affected by the drastic changes I have made.

Yours sincerely,

[Winston S. Churchill]

CHAQ/2/3/5, fo. 17

*IB's reply came seven weeks later. A draft was published at E 42–4, but the version actually sent (which had disappeared) has since surfaced, and appears below. (Changes are shown in *this green*, a passage omitted in E in *this red*.)*

TO WINSTON CHURCHILL

14 February 1948

New College

Dear Mr Churchill

I must apologise for taking so long to acknowledge your letter from Marrakesh, but as Bill Deakin¹³ can testify the monstrous overcrowding of post-war Oxford – and in particular of my own teeming College – has, at any rate for the present, destroyed the civilised habits of a more leisurely time, with the result that one does what one can when one can. I have read the latest batch of proofs with close attention and greatly welcome the result – particularly such changes and re-arrangements as I have noticed. I had returned the earlier lot of proofs when I sent my original letter

¹³ (Frederick) William Dampier ('Bill') Deakin (1913–2005), historian, Fellow and Tutor, Wadham, 1936–49; wartime service as a Yugoslav expert in the Special Operations Executive (SOE) included a dangerous and successful mission to Tito (177/1) and his partisans in 1943; First Secretary, UK Embassy in Belgrade, 1945–6; Warden, St Antony's, 1950–68; formerly Churchill's research assistant, Deakin became prominent in the team helping Churchill prepare his war memoirs.

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to you, and didn't therefore have them by me for the purpose of a detailed page-by-page comparison, but I feel sure that I remembered all the passages on which I sent you comments. The transpopulation of the long memoranda to appendices is, I am convinced, a very great improvement: it lightens the text and gives the whole added balance, momentum and coherence. There are one or two points of minor detail concerned with dates and trivial facts – the fate of Radek, for example – which I have mentioned to Deakin and with which I will not burden you. I add two points of greater importance at the end of this letter.

In general, the architecture of the whole of Book I now strikes me as being far more symmetrical and impressive: the opening chapters particularly, which before seemed to me (I hope you did not mind my telling you that – you did, I recollect, order me to be quite candid) to get off to a slow start,¹⁴ now set the tempo and the rhythm for the entire work: the awful descent to the abyss, liberated from technical digressions, is a magnificently cumulative rapid and continuous narrative. I admired the earlier version greatly and I now more than ever think it a literary and political masterpiece. I long for the rejoinders which you were kind enough to say that you might send – but I have no doubt that you are immensely busy and shall not repine. While I accept your verdict on disputed – or at least disputable – passages as your considered judgement, and, as such, final, there are two points which I venture to bring up again.

¹⁴ In his comments on the previous draft IB had written that chapters 2 and 3 were 'too episodic and insubstantial to act as an adequate scaffolding to the more tremendous story of the Rise of Hitler, with which the book really gets into a wonderful stride' (see Appendix to this supplement below, 'General remarks').

The first is this: the story told, I imagine, for the first time in print of the events behind Mr Eden's¹⁵ resignation in 1938¹⁶ reminded me of an account I had heard of this during the war, and I remember being told by someone at the Foreign Office that after Mr Eden came back post haste from Grasse he forced through a formal reversal of the Cabinet decision rather in the teeth of Neville Chamberlain – although by that time it was all too late, the President felt he had been snubbed and bad consequences followed. If this is true, and I expect you will have had the benefit of Mr Eden's advice on this incident, the details of what occurred in the Cabinet may be worth greater detail and emphasis. But perhaps my memory has played me false, or the facts are confidential, and in any case I should not wish to make too much of this suggestion.

The second point is the information given by Beneš¹⁷ to Stalin about the conversations between the Soviet soldiers and the

¹⁵ (Robert) Anthony Eden (1897–1977), 1st Earl of Avon 1961, Conservative MP; Foreign Secretary 1935–8, 1951–5; Prime Minister 1955–7.

¹⁶ Although Eden's resignation in February 1938 was nominally over appeasement of Italy, the major breach between him and the Prime Minister, (Arthur) Neville Chamberlain (1869–1940), had occurred earlier. In early January 1938 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882–1945) had secretly proposed convening an international conference of the US, Britain, France, Germany and Italy in an attempt to alleviate the worsening international situation. In Eden's absence on holiday in the South of France, Chamberlain replied suggesting deferral of the US plan until the completion of British negotiations with Italy. Roosevelt agreed not to go ahead but expressed alarm at the possibility of Britain's accepting the Italian occupation of Abyssinia. Summoned back from France by his officials and horrified at the damage being done to his work on building up Anglo-American relations, Eden secured in Cabinet discussions a softening of the British position; mollifying messages were sent to Roosevelt, but the US proposal was effectively dead.

¹⁷ Edvard Beneš (1884–1948), President of Czechoslovakia 1935–8, 1945–8. Churchill recounts that in 1936 Beneš had heard of a conspiracy between the military and old-guard Communists in the Soviet Union to overthrow Stalin and establish a pro-German regime, and had immediately reported this to Stalin, who launched a merciless purge of the Soviet Army. IB's attempt to water down the

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Germans in the middle 1930s: the footnote in the text which notes the conjecture about the part played by the GPU¹⁸ to which I drew your attention originally suggests that it is a well substantiated hypothesis. Perhaps I overstated the case in my account of it, and if so I must plead guilty: while I believe that the story is very plausible, the evidence for it rests on gossip and information collected by anti-Soviet Russian émigrés, and is therefore easily challenged. Hence it will perhaps be best to say no more than something like ‘there are those who hold that’ rather than ‘there is some evidence that’, otherwise the Czechs may make a fuss as well as the Russians. I think that I drew Deakin’s attention to this and he probably has already offered a suitable emendation.

It only remains for me to say again how **greatly I appreciate the opportunity of seeing this great work in progress, and what an honour and source of fascination it has been to me. I sincerely hope that you have now fully recovered, and need not add that if there is anything further that you would like me to do, I should be only too ready to do it.**

yrs sincerely

Isaiah Berlin

CHAQ/2/3/16, fos 16–17

relevant footnote (apparently based on information he had provided) seems to have failed, since in the published text it reads: ‘There is however some evidence that Beneš’s information had previously been imparted to the Czech police by the Ogpu, who wished it to reach Stalin from a friendly foreign source.’ *The Gathering Storm*, 225.

¹⁸ Gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie (State Political Directorate), which replaced the Cheka as the Soviet political police force in 1922 and soon became the OGPU (Joint State Political Directorate), was renamed again as the GUGB (Main Directorate for State Security) when it became part of the NKVD (People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs) of the Soviet Union in 1934; it later evolved into the KGB.

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FROM WINSTON CHURCHILL

27 March 1948 [*carbon*]

n.p.

⟨My dear Is[a]iah Berlin,⟩

At last I send you the honorarium, with my thanks for your work and the help you have given me in connection with my book.

All good wishes,

⟨yrs sincerely,

W.S.C.⟩

(With 200 guineas.

CHUR 4/18 B, fo. 168

TO WINSTON CHURCHILL

22 October 1948 [*manuscript*]

New College

Dear Mr Churchill,

I should like to thank you for your kindness and sending me the first volume of your great book, and to take this opportunity once again of saying how greatly I appreciated the honour of being consulted by you in connection with it. I read it with the greatest admiration and enjoyment.

yours sincerely

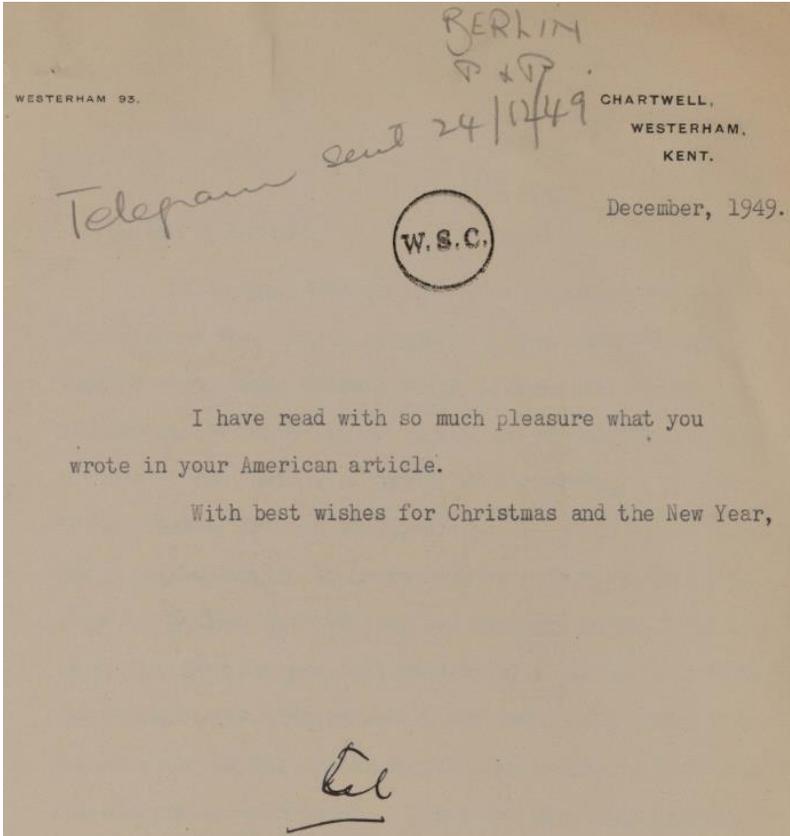
Isaiah Berlin

CHUR 4/49, fo. 41

In the autumn of 1949 IB reviewed Churchill's second volume of War memoirs, Their Finest Hour (London, 1949). The review appeared in the Cornhill Magazine and the Atlantic Monthly (and may be found as 'Winston Churchill in 1940' in PI). On 24 December Churchill sent a telegram from Chartwell.¹⁹

¹⁹ The original text of the telegram is at CHAQ/2/2/29, fo. 3. The telegram as received is in a scrapbook kept by Marie Berlin, at MSB 822/62.

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FROM WINSTON CHURCHILL

24 December 1949 [*telegram*]

[Chartwell]

I HAVE READ WITH SO MUCH PLEASURE WHAT YOU WROTE IN YOUR AMERICAN ARTICLE BEST WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

WINSTON CHURCHILL

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Charges to pay _____ s. _____ d.
 RECEIVED

POST OFFICE
 TELEGRAM

No. _____ OFFICE STAMP

Prefix. Time handed in. Office of Origin and Service Instructions. Words.

At ^{12.58} m ^{12.58} 94 OF A 7134 11.29 AM WESTERHAM
 From SV REDTD FM OXFORD COLLECT FEE 29
 By

ISAIAH BERLIN 49 HOLYCROFT AVE LONDON NW 3 =

I HAVE READ WITH SO MUCH PLEASURE WHAT YOU WROTE
 IN YOUR AMERICAN ARTICLE BEST WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS
 AND NEWYEAR = WINSTON CHURCHILL +

AMS ENQUIRY" or call, with this form
 by this form, and, if possible, the envelope. B or C
 C

G.N.P. Co. Ltd. S171825 200 M.P. 451. 3/47

TO WINSTON CHURCHILL

3 March 1950 [*manuscript*]

New College

Dear Mr Churchill,

This is but to apologize for not writing to you earlier to say how deeply I appreciated your very kind telegram to me on the subject of my Cornhill & Atlantic article. I enjoyed writing it more than anything I have ever done, & am very glad that you did not think too ill of it; I did not dare send you the final version for fear that you might rightly think it unworthy of its subject.

yrs sincerely

Isaiah Berlin

CHAQ/2/2/29, fo. 2

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On 12 February 1950 Kenneth Clark²⁰ wrote to IB:

Dear Isiah [*sic*],

I have been immensely impressed by the leading article on Schiller²¹ – the most brilliant thing of its kind I have read, & far the best criticism of Schiller.

For some reason I have a fancy that you will know the name of the author. If so could you be very kind & put it on a post card.

Sorry to bother you

Yours,

KC

IB's reply follows.

TO KENNETH CLARK

n.d. [>12 February 1950; *card*]

New College

Dear K.

I haven't the least idea. I thought it very good myself – the best sort of Ideengeschichte,²² it begins to be clever & interesting & not flashy for the opening lines & then becomes better & better – who could it be – Eddie?²³ *not* Miss Butler;²⁴ not any Professor of

²⁰ Kenneth Mackenzie Clark ('K') (1903–83), later (1969) Baron Clark (life peer); art historian; Keeper, Dept of Fine Art, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1931–3, Director, National Gallery, 1934–45, MOI 1939–41, Slade Professor of Fine Art, Oxford, 1946–50 (and 1961–2).

²¹ [Erich Heller], 'Friedrich Schiller: The Moralist as Poet', TLS, 10 February 1950, 81–3.

²² 'History of ideas'.

²³ Probably Edward Charles ('Eddie') Sackville-West (1901–65), music critic and author; later (1962) 5th Baron Sackville.

²⁴ Eliza Marian ('Elsie') Butler (1885–1959), Schröder Professor of German, Cambridge, 1945–51, author of *The Tyranny of Greece Over Germany: A Study of the Influence Exercised by Greek Art and Poetry Over the Great German Writers of the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1935).

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German; Mr Willey?²⁵ not any professor of philosophy – if you do discover I'd love to know: I wish it cd have been me (I?) – I wish I thought I cd ever say things like this – almost the profoundest thing said was something about the transformation – drastic act – of spiritual & intuitive experience into *moral* currency & the iron curtain between sense data and Jenseits²⁶ – which prohibits symbolist clairvoyance as the effect of the great Kantian reforms: is it an obvious platitude that the establishing of an official barrier between the sayable & the unsayable, the 2 worlds: the Procrustean effects of this frontier: & the battle of the 2 wor[ld]s is almost the most important phenomenon of our age? may be.

yrs

Isaiah B.

HUMPHREY SUMNER

14 March 1950

New College

Dear Mr Warden,

When I returned in the spring of 1946 from my wartime post in Washington, you were good enough to ask me whether I had any thought of working in the field of Russian history, and I remember saying that my interest had indeed been turning in that direction from philosophical studies, and that I had intimated as much to my colleagues at New College, as early as 1944. As, however, the pressure of teaching was exceptionally heavy during the post-war influx of undergraduates, I felt obliged to put off consideration of any such change until the crisis was over. During the succeeding three years we spoke once or twice about a plan, to

²⁵ Basil Willey (1897–1978), King Edward VII Professor of English Literature, University of Cambridge, 1946–64; author of *The Seventeenth Century Background: Studies in the Thought of the Age in Relation to Poetry and Religion* (London, 1934) and *The Eighteenth Century Background: Studies on the Idea of Nature in the Thought of the Period* (London, 1940).

²⁶ 'The beyond'.

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which I was increasingly attracted, whereby I should devote a greater part of my time to the study of certain selected aspects of nineteenth-century Russian history. In 1948 I accepted an invitation to go to Harvard University in 1949 to lecture on the social and intellectual antecedents of the Russian Revolution, and in the course of 1948–9 articles by me dealing with various aspects of this subject were published in the *Slavonic Review*, the *American Historical Review* and other periodicals, principally in the United States. The six months during which I lectured and held classes on this topic at Harvard (I had conducted a class on it in the previous year for the Modern Languages Faculty at Oxford) served to make it clear to me that a definite shift in my interest had occurred, and that although I continued to be much interested in modern philosophy (on which I went on writing and lecturing), I should prefer to undertake as my main task a specific study in the field of Russian history in the nineteenth century.

As I began to accumulate material for my lectures and classes on the history of radical movements in Russia prior to 1917, I realised how little systematic work, even in the form of isolated monographs, had been done in this field, either in Russia or beyond it. The Russian Revolution is probably the most important event of the twentieth century, yet the amount of serious work accomplished in any country to analyse its causes and examine its antecedents and roots in the past, even in the most general fashion, is remarkably small. I had for many years taken a good deal of interest in the history of ideas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in particular acquired a certain degree of acquaintance with Marxist thought and practice in the course of the research made necessary by writing a volume on Karl Marx²⁷ in the Home University Library, before the war. While looking for information on the influence of Marxism, by attraction and repulsion, on Russian thought and practice, I found that surprisingly little had been done even in the Soviet Union and in

²⁷ The revolutionary and thinker Karl Heinrich Marx (1818–83), co-founder with Friedrich Engels of modern Communism.

Soviet terms to describe, let alone account for, this phenomenon. It seems to me, therefore, that what needs writing is the history of the major developments, social, political and intellectual, which led to the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917. It appeared to me that in order not to go back too far into the past, the proper beginning of such a study should lie in the social and intellectual ferment of the 1830s and 1840s; and after studying the material of which there is far more in the great libraries of the United States than, e.g., in the British Museum or the Bodleian, I came to the conclusion that I should like in particular to attempt a history of Russian radical thought against a background, and indeed foreground, of the social, economic and political facts with which it is, perhaps, more closely bound up than in other countries.

My present plan is this: to devote the first volume of such a study to the life, doctrines and circumstances of the great critic Vissarion Belinsky, who is one of the central, and in some respects the most commanding, figure in the early period of the various movements which culminated in the Revolution. There is no work on his thought and influence in any non-Russian language, and indeed nothing authoritative in Russian since the standard life written in conditions of political control in the 1870s. The book I contemplate would be a full-length study embodying, so far as possible, everything of importance that later scholarship has made and is making known about the man, his environment, the circle of his friends, and the crucial effect which his views had upon Russian – and indirectly European – writing and thought. Further volumes of this study would deal with the conservatives, liberals and radicals of the 1840s, 1850s, 1850s and 1860s, the revolutionaries and their enemies of the 1870s, and the Marxists and Populists of the 1880s and 1890s, culminating in the Revolution of 1905. The last volume would, perhaps, deal with the lull before the final storm of 1917. I should like to make clear the fact that I do not propose to confine myself to the history and analysis of ideas and movements, but to treat in considerable factual detail the concrete social, political and economic changes with which they are interwoven. Nevertheless my main emphasis

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would rest upon the development of social and political movements and doctrines – and the activities of the most important individuals concerned with them – rather than upon social and economic history as such.

At present I do not look beyond 1917 – indeed, even this programme seems to me ambitious enough. I should have no difficulty in finding a suitable publisher for the four or five full-scale volumes of such a study, since I have had offers from more than one firm prepared to undertake a long-term project of this kind.

It is clear to me that I cannot undertake such work if I continue to teach as full-time tutor at New College, with the requirement of devoting, apart from University lectures and classes, a minimum of fifteen hours a week to giving instruction in a subject unrelated to the topic of my research. It is for this reason that I venture to apply to my old College for a Research Fellowship which would make it possible for me to realise the scheme outlined above. For, without the degree of leisure and financial assistance with which a Fellowship of this type would provide me, I could scarcely hope to achieve more than small fragments of the complete design. On these grounds I beg to make a formal application for an appointment which would enable me to pursue the programme of research and publication in the field of Russian history (and the history of European ideas)* outlined above.

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

* See Appendix 2 (*a*).

APPENDIX

There are certain further considerations which I feel obliged to place before yourself and the College.

1. Should my proposal commend itself to the College, I should have to make some provision for obtaining access to Russian material not available in this country or elsewhere in Western

Europe. Since the archives of even the Prague – let alone the Moscow and Leningrad – libraries are not likely to be accessible to Western scholars within the easily foreseeable future, they cannot but turn to the very rich collections of the United States – contained principally in the Library of Congress in Washington, and also at Harvard, Yale and California. When I was at Harvard in 1949 I received an invitation, subsequently confirmed, to visit that university at regular intervals in order to lecture and give instruction on the history of Russian social movements in their relation to the West. This proposal attracted me because, apart from the stimulation afforded to any researcher by the opportunity of discussing the subject with adequately qualified students and colleagues (of whom there are many more in the United States than in England), this arrangement could also provide me with the dollar funds which would at once enable me to work in United States libraries, and adequately supplement the emolument provided by a Research Fellowship – should the College be disposed to grant one – which, I assume, would be substantially smaller than the stipend I at present receive from New College. I should not wish to go to Harvard every year, but perhaps once in two, and occasionally once in three, years. This appears to me to be an almost essential condition for the success of the plan I have outlined, since the Russian collections in the British Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale, and that in Helsinki, suffer, particularly since the war, from gaps in essential material, and I see no other reliable possibility of obtaining adequate dollar funds. An arrangement with Harvard would also enable me to collaborate in a large project for the translation of Russian texts and documents of the nineteenth century in which, when I was there in 1949, it seemed possible for me to participate with eminent scholars in the field of Russian studies. If this part of my plan is approved I should normally expect to spend a minimum of four and a maximum of five terms out of every six in Oxford; at times I might miss a Harvard year altogether and remain in Oxford for seven or eight terms out of nine.

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2. I must also make clear that I have certain commitments to publishers which I should wish to fit in with the general scheme outlined above. I have undertaken to write:

(a) a volume in the Oxford History of Europe (to be published by the Oxford University Press) to be entitled *The History of Ideas in Europe 1789–1870*. The editors of this series have invited me to carry the account to the present day, but if my main project is approved by the College, I should not wish to do this, as it would delay the Russian volumes too greatly.

(b) a volume in a new (Penguin) series dealing with the doctrines of major European philosophers, to be devoted to Bishop Berkeley. This should not take long, perhaps the long vacation of 1952.

Of these (a) would blend quite happily with my main subject of study and indeed would complement it in, I hope, a fruitful manner; while (b) is in process of being written and would not seriously interfere with it.

If my general scheme is approved I should hope to complete the first volume of the Russian series, i.e. that dealing with Belinsky and his times (approx. 1830–48), by the summer of 1953; although it may take a little longer, depending upon the accessibility of Russian material, and the general physical conditions of work at Oxford. The basic outline of this book is contained in the notes which provided the substance of my Harvard lectures, but these will of course need amplification and a great deal of additional detailed research.

3. I should not like, if these proposals meet with approval, wholly to cease from teaching, and still less from lecturing, in the University. I should wish, if my application is accepted, to be permitted to continue to teach philosophy to four or five pupils in New College, as this is a subject in which I continue to feel interest – and thus to remain a Lecturer of New College; and also to lecture in the University on such subjects within my ken as may be considered useful by the Sub-Faculties to which I belong, as well as on my chosen field in Russian history. For I should wish to

continue to participate as fully as is compatible with my main task of research in the general life of the University.

Isaiah Berlin

On 19 June 1950 George Kennan wrote to IB:

I have been meaning for a long time to write to you about your *Foreign Affairs* article,²⁸ which made a deep impression on all of us here. When I was sojourning in the hospital in April I began to dictate a letter to you, but I did not finish it at the time and I have never been able to finish it since. I send it along to you here without any attempt to dress it up more tidily.

FROM GEORGE KENNAN²⁹

26 April 1950

n.p.

Dear Isaiah,

It is now several weeks since I read your article in *Foreign Affairs*, but it has required the monastic seclusion of the Naval Medical Center in Bethesda to enable me to write you about it. As a place of academic retirement the Naval Medical Center is unparalleled. It provides a genuine ivory-white tower, on the 16th floor of which people like myself are accommodated. Except for a few moments at noon and at vesper time, when an electric carillon puts out hymns in stentorian tones which vibrate for miles across the lawns and rooftops of Maryland suburbia, things are relatively quiet. Finally, among the personnel of the place, who must number in the thousands, there is an innocent and childlike unawareness of all intellectual interests except medicine – so great that it provides

²⁸ 'Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century', *Foreign Affairs* 28 (1950), 351–85; reprinted in L.

²⁹ George Frost Kennan (1904–2005), US diplomat, historian and influential exponent of the policy of containment of the USSR, on which he was an acknowledged expert; US ambassador to Yugoslavia 1961–3; prof., school of historical studies, IAS, Princeton, 1956–74.

a solitude without loneliness and without melancholy, uniquely suited for purposes of contemplation.

Numbers of us here read your article with excitement and gratitude, and recognized in it one of the really important statements about our own times.

What I am about to say is not by way of dispute. It is simply that I feel the urge to say some further things in the light of what you have said.

It seems to me that your conclusion was laconic, and almost perfunctory, when taken in relation to the rest of the article.

There is so much more that can be said, it seems to me, about the weakness and fallaciousness of modern totalitarianism. It rests, as you have indicated, on the recognition that man's nature is susceptible, under certain favorable circumstances (one of which is the exclusion of competing influences) to almost any amount or manipulation by other men. Where these circumstances and the requisite techniques and unscrupulousness are present, it is possible to make of the individual man a hero, a villain, or a rag – the ease of the operation being in the ascending order.

The totalitarians have recognized this possibility and they are distinguished from other people, I believe, in their uninhibited readiness to make use of it for political purposes.

Now the great weakness of this practice lies in the fact that the people who grasp for these handles by which the nature of man may be manipulated are themselves men; whereas their action in undertaking to manipulate human nature implies that they have some superhuman platform – some Archimedian 'place to stand on' – outside and above this world of malleable human frailty, a platform from which they can intervene as outsiders in the world or the human subconscious. But of course they do not really have any such platform. They are arrogating to themselves powers which are the powers of gods, in the sense that the readiness to use them implies an immunity to those human weaknesses of which they are taking advantage. And yet, formidable as these men may be in their schooled depravity and in the atrophy of those faculties which cause other people to hesitate, to shrink and to ponder at

points in life, they *are* emphatically only men. Like the rest of us, they must experience passion and illness and death. Their bodies, like our own, begin to be subject at a certain point in life to a process of disintegration which ends in death. Their faculties are no more independent of these bodily changes than are those of the rest of us. Above all, they are not themselves immune from the curious labor of the subconscious, striving to improve for us the outer aspect of our personal world, and impelling us to act upon the impulses of which we are not aware and to rationalize this action in subjective delusions.

Perhaps the national element enters into this. Perhaps it is easier for Germans or Russians than it would be for us to kill the nerves or conscience. Perhaps the resulting insensitiveness reduces the necessary area of self-delusion through the subconscious mind. But that such things as vanity, jealousy, ambition and fear still plague them is evident. Above all, as I say, disease and death remain, and the anti-social impulses or passion; and as long as these great monsters are at hand, surely the human animal must always tremble a little in the presence of his own carnal frailty and mortality. And with that trembling must go those human qualities which are, as I say, amenable to manipulation. But here, of course, there will be no one to manipulate; for the one thing no man can do is to manipulate his own psychological nature.

By consequence, a society in which it is thought that problems have been caused to disappear in order that they may not have to be solved can be, in reality, only a fake. Its foundation is still not really stronger than that of the most muddled and ineffective individualistic society. For what has happened there is only that the weaknesses of the many have been absorbed into the weaknesses of the few, leaving the body politic with all its eggs in one basket, and with that basket woven out of reeds no stronger, or not significantly stronger, than those out of which each of us bewildered individuals in our less purposeful world weaves the little basket in which he carries his spiritual paraphernalia. But many baskets are stronger than one, or a few; and in a world where

each man marches with his own, the quality of self-respect is at least preserved.

What I have just said rests, as I see it, on the logic of the intellect and not of the heart. Actually, the latter, which is of course a personal thing, speaks to many, myself included, as loudly as does the former about the ultimate Impossibility of the totalitarian theory. I really believe that this thing that the totalitarians have done – this taking advantage of the helpless corner of man's psychic structure – is the original sin. It is this knowledge which men were not supposed to develop and exploit. It was this desecrating curiosity, I believe, which Milton really had in mind as his reason for the fall of man and his eviction from Paradise. For when a man's ultimate dignity is destroyed, he is killed, of course, as a man. This exploitation of his weakness is therefore only another form of taking human life arbitrarily and in cold blood, as a result of calculation and not of passion. It is thus the crime of which Raskolnikov made himself guilty and for which his prostitute friend enjoined him to 'kneel down and kiss the earth you have defiled'. The success of civilization seems somehow to depend on the willingness of men to recognize that by taking advantage of this Achilles' heel in man's moral composition, they shame themselves as well as others; on their readiness to refrain from doing so; and on their sticking to the rational appeal which assumes – perhaps in defiance of the evident – that in the long run each man can be taught to rise above himself. Perhaps this is the supreme make-believe. If so, I am persuaded that it is an indispensable one, and the inexorable price of human progress. In any case, it is surely our reason for clinging to the belief that questions are important, are susceptible of solution by rational processes, and should be so approached and solved.

My second point relates to the relative chances of success of the two outlooks.

There is no question about the efficacy of the totalitarian approach, to the individual man, where physical power is established. The soul lives in the body and can be killed through the body, for all purposes of this world. The individual can

therefore always be eliminated if he cannot be brought to obedience. But most people will obviously accept obedience if it becomes indisputably evident that the alternative is elimination, and painful elimination at that.

With respect to large masses of people, the same is true where the possibilities of genocide exist. Genocide is physically a much more difficult operation than murder, but not, as we have seen, outside the realms of possibility where the numbers of people concerned are in the millions and not in the tens of millions. Here, too, extinction can be made the alternative to obedience, and thus obedience can be in large measure assured.

But when we get into the larger masses of people, I am not so sure. There seem to be both physical and political limits even to genocide. They are ample ones, and they still allow for actions too appalling for comprehension, including the establishment of Hell and Purgatory on earth, in the most literal and serious sense. But they are limits, nevertheless.

And beyond them, we don't know what the possibilities of prolonged mass influence really are. One of the highly significant things to know about our world would be the effects on people over a long period of time of a continued unscrupulous exploitation of the irrational sides of their nature. I hope, for example, to find someone in this country who can tell me what changes, if any, are ascertainable in the reactions to modern commercial advertising of the present generation, which has been immersed in it as long as it has been conscious of anything at all, as compared with our own generation, who were taken unaware by it and unquestionably deeply affected. Is skepticism rising? Is the capacity to react to the advertising appeal being atrophied? The same question is pertinent in the political field. When I left the Soviet Union, in 1946, I had the impression that the young people were different from the young people of two decades ago in that country. For this present generation, the doctrine was no longer a live and exciting thing which opened up to you new vistas of outlook and conduct; its recital or acknowledgement was a ritual in which everyone was expected to participate on occasions, some

more frequently than others. It was not that you challenged the ritual or were indignant about its intellectual content, any more than the Sunday morning congregation in the Episcopal Church of any wealthy American city is indignant about passages of the Lord's Prayer which might not stand close analysis in relation to what most of them will be doing the rest of the week. Acceptance of the ritual is just simply the sort of thing one does. If one fails to do it, one stamps oneself, in the case of our young Soviet citizens, as a dangerous character, a likely criminal if not an actual one, and brings trouble upon oneself and one's intimates. But one simply does not bother to reflect on the relation to reality of that which one repeats. It may be right; it may be wrong – who knows? 'They' – the bosses – have their reasons for saying it; Soviet power is a fact; 'keep your mouth shut and sit nicely'.

If what I have said is true, then there is at least an evolution in the relationship between masses and elite in the totalitarian society. There is also an evolution, as we can clearly see in the relationship even between the rulers and those – the party members – who hold themselves out as the enthusiasts. In Germany and in Russia the same phenomenon has been apparent: the gradual death of the party as a real factor on the political scene, its conversion into a glorified *Beamtenbund*:³⁰ a framework within which one seeks security and more rapid promotion. The vital function of providing the source for recruitment into the small conspiratorial Olympus of power shifts from the party to the secret police and above all to the secret police army: the SS or the border guards. It is in these dark and hidden depths that the spirits are raised and trained who will some day compete for supreme power. But the organic connection between regime and people, and even between regime and party, has been lost. People acquiesce, but do not believe; and around the central conspiratorial group there grows a great political loneliness – a loneliness ominous to the point of despair.

What does this portend for the future? I wish we knew. The experiment in Germany (I am not sure that the Italian one was a

³⁰ 'Official association'.

fair one) terminated by violence from without before we could see what it was doing to itself. But I cannot get rid of the suspicion that these men who have reared their power on the beshaming of the nature of other men and on the destruction of their faculties for independent judgment and free will will be found to have destroyed something no less essential to themselves and that their power will eventually perish as the victim of its own extravagance.

Suspecting this, I find myself less worried than I think you are by what you point to as the dilemma, in your concluding passages. Perhaps it is because we have experienced less of it upon our own backs – in any case, I think those of us in America who think about these things at all are less afraid of ‘planning’ as an introduction to totalitarianism. I think I speak for others when I say that we see the only vital and important distinctions in human behavior as distinctions of method, not of objective. Nature, it seems to me, has prescribed our objectives for us out of its own good judgment, and has decreed that we shall desire to remain alive, generally speaking, as long as possible and to multiply our kind – simple and clear objectives, if not very inspiring. About all that we can do nothing, nor about the infinite ramifications of all that in the workings of the human ego. What we can do is to make sure that the pursuit of those objectives, in whatever sublimated forms they may appear, is conducted with methods characterized by a due humility in the sense of a recognition of our mortal weaknesses and susceptibility to error, and by a considerateness for all that in the human personality which we recognize to be clear and more dignified and more hopeful. Provided method accepts and clings to these restraints, I see no reason to fear the objective, whether it be a planned economy or the chaotic freedoms of American life. That there are dangers in one, as in the other, I concede; but I insist that they are the dangers of methodology and not of aim. The completion of endless forms and the submission to a high degree of organization, commensurate with technological progress, is a nuisance, which we have brought upon ourselves by our pursuit of the scientific to the exclusion of the emotional. And it brings us close to the brink of temptations of a far more serious sort. But it

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is not yet the end, and I think there is still time and space for us to halt and to adjust ourselves this side of the precipice. [*unfinished*]

TO DIANA COOPER

1 June 1950

New College

Dearest Diana,

Better to be understood than more intimate and not read; consequently, I dictate. Poor Jimmy Smith, with whom I spent a weekend together with John Julius at Beccles, who complained that he did not enjoy himself at all because he did not understand a word that had been said although God knew all the other guests said enough and in very loud voices. The other guests were the Hoffs [Hofmannsthals], John Foster,³¹ Joe Alsop and Juliet Duff and me, so that you can imagine that in fact there was a good deal of talk and appalling and enjoyable singing till 3 a.m. (John Julius can report to you).

To resume: The Elba plans look very gloomy. The villa offered us by Dottore Ferretti is at once primitive and expensive, so all hope now is concentrated on the village of Lerici. I did have a wild glimpse of hope scotched by a charming postcard from your friend Miss Jenny Nicholson, who said she would be occupying her own villa in September and offering to find other accommodation, then when I explained the poverty, more of my friends than of myself (as dons go I am not rich, but not poor), another postcard extinguished our hopes by saying how expensive Portofino was. So what we hope for is that dear Miss Willis, an ex-headmistress with a 1910 attitude to Italians, will find us something as she promises to do near the Hotel Shelley e les Palmes, in the village off which the poet was drowned. None of us four dons is at all like Shelley; Mr. Dick even less than I, if you see what I mean. If Lerici

³¹ John Galway Foster (1904–82), lawyer, Fellow of All Souls 1924–82; Conservative MP 1945–74; a friend and colleague of IB in Oxford and the US.

fails I don't know what happens, Corsica I expect or Brighton. Connect, connect, says Mr E. M. Forster in all his novels; I shall do my best to connect with you in September if you are anywhere in Italy. The prospect looks grey at the moment.

Israel was splendid. The President is not enormously affable about his government, nor they about him; Mrs President snubs them fairly openly, and is a little like an Anglo-Indian lady who prefers to have as little to do with the natives as possible (for goodness's sake do not repeat this or I shall get into grave trouble all round), but the political pattern is very like what would have happened in Russia if Lenin³² had not arrived upon the scene, and upset things; the same naive and touching political theorising; enormous inefficiency; everybody very nice to everybody; no corruption at all, but nothing done unless you know the Minister personally and there are 75,000 persons who know not only the Minister but his aunts in Odessa, and sister-in-law in Cleveland, Ohio etc.; laws somewhat lax, nobody punished much as it is assumed that nobody means any harm, and all their records in the war have been very good, and you cannot punish people for killing other people with their cars as after all they are decent good people, hurrying to their wives so as to be in time for the Sabbath evening meal, and it was a genuine accident which might have happened to anybody. I found it charming, and particularly the domestic atmosphere in which anybody may be offered any job, and things can only be done not by graft but by persuasion, as for example in Oxford; a system I understand.

There is one business item: there is a man there called George Weidenfeld who edits *Contact* with Nigel Nicolson etc., who is for the moment a very amiable and competent Viennese factotum of

³² Vladimir Il'ich Lenin (1870–1924) né Ul'yanov, Russian revolutionary Communist, founder and leader of the Bolshevik Party; head of the Council of People's Commissars 1917–24.

the President (Raimund and Liz³³ are friends of his), who is engaged in promoting a Festival in 1951, I imagine for a lesser and at [a] different season from our big British one. The official reason for it is some grave scientific conference about ‘The Battle with the Desert’, to which various rural scientists, agronomes, agrosophers, agrologists etc., hydrologists, hydrologers and hydronomes etc, will be invited. But to deck this out a little there is to be a series of concerts by the Palestine Orchestra, Koussevitsky, performances of plays by their two famous theatres etc., and they wish to make a success of that particularly. The secretary of it is the duly virtuous Edwin Samuel, son of Herb, who is a naive good man, although Weizmann³⁴ thinks he is a sinister money-grubber. Be his character what it may, he is an honourable, and so lends some respectability to his partner Mr Evzerov, who I think made a fortune by selling charms and talismans in Siberia enabling ladies to have children of whatever sex they desired. Given that half these women would have children anyhow, or even a third, and that half of these children also will be male or female, if you sell your talisman for £1 and it costs less than 5/- to make, you cannot fail to make a profit. Thus enriched he came to the Holy Land and set up as a promoter and is very successful. He is to sell debentures in the Festival. Edwin Samuel thought that the purpose of it ought to be explained to the investors before they bought the debentures; ‘No’, said Mr. Evzerov, ‘I do not do so. First to sell, then to explain. That is my principle.’ But this is an aside. The point is, will you like to help them promote their cultural activities and be an adviser, for I presume some rich reward, and in any case go and have a look at

³³ Raimund von Hofmannsthal (1906–74), son of the Austrian poet, playwright and librettist Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874–1929); for many years London correspondent of *Time* magazine; and his wife Lady Elizabeth Hester Mary von Hofmannsthal (1916–80), née Paget, second daughter of the 6th Marquess of Anglesey, niece of Lady Diana Cooper, sister of Lady Caroline Paget; Shirley Anglesey’s sister-in-law. See E 793–4.

³⁴ Chaim 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.

the field of operations when the weather is not too hot in June or September or October, or even be interviewed in Paris by the very personable, agreeably ironical Weidenfeld? I think you will probably find it genuinely entertaining, and they are all very sweet and worth helping. Anyhow if you would even consent to discuss it, I could telephone and tell them. They sent me a cable weeks ago asking if I would approach you, but I have been regrettably remiss about this.

Staying with the President was living in a land-locked lamasery with much worship but no contact. He was invited to change his name as all his Ministers have done to some heroic Biblical Ben David, or Ben Saul, or Ben Jephtha, but declined on the ground that he had something to lose by this, which did not make him more popular. He asked his Foreign Minister what being the Prime Minister [sc. President] entailed and was told it was a kind of symbol; he asked how one symbolised, and was told that if he did not like the job they could always abolish the post. How monstrous they are, how ungrateful. They are all very small-scale but very appealing and full of childish imagination. The En Geb music festival in a large unpainted hut on the shores of the Sea of Galilee in which the pianist is expected to play to the bourgeoisie from nine to eleven p.m. and the colony with explanations of when Chopin³⁵ was born etc. from 11 to 3 a.m. is just what I like. I wish I could see you, and tell you how odd and un-twentieth century and comical and touching all this is.

I must stop, I must stop, and go and mind your son and be his moral tutor.

Yours ever,
Isaiah.

⟨Next time I write in MS: this is too orderly & frigid.⟩

³⁵ Frédéric François Chopin (1810–49) né Fryderyk Franciszek Szopen, Polish French pianist and composer.

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TO LEONARD SCHAPIRO

12 August 1950 [*manuscript*]

Grand Hotel, Vevey, Vaud, Suisse.

Dear Leonard,

[...] I must begin by sincerely and warmly congratulating you on having achieved a genuine addition to knowledge; & one which I have not seen remotely recorded anywhere else, since all other meticulous & scholarly work on 1917 is done either from a self justifying (Miliukovo-Kerenskian) point of view, or, at best, from Trotskyist or Leninist anti-Stalin zeal. Whereas you are most scrupulously impartial – if you show any ‘tendency’ at all it is to be too indulgent to Trotsky whose consistency & brilliance obviously stand out in contrast to the zig zags, muddle & second rateness of all the others on the one hand, & the almost cynical utilitarianism – dare one say it opportunism – of Ilyich himself. How differently Carr’s coming oeuvre will read! & what a nuisance it will be to look at the reviews which praise him for exact & unbending scholarship. But to work! Only once more I shd like to say what a solid & valuable piece of detailed research this is, & how good the bibliography: I fear you might easily have got a doctorate in Oxford for the 4 chaps & 4 more in Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Columbia or each of these in turn. But soyons sérieux. I remember your caveat about small criticisms being timely now, & larger suggestions in November. I cd not sort them out. Here is the farrago.

1. Are you meditating a preface? it cd be v. useful for the reader if you tied your chapters, each of which can stand on its feet as a treatise on its particular topic, by saying how these streams fed opportunism in the post-1918 years. I shd advocate – but this is only a random suggestion that you begin by giving a v. rapid coup d’oeil of a crucial moment – sometime in the twenties – say during the chute of Trotsky or before the fatal Party Conference at which Stalin so coolly read out Lenin’s will, or some such moment, classified the oppositional elements, & then promised to take the reader back to the mountain streams of 1917 which fed these

rivers. Otherwise there is not enough connection between the chapters, too few links, each story starts *ab ovo*. And do you intend to print the footnotes & references at the *back* or at the foot of the page? I am a passionate advocate of the latter: looking up is a nuisance, & little numbers break up the print anyway: or else no numbers at all, & an appendix with reference to *pages*, but not to *lines*, which prop up the text: a kind of Quellen Kapital. This is what I mean by mingling trivialities with serious points.

2. Perhaps this is too much outside the scope of what, after all, is a specialist monograph, but wd not chap I profit by a kind of map of where everybody was in 1917: or at least where they began by being: you let quite a lot of this emerge in the text, but it wd be admirable, & no one has done, to have at least the left wing parties – from Kerensky leftwards – arranged in some sort of pattern: say by analysing the tendencies in the Central Soviet: Trudoviks, S.Rs of the Right, of the Centre, of the Left; S.D.s who were on speaking terms with the Kadets, & S.D.s who were not; benevolent Fabians of the Prokopovich–Karpovich–right wing Bundist (Leshchinsky) sort; Revolutionary icons like Kropotkin, Vera Figner, Breshkovskaya, etc. Plekhanov & Zasluch; silly pacific SRs like Avksentiev & Zenzinov, & terrifying ones like Savinkov & Rutenberg; etc. etc. Is this too impressionistic for your rightly more precise technique? it will never be done except by learned & earnest vulgarians like Wolfe who is a typical East side ex-communist & not intelligent, or fastidious enough, nor as privy to the atmosphere as even you or I [...]

[Here a long list of specific points follows.]

As you see I've nothing to quarrel with in your story: but only want occasional amplification or qualification. It seems to me admirable, as I said: but I must now add that I know little about this period: & have learnt most of it from you. I hope you can read my writing & that this is all not too chaotic. [...] I saw Prokopovich & Kuskova yesterday. Most, most moving. And the stories about Vera Figner – the horror even now at her extremism – wonderful.

yrs,

Shaya

MORE ENLIGHTENING

TO ISAAH BERLIN

n.d. [1950; *manuscript card*]

Magdalen

I've just read your 'Logical Translation'.³⁶ Its admirable – & the best bit of writing you've ever done. Im envious – esp. of 'Napoleon'.

I hope you succeed in Sairey Gamp-ing M^{rs} Harris – securing that 'there aint no sich person'.³⁷

Gilbert [Ryle]

I work faster than you. So I got off with a shorter critical notice!³⁸

TO ISAAH BERLIN

[Tuesday: c.10 June 1951; *manuscript card*]

Magdalen

Dear Isaiah,

I'm greatly relieved for your sake, tho' melancholy for the sake of All Souls, that the Wardenship has gone elsewhere.³⁹ The job would have compressed you into a functionary.

I hope you don't mind too much.

No reply, please.

Gilbert. [Ryle]

³⁶ *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 50 (1949–50), 157–88; repr. in CC.

³⁷ In chapter 49 of Charles Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* Mrs Sarah Gamp exclaims: 'have I know'd Mrs Harris five and thirty year, to be told at last that there ain't sech a person livin'!'

³⁸ Ryle's point seems obscure. There is a quasi-review of Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* by J. O. Wisdom in the same issue of *PAS* (previous note but one).

³⁹ IB was a candidate to be Warden of All Souls, but withdrew. Hubert Henderson was elected (E 233), but died in February 1952.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1946–1960

TO GEORGE KENNAN

31 January 1951 [*manuscript*]

New College, Oxford

Dear George,

What is the good of my saying to you however truthfully, however much in the Muscovite (rather than Petersburg) tradition, that I have sinned, feel grief, offer deep ‘heavenly’ bows & genuflections to you, for not replying & not replying & keeping my letter to you under lock & key, oppressed by the thought of its worthlessness?

16 February 1951

This is becoming very like the diary of a Lishni Chelovek⁴⁰ out of Chehov or some less kindly satirist: and I had better not go on: if I wait a second longer this won’t ever go off, but it will be found in the chaos of my posthumous papers, a symbol of general incompetence and inability to finish anything, even a letter. So no more of this, and only a repeated expression of my gratitude & hope that when I come to Harvard in September it will be possible to see you and continue this conversation in conditions of physical, if not moral, comfort. Will you be in Washington or Princeton? I shall, at any rate, try & communicate; I don’t know if you have had any occasion to modify any part of either your Rede an der Russischen Nazion⁴¹ or Mr X.⁴² I am I am a 100% supporter of both; the former is not, I take it, under fire: the latter, I feel, may

⁴⁰ ‘Superfluous Man’. The concept of the ‘superfluous man’ was given its familiar name by Turgenev in *Dnevnik lishnego cheloveka* (‘Diary of a superfluous man’): see entry for 23 March 1850. The term was also used as a catchphrase by Dostoevsky in *Zapiski iz podpol’ya* (‘Notes from Underground’, 1864).

⁴¹ ‘Address to the Russian Nation’, alluding to J. G. Fichte’s 1806 *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, and perhaps a reference to Kennan’s *American Diplomacy, 1900–1950* (London and Chicago, 1951).

⁴² Kennan’s article on the containment of the Soviet Union, ‘The Sources of Soviet Conduct’, published under the pseudonym ‘X’ in *Foreign Affairs* in July 1947.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

be: but even from this curiously remote, isolated, & alas, increasingly isolationist vantage point, I see no evidence against ‘containment’ – only for it; I am *sure* you are absolutely right; that U[nkle] J[oe] won’t strike out unless the game is far more worth his candle than it can possibly look to him to be at this moment; & that if we persist in rearming & not aggressing, the ‘modus non vivendi’ will go on: & so I continue to preach your gospel as best I can and if you are inclined to revise, – continue to adhere to the ‘original purity’.

yrs ever

Isaiah B.

TO EDWARD WEEKS⁴³

15 October 1951 [*manuscript postcard*]

Harvard

This is just to say that I am hiding from you, having in the meanwhile grown serious, withdrawn & unreadable: so might Odysseus have informed Circe, Calypso etc. that he had lost all taste for travel and was in their vicinity again purely in the interests of the Ithacan olive trade.

yrs

Isaiah Berlin

⁴³ Edward Augustus (“Ted”) Weeks (1898–1989), editor, *Atlantic Monthly*, 1938–66; frequent solicitor of contributions from IB, but successful only twice, with pieces on Churchill and Roosevelt, published in 1949 and 1955 respectively.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1946–1960

FROM GEORGE KENNAN

12 December 1951 [*carbon*]

n.p.

Dear Isaiah,

Thank you so much for your note. Don't tell me you I said so, but I think your ignorance of economics, if real, will be a great advantage to you in talking to the group I have in mind.

I'm going to come at you soon with an invitation to come to Princeton for one of the four weekends beginning with and following that of January 25. I cannot tell you which it will be. I can promise you only an immunity from large and solemn discussion groups. Except for three or four hours in which we will lay claim to your time and attention, you may feel free to do precisely what you please on a winter weekend in Princeton; and if there is nothing you please to do, you don't have to take any longer.

The gentlemen from the London *Observer* have already written asking to come up here and see me. Feeling sorry for them, I have uncertainly assented. I don't mind their looking at me, but as for facts about me, I would much prefer that they turned to my friends and acquaintances.

Yours,

[George K.]

TO GEORGE KENNAN

16 February 1952 [*manuscript*]

Bryn Mawr College

Dear George,

I have written to Ed[ward Meade] Earle & suggested myself for March 7 & till the foll. Monday when I have to go back & deliver my 5th Flexner Lecture (My God: what blood & sweat & tears: all the words seem meaningless to me: fortunately most of them are inaudible to the audience, though only a few cads actually say so) – I hope (a) that he E.E. is not too unwell even to receive such a message (b) that you wd be there if I came bracket (c) that if it is

MORE ENLIGHTENING

inconvenient I shall be told so curtly, since I gladly take ‘no’ for answers.

I talked to your bankers, duly; & they were very affable & kind & I thought most responsive & intelligent & I am grateful to you for arranging it, though I had cold feet just before, they seemed so important & knowledgeable.

I talked to Wasson about the publication of Akhmatova’s verses in N.Y.:⁴⁴ Fainsod has now shown me a copy: I must say, it upset me. It can only do the poor lady harm, & she is not in a condition, if still alive, to suffer much more: was this publication really necessary? Couldn’t they have decently waited till demise? I feel a strong personal affection & real romantic feeling for her, having, I think been almost the only visitor from the West allowed to see her – I must have told you [about] the extraordinary meetings I had with her in the Sheremet’ev palace on the Fontanka in Leningrad.

Now: I shd like to see you & take up (secretly & privately) if you’ve a moment, certain theses of yours which seem to me inconsistent, at least *prima facie*: i.e., (1) that in human disasters it is not so much individuals as the human predicament that is to blame (perhaps this is not your position at all but Butterfield’s: *he*, like Marx, Carr etc. shifts all blame on to the back of unavoidable impersonal entities – “the predicament” – which God sends & we can survive only by His grace: do you say that? possibly not. Certainly not as firmly as Butterfield whom I’ve never met but he seems to me to be of no value as a *penseur*: anyway I think I am reading him into you, I don’t know why. I apologise & withdraw (2) that skills & techniques & diplomatic competence can manipulate people’s fate: in its *extreme* form it is what Col. Beck believed. Also Talleyrand: & that doesn’t allow enough to ‘the predicament’, feelings, imponderables etc. (3) that men are by nature good & too much manipulation destroys the manipulators

⁴⁴ Anna Akhmatova, *Izbrannye stikhotvoreniya* [*Selected Poems*] (New York, 1952: Chekhov), a collection of poems previously published in magazines.

& so saves the manipulated. However I must not babble aimlessly: what this comes to is that I shd love to see you if not on that 2^d week-end in March (does the spring come to Princeton then?) at some other time; but when?

I've worked quite hard & fairly fruitlessly this time. I've seen "nobody" – not Adam Watson, Chip⁴⁵ for 25 minutes, etc: I feel virtuous but somewhat starved & plaintive: do, I beg you, make it possible to see you. Have you looked by any chance at O. Utis in *Foreign Affairs*?⁴⁶ Is it all wrong? Sorry to be so chaotic, Russian, discursive. And I hope to see you soon.

yrs ever

Isaiah Berlin

FROM GEORGE KENNAN

20 February 1952 [*carbon*]

Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton

Dear Isaiah,

Earle's letter to you of February 19 rested to some extent on a misunderstanding, for which I take the blame. I am indeed going to be in Princeton those days, but I am expecting Barbara Ward as a house guest and the Franks⁴⁷ as academic guests for that weekend. This is already a rich diet of English intellectualism for

⁴⁵ Charles Eustis ("Chip") Bohlen (1904–74), US diplomat and Soviet specialist; US ambassador to the USSR 1953–7, to France 1962–8; IB first encountered Chip and Avis Bohlen in Washington during the war, and they belonged to the extended family of his closest friends there. See A 621.

⁴⁶ IB's 'Generalissimo Stalin and the Art of Government', *Foreign Affairs* 30 no. 2 (January 1952), 196–214, published under the pseudonym 'O. Utis'; reprinted in SM as 'The Artificial Dialectic' (IB's own original title), with the *Foreign Affairs* title as a subtitle.

⁴⁷ Oliver Shewell Franks (1905–92), KCB 1946, life peer 1962, OM 1977, philosopher, college head, diplomat, banker, public servant, played an important role in initiating both the Marshall Plan and NATO, and was UK ambassador to the US 1948–52, and head, Commission of Inquiry into Oxford University, 1964–6. See E 791.

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us simple frontier folk, and if you are to be added to it I fear we shall suffer like the country cousin from a surfeit of big city amenities.

Could you perhaps come a day, or half a day, earlier so that some of us could meet with you on Friday afternoon? Then perhaps you and I could have a chance to talk privately on Saturday afternoon, as there are some things I would like to discuss that way.

I believe Annelise⁴⁸ and I will be having some people in for Saturday evening to meet the Franks and Barbara, and hope that you can join us.

I read the Otis [sc. O. Utis] paper, as you can imagine, with intense interest and appreciation. In so far as there may be a conflict between it and what I wrote for *Foreign Affairs* last year, I gladly concede that yours is the stronger and better founded view. I had not meant to imply that the Soviet system should be expected to change drastically and suddenly as a consequence of its own contradictions, but rather to express incredulity that it could be immune from the law of change, particularly in a world context of which rapid change is so conspicuous an element.

Your observations on the party line are penetrating and extremely illuminating. I hope to be able to show you, when you come here, the text of a lecture I delivered earlier this winter in Paris, in which I came to very similar conclusions, but with regard to disciplinary relationships between Stalin and his top advisers, on the one hand, and the influential levels of the bureaucracy, on the other. Where you were thinking of the relations between the Kremlin and the wider public, I was thinking of relationships within the influential portions of the apparatus of power; but the similarity of conclusions is striking.

Very sincerely,
[George K.]

⁴⁸ Kennan's Norwegian wife Annelise Sørensen Kennan (1910–2008).

TO GEORGE KENNAN

24 February 1952 [*manuscript*]

Princeton

Dear George,

Thank you for your letter – before anything else I shd like to say briefly – only because the train I have to catch for Annapolis is about to go off in 10–15 mins time – that I have only just, I am ashamed to say, finished your book on American diplomacy with the greatest admiration, agreement and delight in its style & contents. Had I read it I shd not have uttered the, I now believe, rather *frech* [cheeky] sentiments I expressed so gaily and foolishly to you in my last letter. Your disinterment of Mr [Alfred Edward] Hippius [1848–1939] and his epoch making influence; & your protest against formulae, laws of Nature & Juridical straitjackets and above all the sad, wise juxtaposition of ideal frameworks and moral indignations on the one hand with delicate intricate texture of actual human relations – & the dreadful havoc which young angry nations – like enraged infant Herculeses can wreak so nobly yet so disastrously (and usually beyond recall) is very deeply felt, illuminating & unanswerable: you know Aristotle (but you mustn't think I am an Adlerite or Hutchinsite⁴⁹ – far from it!) once said that the only decisive judgment – whether of theory or practice – lies in actual inspection of the concrete situation:⁵⁰ syllogisms (+ all the

⁴⁹ Mortimer Jerome Adler (1902–2001), anti-pragmatist philosopher and educator; Associate Professor in Philosophy of Law, Chicago, 1932–42, Professor 1942–52; founder, Institute for Philosophical Research, 1952. Robert Maynard Hutchins (1899–1977), educational theorist; President, Chicago, 1929–45, Chancellor 1945–51; opposed to intellectual specialisation, job-related learning and the distractions of sport (he banned Chicago's participation in intercollegiate football). Adler and Hutchins shared the idea that enduring truths were to be found in the world's great books, and saw the role of academic institutions as producing responsible citizens through broad liberal education, using these books as texts. Together they edited the 54-volume *Great Books of the Western World* (Chicago, 1952).

⁵⁰ Cf. IB's 'The concrete situation is almost everything', CTH2 19.

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medieval interpretations) don't help at all. – I'd love to talk with you about this and other such topics: and I am much moved by the awful prospect of your week-end & its surfeit – let me do nothing to increase the social *embarras* – I'm going to stay with Oliver and Barbara Franks next week-end anyhow, and *they* won't be too pleased, I daresay, to find me once again popping at them from every corner – and Barbara Ward is a jolly handful of competence and spell-bindingness in herself (so, I am told is her husband; but she's the goods) so – I've told Earle that I shall try & come in a quieter season. I wd not suggest coming at all – Pascal once said that all troubles arise because men *will* not 'rester tranquillement dans une chambre'⁵¹ but will bustle – save that I don't want to seem discourteous to Earle who had written me fairly pressingly before his illness & asked me for a fortnight. So I'll try to come for 2 days mid-week (it is all in Earle's hands) and give as little trouble as I can: & sit in a room so far as possible. I am here for a few hours to-day to see [Ernst] Kantorowicz whom I haven't seen since 1937 or so. But the train is puffing and I am off.

yrs ever,

Isaiah Berlin

FROM FELIX FRANKFURTER

n.d. [c.10 March 1952]

n.p.

Shaya:

With these⁵² go regards to the Bill Jameses & a very eager *auf Wiederseh[e]n!*

FF

⁵¹ Pascal wrote 'tout le malheur des hommes vient d'une seule chose, qui est de ne savoir pas demeurer en repos dans une chambre' ('all men's misfortunes come from one thing: not knowing how to stay quietly in a room'). *Pensées*, VIII 'Divertissement', 139 (Lafuma).

⁵² The carbon of FF's letter to Einstein, and Einstein's reply.

FROM FELIX FRANKFURTER TO ALBERT EINSTEIN

10 March 1952 [*carbon*]

n.p.

Dear Dr Einstein:

Will you forgive me for intruding upon your peace, in commending to you a very dear friend of mine who will be spending three or four days of this week at the Institute in Princeton?

He is Isaiah Berlin, a Fellow of All Souls, who has just finished a half year at Harvard University and is at present giving – unless he has finished them – the Flexner Lectures at Bryn Mawr. Any description or characterization of him would be inadequate. He is a philosopher by trade, but what is more important, a real lover of wisdom, and pursues his search for understanding in many directions. In short, he is not one of these compartmented minds. My wife and I met him twenty years ago when he was a very young don at Oxford, and since then he has become one of our most treasured friends. He is possessed of a quality that one meets rarely these days – a serene and humble spirit. I am sure he will give you pleasure, else I would not feel justified in expressing the hope that you will find time to see him.

Would that I could see you again. But I have not been to Princeton since the time I had that memorable walk with you.

With the highest regards,

Very sincerely yours,

[Felix Frankfurter]

PS I ought to say that Berlin is also a passionate music lover. In the privacy of his own room he conducts for himself and by himself a whole orchestra.

He is a great authority on Russia – its culture and its social history.

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Einstein's reply was donated by IB to the London Library for its 150th anniversary appeal and sold on behalf of the Library by Sotheby's on 15 December 1992 with a letter from Bertrand Russell for £1,000 as lot 288. It was offered for sale at £1,950 the following year in Michael Silverman's Manuscripts: Autograph Letters, Historical Documents, Archives, catalogue 8. The Russell letter (guide price £125) appears as lot 74 (p. 26) in the same catalogue, where the Einstein entry (lot 26, p. 10) includes the following extract.⁵³

FROM ALBERT EINSTEIN TO 'MR JUSTICE FELIX FRANKFURTER, SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES'

12 March 1952

112 Mercer Street, Princeton, New Jersey

[...] Today I had the pleasure to see Mr Isaiah Berlin. [...] The man is really highly intelligent and a kind of spectator in God's big but mostly not very attractive theater. He told me interesting things concerning his impressions in Russia from a psychological angle. [...]

A. Einstein.



[*Frankfurter annotates in manuscript:*] I am prepared to associate myself unreservedly with Dr Einstein's view that "the man is really highly intelligent"!

⁵³ The same extract, without the first sentence, the (embossed) address or the comment by Frankfurter, appeared (i) in 1980 in Sotheby's Illustrated Catalogue 8862 as lot 777 (p. 220) after the letter had been stolen, with others, from IB's room in All Souls (the letter was retrieved before the sale); (ii) in the 1992 catalogue (p. 143), where the word 'highly' is missing and 'theatre' is so spelt (both are surely mistakes). The present whereabouts of the letter are unknown to the editors.

TO DOUGLAS VEALE⁵⁴

16 March 1952 [*manuscript*]

As from Bryn Mawr College

Dear Veale,

When Mr J. L. Austin⁵⁵ asked me to act as one of his referees in his application for the White's Chair of Moral Philosophy, I agreed to do so without hesitation, but with a certain natural embarrassment; for certainly he should need no recommendation or assessment from me, rather the other way about.

Ever since I first met him, on his election to All Souls in 1933, I was made aware that I was becoming acquainted with a man of stupendous, at times frightening, intellectual power; and as I came to know him more intimately this impression increased. It became clear that Austin was a philosopher of the very first order, the most distinguished philosophical personality of his time. Certainly none among my contemporaries or juniors, and only a few among my seniors, have made a comparable impact upon the thought of their own generation of thinkers, both in Oxford and, to some degree, beyond. It is not only that Austin possesses a mind of such lucidity, rigour, and analytical force as has been given to relatively few philosophers of his generation, but that he unites with these qualities a very rich and very disciplined imagination, and above all a quality of 'first handness' – the sense of direct vision of a problem or a theory or a method of thought – which makes him much the most original as well as the most articulate and stimulating teacher and thinker of the post-1930 generation.

The almost universal feeling among his contemporaries in Oxford who discussed philosophy with him both before and after the war was that, whether one agreed or disagreed with his

⁵⁴ Douglas Veale (1891–1973), later (1954) Kt; Registrar of Oxford University 1930–58.

⁵⁵ John Langshaw Austin (1911–60), fellow, All Souls, 1933–5; fellow and philosophy tutor, Magdalen, 1935–52; White's Prof. of Moral Philosophy, Oxford, and fellow, CCC, 1952–60.

reasoning, one invariably left him intellectually enriched – he almost always either made a direct & sometimes wholly original contribution to the topic or caused a ferment of ideas in the minds of his collocutors in the best Socratic Oxford tradition. And despite the great strength and obstinacy of his personality, and his vehemence and occasional passion, he was (and is) seldom dogmatic in the sense [of] remaining imprisoned in some stubbornly held framework of ideas or pet theory of his own.

One of the things which astonished some of those who tended to look on him as an exceptionally gifted and influential philosopher, but also as somewhat over-emphatic in the statement of his own ideas or his own criticisms of the views of others, was the manner in which he adapted himself to almost every point of view held by students of the subject whom he regarded as capable and in earnest; thus visiting Americans, from hard boiled logicians of the school of Carnap to aestheticians and followers of the later Whitehead, found Austin much less dogmatic & more inspiring than other philosophers in Oxford, prepared to go into everything which looked in the least interesting or genuinely troubling, from every point of view, and possessing an astonishing flexibility of mind, imaginativeness, intellectual tolerance, as well as, of course, an extreme acuteness and a unique capacity for exposition.

Of his influence on his fellow teachers it is scarcely necessary to speak: in my time he has transformed the standards of discussion, and won the admiration and devotion of many of his junior (and senior) colleagues, without enslaving the more impressionable, or becoming (as might have been the case with someone vainer or less intellectually scrupulous) the centre of a cult & acquiring disciples moulded into the same uniform pattern.⁵⁶ His ascendancy can thus be attributed not merely to his superb mental powers and gifts, nor to his intellectual morality – his absolute, sometimes over-meticulous, honesty, and sternness towards anything muddled or slipshod (which used to terrify the

⁵⁶ Here and in point 4 below the implied contrast is principally with Ludwig Wittgenstein.

more tender minded, though it does so, as far as I know, no longer), but also to the fact that, unlike e.g. such eminent rigorists as Prichard⁵⁷ or in a different fashion Joseph,⁵⁸ he is scarcely ever blind to the positions or terminology of others – if he perceives a genuine issue, he does not seek to do away with it because it cannot be squared with a given system of thought or language, or has not been expressed in suitable words, but deals with it, as often as not, on ground selected by his interlocutor, without seeking to translate into what too often to the propounder of the problem seems a distorting medium.

The result of this has often been a degree of illumination to persons who suppose themselves to differ widely from him on many cardinal points: and consequently a degree of disinterested (and still growing) admiration on the part of young philosophers who differ a great deal among themselves. If he has a vice it is an almost too great desire to convince his opponents in argument – he will not let go even when further words seem hopeless – together with a certain reluctance to own himself mistaken. But this, of course, is more than offset by his transparent integrity in discussion – but even more by the freshness, originality, vivid & imaginative quality of the new material which he invariably supplies, & which sometimes, when he is at his best and most creative, can transform the outlook of his friends & his pupils, as the reading of great philosophers transforms it. Certainly there has been no Oxford tutor whose pupils are prouder to have been taught by him, or who has been less spoiled by the adulation which such disciples have occasionally felt & expressed.

He has published relatively little, & that, although it seems to me to be of outstanding quality, has on the whole been inferior to his lectures, his classes & his private conversation. His range is wide – it embraces all logic and epistemology, and ethics and (in

⁵⁷ Harold Arthur Prichard (1871–1947), White's Prof. of Moral Philosophy, Oxford, and fellow, CCC, 1928–37.

⁵⁸ Horace William Brindley Joseph (1867–1943), philosopher; fellow, New College, 1891–1932.

classes & in private) political philosophy and aesthetics also. He is, of course, a superb classical scholar, & this has given authority to his lectures on the ancient philosophers.

Perhaps it might be helpful to enumerate the specific respects in which he seems to me to have contributed to Oxford philosophy, even apart from the most important respect of all – the expression of new ideas of high originality and power and influence.

1) He is one of the creators of the Origins of Epistemology Paper in P.P.E., hitherto innocent of Plato & Aristotle, whereby certain of the dialogues of Plato & treatises of Aristotle, as well as Aquinas, 17th century rationalism, Mill, Boole & Frege were presented as a coherent sequence. The text of Frege he translated superbly:⁵⁹ and he lectured in vast detail on Aristotle's *Categories* & the *De Interpretatione*.

2) Similarly he lectured with great and & illuminating minuteness (according to all reports) on parts of the *Nicomachean Ethics*,⁶⁰ & also on selected points in Plato's *Republic*.⁶¹ His Aristotelian scholarship seems to me prodigious, especially when one considers his other preoccupations [and] attainments.

3. He made a wholly original contribution to Moral Philosophy with his theory of Performatory Expressions:⁶² and in the classes which he held with Mr H. L. A. Hart of New College on moral & legal responsibility he developed some exceedingly striking

⁵⁹ Austin's translation of Gottlob Frege's *The Foundations of Arithmetic: A Logico-Mathematical Enquiry into the Concept of Number* was published in Oxford in 1950.

⁶⁰ One article on this work, 'Ἀγαθόν and Εὐδαιμονία in the Ethics of Aristotle', appeared posthumously in the second edition (Oxford, 1970) of Austin's *Philosophical Papers*, ed. J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock.

⁶¹ 'The Line and the Cave in Plato's *Republic*', reconstructed from Austin's notes by J. O. Urmson, was added to the third edition (Oxford, 1979) of the *Philosophical Papers*.

⁶² Set forth in his posthumously published *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson (Oxford, 1962).

conceptions, which only the old Oxford disease of overdeveloped self criticism prevents him from publishing.⁶³

4. His occasional informal gatherings attended by other tutors have communicated an impetus to the subject which is difficult for me, who have attended them, & perceive their effects, to over-emphasize. And I shd like to stress again that despite his dominating intellectual stature he neither crows his colleagues too much nor turns them into unconscious imitators; the intellectual light & life he is able to generate is something the like of which I have never quite seen elsewhere: and this without the tiresome mannerisms & exacting demands of a mystagogue. It seems impossible not to be deeply impressed by his philosophical talent: this is, so far as I know, true of every philosophical visitor to Oxford who has met him.

In short I consider Mr Austin a uniquely gifted philosopher, teacher, lecturer & organizer. He owns a great fund of wisdom about practical affairs & also of kindness and sweetness & generosity, which blend curiously with his shyness & austerity & authority of manner, but for which his beneficiaries among the younger tutors have good reason to feel grateful; I shd almost go so far as to say that on occasion Mr Austin displays the quality of philosophical genius: but even if I am mistaken in this, I feel sure that no more distinguished and penetrating & fruitful figure of his age is to be found anywhere in [the] English speaking world: his interest in ethics both ancient & modern is very genuine and has existed and developed since first I met him some twenty years ago: and his election wd seem to me to add great glory to a famous chair, & give Austin greater opportunities than he now has to advance philosophy in England.

yrs sincerely

Isaiah Berlin

Reader, they elected him.

⁶³ See 'A Plea for Excuses' in *Philosophical Papers*.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

TO JOHN SPARROW⁶⁴

2 May 1952

All Souls

Dear Mr Warden,

I understand that I am required to present a biennial report of the research work done by me in terms of the undertaking which I gave when appointed to the Research Fellowship which I hold at present, and this I should like to submit. I was appointed in the summer of 1950 and since that date have accumulated material for both sides of the work upon which I am engaged:

- (a) The Antecedents of the Russian Revolution;
- (b) The History of European Thought from 1789 to 1870.

In connection with the first of these, I have gathered material for and drafted some three chapters of the first volume which is to deal with the Russian Radicals, in particular Belinsky during the '30s and '40s of the last century. I have prepared a first draft of these chapters and have lectured on the subject at Harvard during the last four months of 1951 (in accordance with the arrangements explicitly proposed in my scheme of work submitted in 1950 to Warden Sumner), and I have accumulated notes for the rest of the first volume, which, of course, will need much expanding and reinforcing, before the first draft of the entire volume is prepared.

With regard to the second field of study, I have prepared a complete first draft of a book on political ideas between 1760 and 1830, some of which I delivered in the form of lectures, in the first months of this year, at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania (an institution kind enough to invite me to deliver lectures on the Mary Flexner Foundation in 1952). I propose to occupy myself for the rest of this year with the preparation of this material, which the

⁶⁴ John Hanbury Angus Sparrow (1906–92), classicist and barrister; Fellow of All Souls 1929–52, then (1952–77) Warden. See E 798. A fair copy of this letter was prepared by All Souls and headed 'College Report Made to Warden and Research Fellowships Committee in accordance with By-Law IV, Clause 8'.

Oxford University Press is to publish as a book, it is to be hoped some time next year. The title of it has not been finally decided upon, but it is, in effect, to deal with some among the most influential schools of political thought during the Romantic Age, three of which – the views of the German Romantic philosophers, of St Simon, and of De Maistre and Görres – have not, as far as I know, been adequately dealt with by any English writer (or in the English language), at any rate during this century. This book will cover part of the same field as, and is in the nature of a preliminary study for, the larger work on this subject which I have promised to the Oxford Press as part of their European series, and will be published under the joint auspices of the Oxford Press and the Mary Flexner Foundation.

Besides the work on the Russian Radicals and on the political ideas of the West, I have published a long essay in *Oxford Slavonic Papers* on the sources of Tolstoy's view of history in Russian and Western European thought, which bears directly upon the Westerner–Slavophil controversy in Russia in the 2nd and 3rd quarters of the last century. This essay has stimulated some discussion among Russian historians and I have devoted some time to scholarly controversies connected with this topic.

I have also written, but not published, a separate study of the views of de Maistre, which I may use as an introduction to a selection of his works which I may perhaps edit for Messrs Blackwell in their well known series of political classics, some time next year; I have also published critical notices of various works in the *Slavonic Review*, the *Journal of Slavonic Studies* etc., and contributed articles on Russian topics in Italy and the United States, notably on foreign affairs. In addition to this I have also performed my full functions as University Lecturer in this university, by lecturing and holding classes (one with Professor G. D. H. Cole), and had a small number of pupils in New College according to the original plan submitted by me to the College.

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

MORE ENLIGHTENING

TO ALINE HALBAN⁶⁵ (IN FRANCE)

6 August [1952; *manuscript*]

Hollycroft Avenue

Dear Aline,

Written to, I answer. I was delighted to get your letter – you write so very seldom, at least to me, that that in itself is agreeable. I am glad about the rays. Not from the point of view of the passers by (no genuinely innocent ones are in danger, as you know v. well! I know that I know, & know that I know that you know etc. etc.) but from the point of view of the centre of emission. The hour, I say pompously, mysteriously, solemnly but with my well known infallibility, for incandescence is not yet. I do not know if it will ever arise, but at any rate the potential persons affected seem to me in what is called a slightly false situation. As there is not enough of either vanity or stupidity or blindness to produce absurd or catastrophic consequences (what do *you* think? But I shall ask you that at Oxford. And perhaps (if you press me) tell you about the extraordinary parallel levels at which you appear to me to move: the Russian & French elements don't blend: both have their say, I can imagine myself talking like this to David C.⁶⁶ but I promise not to. At least before I've lectured you. Aix is as remote from me as it is from you. I came home to find my poor father in a sad state, not

⁶⁵ Aline Elisabeth Yvonne Halban (1915–2014), daughter of Russian-born banker Baron Pierre de Gunzburg (who had settled in Paris) and the former Yvonne Deutsch de la Meurthe (1882–1962), daughter of a French Jewish industrialist; grand-daughter of Baron Horace de Gunzburg, banker (in St Petersburg), philanthropist and Russian Jewish community leader. French women's golf champion 1934, the year she married her first husband André Strauss (1903–39). She had married her second husband Hans Halban (1908–64) in 1943. IB had met her in the US during the War, and got to know her better after the Halbans moved to Oxford. She was in Aix for the music festival, where IB had spent a week in late July, Aline having driven him down.

⁶⁶ Lord (Edward Christian) David (Gascoyne) Cecil (1902–86), Fellow of New College 1939–69, Goldsmiths' Professor of English Literature, Oxford, 1948–69.

dangerous but mishandled by the doctors: they all admit it shamelessly too: so I am wrapped up in my family again, sadly, loyally, immovably, a la Juive – in Hampstead. But I think I do know a little about you now: & feel insulted by the suggestion of a dignified letter: you must write what comes into your head: my capacity for interpretation is marvellously increased. With less pleasure I suspect that your knowledge of me has increased, too: not at all in regions which I like disclosing. Alix,⁶⁷ who really is a figure of the most sympathetic tragic dignity, & cast for a fate not unlike my own, thinks I am like Schubert. Like, I suggest, the hero of *Lilac Time*: do you remember it? he is always saying (after marrying everyone off) “I have my music & my dreams” it is incredibly vulgar. The drive to the station was too brief but to me a considerable relief. Long live intelligent people, as someone once cynically declared: I had nothing to add. My love to Hans⁶⁸ if this is appropriate. And I demand another letter as undignified as possible: think of the Ape⁶⁹ & not of what I am likely to think: & I shall be less cryptic but never in letters.

Love,

Isaiah

⁶⁷ Alix Hermine Jeannette de Rothschild (1911–82), nee Schey de Koromla; first wife (1937–56) of Guy de Rothschild.

⁶⁸ Aline’s second husband Hans Heinrich Halban (1908–64), né von Halban, Austrian-born (naturalised French) nuclear physicist of part-Jewish descent; educated in Germany and Switzerland; played a major role in the discovery and development of nuclear fission, working at the Collège de France, Paris, 1937–40, the Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge, 1940–3, in the British–Canadian Atomic Laboratory (a research venture linked to the US Manhattan Project) in Montreal 1943–5, at the Clarendon Laboratory, Oxford, 1946–55, and later (1955–61) at the Laboratoire de l’Accélérateur Lineaire, Paris. Fellow of St Antony’s, 1950–6 (Professor 1954–6); Professor, Sorbonne, 1956–61. His first wife (1933–42) was Fanny Ella (‘Els’) Andriess (1912–2014; one daughter, Catherine Maulde Halban, 1939–93), who later married the physicist George Placzek.

⁶⁹ Alexander Schneider.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

P.S. I had almost forgotten: my love to Bill & Pussy D.⁷⁰ if they are coming to stay. And to Freddie.⁷¹ I predict you will find Freddie particularly charming, agreeable & restful this time. Don't be furious with my levity: things are much better than they seem. Time the great healer ... & not surgical treatment will save my friends.

Toscanini concerts, Sept 29 & Oct 1. one for you, one for Alix, they cost a good deal, £5.5.0. each. I may go to *neither*: & send you *with Alix*: I don't know why, but this will give me great pleasure: a mixture of affection & amusement.

TO ALINE HALBAN

Postmark 8 August 1952⁷² [*manuscript*]

Brooks's, St James's Street, SW1⁷³

P.S. I always like to go on a little, after finishing. On the principle that no words ever quite come off neatly, there is no natural close – one cd go on indefinitely. I began thinking about Lord

⁷⁰ (Frederick) William Dampier ('Bill') Deakin (1913–2005), historian, Fellow and Tutor, Wadham, 1936–49; wartime service as a Yugoslav expert in the Special Operations Executive (SOE); First Secretary, UK Embassy in Belgrade, 1945–6; Warden, St Antony's, 1950–68. His (second) wife was Romanian-born Livia Stela née Nasta ('Pussy'; 1916–2001).

⁷¹ Alfred ('Freddie') Jules Ayer (1910–89), Christ Church classics 1928–32; married to (Grace Isabel) Renée Lees (1909–80) 1932–44 (Stuart Hampshire was co-respondent in their divorce); philosophy Lecturer, Christ Church, 1932–5, Research Student 1935–44; Fellow and philosophy Lecturer, Wadham, 1944–6; Grote Professor of the Philosophy of Mind and Logic, London, 1946–59; Wykeham Professor of Logic and Fellow of New College, Oxford, 1959–78.

⁷² Probably a continuation of the previous letter.

⁷³ A private London club founded in 1764, the Whig equivalent of the Tory-dominated White's; IB had been a member since 1950.

Cherwell's⁷⁴ “great lady” & you & Alix. She is a genuine Marschallin⁷⁵ – a genuine Mozartian Countess⁷⁶ – all too conscious of the ingredients of life, looking for means of emancipation everywhere, but unable to do what alone liberates, to forget the framework, the throne, pedestal, the decencies, the duties, all the German & Jewish & family heirlooms which weigh her down & martyrize her & give her – in my eyes – an enormous romantic status. It is a German–Jewish thing: not just the guilt but the carrying with one of a heavy, valuable, clumsy, noble, inflexible context of one's own. In the case of broken, not very dignified natures, this takes the form of a sordid personal and social uneasiness, anxiety to please, bullying, grovelling, petty revenges, triumph over adversaries, demands for recognition, obsession with status etc. In the case of the grander cases – Alix, Roszika Rothschild,⁷⁷ the neurosis is nobly restrained & converted into a kind of mournful beauty of a XVII century Corneille⁷⁸ kind. And its sign is a recession in the presence of unfavourable factors: when, on the evening when you left, I found she was quite alone, no Guy,⁷⁹ no Karl Haus, no X, etc. I naturally took her to dine with

⁷⁴ Frederick Alexander Lindemann (1886–1957), physicist and politician, scientific adviser to the government, Professor of Experimental Philosophy, Oxford, and Fellow of Wadham 1919–56, Dr Lee's Reader in Experimental Philosophy and Student of Christ Church 1921–57; personal assistant to Winston Churchill from 1939, created Lord Cherwell 1941.

⁷⁵ Princess Marie Thérèse von Werdenberg, heroine of Richard Strauss's opera *Der Rosenkavalier*.

⁷⁶ Countess Rosina Almagiva in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

⁷⁷ Rózsika Rothschild (1870–1940) née Edle von Wertheimstein, tennis player, wife of the banker and entomologist Charles Rothschild.

⁷⁸ Pierre Corneille (1606–84), French dramatist.

⁷⁹ Guy Édouard Alphonse Paul de Rothschild (1909–2007), French banker, second husband of his first wife Alix; IB had known him in the US during the war.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

the Hayters⁸⁰ & the Rumbolds⁸¹ with whom I was dining. She became passive, courteous, dignified remote & dull: like a large fish which loses its deep dull gold in a strange pond. She enjoyed herself not at all: shut up: adopted a manner: became a Baroness: & returned not to Reux,⁸² not to XVIeme, but to 19th century Frankfurt & Thomas Mann & late Brahms. My friends behaved beautifully but evidently could not make out why she & I – *what* we had in common etc, & given the data they were rightly puzzled. As were the Salems.⁸³ Now *you*, I say briskly, *your* ‘grande-dame’ness is not [‘]grande-dame’ness at all: as you know. But comes from en marge de la vie quality & an ondine-ness, though not of the acute, non-human, Patricia⁸⁴ kind. (At this point I was interrupted by a telephone call from Sir M. Bowra.)⁸⁵ No, it seems to me to derive from a composite nature – a French realism, hedonism, sense of material pleasures, comforts & rights: plus a totally un-French, Russian, or even Russian-Jewish, unworldly, nineteenth century, very pure & almost austere, moral idealism & disinterestedness, governed by no apparent principle, sometimes candid, penetrating & unclouded by any external sophisticated matter, sometimes simple, childlike and capriciously ungrown up:

⁸⁰ William Goodenough Hayter (1906–95), diplomat, Ambassador to the Soviet Union 1953–7, Warden of New College 1958–76. His wife was the former Iris Marie Hoare (1911–2004).

⁸¹ Sir (Horace) Anthony Claude Rumbold (1911–83), diplomat; later Ambassador to Thailand (1965–7) and to Austria (1967–70). His (first) wife (1937–74) was Felicity Ann (1917–84), nee Bailey.

⁸² Guy de Rothschild’s home (and stud farm) in Normandy.

⁸³ The Greek mathematician Raphaël Salem (1898–1963) and his wife Adriana.

⁸⁴ Lady Patricia Sybil de Benden (1918–91), née Douglas, daughter of the 11th Marquess of Queensberry. See E 786–7.

⁸⁵ (Cecil) Maurice Bowra (1898–1971), classicist; Warden, Wadham, 1938–70; Professor of Poetry (1946–51) and Vice-Chancellor (1951–4), Oxford. See E 789.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1946–1960

but related to a world of Tolstoy⁸⁶ & Turgenev,⁸⁷ & when faced with the 20th century & the Western world, apt to recede into a thin vulnerable shell, but still a shell, to end in unanswered youthful wonderings about why life proceeds as it does, & not in some other, perhaps richer & more marvellous fashion. I must not go on. But this two headed eagle – or some gentler bird – is something which I really am responsive to. And we need never again talk about it if you wd rather not. I suddenly feel embarrassed. You want to know about Vronsky & Anna K.⁸⁸ & I speak of the sweetly single & quasi-idyllic 19th century & the sweetness of the Russian upper intelligent-sia.

Yrs

I.B.

TO EDWARD WEEKS

3 October 1952

All Souls College

Dear Ted,

I have had a troubled summer, partly because of the illness of my father, partly because of the chaotic nature of my life, which means that when I do have to get something done it is always a crisis and a mad scramble, and so I have not been to Italy or indeed anywhere but Aix-en-Provence, where the music was astonishingly inferior, no doubt due to the French desire for economy, which

⁸⁶ See RT2 379.

⁸⁷ Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev (1818–83), Russian novelist, short-story writer and dramatist. IB valued his lack of dogmatism, his ‘clear, finely discriminating, slightly ironical vision’ and ‘his power of minute and careful observation, his fascination with the varieties of character and situation as such, his detachment, his inveterate habit of doing justice to the full complexity and diversity of goals, attitudes, beliefs’, and saw Turgenev, like many of his characters, as a ‘well-meaning, troubled, self-questioning liberal, witness to the complex truth’ (RT2 338, 348).

⁸⁸ Count Aleksey Vronsky is Anna Karenina’s lover in Tolstoy’s eponymous novel.

makes them import a grotesque-looking conductor from Baden-Baden, who looks like a caricature schoolmaster whose face first registers a hideous sternness, then sentimental rapture, while the orchestra played in a well-trained, mechanical, absolutely dead fashion after months of rehearsal, with supreme disregard both for the conductor and the music, in a state of continuous terror about false notes etc. On the stage two elderly Wagnerian sopranos, still young but already obsolete, repressing their hideous great voices to sing in *Don Giovanni*.

I originally said I might write about this in the *Manchester Guardian* or broadcast in the BBC, but in view of this thought it kinder to say nothing and was duly thanked for this by the cultural attaché of the French Embassy, who was justifiably terrified of reactions. Consequently I have nothing to write about music, except the two Toscanini concerts which I attended, plus rehearsals, and about which I have feelings almost too deep for words. I could later in the year if that suited you write a kind of chronicle of books and artistic events in Europe generally – largely anything that comes into my head – you could print it or not, and in any case anonymously. Next year I really shall tour Europe, listen to music in April and in the summer, and request you to defray my not very great expenses as arranged. About Toscanini and his reception in London I really could perhaps say something.

Now, there is quite a different matter which I feel ought to be of interest to you. One of my colleagues here, Hugh Trevor-Roper⁸⁹ of Christ Church, whom you will know as the author of *The Last Days of Hitler*, and may have met besides, and who is certainly the sharpest detective of facts to do with the Nazis and virtually infallible as a scrupulous (and mordant) student of the most detailed aspects of contemporary history, has just been in to see me to say that he is anxious to publish about two thousand words on a man called Kersten. I know very little about the last

⁸⁹ Hugh Redwald Trevor-Roper (1914–2003), historian. A 632–3.

days of Hitler,⁹⁰ when this man and the late Count Bernadotte were involved in the abortive peace negotiations. Trevor-Roper's view is that Kersten is a good man and Bernadotte (although posthumously canonised after being murdered by Jewish zealot in Palestine) is in fact an impostor.

He says he can demonstrate this in possibly about two thousand words, and that the only groups of people who know about him are (1) the Swedes, who are inhibited by his Royal blood; (2) the Jews, who are inhibited by the fact that they killed him; (3) Himmler's entourage, who are inhibited by the fact that they do not wish to proclaim their Himmler connections; (4) in addition to this there are the Dutch, who have had a report about all this prepared for some special commission but do not wish to publish their finding because they do not want trouble with Sweden. They are said to be recommending Kersten for the Nobel Peace Prize, which according to Trevor-Roper is incompatible with approval of Bernadotte. Kersten's memoirs, published in English in the United States, apparently have little relation to anything he may have written, as he speaks no English, and the original (again according to Trevor-Roper, if I understand him alright) have not been published.

Now I do not of course know anything about any of these facts, and am not myself desperately interested, but Trevor-Roper is a scrupulous researcher and a brilliant writer – he wishes to publish his story quickly in order to help the Dutch in their support of Kersten, and he is aware that this may give pain to Bernadotte's relations, particularly to his wife, who is, as you probably know, an American heiress. On the other hand the story will certainly be at once a serious piece of work and mildly sensational in its implications, and inevitably involve you in some controversy,

⁹⁰ Adolf Hitler (1889–1945), Austrian-born German Fascist leader, became head of the (then) small National Socialist German Worker's (Nazi) party 1921; chancellor, Germany, January 1933, dictator 1933–45; committed suicide 30 April 1945 as the Red Army advanced through Berlin.

which I imagine on a historical question treated by a recognised authority, as Trevor-Roper certainly is, you would not mind too much.

If you are interested would you cable or write by air mail to H. Trevor-Roper, Christ Church, Oxford? He is a very competent businessman and his text is unlikely to be longer or shorter or earlier or later than he promises. If you do not want it, he will probably send it to *Harpers*, which has expressed a desire to publish his work in general, though it may not want to cast a shadow on the memory of Bernadotte. I feel quite sure that Trevor-Roper is in fact right, and that Bernadotte was in certain respects deeply phoney, though I have no evidence of this, and it does not of course excuse his brutal and gratuitous murder. I should think that in England Trevor-Roper would like his piece published by the *Daily Telegraph* or the *Manchester Guardian*. The *New Statesman* would print it automatically, but it would be discounted as a piece of left-wing or anti-German or anti-something propaganda, although Trevor-Roper himself is a staunch old-fashioned reactionary Whig, or at least likes to think of himself as such.

I am very glad you are doing these things for Ed Prichard⁹¹ – I wish you would send me a copy of the *Atlantic* now and then, as it is not otherwise available here. I did borrow the last issue and read Holmes's letters with great interest – I was fascinated in the wrong kind of way, but fascinated nevertheless. I thought Laski's own letters were the sincere, lively, embarrassingly bogus and vulgar things you would expect – at least I would. You may have thought more highly of him than I, and Holmes's slightly ironical attitude towards Laski's gush, plus the desire not to offend and to treat him as the frivolous, amusing, lively, affectionate, ultimately trivial man that he was also fascinated me. However, not a word of this to

⁹¹ Ed(ward) Fretwell Prichard, Jr ('Prich') (1915–84), Kentuckian New Deal lawyer with whom IB briefly shared a house in Washington 1943; convicted 1949 of ballot-stuffing in a senatorial election in his home state, Prichard resurrected his reputation as a champion of higher education, and towards the end of his life bravely bore the afflictions of kidney failure and blindness.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1946–1960

Felix, who knows what I felt about Laski, but does not like to be reminded of it.

I hope the piece on Toscanini does him justice. I look upon him as literally the greatest man in the world, and nothing but undiluted veneration and self-prostration is enough. The man who could write and write about him, and tells the story better than anyone I know, is the musical manager of NBC, Samuel Chotzinoff;⁹² he has just been in London with Toscanini and I have had a really absorbing time listening (for once) without interrupting to his stories. He tells them with great humour. I saw John Russell for a moment; I hope your ears were burning.

yrs ever

Isaiah (Berlin)

TO ALINE HALBAN (IN WASHINGTON)

3 December [1952, *manuscript*]

All Souls

Dear Aline,

I, too, have *nothing* to write. Hart came & dined with me; Noel Annan⁹³ stayed: we all went to see Balogh⁹⁴ & there was Mendès

⁹² Samuel Chotzinoff (1889–1964), Russian-born American pianist and critic; author of *Toscanini: An Intimate Portrait* (New York, 1956).

⁹³ Noel Gilroy Annan (1916–2000), Baron Annan (1965), historian (particularly of political ideas) and academic administrator; Fellow of King's, Cambridge, 1944–56, Provost 1956–66; later Provost of University College, London, and Vice-Chancellor, University of London.

⁹⁴ Thomas Balogh (1905–85), Baron Balogh of Hampstead (1968); Hungarian-born economist; Institute of Statistics, Oxford, 1940–55; Fellow, Balliol, 1945–73; Special Lecturer, Oxford, 1955–60; for many years economic adviser to the Labour Party in and out of government.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

France:⁹⁵ & Mrs Dick's father:⁹⁶ & Joll:⁹⁷ & so on. Stormy Committees meet in All Souls. I go to London to-morrow: Prof. Zuckerman⁹⁸ wishes me to visit him in February but I am not very willing; I have refused an invitation from Mrs Hulton⁹⁹ & accepted one from Lady Waverley.¹⁰⁰ Stuart¹⁰¹ thinks he is not at all interested in 'getting on' & is a fine observer. This is not so. David [Cecil] saw Freddie at Eton, he contrived to be there at 10 a.m. to see Julian¹⁰² play the "wall game" (David much touched & a little surprised). I can go on in this staccato manner, because it is not expressive, underlines the triviality of my information & gives

⁹⁵ Pierre Mendès France (1907–82), French politician, who became Prime Minister of France in June 1954 when the previous government fell in the wake of the Dien Bien Phu disaster. During his brief administration (until February 1955) he started on the demolition of France's colonial role in Indochina and North Africa.

⁹⁶ Cecilia Rachel Dick (1927–95) née Buxton; Lecturer in Modern History, LMH, 1950–1, 1953–87, University Lecturer 1957–87; Fellow of Iffley 1965–6; Fellow and Domestic Bursar, Wolfson, 1966–94. She married, 1952 (divorced 1968), IB's friend Marcus William Dick (1920–71), Professor of Philosophy, East Anglia, 1963–71. Her father was Wg Cdr Denis Alfred Jex Buxton (1895–1964), businessman and archaeologist, High Sheriff of Essex 1944–5.

⁹⁷ 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.

⁹⁸ Sir Solly Zuckerman (1904–1993), Kt 1956, later (1971) life peer, scientist and public servant; Sands Cox Professor of Anatomy, Birmingham, 1943–68.

⁹⁹ The former Princess Nika Yourievitch (1916–95), Russian-born wife of Edward George Warris Hulton (1906–88), founder of *Picture Post*, proprietor 1938–57.

¹⁰⁰ Viscountess Waverley (1896–1974), née Ava Bodley, political hostess, whose second husband, Sir John Anderson (1882–1958), 1st Viscount Waverley 1952, civil servant then independent politician, Chancellor of the Exchequer 1943–5 (after whom Anderson shelters were named), was Chairman of many organisations, including the Royal Opera House and the Royal Ballet.

¹⁰¹ Stuart Newton Hampshire (1914–2004), philosopher, and (immediately after the war) civil servant in the FO and the Ministry of Food. Named in 1942 as co-respondent in A. J. Ayer's divorce from his wife Renée. See E 792–3.

¹⁰² Julian Ayer (1939–2004), officially son of Freddie Ayer, in fact of Stuart Hampshire; died in the Boxing Day tsunami.

nothing away. I am very tired, in a benevolent, silly mood, anxious to promote general happiness & not interested in anybody's private affairs or even emotions. To-morrow I expect the old zest for life, specific information, private life will reawaken: I am making virtuous resolutions: to work etc. On the strength of this: refusals to dine with Pussy & Bill (he thinks I avoid him. This is too silly & will answer itself, I hope) with Lady P. Berry¹⁰³ etc. I wonder how long I can keep that up. I am glad you made friends with dear Rowland B[urdon-]M[uller]. I *have* his figs: and Charles Lindemann,¹⁰⁴ whom I don't mind a bit. Your view of Jebb?¹⁰⁵ his mention together with Alexander Werth,¹⁰⁶ J. Foster Dulles,¹⁰⁷ Noel Coward,¹⁰⁸ Crossman,¹⁰⁹ Eden¹¹⁰ & the Israel left socialists is too fantastic: why should one retain a *spark* of sentiment for members of such parties? guilt or no guilt? & feel that somehow somewhere they are better, sweeter (even if wrong) than right wing

¹⁰³ Lady Pamela Margaret Elizabeth Berry (1914–82), née Smith, daughter of 1st Earl of Birkenhead; wife of the newspaper editor Michael Berry (Baron Hartwell 1954); famous society hostess.

¹⁰⁴ Presumably Brigadier General Charles Lionel Lindemann (1885–1970), counselor, British Embassy, Washington, 1940–7.

¹⁰⁵ (Hubert Miles) Gladwyn Jebb (1900–96), 1st Baron Gladwyn 1960, diplomat; UK Permanent Representative to UN 1950–4; Ambassador to France 1954–60.

¹⁰⁶ Alexander Werth (1901–69), journalist and author; correspondent, *Sunday Times* and BBC, Moscow, 1941–6; *Manchester Guardian*, Moscow, 1946–8; *New Statesman*, Paris, 1949–53; *New York Nation*, Paris, 1949–53, 1957–69.

¹⁰⁷ John Foster Dulles (1888–1959), lawyer and active Republican; US delegate to UN, 1946, 1947, 1950; Secretary of State 1953–9.

¹⁰⁸ Noel Peirce Coward (1899–1973), actor, playwright, writer and composer of popular songs, worked for the intelligence services during the war.

¹⁰⁹ Richard Howard Stafford Crossman (1907–74), academic, journalist and Labour politician; Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy, New College, 1930–7 (responsible for IB's first academic post); assistant editor, *New Statesman and Nation*, 1938–55; MP 1945–74 (including Cabinet posts); disliked by IB as an unprincipled bully.

¹¹⁰ (Robert) Anthony Eden (1897–1977), 1st Earl of Avon 1961, Conservative MP; Foreign Secretary 1935–8, 1951–5; Prime Minister 1955–7.

extremists? there were probably equally sweet young men in the S.S. or the Iron Guard. I protest against 2 principles:

1) tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner.¹¹¹ often the opposite is truer

2) all minorities must stick together (+ minorities are slightly holy as such). So you saw the ape: & the Boston lemon:¹¹² and the 'spy Jebb': Joe Alsop¹¹³ is, I suppose, not in Washington. Behrman¹¹⁴ is *here* with a cold, in Claridges. I wish you *would* see the Frankfurters:¹¹⁵ I could write (but don't know where they could let you know in Washington) but you can easily reach them via Wiesners¹¹⁶ – & say you are a great friend of mine – or get Joe or the Bohlen¹¹⁷ to call them. *Is* it livelier? gayer? more life-giving

¹¹¹ Proverb of uncertain origin – perhaps a commonplace for centuries? This precise formulation is used by Tolstoy in *War and Peace* (1868), vol. 1, part 1, chapter 28 (the last in this book: chapter-numbering varies) and by Theodor Fontane in a letter to his wife dated 18 August 1876 – in both cases without attribution. Approximations to it (see Georg Büchmann, *Geflügelte Wörter [und Zitatenschatz]*, s.v. 'tout': but his account is incomplete) appear, in chronological order, in Goethe, *Torquato Tasso* (1790), act 2, scene 1, line 1113 ('was wir verstehen, das können wir nicht tadeln'); Madame de Staël, *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807), book 18, chapter 5 ('tout comprendre rend très-indulgent'); Goethe, 'Derb und Tüchtig', in *Westöstlicher Divan* (1819) ('Denn wer einmal uns versteht / Wird uns auch verzeihn'); and Theodor Fontane, *Frau Jenny Treibel* (1892), chapter 7 ('comprendre c'est pardonner'), where it is attributed to George Sand without reference (probably in error, says one of Fontane's editors, without giving a reason).

¹¹² Rowland Burdon-Muller (1891–1980), English-born Eton- and Oxford-educated cosmopolitan, art connoisseur and interior designer who had settled in Boston; IB greatly enjoyed his trenchantly expressed and radical views on politics and current affairs, which he mostly did not share. See E 789.

¹¹³ Joseph Wright Alsop (1910–89), US journalist. See E 786.

¹¹⁴ Sam(uel) Nathan Behrman, (1893–1973), US playwright. See E 786.

¹¹⁵ Felix Frankfurter (1882–1965), Associate Justice of the US Supreme Court, 1939–62, and his wife Marion (1890–1975), née Denman. See E 791.

¹¹⁶ Possibly Jerome ('Jerry') Bert Wiesner (1915–94), electrical engineer and scientific administrator, and his wife Laya né Wainger (1918–88).

¹¹⁷ Charles Eustis ('Chip') Bohlen (1904–74), US diplomat and Soviet specialist, and his wife Avis Howard Bohlen (1912–81), nee Thayer. See E 788.

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than our existence here? I thought the opposite in 1951. I apologise: this is not a letter: it is not meant to be: like you, I sometimes cannot cope.

love

Isaiah.

TO EDWARD WEEKS

23 December 1952

All Souls College,

Dear Ted,

Thank you very much for your letter. I am in the throes of writing, or thinking about, my piece for you now – it ought to reach you some time in January. Roland is very funny about the seven plumbers and a banker.

Let me send you two Churchill stories for New Year.

1) While travelling to Strasbourg by the night ferry from London over the Channel. A terrific bump on the ferry. Frantic ringing of bells from Mr Churchill's compartment. Steward enters to find a broken whisky bottle.

Mr Churchill: 'As you see, the bottle broke. We need more liquid nourishment. Could you bring us two more bottles?'

Steward says 'Yes', and begins hurrying out. Mr Churchill stops him. 'Was that a serious accident? Are very many dead?'

The story might be entitled 'First things first', and is not for reproduction.

The second story is about Reynaud, who talked to Churchill for three-quarters of an hour, with great earnestness, about the past, present and future of France. At the end of it Mr Churchill said: '*Obviouslyment*' – interesting word.

Thank you very much for your suggestion about the solid nourishment for me. If your thoughts did turn to that direction I

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do beg you not to send it to me in London now but to Oxford towards the end of January, where I can share it with one or two equally hungry mouths (not that any of us are remotely that, but I am on the move at the moment and I can't bear solitary feasts).

God bless you, Merry Christmas, etc. I shall not sign this for earlier delivery.

Yours ever,
Isaiah Berlin p.p.

TO JOHN SPARROW

25 December [1952; *manuscript*]

49 Hollycroft Avenue

My dear Warden,

This is a formal little note to you to say that after a highly complex correspondence with Harvard & Princeton I shall have written to them to say that I am ready to visit Harvard in 1953 (autumn) & Princeton Institute for Advanced Study (the Woodwardum) in the spring of 1954 & early summer; but that all this [is] provisional as I must first obtain your permission (I do not need the University's). My desire to go back so soon – after four terms of Oxford – is non-existent: in fact it is a bore & a nuisance (why wd I not have used those terms to Warden Sumner? to Henderson, yes.) but the Russian books are there: so are the chaps to talk to: I shd like Belinsky & his circle (the title seems foolishly esoteric & Beachcomberish) to be ready by say 1955 at the latest: sooner or later I'd have to go to Harvard & the Lib[rary] of Congress & New York Pub[lic] Lib[rary] to look at the stuff, which has been damaged by bombs in the B.M.: better earlier than later. The thing is that I go to U.S.A. regularly to supplement my £750·0·0 p.a. & the practice is not utterly remote from this: God knows I *hate* being away; I love living in All Souls; I hate any uprooting; & do this, for once, purely in the interests of “getting on with my work” to use the by now sacred formula of the dear

President of Corpus in re Dummett. But if you see objections wd you be so very kind to let me know soon: for by Jan 15 or so Harvard, at least, (Princeton can wait) ought to know: And six–seven months seems to me the minimum for looking at all the relevant books. Then not return to the U.S. for 3–4 years at least, if then or ever.

yrs respectfully.

Isaiah.

PS What are the real reasons for going to America in September? as opposed to the reasons?

1) Not money. I know that one of our colleagues will not believe this. But it means as little to me as to – as to yourself. And anyway I spend it all there, almost. And I disliked my last visit to those excellent people more than I enjoyed it.

2) What then? Answer: the connection. If one does Russian history in any form it is the only place where there are facilities – books, catalogues, persons. And I don't want to have to cadge dollars from Rockefeller or go on lecture tours like dear old ALR. My Harvard liaison is a reasonably honest way of turning an honest dollar. There is a kind of gentleman's agreement (Burdon Muller is very sharp on how much more binding that is than a contract) about irregular visits between me & Harvard; if, because I *loathe* the thought of going, I break it, I shall (a) feel awful (b) be cut off from my 'stuff'. (I hope you have *plenty* of *time* & don't mind all this chat. It is a very exaggerated & misapplied method of carrying on our "complete candour" traditions). So I ought to go. What other thoughts occur to me? I can't deny that I wondered if about 1954 there wd not be a vacancy for a Chair for which I shd apply. That wd confine my movements across the ocean; but also, to some degree remove the reason for them; I mean if I got it: & I would not want to be in Oxford during the season of election. My last absence was a great success, I thought. Is it improper for me to say all this? yes, surely, in a way. And talking of Chairs: have you any influence with Stuart Newton Hampshire? He may be applying for the Cambridge Chair in Morals: & they might give it to him: I

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would if I were they: & it really will make him unhappy & disimprove (as Ian Little might write) his work: will he listen to you or me on this? but only to Hart? & is not Hart just as goosey? & what about our poor bruised, concussed, unhorsed old Knight? But I am on dangerous ground. And have you had a dreadfully embarrassed Xmas card from Quinton? – But I stop

IB

TO JOHN PLAMENATZ

Boxing Day [1952; *transcript of missing (MS?) original*]

49 Hollycroft Avenue, London NW3

Dear Plamenatz,

I have read about 50 pp. of your book on Marx etc., and with deep interest. I quarrel with something literally almost on every page: your generalisations are much bolder and more dogmatic than Popper's – your attacks sometimes, however valid, like Joseph's: like a professional philosopher's: and don't allow for the de facto intelligibility of much that is stated in loose, obscure, and maddeningly bogus language: however I could supply you with details later. Of course I think this, like all you write, is worth publishing; in this case, like Tolstoy, even if one thinks your strictures too oversimplified, the questions you put are genuinely 'fundamental' and force one to rethink answers, half-nonsense usually – which one has swallowed a long time ago and repeats semi-mechanically. It is all wonderfully fresh, authentic, relevant, and Emperor's New Colthes'ish: But what I want to know is: what am I to do? Do you wish me to write you a letter which you could send on to Longman's, or what? I can either write you a general letter of 2–3 small pages like these, or a list of major points and reflections thereon (I am now determined to read it all, I think it reads so well and so spontaneously, without the usual Marxological patina) – please tell me.

IB

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PS The Russian bits seem to me at once oversimple in part, and splendidly clear, and in parts genuinely devastating. Of course it ought to be published: I could make one or two suggestions about revisions here or there.

TO EDWARD WEEKS

25 February 1953

All Souls College

Dear Ted,

First let me thank you for your magnificent gift. It arrived intact and gave enormous pleasure not only to myself but to numerous avid friends. Thank you very much indeed.

And secondly a far – to me at least – less agreeable point. As you know, I have been preparing for you for some time a piece about the late Dr Weizmann. Since then I have seen his widow in London – she is very pathetic and melancholy – she is a genuinely distinguished but not very popular old lady who has never affected to love or admire the majority of her husband's followers, who naturally in their turn repay in something like kind. She is respected, but not loved, and having always pleaded what Trotsky used to call the magic of distance between her husband and his followers (and this did indeed save him from being turned into small change by them – he was very democratic and she protected him by snobbery), she is now paying for it by solitude and a sad life in a large house, unloved, unhonoured and unsung. I suppose she will devote the rest of her life in guarding and haunting his mausoleum. At any rate she does not want me to write the article. She feels that no short piece will be adequate, that more has to be known about him, that if a piece like that is written, it will serve as an excuse for not writing something larger – I can think of perfectly conclusive arguments against all these; nevertheless she really was adamant.

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I am one of the feel people upon whom she looks as a friend (and indeed I am, so far as in me lies), and I do not wish to give her any pain or even a moment's uneasiness. Consequently I had in effect to promise not to write the piece. I am very sorry indeed about this – there is a lot I should like to say – and now I am afraid it will have to wait for another opportunity, for I do intend to write it somehow, somewhen yet, when you shall certainly have the first refusal of it if we are both alive at the time. I feel great guilt about it, nevertheless, although it is really not my fault. I do not think that it is worth destroying an old friendship, particularly when one of the friends is really rather pathetic and isolated – for the sake of presenting the world with yet another vignette. I am sure you will understand – I feel remorse and guilt notwithstanding. But I promise I shall write something for you in the course of this year – less than that I cannot do, try to do something I mean. I shall go to Italy in the spring and that will surely make some sort of impact and cause me to be indignant about something, or enthusiastic about something else. I may go to one of the musical festivals in the summer. I shall produce something, I shall honestly try.

How have you been doing with the Trevor-Roper bombshell? He is very gleeful about it here and keeps on coming into my room with new angry communiqués from Sweden or Washington or the London Legation. He is a terrific sleuth and likes blowing up established reputations. In Bernadotte's case I feel that he must be right. He was a very smooth, blown-up, bogus character.

I have been invited to attend a conference by the Ford Foundation together with T. S. Eliot, Arnold Toynbee, Karl Barth, Karl Jaspers, Monsignor de Lubac, C. S. Lewis and R. H. Tawney, not to speak of Heisenberg and some other pious figure. What can I possibly be doing in that *galère*? I cannot help feeling that it would merely be compromising to be associated with a group of out-and-out reactionary figures of this sort. Only Tawney has some degree of intellectual and social conscience amongst them all. If there is anything more awful [than], or as awful as, the muddle-headed, cheap or weak or silly left, it is the pompous, complacent or else unhappy, persecution-ridden, dogmatic right. I admit that if I was

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invited to confer with Kingsley Martin, Michael Foot, Julian Huxley, the late Laski, J. B. S Haldane etc., I should feel much the same. It is clear that there is no real place for me among the people who count in the modern world. Must I really attend?

Yours ever,
Isaiah B.

TO HERBERT BUTTERFIELD

15 May 1953 [*manuscript*]

All Souls

Dear Butterfield

I owe you several apologies, I really do. Firstly I said to you, as I expect & hope you do not remember, when I first met you last year, that I was going to submit my L.S.E. Auguste Comte Lecture for your comments before I delivered it – since I was going to say something in it about what I understood of your views on moral judgments made by historians. And so I would have done if I had had a text before I delivered my lecture. But although I collected a number of disjuncted fragments, I had, of course, no continuous narrative when I spoke on the 12th before a much too distinguished audience. So there was nothing to send to you; I did make some references to your views: & Oakeshott who presided over me, said to me afterwards that he thought I had not got them right, or at least quite right; & it may well be so, & I may have traduced you terribly. In that connection, besides pleading guilt, I shd like to make amends by sending you the MS. of my lecture before publication (it is still in a dreadful mess: & I half talked & half read & it all seemed to me a terrible fiasco, but it is over & that is, thank God, that) since I am most profoundly anxious not to attribute to you any view which you haven't stated in your essays which I genuinely much admire, even though I disagree with at least two doctrines which I think I culled from them. If I did misrepresent you in any degree (it was only a few sentences) I am sorry for it:

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but my words will not be remembered by anyone for long: so there is perhaps no need to worry overmuch about that.

That is one thing. The other is that I read in the *Manchester Guardian* of the 13th, to my great horror, that I had “opposed ... three classes of determinists – teliologists (sic) metaphysicians and scientists – plus Professor Butterfield who severally think that history proceeds along inevitable lines and that therefore no historical judgment is possible’. Whatever I may have done, I certainly did not either believe you to be, or describe you as a determinist of any kind: & the M.G. account is a travesty: & I am almost inclined (& at a word from you wd immediately set myself) to write & testify that you are not, or at least that I do not consider you, or ever described you as being, an adherent of historical determinism. I spoke only of your view of historical moralizing: & if I was wrong, it was not in the ways implied by the M.G. reporter.

Still, I am the accidental cause of a misrepresentation: I cannot feel altogether guiltless: so I grovel to you again. Will you forgive me? & allow me to send you a typescript of my lecture before publication? or wd you rather not be so imposed upon?

Yours sincerely
Isaiah Berlin

GBR/0012/MS Butterfield/B/81

TO ALINE HALBAN

Postmark 15 July 1953 [*manuscript*]

Brighton

My week-end with the Marks¹¹⁸ was *wonderful* – particularly the telephone calls of Mrs Clore:¹¹⁹ also the reactions – pure pleasure; shame; and aggressive desire to brazen it out, of the various smart

¹¹⁸ Presumably Simon Marks (1888–1964), 1st Baron Marks of Broughton, developer of the Marks & Spencer retail chain, and his wife Miriam née Sieff (1894–1971).

¹¹⁹ Presumably Francine Mary Clore (1919–93) née Halphen, m. Charles Clore 1943.

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guests: no more delightful & comical phenomenon has occurred for 10 years or more. Very unlike the Bestigini reactions. Will you come to *tea with Trees*¹²⁰ on Sunday when I have Toscanninis man Chotzinoff all day? do I meet you Friday night? anyway Sat. lunch.

Love,
Isaiah.

TO HERBERT BUTTERFIELD

~~18 August~~ (1st Sept.) 1953

Hollycroft Avenue

Dear Professor Butterfield,

I feel dreadfully guilty about not replying to your most interesting and delightful letter, which it was very good of you to write. I delayed doing so largely because I wanted to finish the text of the lecture which was the occasion for it, and send it to you to look at – by which time alone I thought I would know my own mind about the issues which you raised. But of course I don't, even now; I do enclose a copy of the lecture before publication, in case I have said something untrue and unfair about your views, in which case I should be grateful if you would tell me; and I shall try to amend it duly. But the lecture is dreadfully long, and I fear very verbose. Perhaps you would rather not read it: I should not, in your place, have either the time or inclination to do such a thing; it is no service to anyone one likes and respects, whose time is limited, to deposit a sudden burden of this kind on his shoulders. So if I don't hear from you, within say a week or so, to the effect that you think something imperatively demands to be changed, even without saying what it is (in this, your first warning signal), I shall send it to the LSE, wash my hands of it and, with a sinking feeling, depart for Harvard (I sail on 10 September). Please forgive me for putting upon you so.

¹²⁰ (Arthur) Ronald Lambert Field Tree (1897–1976), Anglo-American, Conservative MP 1933–45, and his second wife Mary Endicott ('Marietta') Tree (1917–91), née Peabody, US socialite and liberal political activist.

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I am most grateful to you also for sending me your last book,¹²¹ which I read with interest and admiration. I wish my lecture had half its elegance or its feeling or its enviable moderation of tone. I am not a good writer and am an over-vehement and careless talker, and you are neither. But regarding the main issues I think that you are right – that we do start from positions which are not in the end reconcilable at all. You believe that it is arrogant and ignorant and dangerous to condemn, denounce, and fight campaigns on moral issues. I, on the whole, do not. Not but what I did once write a piece¹²² in which I tried to say that the trouble of our time was not too little faith – as everyone in America seemed to be thinking – but too much; that different people pursued different ideals and the same people pursued incompatible ideals; and that a civilised society was one which made all this less costly than fanatical and barbarous ones; that human ends, being ultimate, had to be tolerated as such; and other Mill-like things like that, for which I was duly trounced anonymously by E. H. Carr in *The Times Literary Supplement*, who coupled me with Russell and accused us both of a *surtout pas trop de zèle*¹²³ attitude and damned us as propagators of a ‘new scepticism’.

I don’t know about Russell, but certainly I believe in the insolubility of problems of basic moral principle – or rather that they are not real problems in the sense in which factual ones are (which do seem to be soluble in principle or else not problems at all) but represent attitudes to life and not enquiries with their special techniques. So, to that degree, I think I should be inclined to applaud you every time you urge understanding, an atmosphere in which disagreements need not lead to bigotry or efforts at mutual extermination; the danger of indulging in the application of general principles to specific situations – of vivisection of human beings because of some fixed idea of how things ought to be; and ad hoc solutions, each in its own time and place, none hoping for

¹²¹ *Christianity, Diplomacy and War* (London, 1953).

¹²² ‘Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century’: see note above.

¹²³ See L4 236/5.

finality. And I feel pro-Niebuhr on this, and agree with him that democracy is best because it is the most flexible, the least tidy, and therefore makes the most allowances for incompleteness of solutions and inevitable human fallibility (in an empirical, unreligious sort of way I believe in original sin, if that is the strict contradictory of perfectibility).

But whereas you think, unless I mistake you profoundly, the influence of individuals upon affairs has been exaggerated; and that the more we know, the more uncontrollable factors we find at work in history, and that we don't know much, and make a double mistake, when we blame or denounce, of exaggerating the part played by individuals and of our knowledge of what that part must have been, I am continually impressed (*a*) by how much greater is the influence of individuals and moral ideas than is allowed for in impersonal, e.g. Marxist or theologically or economically inclined, histories, or, for that matter, those which stress biological or other non-rational factors – surely the twentieth century, with its Hitlers and Stalins, carries that lesson against the lesson of the nineteenth; and (*b*) by the fact that we cannot divorce knowledge of fact from moral judgement, that we judge as we judge on the basis of whatever is the best knowledge available, and that to abstain from judging morally distorts the picture; that we have, both as historians and as human beings, a duty to understand and explain as far as we can, but that to understand is not to excuse, but, as a Dean of Christ Church once observed in my hearing, 'When a situation looks black it is usually the case that upon closer inspection it turns out to be blacker still.'

This is perhaps too pessimistic; but I do not see the connection between explanation and justification which is usually thought to exist; when we meditate about our own motives we sometimes blame ourselves more sharply, not less; why then should we withhold this from others? Save on the grounds of charity, which is a virtue indeed, but not necessarily compatible with truth or justice, except on interpretation of the word – ultimately a religious one – which is precisely, I suppose, what I do not share with you. I do not believe that a view of the world which denies the right to

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moral judgement to all save Divine Omniscience is a truer view of the facts than one which does not; a different view certainly, and one whose depth, coherence and nobility I recognise; but not one which does justice to ordinary human experience, it seems to me; within that precarious calculation of right and wrong by which most men guide their lives something is lost and something gained in every view compared with every other. But the extent of such loss and gain, and the point at which awareness of it inclines us towards one view rather than another, seems to me part of the fundamental outlook of every individual, and not therefore capable of being judged in terms of some other outlook – an ultimate set of standards beyond which one cannot in principle go.

People whose ultimate judgements differ too widely from our own we cannot communicate with profitably. What we call objective in an outlook is the fact that it belongs to a sufficient degree to a general system of attitudes within which there are publicly accepted criteria which make public intercommunication possible. And this system, in terms of which we do in fact argue with each other, seems to me to take a large number of moral standards and rules for granted – they may vary at different times and in different places, but so may everything else, and we are as we are, and the fact that we might be different, or that other people might be or will be, doesn't seem to me to alter this. To try and eliminate these varying moral standards when we are discussing human beings and their acts, to put them in a temporary bracket as it were, refuse to raise moral issues, seems to me impossible, i.e. to invite us to use ordinary words in such contracted senses as to make them lose a great part of their flavour and meaning. In the sciences we do this by consciously idealising and abstracting. In ordinary thought surely we cannot.

I apologise for carrying on at such length, and so, I fear, lamely and obscurely, but most of all do I apologise for inflicting my lecture upon you. It is a poor response to your letter and your book, I do beg you not to spend time either from your labours or your pleasures unless you think that I have been outrageously unjust – in that case I appeal to your understanding and charity,

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inconsistently, since I myself profess not to attach such value to these attributes as you so generously do.

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

⟨The text has come out so terribly long that it really *is* monstrous to expect you to read it at all – let alone in a hurry. If you do I shall, of course, be very very grateful: but I sail, alas, on Sept. 10, & shall have to send the text in before that. So if I hear nothing from you, I shall understand perfectly.⟩

GBR/0012/MS Butterfield 122/6

TO A. J. AYER

Sunday [20 December 1953?, *manuscript*]

49 Hollycroft Avenue

Dear Freddie,

Thank you very much for your letter. I was devoted to my father¹²⁴ who – I think, perhaps, like yours, was a very young and innocent character, & lived & died without tragedy of any sort – I knew that he had leukaemia against which there is no known remedy, & wd not have gone to America, but the doctors, rightly I think, said that this wd have frightened him, & so I went under a kind of sentence. I shall miss him terribly – he & my mother are all that I know of family life, & probably all I ever shall – and I really like no other kind.

He was a gay, sensitive, elegant & civilised man, very un-exhausted by life & full of desire to live on, but had no notion he was near death 10 hours before he died in a coma, – I shd not mind ending like that, but I fear I know too much about symptoms by now. It was very nice of you to write & my mother wants to thank you too & I hope to see you – I was to have gone back to America, but I shall not now, till March at least: I can't decide to go to

¹²⁴ Mendel Berlin died on 15 December 1953.

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Nuffield or not – like your London problem – wd you come & talk to me in All Souls next week?

love

Isaiah

TO DIANA COOPER

[early January 1954, *manuscript*]

49 Hollycroft Avenue

Dearest Diana,

I really do write from a full – but I really mean an empty – heart: for my father died a fortnight ago – I was just in time from America to talk to him – & since my family is the closest knit I know, the effect is one I cannot face at all. I go through a large number of tasks mechanically but with a kind of frenzied attention to impersonal detail & this fills the days: & I hope that some substitute for life – some temporary scaffolding – some automatic routine will offer a corridor to you too until the new level is reached and a quite different life begins. I know, I know that words are useless and even a burden: & that the world is for a moment depopulated: also that quite aside from all your love & your devotion and the unique intimacy and bright colour & warmth and unheard of combination of public glory & valour with the most vivid, unexhausted, *personal* private qualities – what is most impossible to believe *is* that such a source of life – *such* love of life and appetite for all its riches, is no more. I won't go on – for fear that some untoward word will touch painfully by some accident & give you a twinge unintentionally – but I can't resist saying that never have I met anyone in whom public life killed so little – nothing – who retained what is best – a full & intense inner life, *capacity* for passionate reaction to what alone is real – what human beings do, feel, think – in fact an inner personality and a soul so quick, so undead, in the midst of public concerns; who *else* ever did? nobody in England: in every other case large bits were

atrophied & offered up & destroyed: The Duff¹²⁵ remained a full, unsundered human being, with full luxuriant control of his infinitely generous resources – and still played a really unforgettable part on the public stage, and stood up and fought and defended what he believed in and struck at what he thought hateful, when others either temporized or ran or took refuge in being private individuals & hid inside small cosy worlds which were duly shattered – the combination of public courage and splendour and the rich and passionate private life – that was to me, as it must have been to others, a great miracle, and proof of the nonsense talked by those who excuse the white sepulchres of public life on the ground that they cannot *help* it – & sacrificed their private faces to some public goal. He really has lived out a wonderful life – for he so plainly not only adored you, but being married to you, and every instant, every nuance, everything – but the last days must have been *fearful* for you, & no doubt you acted with splendid nobility & efficiency in a great crisis – but at some uncounted expense. Where will you live now? in England I do hope: & a new life. But it must have been a unique relationship between husband & wife – with perfect complementarity – export – import – & I do see that awareness of the splendour of it and the immense sea of love, admiration, affection, wonder, delight by which you were surrounded is for the moment a substitute for *nothing*: I apologize for this incoherent letter: I am in an abyss myself: very unrecovered: & in some sense I am writing about myself: & the destruction of a world. But what I want to convey is that there is nothing to say but that all my affection, devotion, love, admiration, are at your indefinite disposal, at all times, and that you must not dream of answering this unless you feel an independent wish to write: and that here I shall be, till March, trying to rebuild *my* smaller world, if wanted. And that I hope I shall be: & once again,

¹²⁵ Diana Cooper's husband (Alfred) Duff Cooper (1890–1954), 1st Viscount Norwich 1952, politician, diplomat and writer, had died on New Year's Day.

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as so often, to send you every possible healing prayer & again my love.

Yours,
Isaiah.

In April 1954 a series of dedications written on the flyleaf of Aline's copy of The Hedgehog and the Fox was inaugurated, reflecting their joint work on a French translation of IB's 1953 work, and on a relationship that led to their marriage two years later.

1954. To Aline, lady of leisure and letters, and in memory of many hours of bland labour, of hesitation and insoluble problems (or almost), gratefully, from Isaiah
1·4·54.
and again 31·12·54.
1955. and finally 18·3·55 –
on which the translation was completed, and less proved insoluble than had originally appeared to be so.
I.B.

IB and Aline were engaged on 18 February 1955 and married on 7 February 1956. Aline's translation was published in 1984 in Les Penseurs russes (Paris: Albin Michel) and in 2000 as a separate volume, Le Hérisson et le Renard: Essai sur la vision de l'Histoire de Tolstoï (Paris: Les Belles Lettres).

TO HERBERT BUTTERFIELD

10 April 1954 [*manuscript*]

All Souls

Dear Professor Butterfield

I am ashamed of having delayed in sending the answer to your letter (for 6 months!) I did, as you see from the date, write it in Harvard in October; then I potted with the MS. of the lecture; then my father died and I had to return to England suddenly in

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mid-course, & my life after that was led among accountants & lawyers & business men, & very odious I found it. I only returned to the infinitely more attractive (& difficult) world of theory quite recently, & re-read your letter, & eliminated from the MS (a) all references to *anyone's* thinking that men seek to do good but achieve evil & (b) all references to yourself in this connection – I do hope that such references as, out of genuine interest in & respect for your views and because of the stimulation which I derived from them, I could not & did not wish, to suppress, do not seem to you misleading. I altered as much as I could; you will not mind the result, I now feel sure. Thank you again for your letter: & I apologize once more for my unconscionable time in answering.

Yours sincerely

Isaiah Berlin

GBR/0012/MS Butterfield 531/B/83

TO JOHN SPARROW

4 May 1954

All Souls

Dear Mr Warden,

I submit herewith my account of my work as Research Fellow of the College for 1952–3.

In the course of these two years I have published the following:

1. A small book entitled *The Hedgehog and The Fox* dealing with certain problems in the philosophy of history, with particular reference to the views of Tolstoy and de Maistre, founded upon an article which I had published in vol. 2 of *Oxford Slavonic Papers* somewhat earlier. This essay is concerned with both the subjects which I undertook to study – the history of Russian social and political ideas and general ideas in Western Europe in the 19th century.

2. I have also published as part of the proceedings of the Columbia University Conference on Russian Intellectual History, a somewhat lengthy treatise on the political views of Herzen and

Bakunin¹²⁶ which is to form part of a volume of essays on Russian topics which I hope to publish in the course of next year.

3. I am at the moment correcting the proofs of the Auguste Comte Memorial Lecture entitled ‘History as the Culprit’ which I delivered at the London School of Economics last year, which is to come out as a separate publication in, I hope, a few weeks’ time.

4. Furthermore I have in MS about three-quarters of a book dealing with the origins of modern political ideas in the romantic age – the substance of which was delivered at Bryn Mawr College in 1951 and broadcast by the BBC in the autumn and winter of 1952–3. I hope to complete the MS in the course of this year and the book should be published by the Oxford University Press in 1955 (if I can finish it by August, possible earlier than that).

5. I have also completed in the first draft some eight chapters of my projected book on the intellectual origins of the Russian Revolution to be entitled (provisionally) “Belinsky and His Circle”.

6. I have published critical notices in *Mind*, the *American Review of Philosophy*, the *English Historical Review*, and the *Times Literary Supplement* (front page article) all dealing with the history of ideas.

I have fulfilled my duties as University Lecturer by giving public lectures and classes, and teaching the required number of pupils, as Lecturer of New College.

I lectured at Harvard in the autumn term of 1953 and should have proceeded to Princeton where the Institute for Advanced Studies had kindly invited me to stay for an indefinite period in 1954, and which I should have liked to do as there are Russian texts of interest to me in the United States unobtainable in Europe, but for the fact that my father’s death in December of 1953 necessitated my return to England. I have unfortunately had to give up a good deal of my time to settling his estate during the first

¹²⁶ Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin (1814–76), charismatic revolutionary who spent much of his life outside Russia; ideological rival of Karl Marx; ‘morally careless, intellectually irresponsible, a man who, in his love for humanity in the abstract, was prepared, like Robespierre, to wade through seas of blood’ (‘Herzen and Bakunin on Individual Liberty’, RT2 129).

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months of this year, which has seriously interfered with my academic work. However, this is now virtually over, and I propose to spend this term in preparing my book on political ideas for the Press as well as my normal academic duties.

I have also examined in the B.Phil. examination in politics during 1952–3 and in the College Fellowship examination in 1952, and am to do so once again in the autumn of this year.

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

TO HANS AND ALINE HALBAN (IN DEAUVILLE)

20 August 1954 [*postcard*]

Albergo Garibaldi, Cortona

Deauville is very far away. Paris less so; I have as a last vivid memory his poor Excellency, Chip B[ohlen], broken under the weight of my suitcase, since no porters at Gare de Lyon on Sunday 15th; Oxford closer; “all” are here: Stuart nobly sunburnt, Cecilia whom his society delights beyond expression; Marcus¹²⁷ good, sweet, gay, infinitely kind; Patrick¹²⁸ silent, always in love, preoccupied, constant-ly thinking of something else, with much melancholy charm (*e molto simpatico*), David Pears,¹²⁹ ticking like the best Swiss watch, alive only when philosophical topics come up. Stuart & the Dicks leave on Monday 23^d, so does Patrick, I think. I have had a charming letter from R. Salem in Cornelian heroic couplets: telling me to come for a week from 25 to 7th Sept, any time: I am tempted to go there on the 25th & catch Bill [Deakin]

¹²⁷ Marcus William Dick (1920–71), Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy and Politics, Balliol, 1947–63; later (1963–71) Professor of Philosophy, East Anglia; husband of Cecilia.

¹²⁸ Patrick Horace Nowell-Smith (b. 1914), New College classics 1933–7, Commonwealth Fellow, Harvard, 1937–9, army service 1939–45, Fellow and Lecturer in philosophy, Trinity, 1946–57.

¹²⁹ David Francis Pears (1921–2009), Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy, CCC, 1950–60.

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(book *not* going well. Too many visitors etc.) but the Salems must not be overdone (James Joll went there) by Fellows & associates of St. Antony's: so I'll go to Ravenna, alone, I think: till 26th: to Venice: & to Aix on the 29th or 30th, at the earliest. Perugia is heavenly: esp. Corso Vanucci at 7 p.m., any caffè. Rigoletto in the open air; in Cortona all in the inhabitants are shepherded to bed after Televisione, at 10.30 p.m. by a policeman. Saluti, Auguri, Pace, Pace.¹³⁰

I.B.

TO ALINE HALBAN

24 August 1954 [*manuscript*]

Albergo Garibaldi, Cortona, Arezzo, Italia

Dear ... Aline,

Cortona is a great success. Perhaps a little less for me than for the others, but still sufficient. Perugia is beautiful and gay, and a proper handsome high renaissance city; Cortona is tiny: has one small main street; 2 cafés; but if people are one's landscape, ideal. The flow of life is incredible: it *is* a cure for anxiety and too many dialoghi interni:¹³¹ imagine a small, fabulous looking piazza, with a small caffè: all round, stalls, trade, life, beggars, ebullient black middle aged ladies, occasional operatic looking gipsies, wonderful looking girls of the most romantic exquisite appearance, priests sucking ice creams arm in arm in the street, children, etc. Even the ugly & the crippled are never subhuman, never brutish, always this play of life ('interplay' – interjeu) – at this moment a fantastic looking old figure with a long white beard & a pipe in rags, of extreme dignity & gaiety is approaching my café – & all round are persons with beady little eyes watching everything, discussing, picking to pieces, extracting everything possible from everything –

¹³⁰ 'Good health, best wishes, peace, peace.'

¹³¹ 'Inner dialogues'.

surely this is it; to come into the least contact with it is to acquire juster proportions & stability: & the scattering of the sad & terrifying images induced by our northern torpor.¹³² Our friends were very happy. Cecilia Dick I can't quite take – I cannot listen to her, she seems to me too English & too uninteresting – nice enough & loves Marcus – & I thought she did not export too well – & is herself an exporter of somewhat bourgeois English goods – no market in my economy. She was absolutely spellbound by Stuart, worshipped the ground he trod on, & he was delighted (one always is, I suppose) smiled sweetly to her, & gently flirted with her. Marcus is very kind, altruistic, and ironical: & looked after everyone benevolently. Stuart indefatigably sight-saw: left out no pictures, & made snap judgments: the Dicks accepted all he said as ultimate & uncriticisable: Patrick, with a tortured expression, muttered, moo-ed, & wd suddenly burst into small explosions of disagreement: he has all the qualities of an artist except capacity: & is in his timid, inarticulate, indecisive, tremulous way, independent. He is a very acute observer; enormously sensitive, & thinks his own thoughts. He really is made of even finer substance than Stuart, & although he lacks Stuart's looks (how material is the basis of how much! all Cecilia's worship of S. ultimately stems from this) intelligence, humour, & all his unique beauties of character, he is more imaginative & not at all vain. Whereas Stuart receives homage still like a shy but conscious beauty in a drawing room. I enjoyed myself very much. Pears is dry hearted & silent in such company: now that the Dicks & Stuart & Patrick are gone, he talks incessantly & with great wit & malice. We are all regarded as mad by the village: & have made friends with some of them: what is wonderful here is not only that the sun shines & every face is expressive but that Cortona is not self consciously a holiday resort but a small town living its own real life, into which one enters easily: the Piazza, with inscriptions which in Italy are never wholly routine – about how “obscurantism & dark monarchy will *never* again cripple genius – &

¹³² E 451–2.

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send it agonizing into exile' – in this case Mazzini¹³³ – the Piazza is alive in the morning: dead between 2 & 4; at 6–7.30 every single living being walks up & down the little main street – at 8.30 all look at Televisione: at 10.30 a huge policeman in beautiful white, comes, & by moral pressure & charm sends everyone to bed: if groups linger he gently breaks them up. I cd work here for months, & am doing so now. As soon as I finish this letter I go {to} back to the divine Herzen.¹³⁴ Pears & I go to Urbino after dinner with Morra,¹³⁵ to-morrow: (I wish we had a car! the discomforts are acute) & Ravenna & Venice: I have had an S.O.S. from Berenson¹³⁶ & must visit il vecchio¹³⁷ who is, after all, 90 (what shall we be like at that age? I fully intend to live till then, & recommend you to do the same) and Salem on about 1st or 2^d Sept. So we shall cross; as is best.

At this point the letter was interrupted by the chief taxi-driver who came to tell me about 2 Frenchwomen who induced a local boy to take them to a Trasimene¹³⁸ bathing place – gave him 'drugged' cigarettes – and then the unmentionable occurred – but so much that he was taken to hospital 'Donne insodisfatte! affamate – francese, e il nostro poverino'¹³⁹ – & he descended to

¹³³ For this imperfectly recollected text see the photo below.

¹³⁴ Aleksandr Ivanovich Gertsen (the Russian transliteration of Herzen, the German name – from 'Herz', 'heart' – given by his mother to her illegitimate son) (1812–70), socialist thinker and writer who lived in Western Europe from 1847; publicist and publisher (in London) of influential exposés of the injustices perpetrated by the Russian Government; one of IB's intellectual heroes for his commitment to personal liberty and his clear-sighted and humane dislike of dogma and extremism, especially totalitarian violence inflicted in pursuit of distant Utopian goals.

¹³⁵ The writer and journalist Count Umberto Morra di Lavriano (1897–1981) lived just outside Cortona.

¹³⁶ Bernard Berenson (1865–1959), Lithuanian-born US art historian who settled in Italy, living for many years at Casa 'I Tatti' between Florence and Fiesole; leading authority on the Italian Renaissance.

¹³⁷ 'The old man'.

¹³⁸ Lake south of Cortona ('Trasimeno' in Italian).

¹³⁹ 'Insatiable women! dying for it – Frenchwomen, and our poor little lad'.

detail which wd have pleased the Rheimses¹⁴⁰ & horrified Stuart. He now gives me local gossip daily: I really am not undiscontented. Some sort of inner harmony has occurred.



Plaque commemorating Mazzini, Cortona

Nothing from Bill save a letter complaining of chaos & visitors: we may or may not meet. I must now go to lunch with some

¹⁴⁰ Maurice Prosper Gilles Rheims (1910–2003), French art auctioneer and author, and his wife Lili Adélaïde Rheims (1930–66) née Krahrmer, later Verame.

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religious heretics,¹⁴¹ led by an English lady¹⁴² of 83 from Perugia, who don't eat meat & are led by an ex-professor¹⁴³ who became a bell ringer till his excommunication by the Church. You see how rich life can be. It seems to me 1000 times more delightful than life in Florence, Venice, Siena. Of course one *can* build one's own existence in a socially thin milieu: if one is fanatically devoted to a cause, or insulated, – carapace etc or sufficiently self absorbed & self intoxicated: but I find it easier to exist in a medium filled with other persons filled with their own purposes, bubbling with vitality, who never don't react & smile & frown perpetually & don't sink under their own weight or get blown about because of lack of it – like here. All Souls is the best I can find in England. But small unrepresed communities are the thing.¹⁴⁴ This letter is perhaps excessively impersonal & 'detached' – it is beginning to rain & the objective boredom may soon become fantastique, but all – almost all – is well within. I shall go on writing after lunch (with the Italian religious leader. Not v. like the Aga Khan).¹⁴⁵

Lunch is over. The vegetarian saints were v. touching & possibly like the older saints – St. Francis etc – in whom Perugia – Assisi – & the rest of this bit of Umbria is obviously very rich. Too Christian, too unworldly, too magical for me. The old Katkov¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ The Centre of Religious Stance (COR), an offshoot of Aldo Capitini's Centres of Social Stance. 'The COR was an open space where the religiousness and faith of all persons, movements and groups who didn't fit in pre-council Catholicism could find expression. The aim of the CORs was to promote the knowledge of religions other than the Catholic one, and to encourage the Catholics themselves to adopt a more critical and committed approach to religious matters.' <https://ivu.org/members/council/aldo-capitini.html>

¹⁴² Named Emma Thomas.

¹⁴³ Ferdinando Tartaglia (1916–88), priest and theologian.

¹⁴⁴ E 452.

¹⁴⁵ Aga Khan III, Sir Sultan Mohammed Shah (1877–1957), 48th Imam of the Nizari Ismā'īli Shia Muslims 1885–1957.

¹⁴⁶ Presumably George Katkov (1903–85), Russian-born philosopher; academic in Prague before emigrating to England in 1939; Research Lecturer in Phil-osophy, Oxford, 1947–50; BBC Russian Service, 1950–9; Fellow, St

problem again. My problem is more pedestrian & personal: how not to be like wax for at least 3 inches – inside I am not too malleable. But really Italy does one good – Not drily self-protective & externalised & obeying a million rules like France; not idiotically self revealing & casting one’s heart & soul at anybody & doing everything too much & out of season like the Russians. I propose to return filled with Italian virtues – warmth, sense of measure & realism combined. We shall see, as someone or other used to say. The great revelation to me is Piero della Francesca.¹⁴⁷ I knew vaguely how good he was – but the Resurrection in San Sepolcro – & not only the frescoes in Arezzo – is unbelievable. Like an extremely vivid violent *vision* – sonnambulistica – most haunting & tremendous. The faces of the women are the same, & the men’s in all his pictures. Solomon receiving the Queen of Sheba (in Arezzo) & Christ have the same tragic terrific semi-Byzantine, but also very modern expression – Masters of the World – which creates a desire (even in me: but I like hero-worship & am always looking for feet at which to sit) to be a disciple, to worship. Do look at them. Also at the pregnant Madonna in a village whose name I cannot recollect – it is in the books – almost as good as the Resurrection – Mary appears, again as in a dream of enormous lucidity & precision – in a kind of tent – the dress is torn in 5 places to make room for pregnancy – I could think of nothing else. But being well known to be philistine about painting, held my peace. Stuart wants to think this non-Christian because it is so good: you might as well insist that it is Jewish. It *is* Christian but not ecclesiastical & we have all, even in remote Eastern Europe, assimilated it unconsciously. All this emotion about Piero is new to me: it must be due to some general late development: same in philosophy & literature. It is strange to begin to live so late. But enough about myself & my experiences. Only that if you travel in Umbria, look above all at

Antony’s, and University Lecturer in Soviet Institutions and Economics 1959–71. (What is the ‘Katkov problem?’)

¹⁴⁷ Piero della Francesca (c.1415–1492), Renaissance Italian painter and art theorist.

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Piero della F.: K. Clark's book on him¹⁴⁸ is decent but does not bring out the real splendours – never mind about Signorelli¹⁴⁹ & 200 alterpieces. To-morrow I go to Urbino & Ravenna with Pears: but I said, enough about me. I look back on Reux with queer feeling: I don't believe anyone there suspected how ghastly I felt – they were all nothing out of the ordinary, I suppose; I had a charming letter from Alix, full of sensibility and understatement – I know people can be blind to their surroundings, & blind themselves, & put wax in their ears (like Pears who does so nightly & a mask too I expect) & ignore & not wince, if there is enough – what? love? stoicism? egoism? altruism? fear of facts? courage & desire to preserve what has been built? I marvel at Alix: of course we all have aspects & sides & different sets of antennae for differing uses: who more than I? (or perhaps this is a naïve illusion. My face shows everything – Stuart thought it positively *tragic* when I thought (quite mistakenly) that Mrs Backer¹⁵⁰ was coming to visit us all one dark cosy Cortona evening) – still, still, still, at how many levels can life be lived & sense of truth be preserved? must Alix *act*? or does Guy understand & allow for all this? if he does all honour & glory to him & he is a noble, good & understanding, & does not wish to trample & is capable of sensitive adjustment which only genuine affection & love can make possible. I wish you wd explain all this to me one day. As a case in civilized relationship they deserve study. He was terrible, Guy, as you can imagine: & I like him more than ever. One day I shall try & say why. This letter is too long to destroy, but it may be illegible & too like a travelogue. Do send me a line, if so inclined, from somewhere. To All Souls wd be best. Otherwise I may go on persecuting you with long shapeless stuff like this. Italy is a wonderful healer: I am free of

¹⁴⁸ Kenneth Clark, *Piero della Francesca* (London, 1951).

¹⁴⁹ Luca Signorelli (c.1443–1523), Italian Renaissance painter from Cortona.

¹⁵⁰ Evelyn ('Evie') Backer (1905–71), née Weil, second wife of US Democratic politician George Backer.

anxieties, I can work & think, the lectures for London¹⁵¹ are growing, as you wd say, beautifully: and I see no reason to doubt the ultimate friendliness of the universe. Patience, courage, good sense, affection, respect for other people & their odd, twisted, but still their, purposes, a minimum of Lebensraum,¹⁵² & believe me, the gang will be happy yet one day, as Dr Weizmann rightly insisted in the teeth of all the German Jewish philosophes. What a good story that is. There is a violent thunderstorm outside now. I feel gay & full of good feeling for you, for Hans, for Rosie, for Dr Cohn,¹⁵³ for Señor Montenez, for everybody. Some more than others, but in my present mood, I see no reason for thinking anything insuperable. Do write. I shall end like Indian philosophers (unknown) write to others in Oxford: “yours truly. love. with respect.” Next term will be wonderful. And all other terms, as we shall see.

Isaiah.

TO ALINE HALBAN

Monday [30 August 1954? *manuscript postcard*]

[Caffè] Florian[, Venice]

(an early case of what “they” did to “us”.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ ‘A Marvellous Decade: Literature and Social Criticism in Russia, 1838–48’, the (four) Northcliffe Lectures for 1954, published as ‘A Remarkable Decade’ in RT.

¹⁵² ‘Space for living’.

¹⁵³ Presumably Josef Cohn (1904–86), German-born scientist who acted as Chaim Weizmann’s personal assistant and US representative for Sieff Institute affairs for many years; Executive Vice-President, European Committee, Weizmann Institute, from 1955. Apart from Hans Halban, the other persons in this list have not been identified.

¹⁵⁴ This remark applies to the picture on the postcard, of one of the frescoes in the cycle in the Cappella Maggiore of the Church of St Francesco in Arezzo created by Piero della Francesca from 1452 to recount the history of the True

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I am at Florian, looking out with all my eyes for Michel:¹⁵⁵ so far, no trace. I leave on the morning of Thursday 2nd – missing you, I fear – & am to pick Bill up at Entrèves – the interlacing is wonderful – I’ve written Salem¹⁵⁶ some exquisite Latin rhymes in early medieval style – Don’t go to the Biennale¹⁵⁷ – Venice is of exquisite beauty & Sparrow’s palazzo is a dream.

Much love.

TO ALINE HALBAN (IN VENICE)

8 September [1954; *manuscript*]

Hollycroft Avenue

Long enough, this letter,!

Dear A,

Sheets of rain. But, as in the old Russian revolutionary song, within me all is bright: if not all, at least enough. I wrote you 2 postcards and a long letter: one to Deauville, the letter to Deauville also, the last card 80 Val d’ E. – I hope you have them, I don’t like the thought of even dully impersonal letters wandering about. The letter *was* dull: I wrote it in Cortona, because I longed to write, not because I had much to say: & I regretted it – only because it was *so* tedious – after I sent it. Impersonality can go too far, & is not my style & I cannot really do it except unself-consciously, when one

Cross. The picture in question, painted from Piero’s design by his assistant Giovanni da Piamonte and known as *Torment of the Jew*, illustrates the torture in a well of a Jew named Judas to induce him to reveal where the True Cross had been hidden.

¹⁵⁵ Michel Jules Strauss (1936–2021), son and only child of Aline Halban and her first husband André Strauss. See E 792.

¹⁵⁶ Lionel Salem (b. 1937), French chemist and banker; later (1993–9) founder and director of the Centre de vulgarisation de la connaissance, Centre national de la recherche scientifique.

¹⁵⁷ The Venice Biennale, a large-scale international art exhibition first held in 1895.

just writes as one writes without inhibiting self imposed conditions. Read it by all means, but as one reads a magazine, without attention. The card reported that I had not been able to find Michel. I sat in the Piazza hour by hour, happily enough, against Sparrow's wishes, looking for Michel; I saw too many pseudo-Michels everywhere. Sparrow was, despite his addiction to solitude, terrific independence and hatred of meeting friends in his beloved Venice – in which he is jealously and passionately at home – very sweet & friendly. He found rooms for Pears & me, in a charming humble Trattoria, used every stratagem to avoid smart meeting places, & did not leave my side for an instant. It was not oppressive – I dislike solitude – but nearly so. His confidences were touching & interesting. On the next day, despairing of finding Michel, I walked to the Accademia Vaporetto landing stage, bought 6 newspapers, & sat down, completely blind, to wait for the boat. My neighbour touched me on the shoulder – it was Michel. Had I come 10 minutes earlier or later we should not have met – he avoided the Piazza too. I was delighted: & he had lunch & dinner with Sparrow & me. He was a little melancholy, I thought, & full of sensibilities; most observant, serious, & sweet. But I shd have liked an hour alone with him. Sparrow was there constantly, & he & Michel alone, or I & Michel, wd have been better than a trois, but it was quite nice. I achieved no real rapport, but was tantalized and warmly attracted but unable to talk or really be talked to. He is an interesting, secretive, complicated personality, with a great deal of unexpressed affectionateness: Christchurch will be better than Bryanston I think.¹⁵⁸ I think he was – rightly – a little bored with us; but I cd not shoo Sparrow away, or continue to leave them to each other. His long irrational reveries – the abstracted look in the eyes – the sudden departures to remote regions, reminded me of something; what happens when he looks remote? that he has a rich & sometimes painful & inhibited inner life I am sure; & the most delicate sensibilities of an aesthetic not romantic kind. I watched

¹⁵⁸ Michel attended Bryanston School and Christ Church, Oxford (which IB often misnames Christchurch).

him absorbedly & longed to say something genuine, but Sparrow's presence formalized it all. You must let him look at pictures en route: Pieros even more than mosaics: particularly San Sepolcro & Monterchi. Despite his shyness & inner look, he is capable of sudden leaps into unheard of precipices: I hope he does not bruise himself too much: I should like to be there, after the leap & its consequences, to bind the wounds which he is sure to sustain. Venice was enchanting: the days with Sparrow in the dark by-ways, then, inevitably came Warner¹⁵⁹ & Weidenfeld,¹⁶⁰ Judy M. & Colin Tennant¹⁶¹ every detail of whose life the Italian press reported daily: I saw them all once, in Florian: Lady Marriott¹⁶² gave a party "in my honour" – having sent an invitation to me at the wrong address – but I eluded her & saw "nobody". I sent an insulting message that if she wanted me she wd find me in Harry's Bar¹⁶³ any day between 6 & 8: I have never been inside it, or know where it is: & I left next day, pleased by the attentions, pleased to have slipped away without "corruption" by the awful smart parties which went on uninterruptedly. Under different circumstances I might have gone, suitably accompanied, to give pleasure to my companion or satisfy curiosity. It wd not have been altogether boring perhaps. Quite different from the nightmare of Reux. I am neither climbing nor descending: I am not sure which is "up" & which is "down"; I'll ask you to give me a lesson in topography when we meet. All I cd do, slowly & deliberately, is to seek to attain inner independence: yet, I must own, that uninvited thoughts & images daily invaded me: & once in, I welcomed them and lived with them in considerable intimacy & affection: they were my own:

¹⁵⁹ Presumably Frederick Archibald ('Fred') Warner (1918–95), diplomat (Moscow 1950–1).

¹⁶⁰ (Arthur) George Weidenfeld (1919–2016), Baron Weidenfeld of Chelsea 1976, of Viennese origin; publisher; joint founder (and Chairman) of Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1948; acted as Chaim Weizmann's political adviser and *chef de cabinet* (and senior counsellor, Israeli Foreign Ministry) 1949–50.

¹⁶¹ Colin Christopher Paget Tennant, 3rd Baron Glenconner (1926–2010).

¹⁶² Maud Emily ('Momo') Marriott (1897–1960), née Kahn.

¹⁶³ Famous restaurant on the Grand Canal in Venice.

I was astonished only at their frequency: I remembered how, not so long ago I stood ready with a pitchfork to speed them on their way: now not: & much better so. Do you ever have such experiences, I wonder? You must tell me one rainy day. Venice went by very sweetly, then I telephoned Bill & talked to Pon¹⁶⁴ where he & Pussy were staying: & was invited to come: & could not refuse: & told Sparrow I wd have to: he cannot bear Pon; too insipid (I *like* him, I think), I said I *might* miss the bus from Milan to Courmayeur, & did, not deliberately. I had ¼ hour in which to catch it in Milan: but there were no *facchini*¹⁶⁵ at the station: my luggage, in 3 pieces was too heavy: & I cannot scream, bribe, assert my personality (as Roy¹⁶⁶ used to urge me to do in 1932 when I was silent at philosophical meetings) so I stood proudly & helplessly on Milan platform, with my bags, – if I were *really* ardent I cd have done something I think – when I made sure I had missed the bus, I entered the same train again & went to Turin. Thither, on the next day came the Deakins & drove me, all night to Aix. Pussy sick & plaintive & nagging, Bill affectionate & André to my Pierre.¹⁶⁷ He would not, a *l'anglaise*, discuss the Aix festival week: or his own condition, at least not much. I like him very much: he believes in a generous unreckoning world, and we get on: he makes no secret of his loves, & appraisals of people, & distastes: & echoes my views spontaneously & fervently: what cd be nicer? & is fully aware of the very odd nature of our relations – his & mine – & is fond of me, & I of him; we cd all have a delicious time together Salems & all. They welcomed me warmly & adored having you.

¹⁶⁴ Nickname of Alessandro Passerin d'Entrèves (1902–85), Italian philosopher and historian of law.

¹⁶⁵ 'Porters'.

¹⁶⁶ (Henry) Roy Forbes Harrod (1900–78), economist, Student of Christ Church 1924–67.

¹⁶⁷ Prince Andrey Nikolaevich Bolkonsky and Count Petr Kirillovich ('Pierre') Bezukhov, characters in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

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Raphael [Salem] is a great tonic: toujours pétillant,¹⁶⁸ as Seznec¹⁶⁹ says, & amused & independent & very observant. Adriana full of views: they wondered if Hans was right to think about leaving Oxford – because it dried him up too much – so, they said, he told them – & thought Paris wd be fatal & begged me to urge you & him to stay in Oxford. I said I thought I had little influence on either of you: Raphael doubted this: was tremendously pleased at you writing that we should all meet in Montjoli & Oxford; & went off to Milan to sell his d’Annunzio¹⁷⁰ letters. He was very curious to know what I thought about the Ape (why are *all* apes called Sascha?¹⁷¹ But this one is IVth class). I did not dislike him, but I inhibited him a little. He was not silent with me – talked away (in French – when his real language is Yiddish, so to speak) – & smiled seductively. His wife was not there. After he declared that Menotti’s ‘Consul’¹⁷² revealed the possibilities of opera to him, I saw what he was like. Do you know it? a homosexual piece of neurotic beating on the nerves – intolerably hysterical – & deeply awful – Koestler,¹⁷³ central Europe – seamy side of jazz – everything twisted & torn off & full of Pernod & skilful & terribly vulgar & cheap. I don’t think he is a bad man exactly: & I shd think he is kind, a skilled doctor, & physically very experienced & satisfactory: & he flirted with Adriana who adored him, & Bill did not like him at all & thought him ‘smooth’: well, yes, he is. I prefer the real Sasha: no nonsense & Russian directness: this is crossed

¹⁶⁸ ‘Always sparkling’.

¹⁶⁹ Jean Joseph Seznec (1905–83), Smith Professor of the French and Spanish Languages, Harvard, 1947–50; Marshal Foch Professor of French Literature, Oxford, 1950–72.

¹⁷⁰ Gabriele d’Annunzio (1863–1938), Italian poet, novelist, dramatist, war hero and supporter of Mussolini.

¹⁷¹ IB calls Alexander Schneider ‘Sascha’ or ‘Sasha’.

¹⁷² Gian Carlo Menotti (1911–2007), Italian American composer. His first full-length opera, *The Consul*, premiered in Philadelphia in 1950.

¹⁷³ Arthur Koestler (1905–83), novelist, journalist and writer on scientific and social topics; born in Hungary of Jewish descent; British subject 1945; supporter of Zionism.

with sophistication & late nights in Bucharest & Mme Lupescu.¹⁷⁴ But I see how attractive his Jewish laideur¹⁷⁵ – the coarseness & the rich voice & the delicious oil can be. Goodness, but I am not for it: (“not at all what *you* wd like,” as Stuart wd say) yet I don’t mind it if it knows its place: like the relief of a really awful agreeable piece of Chaikovsky after the noble beauty of Vivaldi or Beethoven. And indulgence in it may well have no lasting consequences. He is shrewd, & knows what he wants, & Alix wd quite like it, I shd say.

Too German a taste for Eastern Europe – I like more Russian pleasures. I was very happy in Montjoli. The Salems talked very freely about persons – I’ll repeat it all to you some grey Oxford afternoon – & asked questions to which I replied with amiable & courteous discretion. Adriana is fascinated by all your marriages: Raphael just liked you. They also like the Deakins: adore Hampshire & Mrs Hart; & wd love to stay in Oxford again. She is much more human – full of disarming weaknesses – than he: he is clever, gay, nice, & satisfied: & a credit to the human race. I achieved real rapport with her & was delighted. They like us both very much: & are on the way to being lifelong friends, despite politics. Now I have to go & take tea with Stuart. I am seldom punctual save in exceptional cases – I *must* hurry. My mother is harrying me: she tells me that I love her but that I tremble too much about her in public when we are together – do I? – & that it is a good thing she is not my wife. If she knew that I was writing to you she wd send her love. I shall be here all September: probably when you return from Rome: so ring me here (in Hollycroft Av. I mean) when you come & I’ll gossip to you about our friends. I feel almost serene: I don’t raise barriers against the daily thoughts: I know what my happiness depends on so clearly, so well, & no doubt cd live without it but believe in the great melting & harmonizing efficacy of tender affection and devotion – & sanity

¹⁷⁴ Elena (“Magda”) TâmpEANU née Lupescu (1895?–1977), influential part-Jewish long-term mistress of King Carol II of Romania, for whom he renounced the throne. They married in 1947, six years before the ex-King’s death.

¹⁷⁵ ‘Ugliness’.

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& time. Yes, & in respect, admiration & non self-laceration & in not shooting up rock faces in agony & guilt. In short I am happy, optimistic and *sure* that so long as personal relations – human contact – is not sacrificed to some blind unreasonable demand – to trying to create what cannot be built anyway – one can live & make others live & be happy – & rise nobly to what is nice in them – like David & Jonathan. Bless you as the dear garrison¹⁷⁶ says: & let me know as soon as you return. I shall not write again: only think.

love

IB.

[*card*]

I have just opened this letter to add that if you open it on a good & tranquil day you will believe all the sincere ‘eloquence’ at the end of it; if on a gloomy one, you will wonder: but don’t. It *is* true. The sun will shine, moderately, steadily, yet & for a long time, till you reach a time of life when all things are steady forever. Peace, confidence, affection, & don’t believe your governess’s fierce admonitions: you have been ‘saved’ – if saving you needed, long long ago. I know you quite well (“I happen to know her very well’ as Michel – whom I love – said once about Sarah Rothschild)¹⁷⁷ & you need no anchors & no rescuers.

¹⁷⁶ Unidentified (French for ‘garrison’): elsewhere ‘garnis’.

¹⁷⁷ Sarah Rothschild (1934–2018), daughter of Nathaniel Mayer (Victor), 3rd Lord Rothschild (1910–1990), and his first wife Barbara Judith, Lady Rothschild né Hutchinson (1911–89).

TO ALINE HALBAN

16 September 1954 [*manuscript*]

Hollycroft Avenue

My dear Aline,

This is a business letter – as brisk & urgent as I can make it – i.e. not very. I am delighted that Venice is warm & gay – Sparrow wrote me about it & your meeting – I suddenly felt despite certain obvious differences of taste & his odd mixture of flint – or rather sharp rubble & feline softness and furtiveness – that he was a friend. After 25 years this is an odd new feeling: all changes in relationship are: both up & down & sideways – which is why it is such a dangerous thing to look at old letters: the past infects the present & alters it not necessarily either for the better or even the truer, if you follow me. I am sure that Perugia must be wonderful now: (how queer the fountain only visible properly from those steps!) *Monterchi* is where the Madonna della Parte (I *think* this is right)¹⁷⁸ is – I shall wait with the Nat. Gall. till someone points out the beauties to me. In Perugia between 6.30 & 8 p.m. the flow of life in the Corso Van[n]ucci¹⁷⁹ (and Stuart did not know *why* this was the name of the principal street; it was the only occasion on which I – blind philistine in the visual arts – triumphed) is infinitely delightful: as one sits in one of the caffès – there is one a little smarter than the others a kind of *deux garçons*¹⁸⁰ – the restaurant of the Brufani is too gloomy & the food too dull: it is quite a comfortable hotel – noisy – I prefer an Osteria in smaller, humanly richer town – Gubbio say – with less comfort. & Cecilia Dick was too English & unexportable in Perugia – better in Suffolk or

¹⁷⁸ It is geographically right, but not linguistically: the *Madonna del parto* (*Madonna of Parturition* – a pregnant Virgin Mary) by Piero della Francesca is in the eponymous museum there.

¹⁷⁹ Named after the Italian Renaissance painter Pietro Vannucci, known as Pietro Perugino (c.1448–1523).

¹⁸⁰ Les Deux Garçons, celebrated brasserie in Aix-en-Provence.

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Hampshire I imagine – she is very nice & honest & domestic & young & adores Stuart (who accepts her admiration sweetly) – but I find it difficult to take an interest in what she says (or is) – Monte Pulciano I thought too formally pretty – the views *are* divine – (I annoyed Adriana S. a little by saying that nothing even in Provence was as magical & unreal as Umbria) & Pienza *too* small: but Cortona has life of its own & a human -personality – but this was meant to be a *business* letter.

Well now: The Austrian Opera.¹⁸¹ On receipt of your instructions I telephoned to the Hall: sold out totally. As expected. I spoke to Claridges – Gibbs, the confidant of *haute juivevie* – was not there; but his colleagues rummaged round & produced *two* tickets, *not* together (£2.10.0 & £3.3.0 or the like) for Friday 24th, Figaro. This I instructed them to keep for Dr Halban. I then secured an interview with the Box Office Manager, who furnished 2 more tickets for the *same* evening but said 25th, the last night, Don Giovanni was really sold out. If people returned ... etc. The Claridges buyer is also in the queue for this. So you have 2 tickets on the 24th anyway: 25th is very dubious but not totally out of question. I have now been 3 times: Don Giovanni was remarkable: the orchestra is celestial: the voices *never* sing more than mezzo: no temperament, no large romantic unfolding: but an exquisite lyrical stream, not deep, but luminously clear, and unlike anything in serious countries. The men – Mr London¹⁸² as Don G. a little vulgar: a Canadian Jew of little taste, decent dull voice & the manners of one [of] Si[e]gmund Warburg's¹⁸³ assistants from Hamburg, anxious to please. Leporello, Kunz,¹⁸⁴ too vulgar but remarkable acting. The two women (Zerlina not v. good) divine:

¹⁸¹ The Vienna State Opera at Covent Garden.

¹⁸² George London (1920–85) né Burnstein, US bass-baritone.

¹⁸³ Siegmund George Warburg (1902–82), Kt 1966, German-born English banker.

¹⁸⁴ Erich Kunz (1909–95), Austrian baritone.

Jurinac¹⁸⁵ as Elvira you remember: Elisabeth Grümmer¹⁸⁶ as Anna, moving, noble, & really unforgettable I thought. Simoneau¹⁸⁷ as Ottavio are now one person in my mind, as in Glyndebourne. Così fan Tutte, very good, Seefried¹⁸⁸ not quite as wonderful as all that, Viennese Charm of a too obvious kind, a plump girl in a dirndl, which does not suit save the very thin, prancing about in an arch, jolly, to me awful way. Still. *Figaro*: the wireless performance on Monday (which I hope is the one you'll go to) superb. Marvellous Countess (Lisa della Casa)¹⁸⁹ good looking Austro-Italian, young, graceful, one day she'll expand & be enormous & still excellent. Splendid Cherubino (Jurinac) Susanna (Seefried) Figaro (Kunz) – but to my horror, last night I went to see them in the flesh: second eleven appeared: only della Casa; the rest poorish: poor conductor: awful Cherubino, a semi-Susanna. *if this* is the group of singers next Wednesday (when I have tickets also) then I'll *have* to go myself on Friday somehow; if I get 2 tickets out of the friendly manager I'll have to take my mother, in which case you still have your two separate tickets: if Wednesday is in order, I'll present you with 2 tickets together & get rid of the two Claridge ones unless you want one for Michel or anybody else. Very complicated. Let me know, if possible before Wednesday (if you want more tickets than 2) if you don't, leave it all to me. 2 tickets for Friday are guaranteed, though not necessarily together. This is the best your poor factotum can do. On my 2 nights for Don G. & Così f. tutte I met the same people: Sir Simon & Lady Marks; Lord & Lady Moore;¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Srebrenka ("Sena") Jurinac (1921–2011), Austrian soprano born in Yugoslavia.

¹⁸⁶ Elisabeth Grümmer née Schilz (1911–86), German soprano.

¹⁸⁷ Léopold Simoneau (1916–2006), French Canadian tenor.

¹⁸⁸ (Maria Theresia) Irmgard Seefried (1919–88), German soprano.

¹⁸⁹ Lisa Della Casa (1919–2012), Swiss soprano.

¹⁹⁰ Presumably Philip Brian Cecil Moore (1921–2009), later (1977–86) Private Secretary to Queen Elizabeth II, and his wife Joanna.

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Sir R. Mayer;¹⁹¹ terrible argument as to whether Milstein¹⁹² should or should not play on the night of Kol Nidrei, Erev Yom Kippur;¹⁹³ Lord Moore took one line, Miriam Marks, another. Sir Simon cautiously advanced the view that all the singers were true artists: no one disagreed. He was sweet, as always, bewildered, bored, & anxious to go off into a corner with me to tell me two new Jewish jokes (dreadfully bad & extremely indecent) – I have, of course, accepted an invitation to spend a night. Freddie has gone to China with a cultural delegation. I mildly disapprove, but very mildly. To go privately, yes: as an official, yes: but in a way inevitably implying approval? You & Stuart & Tess v. Col. Deakin, Raymond Aron¹⁹⁴ & me. But then I wdn't go to Yugoslavia either. But I am prepared not to moralize & follow the impulse of the heart, & let others do the same.

Stuart will be gone to America by the time you return: I shall miss him more than Mrs A. I think. He is being tenderly touching to me at the moment: as if I were a friend in trouble – or wounded in some way – & needed uninterrupted sympathy of the highest quality. I don't [know] why I seem so: but I accept the gift.

Love.

I.B.

¹⁹¹ Sir Robert Mayer (1879–1985), German-born British businessman, philanthropist and music patron; founder of the Robert Mayer Concerts for Children.

¹⁹² Nathan Mironovich Milstein (1903–92), Ukrainian-born violinist.

¹⁹³ Kol Nidre(י) is a Hebrew and Aramaic declaration recited in synagogue on the eve (Erev) of Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement.

¹⁹⁴ Raymond Aron (1905–83), French sociologist, philosopher, political scientist, author and journalist; columnist, *Le Figaro*, 1947–83; Professor of Sociology, Sorbonne, 1956–68.



I. I. Levitan, *At the Pond*, 1892

TO ALINE HALBAN (IN PERUGIA)

Postmark 19 September 1954 [*manuscript postcard*]

(forwarding?) postmark on envelope: Perugia

I adore this melancholy scene – it is painted by a famous Russian Jewish paysagiste¹⁹⁵ called Levitan¹⁹⁶ whom the Russians in the nineties thought marvellous – the contrast with Perugia must be considerable. Yet it fills me with gay feelings. Partly because it is Russian & therefore gentle and responsive and to do with the emotions & not the rich visible world; but more because it is full of direct feeling addressed to one personally & privately.

Have you ever, perhaps, received a letter – had a message – from someone you knew well, which might possibly be, in the words it contained, sad, even apprehensive – say asking for advice

¹⁹⁵ 'Landscape painter'.

¹⁹⁶ Isaac Il'ich Levitan (1860–1900).

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or expressing pessimism – but which, though the quantity of actual feeling with which the words are charged, communicated life, and while the words said this or that, in fact said something much more exhilarating, if not said, then conveyed, expressed – so that instead of gloom it induces joy and hope & affection? I am sure you have: & per contra jolly letters which plunge one in darkness. Or do people not write to you like that? I have recently had a letter like that & was moved & made happy. Forgive me for this theoretical disquisition induced by Levitan's – “pond” – I am overjoyed at the thought that you will soon be back: I shall be in London (until Sep. 30) and very sensible and ‘clear’ & rational. Talking of Charlbury: Ronnie will be here too.¹⁹⁷ A bientot.

I.B.

4 p.m. must be a marvellous hour to see the Piero in N. Gall.

TO JOHN SPARROW

1 November 1954

All Souls

Dear Mr Warden,

In connection with your statement at the College Meeting about the International Congress of the Historical Sciences to be held in Rome on 4–11 September 1955, I have received an invitation from the Slavonic section of this Congress to attend these meetings and perhaps to read a paper. I am not sure whether I shall do the latter, but in any case I intend to attend the Congress itself. I cannot quite tell what the expenses entailed by this will be: the registration fee is 3,000 lire, the hotel accommodation should cost about 16 or 17,000 lire, and the transport about £25 – in all about £40. I should not expect the College to defray the whole of this of course, but should be exceedingly grateful if some portion – whatever is

¹⁹⁷ (Arthur) Ronald (‘Ronnie’) Lambert Field Tree (1897–1976), Anglo-American Conservative MP 1933–45, former owner of Ditchley Park near Charlbury, north of Oxford. See E 798–9.

thought appropriate by the College – could be granted to me. My purpose in going (apart from the problematical paper which I may or may not deliver) is the value of the intellectual stimulus and technical information obtainable from meeting with scholars in one's own subject, which is peculiarly useful to those working in my field, since information and bibliography in it is very unsystematic (owing to the irregular information received from the Iron Curtain countries), so that any opportunity of meeting with the dozen or so persons concerned with my subject is most eagerly to be embraced. I very much hope that the College will not think this an unreasonable request. If it should wish to be represented by me officially together with Ernest Jacob and anyone else who may go, I should of course feel honoured to accept this mandate.

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

On 16 November 1954, soon after they had met and talked at a mutual friend's, Arthur Koestler wrote to IB with a request. In his Promise and Fulfilment: Palestine 1917–1949 (London, 1949) he had broached the subject of the 'self-liquidation' of Jewry in the Diaspora; he remembered that IB had attacked his position in the Jewish Chronicle, and he wanted to use IB's piece as the starting-point for a new essay.¹⁹⁸ 'Your attack', he wrote, 'was the only one which could serve as a basis for serious discussion.' But he could not remember the title or date of IB's article, and wondered if he might borrow it.

¹⁹⁸ 'Judah at the Crossroads' (1954), included in *The Trail of the Dinosaur and other essays* (London, 1955).

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TO ARTHUR KOESTLER

18 November 1954

All Souls

Dear Arthur,

I remember our conversation about my articles well; and I wish I could send them to you, but I have no copy here. The whole thing was reprinted in something called *The Hebrew University Garland: A Silver Jubilee Symposium*,¹⁹⁹ of which I do possess one copy in London, and which I think you could obtain easily by telephoning to either the *Jewish Chronicle* or the Friends of the Hebrew University, who in some ways sponsored it. You will be amused to hear that in an attack upon my article written by a man called Himmelfarb in one of the latest copies of the *New York Journal Commentary*,²⁰⁰ I am regarded as your direct disciple, though somewhat milder in my views and more cautious, but holding an identical position with you as against that of the writer. It may be worth your while to look at that. It was described to me in an apologetic letter by the editor as ‘impertinent and resentful’, which it is, perhaps. At any rate, I do not think it worthy of an answer, nor will you when you read it. My articles originally were called (and in the *Garland* too) ‘Jewish Slavery and Emancipation’. The only difference that I remember between the original articles printed in the *Jewish Chronicle* and the complete thing – which was originally written as a contribution to the Hebrew University publication – is that one or two references to T. S. Eliot were softened²⁰¹ by me as the result of protests by him that I had misunderstood his position, which to some degree I think that I had. [...]

¹⁹⁹ *Hebrew University Garland* (London, 1952).

²⁰⁰ Milton Himmelfarb, ‘Unease in Zionism’, review of Zalman Shazar and Nathan Rotenstreich (eds), *Forum: For the Problems of Zionism, World Jewry and the State of Israel*/No 1 (December 1953 [Jerusalem: Information Dept of the Jewish Agency]), in which IB’s article is included.

²⁰¹ In fact, removed. See L2 278/3.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1946–1960

Yours ever,
Isaiah

Koestler got hold of the book and wrote to IB on 25 November describing his essay as 'truly admirable'. He added: 'I feel that the difference in our approaches is small.'

TO ARTHUR KOESTLER

30 November 1954

All Souls

Dear Arthur,

Thank you for your note. I agree that our differences are not great and all that substantially I complain of both with regard to your views and those of Eliot is that you demand tidiness and order, whereas I am daily becoming more and more obscurantist and cling to Kant's proposition that 'Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing was ever made.'²⁰² The obscurantist bit is that I shall go further and say 'and should not be made either'. However, we can talk about that when we meet. [...]

Yours ever
Isaiah

[...]

TO EDWARD WEEKS

30 November 1954

All Souls College,

Dear Ted,

In default of works of my own – you would not, would you, wish to reprint a eulogy, about 3,000 words, which I wrote on Dr Weizmann, finally, under hideous pressure from something called the *Jerusalem Post*? I assume not – I send you a peculiar work by my friend, and your friend, Hugh Trevor-Roper. He obviously thinks

²⁰² See L1 72/4.

it is rather hot stuff, and so it is. Do you think it publishable? By yourself? I enjoyed reading it, and I share the fundamental sentiment, that is to say, I think Toynbee a very nice, kindly, sweet, decent man and would not like to attack him myself in public, because of the kindnesses which he has shown me in the past. On the other hand, I regard his last four volumes as really rather abominable. The first four volumes I enjoyed reading – I haven't really read them seriously since. They were like the product of a clever Wykehamist, which indeed he is. Rather like those stimulating intellectual games that very civilised, very enjoyable young men can play, of the form 'How many Queens conquered huge territories before they were thirty-five years of age?', or something of that kind, which needs considerable knowledge and is very gay in its own way, but is not serious, all the same. The facts, as everybody knew, were thin, the history pretty general, the pattern odd, but the whole thing was as agreeable as a very high-grade and high-brow game of patience, played by an exceptionally skilled and imaginative but ultimately frivolous undergraduate, perhaps of genius.

The next four volumes were straight ultramontane propaganda, and were obviously moving uneasily towards some far-off, divine, but on the whole Roman Catholic, solution. The last volumes had something which the previous volumes have not had, which is a strong note of unctiousness or sanctimoniousness, which seems to me detestable and which is, I suppose, the product of the heavy adulation of the poor man in the United States.

Here, as you know, nearly every reviewer condemned the last four volumes in pretty trenchant prose. The only person to praise [them] was Christopher Dawson. But not only Trevor-Roper but such mild learned men as G. F. Hudson (in the *Twentieth Century*) and Patrick Gardiner (in *Time and Tide*) have not even troubled to damn it with faint praise, or praise it with faint damns, but condemned it, in my opinion justifiably, outright. And the TLS contained a pretty devastating front page on him, written by, I think, an American, which was damaging in every one of its charitable lines. Toynbee doesn't mind, any more, I suppose, than

Muhammad would have minded poor reviews of the Koran. Nor, I imagine, would St Luke have been much shaken if someone had pointed out that his Gospel had been found wanting by some highbrow Roman reviewers.

This is obviously how Toynbee now thinks of himself – the stuff is straight sermonising, and will die as the last heavy brick in the already dead temple of huge, cosmic, circular constructions, beginning, I suppose, with Hegel and the Romantics and proceeding along this dreary path through Comte, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Danilevsky, Spengler (which I myself find much more exhilarating than Toynbee: unscholarly view of facts but much livelier ideas), Lewis Mumford etc. etc. So far from thinking Toynbee a pioneer, something new and exciting, I think he is the last, fortunately the last, link of a long and on the whole useless German metaphysical school.

However, these are only my private views. I forward Hugh's (slightly vulgar) piece, however, just in case you think it possible to publish it. Or is Toynbee regarded as too saintly a personality to have that kind of thing done to him? There is no point in publishing it in England, where nobody takes him seriously anyhow; not, certainly, since the Reith Lectures, which have been a dismal failure in general, I fear. But America and England are much more different now, intellectually, than they have been, say, during the war. I have just reviewed Stevenson's book for the *Sunday Times*,²⁰³ and, goodness me, here are sentiments which no European statesman would begin to differ from, which are almost platitudes, from Adenauer to Aneurin Bevan, and which yet are regarded in America as bold neutralist or semi-neutralist stuff, for knowing which a man might be eased out of the State Department. But what are platitudes in Europe are paradoxes in America; and this is something new.

²⁰³ 'Calling America to Greatness', review of Adlai Stevenson, *Call to Greatness*, *Sunday Times*, 5 December 1954, 6

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Anyway, I won't go on, and will simply wish you and your wife the best possible Christmas; and I have the best possible memories of seeing you both in England this summer.

Yours ever,
Isaiah B.

PS I don't know why Hugh doesn't send you the piece himself. But he feels a certain shyness. It is curious and not curious in his particular character.

TO ALINE HALBAN

Thursday [autumn 1954?; *manuscript*]

All Souls College Oxford

Your Sunday letter received. I quite understand – ‘openly’ is faintly vulgar – and imitates habits & policies alien to you – very – and ‘secretly’ is out of date & awful anyhow. So I must be patient. I don't think Serena Dunn²⁰⁴ is ‘my’ Mrs D's²⁰⁵ daughter (*can't* be: anyway she is Dunne) but may well be daughter to Freddie's friend Mary Campbell, née Lady M. Erskine, later Dunn²⁰⁶ (wife of a horror called Philip Dunn²⁰⁷ – Hofmannsthal world) who used to be very attractive indeed in a landgirl-gipsy-upper class way. I went to a party for Valerie,²⁰⁸ & I *suppose*, Serena in the Park Lane Hotel, wh[en?] Mrs Ayer²⁰⁹ was there – hell it was – so Stuart who was *not* there later reported. I'll ring Bill this afternoon. My book is marching: my love cannot. It fills every interstice. Alix will be taken

²⁰⁴ Is this not the Serena Dunn who married Jacob Rothschild in 1961? Serena Mary Dunn (1935–2019), racehorse owner.

²⁰⁵ Unidentified.

²⁰⁶ Lady Mary Sybil St Clair-Erskine (1912–99).

²⁰⁷ Sir Philip Gordon Dunn (1905–76), 2nd Baronet.

²⁰⁸ Presumably Freddie Ayer's eldest child Valerie (1936–81).

²⁰⁹ Freddie's first wife Renée.

by me to Hedda Gabler²¹⁰ – let her talk to H. & me to both of you. Cold rainy day & I am coughing: but as you wrote so horribly in Deauville, I don't mind.

IB

TO ALINE HALBAN

Saturday 18 December [1954; *manuscript*]

Hollycroft Avenue

D. Aline,

Ha! ha ha! so you *have* plumbed (what is 'plumbed'? the translator asks) the full depth of what calculation & vulgarity can be – but this is only a beginning, & part of the plan of campaign recommended by Our Friend²¹¹ (I am devoted to her. But if need be, am ready to lose her. And without a deep wound: but I don't think it will come to that: she believes in friendship even when she disapproves: the only thing is that her disapproval is not "pure" but springs from a possessiveness which I used not to find disagreeable, but which is a moral embarrassment in this situation) – as for my 'mistake' – may Stuart & Raimund always be as right as this – always always – it is only as you well know, fear of disappointment that makes one anticipate – expect – the *worst*: without for a second believing that it could happen – I'll barter my 'mistake' for yours: your reasons for the situation you envisage in your 'neurosis for the record' are identical with mine for supposing that you will respond to tactics; namely that one is revolted by the very suspicion that it could ever happen, still, one likes to give way to one's pessimism: more stoical, 'stronger', more realistic, drier, minimizes the risk (it *doesn't*. It is like saying 'if I have no money I shall stop eating. One won't'). Yet I have better reason than you to be worried: for if this is *not* how you could, being a princess, conceivably react, then how to explain the past? Buddhism, pity,

²¹⁰ Ibsen's 1890 play.

²¹¹ Alix de Rothschild.

non-resistance to this & that + appalling pride & reticence? I suppose so; + passivity and fear of the future – well do. I know them; but as for your specific prediction (no, no, of course I don't take it seriously) the boot is more likely to be on the other foot, & it is I who will suddenly find myself high & dry (you are supposed by all the rules to say: No, no! never! but in fact you wd say – I know the maddening tone so well – “yes. perhaps. One can never tell’ etc. & I then leap to the ceiling like one stung by at least a wasp.) – but never mind about all that. You must somehow contrive to be well, not too gloomy or tired – & even calm & happy. I cannot be expected to be this if only because of this Parker pen which I use exclusively & which gives electric shocks each time I touch it & gives no peace. I quite understand about the fetishism of objects – did you know that Petersburg balletomanes – your uncle I daresay, solemnly *cooked* the shoe of Taglioni²¹² (ask Hans to look up her dates) & ate it in the dining hall of the Mariinsky Theatre? at the moment I understand this desire perfectly: altogether to be growing as fast & furiously as I am at the age of 45½ is fantastic. Not love, not affection, not kindness, not intelligence, not beauty, not charm are the reliable qualities on which alone one can lean forever – only refinement of texture, distinction, incapacity for descending below a certain level, *inability* to be vulgar, mechanical, shrewd, low, philistine, predatory, unscrupulous in common way. Only only this. To have a civilized heart is the rarest of things, & why we like Stuart & James & even Alan²¹³ – even d'Entrèves – for without *that* they are nothing. Thursday was a difficult day for me. From 11 a.m. till 12.30 I broadcast lecture no IV, & from 2 till 3.30, Lecture No 1²¹⁴ (the ones you slept through are being given verbatim) – & in the middle

²¹² Marie Taglioni (1804–84), Comtesse de Voisins, ballet dancer born in Sweden.

²¹³ Alan Payan Pryce-Jones (1908–2000), literary and theatre critic, author and journalist; editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 1948–59.

²¹⁴ These are two of the four Northcliffe Lectures on ‘A Marvellous Decade’: Lecture I was entitled ‘1838–48: The Birth of the Russian Intelligentsia’, Lecture IV ‘Herzen and the Grand Inquisitors’.

of it images impinged, words occurred – I could have given a sharp neurotic laugh in the middle of the impromptu broadcast – when I was at my tensest – & suddenly said “what the Russian intelligentsia’ or “what Herzen” ‘*really* adored was’ – & then given a vignette of certain human beings who declare they do not well know themselves. As it was I needed a release, a safety valve – so I pitched into the Germans: I said things I did not say in the lecture: I quote the most insulting remarks by Herzen, & quite irrelevantly – but because I was inveighing (do you know this good word?) against some invisible borné²¹⁵ antagonist, Bakunin’s insults too. After this I felt better, & proceeded more calmly, images began to impinge again, it was too disturbing, how can one *miss* so acutely? to-day is better because I have words to read, sounds to remember etc. By Monday I shall be needing huge enormous efforts at concentration to do my work. The *Time* photographer appeared & tried to engage me in affable small talk so as to make me look animated & smile. I looked gloomily at a book. In the end he admitted it was all a learnt up stratagem & wd I just look at him & his machine, cheerfully if possible? I did look, but with an anxious air, thinking, “am I being vulgar? snobbish? but I *did* stop the Sunday Times article?²¹⁶ am I worthy of – ? vivacity, yes; but genuine moral sensitiveness which changes colour in the presence of the faintest breath of falsity, of rancid butter, of cunning or vulgarity of any kind?” – then I think of you & I cannot help an enormous radiance from pouring forth & over everything & I feel confidence & to use Mdlle de Lespinasse’s²¹⁷ idiom “jolly glad”. I shall certainly not enlarge on any feelings of mine. When Cyril Connolly²¹⁸ was asked what he thought of the works of Charles

²¹⁵ ‘Narrow-minded’.

²¹⁶ Not clear what he means: there was an article there on 4 November about the lectures that he disliked: see E 461/1.

²¹⁷ Jeanne Julie Éléonore de Lespinasse (1732–76), French salon hostess.

²¹⁸ Cyril Vernon Connolly (1903–74), critic, author and journalist; founder co-editor, *Horizon* (E 268/4), 1939–50.

Morgan,²¹⁹ in Zurich I think, he said ‘ask him what he thinks of me & multiply this by 7 & you’ll get mine about him’. I recommend this same. It seems to me, suddenly that we each have an undeveloped side of our natures, in your case respect for your own strong and elegant intellect, your irony, acuteness, humour, gaiety (yes yes) taste for life & perception of all its most delicate shades & hues, morally infallible discrimination between the noble & the disgusting – oh you know you know with how much that *is* disgusting you have put up, you do put up – this self relegation to the role of a rich Cinderella because no shoe will ever fit you – no prince will ever come – this anxiety to [to] conform to idiotic standards created by & made for a neurotic bourgeoisie without poetry without imagination, without sweep or salt & yeast or understanding of the Tolstoyan imponderables – the unseizable essences – etc etc – to bow to all *this* (I hope I am making you indignant) – when you *know* that one can be happy & free without hideous compromises or solitudes or building structures out of reinforced cardboard & not looking when bits fall off – oh now, you know the truth now & never will unlearn it. And so I am filled with what had best be called adoration, affection, family devotion attachment – but which in fact – I know, truly I do, the difference between – how shall I put it in words, I who use so many so much – between either steady affection & solid warm feeling on one side, & exalté²²⁰ moments of unbelievable splendour – on the other – *and* – that which I am trying to describe – something which is at once burning & permanent (it is what people want to mean by

²¹⁹ Charles Langbridge Morgan (1894–1958), novelist, playwright and drama critic, was an accomplished, if solemn, wordsmith. His works had been fashionable in the 1930s but his metaphysical preoccupations later lost their appeal. He was violently critical of humour, which he defined as ‘talent’s sneer at genius, [...] mediocrity’s hatred of the Spirit of Man’, and claimed that many great men – including Shakespeare and Jesus – lacked a sense of humour (‘On Singleness of Mind’, published in *The Flashing Stream: A Play, with an Essay ‘On Singleness of Mind’ and a Foreword* (London, 1938), 32, 31. Stella Gibbons mercilessly caricatured him as Gerard Challis in her 1946 novel *Westwood*.

²²⁰ ‘Ardent’.

“soul”) – because when it comes at last – & it doesn’t come to everyone & perhaps not to many & perhaps not to you – it seems not new but the revelation of something which has always existed in one – goes through the bones & the marrow – springs from one’s deepest tastes, oldest roots – & is the nearest sensation to a sense of something eternally strong & eternally present that non-mystical – irreligious people like, can have. It *is* a hedgehog vision, it *is* the one. Don’t bother with all this rhetoric. By nature we are both sane & delightful. “Irrationality” is only limited, & to do with only one kind of state of mind; I am in this state partly because I have been starved & left to myself, partly because Sir Charles Webster,²²¹ the eminent historian, whom I much admire has just written to me about “Historical Inevitability” & informed me that *when* I write my oeuvre de long[ue] haleine,²²² I shall be recognized as one of the major ‘thinkers’ of our time. I don’t believe this, but it excites me. And I am moved that an old grand académician of this type shd trouble to write this to me. The only other quality which my outburst has is that it is true, & seen in my sober present condition, loses nothing in that regard. I must prepare myself for Somerhill.²²³ There are *four* parties this week to say good-bye to the Massiglis:²²⁴ I may go to none or at most one – I am invited as an intimate friend of theirs – Odette hardly recognized me in her own Embassy. I saw Miss Fonteyn²²⁵ again with “Moucher” Devonshire.²²⁶ I cd go on & on like this. But the point is that only

²²¹ Sir Charles Kingsley Webster (1886–1961), Stevenson Professor of International History, London (LSE), 1932–53; a wartime colleague of IB’s in the US (Director, British Information Services, New York, 1941–2).

²²² ‘Work of long time’, i.e. (roughly) *magnum opus*.

²²³ Independent co-educational school in Tonbridge, Kent, for pupils aged 2–13.

²²⁴ René Massigli (1888–1988), French diplomat, French ambassador to the UK 1944–55, and his wife Odette Isabelle née Boissier (1907–90).

²²⁵ Margot Fonteyn (1919–91), nee Margaret (‘Peggy’) Hookham, the leading ballerina of the (then) Sadler’s Wells Ballet; married Roberto de Arias in 1955.

²²⁶ Mary Alice (‘Moucher’) Cavendish (1895–1988) née Gascoyne-Cecil, Dow-ager Duchess of Devonshire 1950.

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one thing exists for me – I shall love you without limit for ever & ever. Pray keep this for the record.

Isaiah

TO ALINE HALBAN

6 p.m. our time. Saturday [18 December 1954?; *manuscript*]

New College [headed writing paper]

I* enjoyed our conversation about Milan & the Cherry Orchard v. much: why *you*? Why are you Mme Ranevskaya?²²⁷ She is, it is true, ‘non-existent’ whereas you are, if I may turn the tables, gravely ‘wasted’ – the Uncle is what I like best in the world – again princesses & peas & not the slightest possibility of anything vulgar – it is what is common to Katkov & Nabokov²²⁸ (I insulted Katk[ov]’s uncle²²⁹ deliberately in my broadcast) I felt a certain torn off quality about our talk – it did not end at the seam – but this is due to my being in an insatiable state which fortunately I *can* control. I too have pride: & shall never demand anything on the ground that I “cannot” bear something: always always one *can*: it may be superfluous & inefficient, but however awkward things one *can* bear things: & work out a successful & morally acceptable solution: one must not drift: one must not give in: one must not tick over: one must know what one *should* not do without (one always *can*). Now: when Napoleon used to enter a room, his lackeys were trained to fling open the double doors, exclaiming “Vive l’Empereur’. Hence the *habit*. Where – where – are my thoughts

²²⁷ Mme Lyubov Andreevna Ranevskaya, the protagonist of Chekhov’s 1903 play *The Cherry Orchard*.

²²⁸ Nicolas Nabokov (1903–78), composer and cultural administrator. See A 627.

²²⁹ He means his great-uncle Mikhail Nikiforovich Katkov (1818–87), conservative Russian writer, editor and journalist. Nothing he says about him in the published text of the lectures seems to count as an insult.

roaming? – When Fonteyn dances she casts Brazilian wild Indian flashes from her Oriental eyes – it is native & terrific.

I'll take tickets for ballet on the 11th or 12th or 13th or 14th. & let you know.

* don't worry about unpredictability of moods. the Canto Fermo²³⁰ alone matters & that I am solid at: & you have full freedom of the most méchant²³¹ modulations & variations. I'll drone on with my faithful bass.

TO ALINE HALBAN

3 p.m. Wednesday [22 December 1954?; *manuscript*]

Darling Aline,

I am grateful for the telephone call – & for all that you said – the snow – the fine bright days – the physical health & pleasure of the daytime – the acute and *shameful* boredom of the evenings (I have an awful suspicion that this is not confined to the aristocracy & plutocracy in France – that the beau monde is only an [*sic*] neurotic exaggeration of a general condition – that the driness & boredom go right through the intelligentsia too – than [*sic*] an evening with Malraux²³² or even Sartre²³³ might be intellectually very stimulating but a week wd be desiccating in the extreme – that even Jews lose their savour in this dry *mésuré*²³⁴ atmosphere in which all values are known & watched – as they go up & down –

²³⁰ 'Basic melody': IB takes it as equivalent to 'ground bass'.

²³¹ 'Wayward'.

²³² André Malraux (1901–76), French novelist.

²³³ Jean Paul Charles Aymard Sartre (1905–80), French philosopher, writer, activist and leading exponent of existentialism; became a Marxist, though not a Communist, after WW2.

²³⁴ 'Guarded'.

with dead specialist eyes – so that they become boring like Proust²³⁵ or Maurois²³⁶ – or Blum²³⁷ – empty like Alain²³⁸ – or raté²³⁹ like Guy; even Salem’s frontiers are (to me) too visible: you perceive *tendresse*, mistakenly I am sure: only vitality & gaiety & appetite: the sense of reality can go too deep & expel too much heart. So it is best for your children to be educated there. England is so much much less *nasty*: the whole Alix theory about Paris is unconsciously founded on the proposition that in that glittering city, human feelings are dehydrated, & a shell of nasty socially competitive egoism + panache carries one through, & one’s heart is encrusted in a kind of hard French enamel & after a bit ceases feeling any genuine pangs & becomes a social entity. That is what has half happened to her – she is not as she was in N. York in 1943 – she believes in friendship but no longer (& she *did* once) in impulse & warmth & the opening of one’s moral pores in a single generous acceptance of something or somebody. The best “line” (awful awful word!) wd be, if you must discuss “the subject” – & perhaps you need not – perhaps to treat it as purely internal between you & H., & leave me out. I’ll make *my* declaration in London, if it ever comes to it (as it will in the first quarter of an hour I shd say – I am usually asked at once) which will leave no doubt about *my* sentiments: as for yours I dare not guess to th [??]: if you do not wish to seem a cruel beauty, & a Loreley²⁴⁰ – &

²³⁵ (Valentin Louis Georges Eugène) Marcel Proust (1871–1922), French novelist, author of *À la recherche du temps perdu* [*In Search of Lost Time*] (Paris, 1913–27), ranked 1st by IB in his top 10 ‘Books of the Century’ (A 557).

²³⁶ André Maurois (1885–1967), né Emile Salomon Wilhelm Herzog, French biographer, novelist and man of letters.-

²³⁷ Léon Blum (1872–1950), Prime Minister of France 1936–7, March–April 1938, and December 1946–January 1947, the first Jew and first socialist to hold that post.

²³⁸ Émile Auguste Chartier (1868–1951), French philosopher and journalist, known by his pseudonym ‘Alain’ after the poet Alain Chartier (c.1385–1430).

²³⁹ ‘Unsuccessful’.

²⁴⁰ Mythological blonde beauty who sang from the Lorelei rock beside the Rhine, luring boatmen to their deaths.

perhaps I shall be warned against your *méchanceté*²⁴¹ – we must leave this to the facts themselves to show: if I so much as hint at “symmetry” this will be interpreted as either wicked flirtation by you or as total response. Whereas, in truth, it contains both elements in proportions not to be explained or even reflected about. So I had better not save you from a reputation for using me wickedly: if you wish to avoid it you must drop a hint to that effect yourself – implying that the whole thing – both our sentiments – have mounted to a new stage since A.’s last bulletin: remember that all the old propaganda was directed to show that neither of us felt all *that* much: that a needless scandal had been generated: & A. kept persuading *me* that *you* felt *more* deeply than *I* allowed – while I kept saying ‘no, no, no’ & blushed with pleasure all the time. In the end Alix will spread her tent over us & make another noble – & genuine – *gran rifiuto*.²⁴² But I do not like to think of my guilt in this connection. Like you, I seem unable to be fond of people without causing pain: to all but you, so far; & to you I never never shall. How can I tell? I can: keep this letter as testimony for the future: or destroy it with the others – but remember my prophecy: I shall love you forever (oh tedious albatross!) & never cause you pain. Which is more than you can say of your other – what shall I call them? Favourites. Here I stopped & began thinking about something else. And then about the silences which I ploughed through like Orpheus whose main gift was capacity for love – for persisting – & no *arrière pensées*:²⁴³ Eurydice did follow him out of her nether regions – where she tried to lead a modest domestic existence among all those obscure creatures – as wife of the great one track set technician Pluto who carried her off struggling a little, not much; & though she was the daughter of a goddess – still she tried to be humble, & live in the *chiaroscuro* of Hades like all those workers in Pluto’s workshop. Pluto was not a bad fellow: but Hades was his notion of the world: & Orpheus was certainly more

²⁴¹ ‘Wickedness’.

²⁴² ‘Great refusal’ (Dante’s phrase), i.e., in this case, noble denial.

²⁴³ ‘Looking back’.

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musical: & tamed all those animals by his notorious charms (of which he was terribly ashamed) all went well – Eurydice followed him lovingly, affectionately, timidly, blinking in the light – but was warned about cakes & eating – told in short that she must not, having decided, look *back* – being foolish, she *did* look just once – & was sucked back into Hades at once: Orpheus’s laments shook the world: & the only solution was to make them both constellations: for Eurydice made it clear that the return to Hades was worse than the first: only Orpheus could do no more to bring her back – be wise be wise – & remember that music & niceness are all: Pluto acquired Proserpine & settled down grumbling to a contented life. Is it not unbelievable that the Emperor Franz Josef²⁴⁴ – at the age of 70 – used to end his pathetic quasi love letters – *amitié amoureuse*²⁴⁵ – to the actress Frau Schrott²⁴⁶ – like this: ‘***x’ ? oh the foolish Germans with knowledge & imaginary finesse & no understanding! the French have a nasty nasty understanding without warmth or humanity – whereas you & I – tu – t’ –

Yrs,

I.B.

tu – toi – t’ – do you like ballets with *tutus* more than dressed up ones? Have you seen Lac des Cygnes²⁴⁷ with Fonteyn? shall we go & take Miss Kallin²⁴⁸ who wishes us so well without quite knowing that she does?

²⁴⁴ Franz Josef (1830–1916), ruler of the Austro-Hungarian Empire 1867–1916.

²⁴⁵ ‘Romantic friendship’.

²⁴⁶ Katharina Schrott, Baroness Kiss von Ittebe (1853–1940), Austrian actress; confidante and companion to the Emperor Franz Joseph.

²⁴⁷ *Swan Lake*.

²⁴⁸ Anna (‘Niouta’) Kallin (1896–1984) IB’s BBC Third Programme producer 1946–64.

TO ALINE HALBAN

3.30 p.m. 24 December 1954 [*manuscript*]

coffee? tea?²⁴⁹ Hollycroft Avenue

In some sense, page I

omit this page. Beginning of some boring essay)

D. A. (No need to read this bit: all about me & not particularly fascinating)*

Now am I in a state of burning madness. And yet I can only write to you with one instrument and physical symbols are of the utmost significance to me. Still it is better so: when I did go mad, the neurotic distortion was always too violent one wanted too much, or did not know what one wanted but the slightest frustration hurled one into an abyss and even satisfaction was always painful, too tense, too excited, one felt that some thing enormous was demanded from one – anything normal was insipid, it was all delirium & always ended sadly, by petering out & leaving guilt not just flatness, because of some vague memory of one's own inflation & falsification of feeling. Not but what I've been through lunacy here too: but it has ended: instead of petering out it went up not down; on to a solid ledge of reality, at once sacred – i.e. all that is most real, most adored, what is prepared to lived for, to die for etc. etc., *and* of everyday texture, not exotic and full of opium (like Patricia – not to be mentioned again, I promise). My fever is gone after wonderful sleep in the afternoon (no dreams), I am in “discomfort” from unmentionable causes, but tranquil and, I suppose, really rather happy. I am much older than in 1953: 1954 has been *the* crucial year of my life, I see. The death of my father broke the ultimate refuge in which I sheltered (like many Russian Jews – incestuous relations with my family – leading to a terrible *pudeur*:)²⁵⁰ only now, strange to say, only now have I grown up. A

²⁴⁹ A reference to a stain on the paper here.

²⁵⁰ ‘Reserve’.

child of 44 is an endearing but a pathetic & absurd phenomenon: yet it was as that that all these Dianas,²⁵¹ Lady Cunards, Venetia Montagues so liked me: & their insistence that marriage would not suit my “special” attributes etc., I now see, relate to this status of a gay, intelligent & affectionate monk: a superior Dodo²⁵² (he is in trouble with Roman Church, poor Dodo). However 1954 put an end to all that: I am no longer what I was in any case: not a heedless, timeless, amiable *causeur* like Desmond McCarthy,²⁵³ with no real wife, no real family, spending hours & hours in the drawing rooms of endless hostesses like a whimsical irresistible bachelor appearing & disappearing quite suddenly (like a cuckoo in a cuckoo clock in the description of me in Lord Berners’ Oxford novel,²⁵⁴ quite funny, quite good) – I am (it is absurd to be so solemn about oneself) grown up, responsible & no longer passionate for *salons* or for personal freedom. However it has happened, it has.

Your letters are here and I am happy. Every word you wrote is delightful to me even the reticences & the timidities and the honest cautious qualifications. But what I see, what I cannot help seeing, is that in some sense you have – without altogether knowing how or when or even quite *why* – crossed a Rubicon. I don’t say what Rubicon – but only that certain courses you have now finally abandoned & condemned & the number of “possibilities” is smaller & brighter (“I suppose so” I can hear you say in your dreamy understating manner; but, believe me, it *is* so. “do you think so?” you answer). Don’t let me frighten you; I don’t mean that you know now, quite clearly, where you are going, where you want to get, & why, & how much, & at what possible price. Of course not. But there is something which *has* grown unreal & therefore intolerable: something which was buried under the desire for

²⁵¹ Presumably a reference to Lady Diana Cooper.

²⁵² Nickname of (Comte Jean) Dominique (de Hemricourt) de Grunne (1913–2007), Roman Catholic priest at Oxford.

²⁵³ (Charles Otto) Desmond MacCarthy (1877–1952), writer and critic.

²⁵⁴ Lord Berners, *Far From the Madding War* (London, 1941): ‘I am distressed to observe I form at least a part of a character referred to as Mr Jericho’ (IB to his parents, 12 December 1941).

peace, stability, morality, & integrity, dignity' etc. yes, & affection, habit, indolence, passivity too – something not quite genuine buried in all this has been laid bare & has crumbled & if it is patched up (as Alix & possibly Tolstoy wd recommend) it will crack again in the same place, quite quickly. And cause everything else to cave in. So *that* must be abandoned & a new beginning made. That, in some sense, you have resolved. All else is unclear to you, I am sure. Whereas it is much too clear to me, who am in love utterly, soberly, very very deeply, solidly, and, it seems to me, inextricably, for ever: not at all neurotically & insanely: I see it all {with} in a flat clear even way: the future: perhaps not quite accurately, but sanely & with a full three dimensional solidity: I say again: I'll be responsible for it & accountable in heaven for it as well as here. So, for once, I tell *you* not to worry. Your feelings? they are beyond my hopes. Of course I shall discount all the dips & sudden disappearances & deviations & chilliness and self withdrawals & the 'one big thing the hedgehog knows' – in your case disappearance into a semi-narcissistic bubble made up of self generated dreams which insulate you & make you even more poetical, even more remote from everything in general – & frustrating as this will be, I accept it with love & with a kind of reluctant admiration: it is part of a genuine fantasy, genuine poetry & I really admire that: & without it could never live – I who am thought so solidly *terre a terre*.²⁵⁵ Perhaps for that reason. So fly wherever you wish: you will be as free as you will want to be: the limits will only be determined by the relationship itself – by your own wish to gravitate rather than wander: by actual influence of me on you or vice versa: not by some view of life, consciously held by me or by you & needing to be stated in the form of a moral doctrine – & inevitably leading to commands: requests: sacrifices: problems: revolt. If a certain person – left to himself – not only finds comfort but actually falls in love with someone else – it is best of all. But that can only happen if no hopes, or even small gestures are made which encourage an unconscious belief that the

²⁵⁵ 'Lowbrow'.

old can be restored – but I am lecturing; & am probably wrong & jealous. Not jealousy but *envy* on Our Friend's part? possibly. I do see. *Amazing*, as Dr Katkov wd say, but possible. Anyway let us now discuss all that briefly: I received a telephone call this morning to wish me Joyeux Noel. Nothing was said at all. It was not known whether you had yet gone to Mègeve – probably you had – Guy wd go there to-morrow – Alix to Reux & then to Mègeve – & to London definitely, by the midday plane on the 6th Jan. I said I wd lunch in Claridges that day. I cannot think that the visit will last till 11th or 12th – it is the visit sentimentally planned at Reux & will turn out to be v. different. I shall, I think, unless you stop me, tell the truth about *my* feelings – but not about yours: this *will* most inevitably cause pain: quite deep pain: perhaps a genuine crack in relations: perhaps not: but although I am terribly anxious to preserve tender relations & cause no wounds & not exaggerate, yet this *is* the crisis of my life – there is nothing to compare with it in value or sanctity – not even my celebrated family affections – so I can [sc. cannot?] lie or conceal even by a millimetre. I have no right or need to commit you, but I must be sincere with Our Friend & hope for the best. I shall then examine the Paris plan with her: explain the unreality of a patched up compromise in Paris based on duty sacrifice etc. – the motives for th[at?] are impure: not only because of jealousy, or envy, but an inevitably but false analogy with her own situation: false because her feelings about her husband, about how life shd be lived, & even about her 2^d Marr are quite different: she *wants* to reign: she respects and even admires him in many ways and is physically much more in love with him than he her; she adores the haute juiverie world – & the Rothschild huis clos²⁵⁶ particularly & is lost without it: He treats her like a sister & a mother & comes back drily but trustfully, & they hurt each other but there is never failure of communication or *distaste*; & above all she is a German & believes & likes self-immolation and moral masochism to social-traditional ideal. I shall not say this to her: but I shall ask her her views – without implying that I know &

²⁵⁶ 'Closed door'.

guess how much she knows about you & Hans – she will have brought the latest impressions from haute Savoie – and state objections objectively. Why you should assume that you may have to be bullied by her into doing this or that, I do not know, her mission to your brother was not a great success & merely prolonged the agony; & in this case she will display a kind of honourably bureaucratic zeal for law & order & family life, & not, I think sympathy or wisdom; but I shall have a real talk with her: I don't think British understatement is much good to me vis a vis her; it will only lead to artificiality & antagonize her needlessly. But I shall not speculate about *your* feelings: & not insist on my own so regardlessly as to hurt hers too gratuitously (I am getting into my “difficult” prose again. Back! I am writing a letter – to *you* – to *you* my d. – but stop, I – I am not your lover. Oh the frustration of writing not quite securely, & in a language which is not rooted in early years – but I do love you at this moment with a depth & a violence which shuts everything out & I must stop.) Well now, I am a little (but only a little) calmer. Very well then. I talk to Our Great Friend²⁵⁷ & make a dent: I think her conception of the situation must be one sided: & as her verdicts seem to carry weight, she must see the balance rectified. O.K.: I speak, as inevitably I must anyhow. You arrive on the 12th – that evening Miss Fonteyn dances in *Daphnis & Chloe* – which I find awful: the Ravel music boring, & the ballet itself vulgar: on the 13th etc. it is *Figaro* etc. & no ballet till about the Tuesday of the 1st week of term, when I purport to take the only available seats – a box for 3, fairly high up – for Miss Fonteyn in *Firebird* which is superb but really wonderful. Whether we ask a 3rd person – & whom – we can leave undecided. Alan? Eliz. Cavendish?²⁵⁸ Pointless. *Salomé* [Halpern?]? an idea. But you like *men*. *Stuart*? yes! or alone? anyway we'll talk. I shall certainly be at the airport to meet the midday B.E.A. plane from

²⁵⁷ Alix de Rothschild.

²⁵⁸ Lady Elizabeth Georgiana Alice Cavendish (1926–2018), daughter of 10th Duke of Devonshire; Extra Lady-in-Waiting to Princess Margaret 1951–2002.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

Paris on the 12th unless you otherwise instruct. Could it not be the 11th? there *is*, I know, plenty of time, Still ... As for the 3 possibilities – The Ways of Life – (oh I am in a serene and good state, & certain images don't leave me at all. Stephen Spender²⁵⁹ visited me last night, he is my clergyman. He told me about his “affairs” with ladies – the men are too numerous I suppose. And pressed for reciprocal confidences. He said he always defended me angrily against charges of Farinellismo.²⁶⁰ I told him not to – that it was an excellent *alibi* – told him something – mentioned x as x – & then suddenly burst out & said I am deeply in love – but she is married – it is difficult – but I am finally & for the first & last time in my life on the brink of lasting happiness – but told him no more.) 3 Ways of Life: or the Interim Solution. My spirits rose & dropped less than you assumed – I have more confidence than ever I did (‘careful’ I have to say to myself ‘pessimism is safer) Solution 1): Oxford as before, holidays apart; pleasures in London etc. – possible. (Dear Weisskopf.²⁶¹ But I think he knows more than he admitted. He wishes to keep out of trouble & does not care a hoot) = ostensibly, last term. No apparent change; a little more gossip. (do you absolutely believe the story about what our local Mme Bovary is said to have said? I am sceptical.) Same topic as the voices. Grains of truth perhaps. Something unplausible.) Plan 2 is obviously better: visits to Paris – romance – & frequent looks described by Bill as of ‘a cat that’s just had the cream’ – as a by-product more general benevolence, less pathos, more freedom of movement all round. How can I like plan 3? unless you stay in England? & the risks to H? the defector? Since nothing will mature in Paris, acc. to Alix, for say 2 years or so. Plan 2 seems best to me;

²⁵⁹ Stephen Harold Spender (1909–95), poet and critic; co-editor of *Encounter* 1953–67. He and IB had been undergraduates together and became lifelong friends. See A 631.

²⁶⁰ Farinelli (1705–82) was the stage name of Carlo Maria Michelangelo Nicola Broschi, Italian castrato opera singer.

²⁶¹ Victor Frederick (‘Viki’) Weisskopf (1908–2002), Austrian-born US theoretical physicist who led the Theoretical Division of the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos during WW2.

however this is all very discussable, when we meet. 3 weeks! Or at least 19 days! I must work like a black & produce at least 3 chapters of a book – after that it goes easier – but then Alix comes, & noblesse oblige – ultimately more noblesse than interest. Goodness! I long to see you, I suppose with neurotic violence: you are quite right – & it *is* an insight of great beauty & usefulness – that apart we are neurotic & break out in odd directions, but together pleasure, calm, sanity. And as I told [*sic*], in public too. Shall I boldly, next time Lady Waverley invites me to the Opera ask if I might bring you? Wd you like that? Supper with strangers or semi-strangers (2 politicians, a surgeon & an admiral & Lady W. herself watching with a beady eye. She seems oddly *fond* of me – I have just received 2 Xmas cards from her + a gift. Besides Alix’s foie gras the only other one – a Victorian glass paperweight with flowers in a solid hemispherical glass bowl or ball. Touching & unexpected.) There is really no worthwhile Cov. Garden on the 12–15 Jan. (Figaro will surely be awful: & you don’t want to see Sir W. Walton’s *Troilus & Cressida*? Or do you? If you do, we go – 13th I think) I think of you in the snows, free from everything, healthy, liberated by nature & physical release & pleasure, wonderfully young & elegant & filled with untormenting inner content – serious feeling varied by delicious intermezzi vis a vis [garrison] – what will *he* advise Hans?! I shall not see him before, I think; what a fool what a fool I was, in my letter to Alix in April when I ascribed your acquiescence in H.’s wild tantrums to desire to live at a low ebb – not to take trouble – so that however low you wanted to “fall”, H. was always lower still – that you did not “mind” him alone – he alone did not give you guilt or hoist you out of the indolent lotus medium²⁶² – when it was 9/10 *pride* and honour & married Jewish sense of responsibility – yet Alix accepted my angry explanation – & I implied then that I was not madly in love with you as H. supposed – that *his* & Alix’s “compassion” is what I minded most – that I cd not say so to H. because it seemed caddish – & this was

²⁶² Here a new page begins, and IB writes: ‘p 7 (this goes too far. But you wanted a letter)’.

false, & dictated by pride on my part, sour grapes, desire to escape, desire to conceal: this will *never* be repeated. I may say nothing, but if I speak I shall tell A. the truth as I did to Hans in Oxford on that remarkable & decisive day. I may minimize your attitudes: but I shall, if need be, correspondingly exaggerate my own, to fill the gap. Do not be worried by anything darling A.: watched by Our Great Friend; & curiously also by other friends; scrutinized, pitied, occasionally offered paths back to the ambivalent troubled peace of 1953–4; and occasionally tempted by the difficulties of playing parts, of being a *qui vive*, of Cold War etc. to conclude armistices, Korean treaties, stabilize a status quo; all this made tolerable by the cold clear air & sheer physical well being and the soundly slept nights and the amiable company & the memories of the beatitudes of the thirties – & then England; the airport: & time & peace at home. So much talk even on paper must tire you: we must play more chess with each other. Or sleep. Or play very long musical works, like Pelléas which one need not listen to – like all those French novels – like Balzac which contain no living persons at all – I go on reading Anna – I am *much* better by the way, no fever, only coughing + the “unmentionable” discomforts – Anna is made into a liar + the guilt which infects the first moments of her love for Vronsky, by the falsity at the root of her marriage to the admirable Karenin + her admiration for his “serious” friends – whereas she really adores something else – & Tolstoy’s ‘solution’ of her situation is both false & avoidable, as the poetess Akhmatova passionately argued to me in Leningrad in 1945. What wd have happened i[f] Levin had fallen in love with Anna? & Dolly found someone for Karenin? I *can’t* go on. Wd you *like* to get letters of this length, illegibility, secret chaos, every day? Ha! I’ve just had a letter of gigantic²⁶³ proportions from Lady Violet Bonham Carter professing her feelings & ending “it is so *terribly* easy to write to you, dear Isaiah’ or something of the sort. Do *you* find that? Love to everybody particularly les petits – I am, I *am* such a good s[tep]-f[ather] you’ll see! You’ll see! I am ‘jolly’ glad that you see what you

²⁶³ IB writes at top of new page: ‘Page 8 & quite enough too.’

see (you will, maliciously, truthfully as always, declare the images on the snow no longer come) & feel as you feel, jolly jolly glad. Remember the caviare. Also that you are too good for almost anyone: that if you did not suffer from an almost morbid modesty & self-depreciation (augmented by the sisters of Cinderella – the Rothschild ladies + those who accept their values: cp. *Cenerentola*²⁶⁴ to which we shall go to Glyndebourne, and to *Barbiere*²⁶⁵ *with* the Hofmannst[hals]. *And* to Comte d'Ory²⁶⁶ *and* much besides but not Figaro in Cov. Garden) this would have been more generally noticed. I have a splendid Xmas cards [*sic*] from Abe,²⁶⁷ Molly Mure²⁶⁸ *and* M-dlle Perria²⁶⁹ who calls me to Paris pas-sionately. James dined with her – & v. malicious she was. All because she lacks your attributes, poor obsolete Russian intelligentsia lady. I'll certainly call on her: naturally she adores you: you & Vicki: when I tell Miriam²⁷⁰ about my “état d'âme' wt will she say? In a cockney voice” I *always* (allwice) thought so (sao). I am sorry for you.' Th[en?] a mixture of frustrated indignation, compassion, fury embarrass-ment &, I must concede, rough humour. A long terribly sad letter from T[revor]-Roper, whose only true friend I am now declared to be (I think, awful to say, it *is* true) from Spain – he is going to Rif in Morocco – he has lost Cumnor,²⁷¹ he hates Christchurch, he has no future, he wants All Souls, he wants a crumb of comfort – can I *save* him? I must try. He is a monster but my monster, & intellectually remarkable. Don't

²⁶⁴ Rossini's opera *La Cenerentola* [*Cinderella*].

²⁶⁵ Rossini's opera *Il barbiere di Siviglia* [*The Barber of Seville*].

²⁶⁶ Rossini's opera *Le comte Ory* [*Count Ory*].

²⁶⁷ Possibly (Leslie) Avraham ('Abe') Harman (1914–92), London-born Oxford-educated Israeli diplomat and university administrator.

²⁶⁸ Kathleen Mary ('Molly') Mure né Seton, wife of the Oxford philosopher G. R. G. Mure.

²⁶⁹ Unidentified.

²⁷⁰ Presumably Miriam Louisa Lane (1907–2005) née Rothschild, entomologist and conservationist.

²⁷¹ Trevor-Roper had tried unsuccessfully to buy Cumnor Place, an 18th-century house near Oxford.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

think at all – Tout s'arrangera²⁷² as someone once said. I adore your 'cynicism'. But what don't I love in you? Life is not gloomy or empty at all.

love
I.

*Your two letters just arrived. light, warmth, I cannot go on I must read & reread.

TO ALINE HALBAN

4 p.m. 26 December 1954 [sent several days later; *manuscript*]

Hollycroft Avenue

D. Aline,

When I am 'worried' – as now – because I haven't spoken to you – although of course you said you might not be able to telephone – said I would not expect etc. – *what* am I 'worried' about? everything, irrationally. Perhaps you tried, but they said the telephone did not answer, as they did to Alix yesterday, although it was in order as far as I knew. Which should set my mind at rest? but of course not. Perhaps you have had an accident. Perhaps you are practising self restraint & saying that you don't really want – that it is actually a nuisance – all those efforts at demonstrating independence – even a slight revulsion – which we both cultivate in order to prove something to ourselves which is in fact quite quite false: namely that it is all an illusion merely because it is a continuous 24 hr long obsession of a neurotic kind. Perhaps you have had a scene, as a result of which all is in chaos again. Perhaps the combination of weather, snow, familiars from the past, your children, Alix's Mother Figure with the stern German words of duty, all this, instead of seeming awful, has disposed you towards subsidence, Munich, a compromise, because the future is too complex, dark, & you are not sure that since you don't feel X or Y

²⁷² 'Everything will sort itself out.'

or Z, you can, should, will be able to give up A, embrace B., choose C. etc. etc. – all this is craven nonsense & well I know it – one word from you on the telephone – <as in fact occurred 27.12.> will shiver all. Because of course it is all, as I said in my unlucky letter of April from Somerhill, so much firmer & more permanent – & Mègeve is difficult to talk to & from, & however violent my desire to hear the sound of your voice – & it is, I suspect stronger than yours – I shall *never* do anything to embarrass you. I hope that you succeed in getting through these days peacefully, even pleasantly. Don't enter into 'explanations' or negotiatons or "scenes" – don't, don't. Even curiosity & pride & pique & pity & desire to justify yourself must not, even with Alix I mean, lead to much just yet – your admirable old silences are best with all, (except me of course) – but how we do grasp at straws: images; which fill everything; then, for 3 hours no images: liberation, one exults: or perhaps one falls into gloom & despair (oh I wish you wd telephone! I can neither read [n]or listen to music as a result: and my fever *has* gone up, after being nothing all Friday & Saturday: & my mother is worried & even the doctor puzzled; so there *is* literal love sickness?) and one looks for symptoms to reduce the tension – it is a modern form of plucking daisies & loves me – loves me not – I *know* there is nothing to worry about, & yet, & still you are far & in, a to me, alien element – how tawdry the 1st performance of *Symphonie de Noël* de Manuel Rosenthal,²⁷³ broadcast from Paris, sounded yesterday – but I must ring up Lady Waverley. For not only has she sent me a glass Victorian object, but I am to be put on the board of Governors of Covent Garden (as well as Sadlers Wells. Surprising). This genuinely pleases me. It means a voice in deciding on operas & ballets & singers & conductors, & no difficulties about *seats*. I now, in my megalomania, think we must go to Swan Lake (sold out) and Firebird (also sold out) in some suitable stalls & not boxes high in the upper circle. For the first time in my life I shall enjoy "protection" from a Box Office – a la Raimund in Austria –

²⁷³ Manuel Rosenthal (1904–2003), French composer and conductor whose *Symphonie de Noël* was published in 1947.

without bribery which I do wretchedly so that the bribed officials accept but laugh at me. And the excuses for going to London in order to attend long meetings with governors, tenors, choreographers – so surely, though it is a real duty & not just honorary, I accept? & visit the Scala with a letter to the Direttore, as a learned colleague, influential at Court. But the gnawing – what? Jealousy? Uncertainty? It cannot be. Why then am I sharp, anxious, cross with my poor mother who has had to leave the room – unable to read, eager for what? For human contact I think. No one is to blame: only those qualities in me which make me incapable of driving a car steadily and instinctively & well. My boring school friend, Jack Stephenson & his wife came to tea. It is 7 p.m. & perhaps you telephoned, perhaps I did not hear as they denied connexion as to Alix: in which case you must wire to say so – My watch logically says 8 p.m. & you will do no more to-day – so I must “take myself in hand” I suppose. Easier said than done. Still – Done. I shall ring to dear Ava Waverley,²⁷⁴ before dinner on Tuesday (Massigli) Wednesday (your friend Rumbold) Thursday (Michael Tree)²⁷⁵ without regret; do this at once: *force* myself to read Rousseau’s politics; *stop* reading Anna Karenina: scatter the images with both hands, away, away, like St. Anthony²⁷⁶ defying temptations; and start writing a book, even though not yet quite well. So: you see you’ve witnessed a neurosis: quite causeless, pointless, silly, but writing all this has helped a little. Does all this reveal too much? Or communicate ‘guilt’, even though you have behaved *beautifully* & even heroically? If so – but it does not matter. The 12th is further

²⁷⁴ Ava Waverley (1896–1974) née Bodley, political hostess, whose second husband was John Anderson (1882–1958), 1st Viscount Waverley 1952. Although she ‘took no part in public life’, Ava Waverley probably exercised ‘more indirect influence than any woman of her generation’ (*Times*, 24 December 1974, 12e).

²⁷⁵ Michael Lambert Tree (1921–99), son of Ronnie Tree and his first wife Nancy Keene Lancaster (E 602/5).

²⁷⁶ Anthony of Padua (1195–1231), Portuguese Catholic priest and Franciscan friar, said to have been tempted by demons in the desert.

away than ever – & meanwhile you’ll be subjected to such a quiet ordeal – tactics, pathos, the instinctive desire to go back to Egypt & the cosy old fleshpots – although with so little flesh in them – but then people do say vegetarians *have* been happy (it is a lie! I.B.) – Alix’s extreme niceness & integrity, dignity etc. – all this – your own doubts, uncertainties – but you are ultimately de la résistance: enduring: trembling but audacious; & clear about what human qualities you like, love, admire, need, & who have them. I love you & trust you absolutely and in your very uncertainties and honest avowals that you cannot discern the to-morrow – in this I feel a terrific moral genuineness & deep loyalty and – ? You must supply. If you wish the present, for the future I stake *my* “weighty” personality. I have enough of the stuff life needs – the crude raw material for two. *And* your exports are eagerly absorbed, there are not enough of them always – so what more, what more do you ask? I feel gayer.

yrs

I.B.

Edm. Wilson²⁷⁷ on Israel in the *New Yorker*, Dec. 4,²⁷⁸ is *worth* reading. Alan, David C., & Freddie on the best books²⁷⁹ are not. I refused to contribute out of cowardice & loyalty, if you see what I mean.

After my 6000 words of yesterday – how much more *can* you want? I am ashamed of writing so long so dull, so thickly[?] – instead of all the things which I think, & *could* say, direct, transparent, cool, fine, noble, etc. etc. which you evoke – & are yourself.

²⁷⁷ 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’ (IB to Jeffrey Meyers, 14 June 1993).

²⁷⁸ Edmund Wilson, ‘A Reporter at Large: Eretz Israel’, *New Yorker*, 4 December 1954, 158–206.

²⁷⁹ Not in the same issue of the *New Yorker*.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

TO ALINE HALBAN

3 p.m. 27 December 1954 [*manuscript*]

Hollycroft Avenue

Monstre!

I am writing this with my normal pen, peaceful loyal object, no *frissons*. Three days and no communication is too much. How can I be expected to write a book if I worry? & worry I certainly do. About what? Why? Do not ask. Never mind. Yesterday, I had a “relapse” after an excellent Friday & Saturday – fever – & delusions that telephones are ringing: they did this even in my troubled dream in which I was being married to Alix, violently resisting & the uninterrupted sounds of low telephone bells by a Rabbi who was Hans smiling horribly. I woke up in the dark, very hungry, & cried with frustration. To-day I am physically better: & though I know that your walls are of paper, public boxes awful, the friends with fantastic capacities for overhearing others no longer telephoning, & in the delicious snow, light, air the original brave total liberties compromised in some way – although this *is* so – still where there’s a will – ‘*But*’ you say indignantly ‘I never said I would – on the contrary – besides I am, after all, *not* your wife!’ or (not *your* wife or not your *wife*) True, very true. But le Coeur a ses raisons,²⁸⁰ & well you know it. After sending you a monster letter I immediately wrote another 1000 words – 2 pages on that huge paper to explain this & that: & communicated the latest gossip (shd I join the Board of Governors of Covent Garden? Honourable, amusing, snobbish; & free tickets & “fun” & upper bohème – should I?) but no, no no! it stays here till *you* set my mind at rest (by the time you get this, I shall probably have lost my reason forever, & you will weep in vain. Still – may be there is a glimmering of a chance – rush to the instrument – demand – & you may save me yet.) – I’ll send it on request, but not

²⁸⁰ ‘The heart has its reasons [that reason knows not of].’ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées and Other Writings*, ed. Anthony Levi, trans. Honor Levi (Oxford, 1999), 158.

spontaneously. I cannot tell you how maddening it is to have a call – from abroad – from France – Saturday & Sunday – & to find it to be Our Great Friend. Still, I suppose I love you. Please go to some repulsive Kuildor[?] hotel & telephone: or at least wire nicely if you cannot. I'll accept Cov. G.: it will annoy Billa²⁸¹ & Maurice separately.

I.B.

TO ALINE HALBAN

6 p.m. Same day [27 December 1954?; *manuscript*]

I am partially appeased – Still, am I not to worry? Not *at all*? oh if I cd speak to you! & this is written with the traditional spark-emitting instrument. As my despair was reaching its climax the telephone rang – & ultimately reported that Mégève was unobtainable – too busy etc. 15 minutes later the girl declared that the call had been cancelled. Impetuously I demanded to make one myself, at once, at once. Immense delays while the number was investigated. Then, stupefying report: No Mme Halban at the hotel. Unknown. I stormed furiously from here: ½ an hour later; a mistake: the wrong hotel had been talked to {you}. Madame H. *was* there but wd be back only at 8.15, French Time, to keep call in? yes yes. Then I had an image of your return to dine, surrounded by friends & relations, embarrassed by the porter's rushing forward to report a pending call. So I cancelled it. Is it too difficult to ring in the morning? explain it all to me & I'll rest in peace. After words, however idle, I can work fruitfully all day. As it is I mope & have fevers & drive pins into people. But I see the difficulties at your end well enough. But surely is your 11 a.m. or 11.30 (too late?) or your after 10 p.m. – I am always in now, being “delicate” – &

²⁸¹ Wilhelmine Margaret Eve ('Billa') Harrod (1911–2005) née Cresswell, wife of Roy Harrod.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

perhaps it is possible to ring me without irritating – any time will do in fact. I feel happier, but cannot be so without you.

IB

TO ALINE HALBAN

midnight, 27 December 1954 [*manuscript*]

D.A.

I love you very deeply; and am in love with you – how deeply does not bear saying. Consequently I have, as a result of the sanity – *asainissement*, induced by hearing your voice, reflected calmly & very soberly not about myself but about your ‘predicament’. Predicament it certainly is. Soluble, manageable, but not easy. You sounded exhausted & bewildered. Nor am I surprised. Instead of gradual transformation depending on reliable reciprocal sensibilities you have had to conduct short actions: take positions; & count the casualties & the wounds; without much help from anyone: passionate pieces by me; ambiguous semi-hostile neutralism from Aline: & the potentially unfriendly “world opinion” which greets all irregularities. What are you to do? How are you to live? Let us eliminate the secondary & uncritical factors. I am no longer afraid of the results of the German Tactical Operation. Your jealousy is a mild nuisance & terribly intelligible: but in itself this will not bend your sense of the truth or your will or your deep & splendid honesty (don’t disavow it: emotionally you never cheat. Your life wd be unintelligible if you had: whereas it is not: it can be set to music. Incidentally I’ve just refused to write a libretto) – Right, as we say. You will mind, but not retreat. Now the problems are:

- 1) How are you to live next term? In close intimacy with someone who is to live his own independent life, while you live yours?
- 2) Can it be good for your 2 children to feel the crack as they must & will

- 3) Am I to be declared the culprit, at least in part, & can H. & I meet if so, & if not, what is to be relationship, to be bearable at all?
- 4) How & where do we meet?
- 5) Where is this going? If not towards physical separation, then where? & if towards separation, how, when, why? &
- 6) Do you want this? separation? to lead what other life; where?
- 7) And what is going on *now*? has a decision to live apart *really* been taken? so that the present relation is a civilized make-believe – or is it a comedy in which tactics are being used – or an experiment designed to show who feels – or fails to feel – what – to what degree – as a guide to future action?
- 8) Suppose a physical separation *is* thought best, where is H. to go? Paris? to what? is a job certain? when?
- 9) Your mother? brother? Alix? – & you? are you to live with your children in Headington – alone? visited, besides me, by Joll, Hampshire, d’Entrèves, Dodo and Mrs Mure?
- 10) What is to be fate of the 200 ties? (in a way, symbolic, surely) or of Weisskopf?

And so on. Let us deal with these seriatim: “logically”. The most essential question is what you *want* – vis a vis H., vis a vis me (your own self with emerge from this by & by). And let me assure you at once that this is a matter – with you – of *time* & slow change. One fine morning you will know & act. You yourself have told me this about the past: & a war or a death may not be needed. Let it ferment, torment, mature. You can conceive with what heroism *I* have to let my life undulate on the slow waves of your indecision. But this is right. I am all for haste & impatience, & if you felt illumination “to-morrow” – of the kind I pray for – I wd offer my most precious possession – my old horned gramophone – full of emotion of the past – to the Gods. But this is not to be. Some process must be allowed to complete itself, with much unpredictable dramatic incident yet, probably. Let it ferment & grow slowly, very slowly. One fine morning you will know exactly what you want. And “as usual” you will have it. This by way of

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preface. Now practical detail, which is perhaps all that ever matters. One awful thing I have to warn you of: by me you will never (alas!) be abandoned. It is *a terrible* prospect, *unlosability*: & diminished my value. But I am too far gone, too old to turn back, too blinded by one strong feeling. So that need not be argued.

28 December, 11.30 a.m.

At this point, like you, I suddenly stopped, went to bed & slept till I got your telegram. I now think when you arrive on the 12th, you might 1) order your car to London somewhere. 2) come back in the hired car to London, lunch in London, & come to Hollycroft Avenue for the afternoon (there will be nobody here from 2.30 till 7 p.m. or later) dine or not dine, go to cinema & drive to Oxford or stay in Claridges, as you prefer: & I shall invent some pleasure for the 15th; alternatively we can drive straight to Oxford: Indecision. Indecision. Indecision. I incline in favour of the first plan. I can scarcely go on writing, I long to be in the same room with you, so much. However Sparrow says that I am, surprisingly, the most sensible, level headed, even wise person he knows: so force myself *down* – to the calm centre of the waters: & like the effort of attention you notice as needed for the translation, I return to the Massimi Problemi.²⁸² Logic: Clarity: Bon sens & sens commun.²⁸³ So:

1) Life with H. There is no real alternative. Ideally it wd be better if he (or you) lived in London & came for week-ends. But this can't be: so you'll have to establish an unsatisfactory, temporary, semi-insulated *modus vivendi* (this you know already) – what is to happen when suddenly you feel cold, lonely & in need of warmth & intimacy? H. cannot (unlike some highly flexible & boneless people – Nabokov say) be thermostatically regulated – now warmer now cooler: he is somewhat *set*: & will want to know where he is by means other than inner antennae & neurotic sensibilities. So you will, in the interim period (we don't know

²⁸² 'Most important problems?.'

²⁸³ 'Good sense and common sense?.'

where the interim leads, as yet) see if you can live on less emotional income ‘during term’ – with much more frequent ‘windfalls’ from elsewhere: the old condition of unexpected dividends for H. can, alas, not go on: for it leads to systematic misinterpretation (academic language: but for this purpose I am the doctor) & so to much more painful results in the end. It only does for affairs: not for serious situations (& you have a *far* deeper & more serious – not just heavier – nature than you will admit. Consequently you can’t continue on a false basis for long. As if you do, H. will suffer more painfully in the end than you: quarrelling, & bitterly, at 60, as you would, is a nightmare: all the roads are still open now). You will have to practise – little self-discipline, yes: to go into your exquisite cocoon: not to pull H. by elastic because you suddenly feel a gust of familiar feeling: let him build a compensatory life: not mind, criticize, complain: otherwise really hideous untidiness. The present policy is to give you so much rope – since you have asked for it – that you will be sadly & solitarily entangled in its coils & ask to be tied up again, as before; i.e. it is hoped that it is all a temporary aberration, especially as you have no rival source of “satisfaction”, so far as is known. This I believe to be a pathetic miscalculation. You do need the rope: or at least to be tied in some much nobler & more distinguished fashion: utility without refinement you cannot swallow (nor can I.) – the minute, useless vanishing bits, which nobody can name, are everything: everything – sometimes a long succession – like the equivalent of the long slow wind (horn? bassoon?) tune in Mussorgsky’s Old Polish Castle in Pict[ures] f[rom an] Exhibition – sometimes broken zigzags of feeling at Aix or fields near Oxford known to the officers of our regiment – but this is all rhetoric – still it is like passages *both* in Schubert *and* in Vivaldi – but still, nonsense, I must return to realities. So: a civilized mode of life as with an old friend who has done something which makes certain things impossible, has to be let find its own level. Not easy, not durable, but not impossible. Still, a test of character (of which you have plenty – to spare: but you *like* self-indulgence & have always got away with everything. Still you can’t have *absolutely* everything: & you have, of

course, decided. But see no reason why you should accept the consequences which you yourself would *fight for* if they were denied. Surely?) – At this length my questionnaire will take 30 pp. to reply: will you publish a translation, privately circulated, after my death in 1999 (I *told* you I am nel mezzo camin:²⁸⁴ you, I am afraid are doomed to ‘go’ quite early in 1995 – like Berenson I shall live *alone* at Stanton [St John?], tended by Mlle Cassin). Well then, where are we? Yes, life in Headington. With *frequent* absences on academic grounds to Paris: & perhaps a pied a terre not only in Paris for him but in London for you: each to be secure from the other. I do not think this is insufferable. And the ‘world’ will still remain in ignorance save for rumours from Paris of H.’s appearances. And that wd not matter *in the least*.

2. Children. Much the most real question. Children react to everything real. There is nothing to be done about *that* – the children of unhappy parents are not better off than those of divorced ones – but you may disagree. The only cure is love – affection – & naturalness: the not playing of parts: even I can help. If you feel happy you will communicate it – but we must hope that the kindly blanket of Miss Lee²⁸⁵ will keep them warm; *mechanical* means – divorce – not-divorce etc. will not help them much. This is a problem for daily & hourly adjustment & endless endless effort & lubrication. ‘All very well’ you will reasonably say, ‘but how can one live & not live with someone? how much acting of a part before children – or friends – is required? can one do it? should one? why?’”

No, one cannot live & not live. One can only live from day to day, awkwardly. If you were a violent, resolute, Amazonian queen (how awful!) you wd decide, cut, bind the wound, & readjust fiercely & rapidly. As it is, with you, ripeness really is all. You must let the stream continue which bears you to the unknown shore. With many a reflux – 2 steps forward – one step back – 3 steps

²⁸⁴ ‘Midway along the path [of our life]’, the opening of Dante’s *Divina commedia* (and thus of his ‘Inferno’).

²⁸⁵ Nancy Lee, governess to Peter and Philip(pe) Halban.

sideways – no fanatical straight path – not for you. Occasionally you *will* look at the compass & realize that you are being carried to some undesirable marsh: & you will suddenly shoot forward. In the end, after many a zig-zag – while Miss Lee keeps the shower from the children – you will come into port or the mainstream or wherever you have wanted to, always, without quite knowing. It *can* be done more swiftly, painlessly, neatly (I should not protest) but not, I think, by you. Everything has to ripen within: otherwise you will complain of unreality. So one must let the situation go on, unexplained, undiscussed; the only questions you must answer are specific ones, about something to be done next week, about your state of mind *now* etc. never general issues of policy or principle, which, for you, include too much unknown stuff, unreality. So we shall go on, stepping stone by stepping stone. Heavens, how much patience, goodwill, niceness! but they will forthcome. Half evasion, half coping; half forward half sideways; half courage half timidity, half desire, half fear, & so hurrying slowly, on foot, slipping occasionally, you will arrive. Yours is only the next few hours, days, weeks; the Future a la longue, I, in my godlike way, assume responsibility for. How does one live & not live? uncomfortably, H. will have a theory by which he will guide himself: you will have none: it won't last forever.

Alix thinks that patching can last forever: if one cares for something more than life, love, & 'human contact', it can; but if not, not. And I shall argue theoretically with her about this general proposition. You are in a submarine (why are your images always so concrete & precise? why are all your gifts so jealously buried?) – therefore no sense of depth or direction: the comedy wd be, if after all these perilous scrapings of the ocean floor you ended up dramatically in the port you came out of: but you won't. So you must live in 'remote intimacy' or, if this is refused politely on principle, or from tactical motives – (but how *can* a man follow advice *so* woodenly? & so cynical, so shallow, so absurd? *That* is why the Germans always at first impress, frighten, cow people – can damage by the fanatical & stifling quality of their devotion & unbridled love – & then lose the wars & feel undying grievances

against peoples they do not begin to understand; neurotic, energetic, methodical, kindly, self centred, malades, malades imaginaires & always, in the end, betrayed & unrequited – their love repulsed – is this not a historic description of the Germans? so blind, so tragic, so ridiculous, intimate without delicacy, craving for “style” without distinction, anglophile, in love with gentlemen, unbearable to them? But to go back to 3)

H. & me. Difficult. For the purpose of the Interim, it wd of course be better that he should not think me the cause & object. I can play my part, with reluctance & contre coeur, but I *can*, & quite well too. Especially as I don't hate H. & even sympathize as one does with someone in a permanently false situation which he has not the means either to avoid or to disguise – only obscurely feel & suffer. But he may not be up to “taking” me. That remains to be seen. If he hates me too much, we shall meet in All Souls, in Stanton, in Hollycroft. In London – openly. Holidays? separately, yes, In spring I might persuade Victor to come again to Israel, then you cd too – or anyway – we'll see, as you too often say; summer we shall arrange with Michel. This settles (4) also. If H. cannot bear me next term – to be found out by direct question – I shall not come: myself I am in favour of (still) representing this as internal evolution in you, to which I am but an occasion: but if this too patently absurd, then I need not come, & Stuart will notice & David, & it does not matter *in the least*.

The other questions answer themselves: the ‘crack’ cannot & should not be plastered over; your decision has been taken for you by your own inner process – I won't prophecy where it will go – divorce or not – me or not – time, time alone, will build the answer. Don't worry yourself: the cards are in your hands: & you need not play them. Is H. experimenting? Possibly. Does *he* know what is happening, or what *he* is doing? Does not matter. He will go on for so long – & then may be bored & will go away: that wd be best: or I will go away – that is impossible & I put it in for logical completeness: or *you* will leave us both: possible but improbable: the decision is *yours* I regret to say: & you cannot & should not decide: let the inner process go on – & meanwhile live as normally

as possible, & avoid leading questions like a careful witness. Behave as if nothing were in the least amiss: & remember that money helps – that, if need be, H. can live in Paris ostensibly terribly busy on a 1000 things while you are in the more real lands of England or Italy – no, oddly enough, the girl in the Degas *Absinthe* is not like you in a mood, but, abstractly, more like X. I am certainly the bearded man, a tower of strength, *fond* of the café, always there, fidèle, an imposer of a personality on an unheeded environment – come under my “influence” Aline, dearest, & warm your limbs after the cold dry rattle – the *cliquetis* of the formules françaises²⁸⁶ – if only I cd speak Russian to you – it is *so* restorative – like a warm balm which gives simultaneously inner warmth, confidence, optimism & acute sensual appetite + the possibility of its satisfaction – a kind of elixir de vie – et de jeunesse – perhaps this million of well chosen words has not helped – but write, write to me – it does relieve tension, it is better than twirling fingers madly, darling Lady Jones – one day, believe me your life will be set on new, solid, unshatterable foundations & all the past – now & 40 years back – will be like a thinnish dream. Believe me, my love. Good night.

Isaiah



Edgar Degas, L'Absinthe (1875/6)

²⁸⁶ ‘Clanking of the French formulae’.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

TO ALINE HALBAN

Tuesday evening & Weds. Morning. [28/29 December 1954] Nuit blanche.²⁸⁷ [*manuscript*]

D.A.,

Having written about 10-000 words to you again to-day – I discovered, 3 hrs later (having given it to the maid to post at 7.30 p.m.) that I had said *nothing*. But it is no use: “it” – what needs to be said – will communicate itself in some other way. However your voice does not leave my memory. Constructed, hemmed in by people going in & out, as it were, full of angst, anxious for solidity & firm basis – it is, I thought, solitude that is the trouble – no one to understand all one says (or if one cannot or will not say it – is not sure what “it” is) all one is & is becoming. Imagine how differently you wd feel if I lived in a small chalet not far away – or if even you had a genuine confidante who was not already engaged in someone’s interest – her/his own perhaps – or where secrecy or pride or decency was no barrier. Believe me the unnatural life you are leading wd not be so difficult to bear – the situation is not all that unique, only the failure of communication is very exceptional. Your jealousy annoys me ever so little – how well I understand it – still I expect I want too much, too quickly, I the preacher of “ripeness”. Stephen Spender came in to-day & talked well about my generation (for once let me talk about myself a little – oh a very little) – he said that our generation – people born 1908 – 1915 say were incurably frivolous & liked this in each other. We were all, he declared, very serious & had passionate moral ideals: but we adored to be amused: & cd forgive anything to anyone who did that – & liked each other because we alone knew what it was to be serious *au fond* & frivolous *au plus profond fond*²⁸⁸ – & he instanced himself:

²⁸⁷ ‘Sleepless night’.

²⁸⁸ Serious ‘at heart’ and frivolous ‘deeper at heart’.

Auden: me: Freddie: Goronwy Rees;²⁸⁹ Victor [Rothschild?]; up to a point Stuart who was born later: Victor [repeat?]: Miriam: Day Lewis was the exception, he was genuinely boring & solemn. And the earlier generation – Connolly etc. the vile bodies²⁹⁰ & bright young people – Billa & Co – *wanted* to be frivolous, feared seriousness, thought it smart to mock etc – whereas we believed in seriousness – & were terribly in earnest – but cd not help a frivolous gay view of life – a Rossinian fountain – which we could not stop – adored – & did not try to defend or deny, but admitted to only under pressure, with guilt & relief. All very true I think. And you & your brother the same it seems to me, but Margot²⁹¹ & Bill not. & you have done so much to avoid it, & love it so much – this peculiar mixture of moral seriousness & intellectual frivolity, exquisite even solemn manners + deep artistic gaiety & generous imagination – and opposed to easy manners & heavy commonplace seriousness within – which you are surrounded by – oh Alix is very unfrivolous, & Guy only for 3 seconds at a time the rest is black hypochondria & surface buzzing & dry coruscation – Rheims is not frivolous, only cynical, even Sez nec has more secret frivolity. But Stuart *really* has it: & James some, & Nabokov too much – hysterical quantities – & Liz & Raimund – as for Freddie “ce monsieur a quelque chose de gamin et cela ne marche pas bien avec la philosophie”²⁹² said a French lady – this is true of

²⁸⁹ (Morgan) Goronwy Rees (1909–79), journalist and author, close friend of IB’s from their undergraduate days; fellow, All Souls, 1931–46, Estates Bursar 1951–4; Principal, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1953–7. A friend from 1934 of Guy Burgess, who ‘told him in 1937 that he was an agent for the Comintern; many were later to allege that Rees, very sympathetic to Communism in the 1930s, was an agent or even a double agent himself’ (Kenneth O. Morgan, ODNB).

²⁹⁰ Allusion to Evelyn Waugh’s 1930 novel of that name, which satirises the ‘bright young things’ (the book’s original title).

²⁹¹ Presumably Countess Marguerite (‘Margot’) de Gunzbourg (1920–98) née de Gramont, Aline’s sister-in-law, third wife (m. 1952) of her eldest sibling, Pierre de Gunzbourg (1904–86).

²⁹² ‘This chap is a bit of a brat, which doesn’t sit well with philosophy.’

MORE ENLIGHTENING

all of us – the Non-Bohr²⁹³ quality, what M. Ledermann²⁹⁴ also, alas, did not have: that is why, *au fond*, I shd get on with your brother as with Wheeler Bennett²⁹⁵ (who astonishingly has it) & why your life, A.D., will not be tangled in weeds but will triumphantly break out into delicious pleasure, sensuous & gay, dry & rich at the same time, given time, patience, a little stoicism & skill at behaviour under *siege* (you are beleaguered) self – protective silences – and, (I am afraid, but the truth – the frivolous gay truth) – and me. Telephone when you can: & if I am out nominate another hour – & write write write & believe me you will be singing Mozart in motor cars yet. On Thursday Elath & Eliz. Cavendish are coming to see the poor patient: how will that go? Alan's flirtation goes on exciting ribald laughter & not a spark of human sympathy. His life is a pure farce but dreadful too. Even he cannot go on like this. Even Dodo is more dignified, & Alan was a bit frivolous, that is the whole trouble. 2 a.m. good-night, I love you with all my heart & a great deal besides.

5 a.m.

If there is to be a railway strike on the 9th Jan. here it really might be wise to have your car at command – if it is not convenient to leave it for you in London, then we shall go to Oxford.

I.

5.05 a.m. It is very well to tell me not to “worry” – but if you are jealous of H.'s lady, & not of 'X' & very mildly Alix, why should I not remain sleepless? Still I am not ungrateful to 1954 – (your pen no longer writes – ominous) – think through the amount of *jealousy*:

²⁹³ Niels Henrik David Bohr (1885–1962), Danish physicist; Professor in Theoretical Physics, University of Copenhagen, 1916–62.

²⁹⁴ Possibly the mathematician Walter Ledermann (1911–2009).

²⁹⁵ John Wheeler Wheeler-Bennett (1902–75), KCVO 1959, historian; lecturer in international politics, New College, 1946–50; fellow, St Antony's, 1950–7; historical adviser, Royal Archives, 1959–75; a wartime colleague of IB's in the US, where he was, inter alia, personal assistant to the UK ambassador.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1946–1960

H of me; I of him; you of Mme ?; Alix of you; Miriam ditto; you of Alix (a little) I of Garnis (a little), X of you (in principle) nothing that anyone can do can stop *this*.

P.S. Can you really live half in half out till 1960? – 1960? – 1960?

TO ALINE HALBAN

31 December 1954 [*manuscript*]

Hollycroft Avenue

Darling Aline,

(Very well: you must tear off *this* bit: thus: I shan't write on the other side: or write trivialities

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Really Anna Karenina is fantastic: the description of Anna, sitting before the races, pressing a cool object – the watering can – to her hot cheek – preoccupied with one topic – waiting for her boy who cannot make out whether Vronsky is a friend or an enemy – & then the ride after the race with Karenin – his reproaches – her outburst – Levin's inability to ask about Kitty & therefore bad mood & inability to shake off the obsessive question – & as soon as she asks – immediate relief & warm feelings & gaiety – I read & read & think it more like life, than Oxford, London, Paris – particularly when Levin does ask his question – able to do so because he is at his own home and the *walls* help. But now something less nice: I went to the doctor yesterday, endless X-rays, blood tests etc. finally the Cardiograph: funny wobbly lines. He thinks I have a virus infection of the *epicardis* – the bag in which the heart is contained – that it will pass, is not chronic or coronary or anything – after 2 weeks of “complete rest” – then a further cardiogram – then if all right, permission to return to Oxford; if not, 2 more weeks etc. – The general line is that on ne badine pas

²⁹⁶ Repeated on the verso of this leaf in the same position on the page, with nothing written above it.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

avec le coeur²⁹⁷ – have I had emotional ‘tension’ of any kind? No, of course not – well then it is just an unaccountable virus – like pneumonia – & one must wait for it to die out²⁹⁸ – I *cannot* take this seriously. I am, I suppose, “run down” – this rest will do me no harm – but there is poetic justice in being told that one genuinely suffers from something which Another Person thinks he has – you can imagine that my mother is concerned – but I think I know myself. If such a cardiogram had been taken (I’ve never had one before in my life – & even this doctor – after looking at the cardiogram – cd hear *nothing* in his stethoscope, no matter how devotedly he pressed his patient, stupid German ear to the instrument) at *any* time in the last 2 years, say, the results might have been startling: it is all ultimately due to Dr Goller’s pills – which Victor sternly warned me about – how good our relations suddenly are! I have received the Lycurgus Cup as Xmas gift, & David’s description of him, on his *best* behaviour at lunch at Hatfield brought by Diana Cooper – watched sombrely by Lady Salisbury²⁹⁹ – but to return to my “condition”. Absolute rest? this will not preclude me from meeting you on the 12th at the Airport: only perhaps you wd spend the first night in London? I can *clear* Hollycroft Av. of population on Wednesday & Thursday: & if you have a car in London, we could drive a little. Anyway I’ll know more by next week. But Alix? What *am* I to do with her on the 6th & 7th & 8th? She wishes to go to the Ballet Theatre etc. – can I just put her off? Scarcely if all she wants is to see me & talk to me: I shall have to telephone & explain – I suppose you had better not have heard all this – otherwise you cd tell her, & ask her to telephone from Paris – I talked to Bill this afternoon. His father has had a stroke, 1st Jan. is filled with his mother, son, relations at Oxford – they haven’t had time to unpack etc. – usual Deakin

²⁹⁷ ‘One doesn’t trifle with one’s heart.’ An allusion to Alfred de Musset’s 1834 play *On ne badine pas avec l’amour* [*One Doesn’t Trifle with Love*].

²⁹⁸ E 467.

²⁹⁹ Elizabeth Vere Gascoyne-Cecil (1897–1982) née Cavendish, Marchioness of Salisbury.

situation. On the other hand he says he has written 20·000 words on Mussolini – & I believe we may prove right in our faith in the end. You sounded a little low last time, as if liberty – or the bogus form [of] it you enjoy at present – local self-government – is something you are not sure what to do with – remember the Israelites – 40 years in the desert before they stopped hankering after those inferior but familiar Egyptian fleshpots – ‘your’ pen again, I wonder how long it will write this time. I believe in omens – I shall recover & survive (if I go to bed before 10 p.m.) – & not perish – I am sure the thought of yourself as killing people has occurred to you – but so long as you live & I am in a state of passionate & steady emotion – how strangely & delightfully they blend – I shall live on. Live on and teach you bit by bit the marvels of freedom & self confidence & the use of your wonderful intellectual & moral faculties – about physical & emotional ones you know more than I do – yes all the faculties which you so passionately want to develop & fear & bury in your enormous silences – & you will have to walk alone a little – a bore but necessary – Alix, remember is too pro-prison & H. was born in one & Tess & Stuart hug their walls. But you *have* known liberty – you *know* what it is to be solitary & the enormous opening out & radiant pleasure of being understood – of communicating at once overtly and underneath, articulately *and* instinctively – without swallowing & atrophying all the words which the other person cannot cannot understand, & that *is* unimpeded “human contact”. Good bye – I’ll telephone on Saturday or Sunday & don’t think about my health, *you* alone can get it right, for you I’ve lost it, by you I’ll gain it, I say mystically & literally. How worried poor dear Stuart will be: this brings out *all* his affection.

love love love

Isaiah

P.S. Your concentration camp letter just arrived – how telepathic we are being again – it is a wonderful metaphor – I see the grinning guard – I cannot *hack* through the barbed wire because that wd make you hate the past too much – & anyway I am not a hacker –

MORE ENLIGHTENING

but patience, love, patience, better unwind – there is a *door* & you *have* a key – only come back to London – the thought of return to the comfortable cell is not thinkable – but how I see H. in a little German cap, courteous & ironical & wrong. It will all seem a harmless nightmare to you in two years time, no more – True about the ladies – isn't it awful I count 12 no less, minus D[aphne] Straight & D. Head³⁰⁰ & Clarissa³⁰¹ who don't pursue – & Eliz. Cavendish who doesn't really – oh she was so sweet & modest when she came to tea & talked to my mother & her dog – I dare not tell about my 'condition' to X who will rush round at once – I don't believe in my malady – & don't *you* worry, but I thought I must tell you – the doctor assures my mother it is nothing important – rest – rest – your last letter, as always, filled me with bubbling happiness. Good night again.

Isaiah.

TO ALINE HALBAN

Monday 3 January 1955 [*manuscript*]

Hollycroft Avenue

D.A.

Once more your pen, large sheets, too much to say (in one, most real sense) too little (factually). Darling Aline, it gives me such pleasure to write these words, I really do not see why I should deny it to myself: do you? No, you don't. Yes do return the papers to me: they will be safer in my keeping; I shall not misinterpret. I do not know how to get through the days & the hours. I go into sudden delicious reveries & imagine, & see, and have to check myself on the ground that all optimism is punished & one must

³⁰⁰ Dorothea ('Dot') Louise Head (1907–87) née Ashley-Cooper, daughter of the 9th Earl of Shaftesbury.

³⁰¹ (Anne) Clarissa Eden (b. 1920) née Spencer-Churchill, niece of Winston Churchill, m. 1952 (Robert) Anthony Eden; Lady Eden from 1954; as an unarticulated philosophy pupil of IB's at Oxford during the war she became a close friend.

teach oneself to live on the floor – so that one cannot fall off – (except one can) – & then everything is a windfall & delightful & undeserved & unexpected and one can live. But I cannot keep this up: after Saturday’s wonderful conversation I looked so happy – & so well – that my mother, though she certainly divined the cause without difficulty – was surprised, perhaps even a little upset by *such* change of mood – such heights of sweetness (to her) gaiety & obvious bonheur. I do not really mind what & how much you told Our Friend; I shall seem to her to have been a trifle disingenuous – to have been silent when our ‘intimate’ relationship called for candour – since in the famous & good letter she wrote me after the April crisis she promised to be at my side whatever happened – but it does not matter: trust breeds trust; truth – truth – ; she is awkwardly placed between you, me, H.; but she will, in the end, accept all conduct by people she loves which is not base: & whatever else, neither you nor I, perhaps to our cost, are capable of *bassesse*: we continue, at vast expense, to pay moral dues – a kind of spiritual blackmail – to all kinds of gods – moral principles – aesthetic demands – ‘integrity, dignity’ etc. It cannot be avoided: we shall have to go on so: like the *bien nés*³⁰² people in Chekhov & Tolstoy – as against the apes who take what they want & assert rights naively, calmly, brutally and lower the standards & make things easier, more natural but in the end repulsive – if that is due to a skin like yours & peas penetrate. So let us not deplore our natures, go on paying blackmail – buy off the *canaille*³⁰³ – to live the only way we can – to the full limits of our ineliminable sensibilities. At this point you will say to yourself that you are really *not* so sensitive – quite coarse, quite ordinary, dull, passive, of no interest to Alain or Mme Rheims; the desire on the part of people who are too good, too refined dignified & noble in texture *not* to be so – to sink to the conventional level, is not rare: like “moucher” Devonshire’s desire to talk to ‘ordinary’ people in their own

³⁰² ‘Well-born’.

³⁰³ ‘Mob’.

language: no doubt Mademoiselle de Lespinasse & Mrs Woolf³⁰⁴ suffered from neglect by red faced 18th cent. joueurs³⁰⁵ or the friends of Duff Cooper (my name has appeared in the D. Telegraph demanding money for some memorial to him, in very odd company – I cd not refuse to sign when Randolph Churchill³⁰⁶ hectically telephoned to me – but my co-signatories – Boothby,³⁰⁷ the Prime Minister,³⁰⁸ Victor, Connolly, are a pretty odd lot) – & Mrs Woolf did mind – & was always catching – trying to catch “life” which was flowing always somewhere else – where the real people & the real electric current & the real enjoyment was – & meanwhile remained an object of worship to all who mattered. The difference is that she emancipated herself early – with Mme [Marie] Curie as a shining ideal of independence, she got out of *her* concentration camp (& it *was* one) quite early: whereas you were born in freedom & entered your bois dormant³⁰⁹ by error – & like everything in your life the process of escape is gradual & timorous, until suddenly it accumulates & you step over the ocean & are on the *autre rive*³¹⁰ – yes & your children with you – & all that you truly value – will be transported on an enormous raft which I shall patiently build – am building – better so than a Night flight abandoning all possessions – yet that too is necessary if one is an Elizabeth Barrett³¹¹ & no other escape exists – there is *never never*

³⁰⁴ (Adeline) Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) née Stephen, novelist, publisher, critic.

³⁰⁵ ‘Gamblers’.

³⁰⁶ Randolph Frederick Edward Spencer Churchill (1911–68), journalist and Conservative politician, only son of Winston Churchill.

³⁰⁷ Robert John Graham (‘Bob’) Boothby (1900–86), KBE 1953, life peer 1958; Conservative MP 1924–58; PPS to Winston Churchill 1926–9; parliamentary secretary, Ministry of Food, 1940–1 (resigned over a financial impropriety).

³⁰⁸ Winston Churchill.

³⁰⁹ A reference to ‘La Belle au Bois Dormant’ (‘The Sleeping Beauty’), IB’s metaphor for Aline’s unhappy marriage.

³¹⁰ ‘Other shore’.

³¹¹ Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–61) née Moulton-Barrett, who had to escape her controlling father to marry Robert Browning in 1846.

any case for the enchanted forest – the gentle concentration camp – the civilized withering of all one’s faculties for everything in an atmosphere of possessive affection and blind routine with all the windows sealed off by the “construction” – itself a pessimistic & unrealistic effort [to] secure safety at the expense of liberty & love. *Engagé* – wonderful and mysterious notion – ‘engaged’? you so, *no*: ‘committed’? ‘involved’ the first at least represents a free act of an irrevocable kind (bravo – & it is exactly what it is) the second a reluctant result of impersonal forces, with desire for self-extrication. I have been reading, of all people, the detestable Sartre. The novels are too slimy & dark, but he is a *very* clever man & his moral philosophy *is* what I think I $\frac{3}{4}$ believe. What a fool I was to be deceived by Freddie’s articles in *Horizon*³¹² at the end of the war which concentrated on Sartre’s obscure logic & his attitudes to sex & ‘proved’ it all bogus. It is not. It is most imaginative & bold & important.³¹³ In effect it says that all theories of life & morals – scientific, metaphysical, theological – are human efforts to

³¹² A. J. Ayer, ‘Novelist–Philosophers: V – Jean-Paul Sartre’, *Horizon* 12 No. 67 (July 1945), 12–26, No 68 (August 1945), 101–10.

³¹³ To Morton White IB commented:3 ‘And there is this to be said about Sartre and his friends, that such questions as the moral sanction for conduct – the justification for Communist atrocities, the notion of personal liberty as an autonomous being, as opposed to one obeying authority, or drifting along a stream not of one’s seeking, etc., above all the notion that all theories and all rationalisations are vicious fallacies as such, alibis invented by human beings to save themselves from the necessity of responsibility for their choices – for which no reason can ever in principle be found – all this seems to me original and important, and certainly to be found in literature from the seventeenth [century] onwards and left comparatively alone by professional philosophers, who concentrated on the natural sciences and when they did talk about morals and the like, chose their examples from too trivial and philistine a world and analysed none of the problems which appeared central and agonising to sensitive and superior persons. Kant, however, did deal with problems that agonised his contemporaries – so did Hegel, so did Comte and J. S. Mill. But after 1880, even including William James and Dewey, I don’t think anybody did in the sense in which Sartre at least tried to. And a mark ought to be given to him for that.’ From comments, sent on 11 January 1955, on the manuscript of MW’s *The Age of Analysis: Twentieth Century Philosophers* (New York, 1955).

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s'arranger³¹⁴ – to pretend that the chance & chaos of circumstances are “explainable” in some *tidy*, cosy, easy fashion – rationalistic *alibis* to justify one's own weaknesses, vices, misfortunes – to show that it must all be all right “in the end” & that we cannot help doing what we do – weak feathers in the wind – & must “sacrifice” & go against our instincts in the name of some vast abstraction – State, God, Humanity, Family, Duty, etc. etc. Whereas all this is illusion; the world is not morally directed anywhere; it is just what it is: neither good nor bad: just events & persons & things – *we* do what we can with them: we are apart from physical weakness etc, free: if we plead passion as an excuse, it is not: we *could* control it: if we don't it is because we choose not to: if we go for advice to a priest or a friend,³¹⁵ it is because we know in some sense what they are likely to say, & *choose* them ourselves for that reason, freely, ourselves. We are what we make ourselves: Marx, Freud, are all attempts to treat us as material objects played on by outside forces: we know that this is *not* so: we choose, we are responsible, we *commit* ourselves, & when we don't – when we let ourselves drift or be managed blindly by others, we know that we choose *passivity*, & we can if we like, but it is still *we* who are responsible & answerable if anybody asks why; we *need* not give reasons for our behaviour but we must not give false ones – such as psychological rot or conventional nonsense: or rather if we do, we are concealing something & deceiving ourselves or others: which again we *can* do if we like, but it is unworthy, undignified, squalid: or at least some people feel lies to be so. Surely this is true, largely: we are what we feel, do, intend, & want;³¹⁶ hence the case for making one's own way out of concentration camps – I feel much more truthful if I do accept responsibility for, say, H.'s sufferings – if I repeat his quite coherent, decent, but to me unswallowable point of view & scale of values – *I* reject it: “openly” – & set up my own flag: &

³¹⁴ ‘Make oneself comfortable’, ‘Come to terms with’ (the way things are).

³¹⁵ See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism* [1946] (London, 1973), 35–7.

³¹⁶ E 467–8.

ready to lead someone somewhere with it: like Dr Weizmann: or Toscanini: hence my nomadic hero-worship of “large” & noble persons – & passionate belief that moral values are real, not in the sense the books contain them, or superior people, but that what *we* feel to be genuine for us, is so: & if we discover that we have been dreaming or made mistakes, then we change our views: & march in a new direction: it is a terrible nuisance to be free, choose, admire love respect only what one *does* admire, love, worship; & not tick over in a depressed way behind a mask with, ear plugs – but believe me, darling A., you will not find your past 40 years as satisfactory as the second half: you will forget the barbed wire: & the wood – le bois dormant – will fill you with the kind of sweet but bogus nostalgia which one has when one sees the scenes – school etc – in which one loved & hated as a child – but to which one cannot possibly return or want to return. All this sermon for the existentialist word *engage!* as for my “disease” I see Sir John Parkinson³¹⁷ (the specialist) to-morrow: Lady Waverley telephones hourly: so do all her medical friends – Lord Moran,³¹⁸ Sir Mc’Call, Sir Bedford etc. etc. – she keeps hoping she is not “interfering” I am thought one moment to have “dry pericarditis”. Alix *just* telephoned: really – you told her I thought she wd be *jealous* – she wished to assure me she “quite understood” Aline, Aline, what did you say? What did you imply? For I thought Alix was engage to me? Oh dear! I am much more “worried” by this than any possible “feelings” of Alix – she obviously wonders how much & what I said to you about her & me – she can only get out of her embarrassment – oh darling darling Aline what *did* you say – by rising high in the air like a very grand Marschallin & being like an Empress to us all – kind, beneficent dignified, detached, – but there I’ll reproach you nicely on the telephone to-day – tomorrow you

³¹⁷ Sir John Parkinson (1885–1976), cardiologist, President of the British Cardiac Society 1951–5.

³¹⁸ Charles McMoran Wilson (1882–1977), Kt 1938, 1st Baron Moran 1943, physician; Dean, St Mary’s Hospital Medical School, 1920–45; Winston Churchill’s personal physician.

are 40 – “life – life ...’ as a lady³¹⁹ who was in love with me in a lunatic way in the 30ies was once heard to say in Versailles, from inside a private cabin – I’ll stop now – Alix’s call interrupted what wd otherwise have been a passionate last sentence – but now I can’t I must think a little about Alix’s undefended personality & how to cause no wounds – no vulgar scars – in the name of “dignity”, integrity” & the rest. I miss you more dreadfully every hour. I wonder whether Parkinson will order *us* to go to Nice. Will I get hurt in the future – Alix thinks – forse che sì forse che no³²⁰

I.

Somehow I feel a vested interest, on her part, in, status quo: though she will try to be sympathetic etc.

Since then our telephone conversation (Monday)

It is now *Tuesday*, 11.30 a.m. I go to the specialist in 5 minutes. Wait), It is snowing wildly, a violent unEnglish Breughel [sc. Bruegel] scene – I feel a little nervous – am I going to be semi-invalid? I?

–

3 p.m. O Gioia! Parkinson thinks the “deviation” on the cardiogram *may* indicate something odd in the Pericardia, but more likely not – he thinks it may be my usual eccentricity – as everything in me – diaphragm – arms etc is odd but healthy: I may be a soundly built monster – I am not to “overdo” things (but how can I help it?) but otherwise to live normally after 3-4 more days at home in semi-bed. He thinks (I suspect) that it is a false alarm: my regular doctor, who raised the alarm, still thinks I need care etc – anyway I am vastly relieved: so is my poor mother who cried all morning (anniversary of my father’s death by Jewish lunar months) I still

³¹⁹ Rachel (“Tips”) Walker (1913–92), Somerville PPE 1931–4; pupil and close friend of IB who in 1935 hoped to marry him; later became mentally ill.

³²⁰ ‘Maybe so, maybe not.’ *Forse che sì, forse che no* (Rome, 1932) is a novel by Gabriele d’Annunzio.

have a cold etc. but in fact all is well. I think I probably *could* meet you on the 12th & drive back to London; do let me particularly as it *may* involve us in a little “scandal” which I shd enjoy (I don’t feel to hell with them all – but I really could not care less: & I’ve never felt this before a propos of anything; so, you see, it *is* all terribly special;) You might stay 1 night in London & take me to Oxford on the next day – since you long to see garnison[?] so – oh I know well the feeling of acute [*sic*] – I *wish*, in a way I cd still have it towards X – but no, no, it is, I am obliged to admit, all concentrated on one person only (& it annoys *me* to have to admit this too, I will have you know – those grudging truths are our speciality) – not to go down on my knees before – not to worship – not to exaggerate your marvellous qualities – because you are not used to pedestals – & prefer the dark corners of Cinderella (have you heard Cenerentola or rather *seen* it? the moment when the good magician brings the glittering magic carriage to take her to the Ball – although so light & frivolous Rossini – is enormously moving & I cried at Glyndebourne seated between Sparrow & James) & to be ordered about – very well; I shall tell you what to do: for truly I know & understand – but remember that I am but an elderly Ledermann – ébloui³²¹ by the real thing – the authentic princess – cannot *not* clap my hands occasionally – whatever the relation of ‘possession’ – & you are right I shall be racked with an ironical jealousy – & however much you want to be directed – & my gaiety & optimism are enough to keep us both afloat for Alix’s “25 years” – yet there is a level at which I must be allowed to sing a hymn or tune – you do it too – for if one loves & is happy & has the additional joy of discovering the ultimate fulfilment of one’s human ideals – one must offer homage. But I’ll try to be less exalté, & more [*copy defective*] commoner in future – Come quickly darling Aline how can I wait?

Isaiah.

³²¹ ‘Dazzled’.

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I am glad I don't have to be sorry for H. – but I *cannot* help despising a little – is that so very wrong? Not only him but also those who *want* him to come out vaguely victorious in the end (for occult personal reasons of their own)

TO JOHN SPARROW

17 February 1955

[All Souls]

Dear Mr Warden,

I should like to apply for re-election for the quinquennium 1955–60 to a Research Fellowship of the same class – the 'Robertson' – as that to which I was elected in the summer of 1950. On that occasion I undertook to work in two fields: Russian social and intellectual history, and European political thought. In the first of these fields I have published two overlapping studies of the origins and contents of Tolstoy's view of history, and a study of the political opinions of Herzen and Bakunin; and have prepared for publication, in an English periodical (and later in book form), the substance of lectures I delivered for the Northcliffe Foundation at University College, London (they were subsequently, in part, broadcast by the BBC) dealing with origins of Russian radical thought in the '30s and '40s of the last century. The articles are due to appear in the course of this year; the book, if it is worth publishing, in 1956. In addition to this I have prepared for the press an English edition and translation of *From the Other Shore*, a book by A. I. Herzen; and have contributed notices and reviews to learned periodicals in England and the United States, as well as articles for two encyclopedias. I have also in draft nine chapters of my book on the critic Belinsky – the first volume of a projected history of the forerunners of the Russian Revolution; this last is to be ready in 1956–7. In my other field I have published an essay (Auguste Comte Memorial Lecture) on the inevitability of history under the auspices of the London School of Economics;

and concluded the second draft of a book on Political Ideas in the Romantic Age, arising out of lectures delivered at Bryn Mawr College and later broadcast by the BBC. I meant to finish this book at the end of last year, but bad health intervened. I hope to have it in the hands of the Oxford Press by June of this year. I have also completed for publication an article on historical method (originally delivered as the first Elizabeth Morrow lecture at Smith College in the USA), and almost completed one on the Russian writer Prince V. Odoevsky.

Should the College re-elect me, I propose to devote myself during the next five years to the completion of the first, and work on, and I hope completion of, at least one other volume of my history of the Russian radicals and revolutionaries. As for the study of European political thought, I should propose to accumulate material for the volume on the history of European ideas from 1789 to 1848 for the Oxford History of Europe, commissioned from me by the Editors of this series, combined with general work in this and adjacent fields. I have carried out my duties as a University Lecturer, and Lecturer in Philosophy of New College, and I have examined in the College Fellowship Examinations thrice. I have also supervised a number of graduate theses, examined thrice in the BPhil, once in the Final Examination of Literae Humaniores (I am to examine in the PPE Final School this summer), and examined PhD theses in London and Cambridge. I have, in accordance with my original proposal to the College, twice been away to teach and lecture at Harvard and other American Universities, but propose, if re-elected, to do so at less frequent intervals and for shorter periods of time; and also to curtail, so far as practicable, the work of examining, but not necessarily my other College and University tasks.

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

IB proposed to and was accepted by Aline on 18 February (see E 480).

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TO EDWARD WEEKS

25 February 1955

All Souls College,

Dear Ted,

Thank you for your letter of 9 February. I wish I was there too and could have met Mr Stevenson, about whom I wrote a very civil piece in the *Sunday Times* not so long ago. I have I am afraid been unwell for weeks but am slightly better now. Almost Rowland-like in my concern for my own sad health. However, I rose from my bed of sickness and went to a party given by Mr Aldrich for the opening of his new embassy and there gazed upon our Queen from respectfully close quarters for the first time in my life. She is tiny and dances like a pretty dwarf – so I expect did Queen Victoria – with a severe slightly marble expression about her face. The Queen Mother was once heard to observe that what a Queen needs are two qualities – patience and anger. That is formidable enough. I think our Queen possesses them.

I wish I had something to send you – the piece on Dr Weizmann has appeared all over the place and must be too shop-soiled for you by now; I propose to publish four articles [based] on the BBC lectures on the origins of the Russian intelligentsia in Stephen Spender's *Encounter*, starting May or June – one on the milieu in general, two on Belinsky, one on Herzen.³²² The last is the best and not very bad. I do not know if you want to use that perhaps. Probably not. If not, do anything you like with 'Historical Inevitability': an extract might be better than by condensation. It had a mixed reception here, being attacked savagely by Mr Deutscher, who is a very uncompromising early Bolshevik, one of

³²² 'A Marvellous Decade: Literature and Social Criticism in Russia, 1838–48', Northcliffe Lectures for 1954, published in *Encounter*. I '1838–48: The Birth of the Russian Intelligentsia', 5 no. 6 (June 1955), 27–39; II '1838–48: German Romanticism in Petersburg and Moscow', 5 no. 11 (November 1955), 21–9; III 'Belinsky: Moraliser and Prophet', *Encounter* 5 No 12 (December 1955), 22–43; IV 'Herzen and the Grand Inquisitors', *Encounter* 6 No 5 (May 1956), 20–3.

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the few really fanatical Communists of our time; and from the Right by an unknown journalist in the *Spectator*, who found my thoughts insufficiently Christian. On the other hand I was compared to Acton by *Encounter*, and to Coleridge by *The Economist*, so I ought to feel on top of the world. So far as I know, nobody has taken any notice of it in the USA – I do not even know whether it is on sale there. Anchor Books did want to publish it in their periodical, but the London School of Economics forbade this and said that the Oxford University Press alone would peddle it. I propose to write an enormous piece of historic[al theory]³²³ for Ham Armstrong, I fear too stiff for you, but if I go and visit some musical festivals this summer I shall fulfil my promise and send you a musical chronicle.

Much love to you both,

Yours ever,

Isaiah

PS I shall probably be in Chicago this November, but breathe not a word of this to anyone, I beg of you.

TO EDWARD WEEKS

25 April 1955

All Souls College

Dear Ted,

Thank you very much for your letter of the 13th and for the chaser which arrived some weeks before and confused me somewhat. I have now looked at the piece and beg you despite your strictures to reproduce it as spoken. Much better, I do assure you, not to turn it into an article but to put in a footnote saying that this was delivered as a talk produced by the BBC to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Mr Roosevelt; that it is printed as delivered (which is almost true – true enough anyway),

³²³ Probably a reference to ‘The Sense of Reality’, now in SR.

that it was addressed to a British and not to an American audience, but that nevertheless (if that is your opinion) it says things which are too easily forgotten in these days when people on both sides of the Atlantic seem to see nothing but the feet of clay. The advantage of saying all this (I mean in the footnote) is that the piece is then not a contrived article for American readers of the *Atlantic Monthly* seeking specifically to defend Mr Roosevelt against the latest charges, Yalta, etc., which makes it look like a piece of propaganda designed specially by a foreigner to assist the Democratic Party of the United States – which is highly improper and lends itself to obvious criticism and attack – but is an authentic document, reproduced unaltered, of what was being said in England out of all relation to current American politics.

For this purpose it is particularly valuable to reproduce all the peculiarities of the spoken work, including the perfectly sincere and in my view not at all exaggerated apology for not being an American expert, etc. etc., which is exactly what an Englishman speaking to the English (and not writing a commissioned article) would be liable to say. You can say what you like about me in your statement about who I am and why I should have been asked to deliver this particular talk by the BBC; but I think it would be best to let me show myself in my true colours and to reproduce the whole thing quite explicitly as something of interest precisely as a British document and not as a piece of Anglo-American hands-across-the-sea sermonising. On these grounds I do pray you to leave things intact and only embody the corrections which I made. Let the eye read this as a piece intended for the ear, and this will give it a peculiar flavour, which for once could be risked by the *Atlantic Monthly*. Believe me, it will be much better so.

I do not think there is any point in saying much about Yalta. I did put it in a piece – you will observe on the last page – which more or less covers it. As for the *Listener*, they are a little cross with me for not letting them print the piece, but, as I told you before, I have made my choice of Paris and the apple is yours. I have no objection to publishing it somewhere in England – perhaps in some obscure publication like the *Political Quarterly*, which is edited

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by my friend Leonard Woolf, whom I greatly admire and respect; it will not be seen by many people here, but never mind. It is of greater value, as I am sure you will agree, in America.

Do reward me as well as you can, for I am very poor this year; and do send me something here – on which I shall pay tax even under Mr Butler's admirable reduced rates – and about the residue we can haggle when I come to America in November. I shall enjoy writing begging letters when I come to America. In my letters to the *Listener* I have had to advance as my chief motive that of lucre and my own sad academic poverty. This they understand. Other reasons not.

God bless you,
Yours ever,
Isaiah B

TO EDWARD WEEKS

6 May 1955

Hotel Ruhl, Nice

Dear Ted.

Thank you for your cable. I hope the Roosevelt piece is not too naively eulogistic, but it reflects my feelings very truly. [...]

Yalta: I don't think much difference has been made: certainly not 300 words worth. I'll add a footnote if you wish & enclose it herewith.

[...] The sun is shining, I am sorry Winston is gone without the adequate tribute in the press which he needs so badly & I send you my love

yrs ever
Isaiah

PS And *would* you say something about the article being literally the talk of the 12th April in London & not an article. It excuses the chattiness & the 'Britain-oriented' tone.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

footnote:

This talk was prepared before the recent publication of the Yalta documents, but they seem to me to add nothing of significance to our knowledge of the President's character or motives. In these days, when his detractors speak as if all that remained visible are his feet of clay, it is perhaps worth reiterating that his faults and errors as a statesman were the consequences of his virtues. He trusted the Soviet leaders and credited them with good intentions because the motives of those who denounced Stalin appeared to him prejudiced. He was certainly mistaken; but so were a very great many persons, both in the US and in Britain, whose uncritical enthusiasm for the Soviet Union also sprang from their (partly correct but, alas, misleading) belief that it had been misrepresented to them by reactionaries and ex-Communists. Mr Roosevelt's breezy anti-imperialism, which occasionally took reckless forms, his belief that the Russians were at bottom good fellows, if a little rough, who could be cajoled into harmonious cooperation with the democratic world, and, above all, his conviction that personal contact between him and the head of the Soviet State could always settle everything – all these opinions came from too generous and simple a view of his own powers and of the human qualities of others. If he had lived, he might, as so often before, himself have provided the swiftest and most effective correctives of his own gigantic aberrations.

TO ALINE HALBAN

10 August 1955 [*manuscript*]

Hollycroft Avenue

My darling Aline,

Your letter was an overwhelming pleasure & excitement, particularly after the two conversations on Sunday – nothing was exactly amiss in the first, yet, it brought back all – not all only a memory – of the uphill period. You *can* express yourself & you *can*

say things: but I do see that the opening vocative cost you something: and that you were pleased that it did & that you could & wanted to pay it: as for me, I ask for no more: it really is the peak, the summit of the awful climb the ploughing through those great flat fields of snow which you think your frozen feelings to be – refrigerated heaven knows when, & kept pure and spontaneous & unbelievably young until the splendid thaw (this is beginning to be literature: I feel all I say, but it is amusing to do it too: which is perhaps not right); but you are deeply right: it is not the neurotic bliss of people who are miserably tortured by absence and are made violently happy by presence (which I suspect Nabokov's relationships to be – & Patricia's) but *that unheard of wonder – the rarest of all things – the most wonderful luck & coincidence – the knowledge that one has arrived where one has always wanted to be.*³²⁴ There are cases when people tired of wandering simply rest on decent benches or bits of flat rock and are grateful for solidity & peace – (Salome: or almost all elderly dons' wives) but although this can be quite nice, quite contented, – Virginia Woolf married her husband so – it is a second class carriage: good prose better than bad poetry. I am quite dry, realistic, sober. Strict about this: I wish to say that I always knew what I liked, loved, admired, longed for, & what I flew from; & in answer to your question 'are you sure?' it is almost tedious – because so obvious, so unanswerably, so enormously clear – to say YES: I am sure: this is it: this is the goal peacefully attained: the harmonious resolution where everything is right, everything fits & is beautiful & permanent, the one true answer, the state of grace which cannot be artificially constructed or won by deliberate effort: the state of full realization of all one's wishes, all one's ideals which artists & religious persons know – without which the idea of grace wd never have been thought of. You speak of the two groups of people at Biarritz – the *pourris*.³²⁵ (Howard is surely worse than Tanis: or at least looks it; the vulgarity alone is awful enough) & the mild

³²⁴ E 519.

³²⁵ 'Cads'.

aristocracy. The mild aristocracy I like very much: more than the flashing & passionate & miserable ones. Partly because they are connected with some divine tranquillity & live by values which are authentic and prevent false notes and promote a kind of sweet peaceful spontaneity – the opposite of the Steeplechase produced by pride, ambition and emotional avidity & rapacity; unsmart & not cold and “wears” well. I’ve always liked such persons: it is one of the gulfs which divides me from Sir Maurice who hated them – to whom they are a standing priggish reproach – & from Stuart whom Renée & socialism have taught to dislike them – though by nature he cd be like them himself (as an old old man). They do disapprove of divorces & racketiness and social ups & downs & “irregularities” & bohemian jumps. So, in the end do I & so do you. Experience teaches one to understand & be sympathetic to it: not to be at home in it, believe me. And in your case, because you are you & made of the stuff which Lady Waverley described with such vulgar accuracy – ‘dignity’ etc., they won’t, in fact, disapprove. Such people are put off by tone, accent, feel, flavour, not ‘deeds’: during the period of instability & restabilization they look worried & suspend judgment: when all is fair again, they continue with their peaceful courtesy & devotion: they are the last people for you to be nervous of, even in theory, even slightly, even when “it does not matter” – for you are in the respects that matter, like them: & will always be adored by them: & they too have their secret upheavals, only their manners & morals are too good to explode in external distortions: & they swim in public waters but instinctively avoid squalor: so do you, so do you my darling, automatically, by radar: & the natural sympathy is there: it is the only form of life which survives revolutions & wars and is uncontaminated by pourriture³²⁶ and apes and bullies and unsuitable alliances. I knew that *I* had arrived long before I had violent physical turmoils: that you were the universe in which I wished to live, the sounds I wished to hear, the *tonality* in which at last – & for the first time in my life – I felt pleased to be myself:

³²⁶ ‘Rottenness’.

which like a country, a climate, an age, one has always unconsciously wanted, in which alone one is all one can be – & delighted relieved, happy, with conflicts resolved, solid; genuine & filled with goodness & love. What French writer takes the faintest interest in this state – or the desire for it – & what Russian novelist writes about anything else? I knew this when I went to concerts with you in 1947: as you came along the row in the Town Hall at Oxford; we were already there, in the distance, waiting when I came; when you used to rise to greet me in the 2nd house, Hilltop,³²⁷ I was transported with a sense of light: & felt well proportioned, (the opposite of the tension of unhappy love) and at once terribly elated, excited, happy, and at home. That is why I used so bitterly to ask why Hans – when only I saw its full beauty & value and never felt such pride & delight in the qualities of someone else before. Like a brother – this was the reason. *Paradisiac* feelings – nobody who has not felt them knows them: not the same as the most passionate desire, not the cosiest affection – it is a whole story *above* ordinary life: obstacles & frictions are washed away – oh but I have never begun to tell you what I felt. All this, in a sense, independently of being in love. Which was very violent but accompanied by the sense that it was this time the only life I could lead: if you refused: or some accident happened, I wd remain crippled for life: quite gallant but uncompleted & aware of what could be & was not. Then what happened happened. You spoke of my “winning” you. How could I help it? there was no other possibility for me. It was quite different from those terrible campaigns – Patricia & even X – where one craves, obtains, is filled with the febrile *tiv* of an abnormal experience – & knows, knows that it cannot end well; that something does not fit, that the physical & emotional relationship exists out of harmony with, in a way as a challenge to – enhanced by its opposition to – the proper order to which one belongs by nature – a wilful choice, a breaking through something – one knows all the time that the débris is

³²⁷ Hans and Aline Halban and their children lived in Hilltop House on Headington Hill in Oxford 1949–52.

unavoidable. One continues either in cold blooded pursuit of pleasure: or hand to mouth, *ad hoc*; or like a person possessed by spirits. Oh but you know all this: & then the tone is right, everything clicks into its correct position, one is home. To some people this never happens (Hans? Miriam? Guy?) or all the time because they can be adjusted to anything by coarseness, niceness, blindness (Foster, the nicer apes, primitives generally – to us, yes, at last, for life. In 1954 I constantly had failures of confidence: it seems too good to be true: I am used to living in atmospheres unsuited to me & adjusting myself all too easily and never quite convincingly: I wanted to be with you so much, I could not believe that so much satisfaction on earth was possible. And when you, at last, and slowly, & not too articulately to begin with, & then increasingly, thawed, I mean allowed all kinds of faculties and feelings {and} which lay neatly and prettily frozen, for fear of the null, the void, and worse still, offering apes & blocks relationships which they could not cope with – when you came to life it really was like an awakening in a fairy story: & a solid & beautiful world came to life for me. I used to feel childish impulse, to which I never confessed, to go on my knees & offer prayers of gratitude, as one does not upon discovering a treasure, but upon coming home after a storm to a wife, & children and a familiar home. At times I used to say (in your style) is this a mirage? & then it was quite clear that this was an absurd doubt: if this was false, nothing was true. The reality was so terrific, the bliss so golden & steady and deep that one might as well doubt whether Bach's music was good; whether Tolstoy had something to say – the miracle is that faced with the crises of rich well brought up (but in some sense not too deeply rooted) girls – at once humble self depreciating & exigent – & after the trials & errors – after the world of maquereaux³²⁸ & Charlie Muns – & despite the war, & apes, & Hans, & children, & perpetual readjustment to values which were always superior – or seemed so – because they were vouched for by others – because they were not one's own – after all that you (& you alone: not

³²⁸ 'Pimps'.

Liliane,³²⁹ not even Poppy:³³⁰ as for the Tanises, etc. ...) should have preserved so unbroken, pure, sensitive, untouched, so fresh, so acutely responsive, so morally discriminating, so undeceivable, so fantastically uncorrupted by even the minimum degree of compromise with *beau monde* moeurs & *beau monde* talk. Hans & Lord Cherwell think you a great lady. No doubt you are; but that is a social category & I don't mean that. I mean that you are absolutely true: & all the moral & aesthetic properties then come of themselves: I cannot describe to you what a luxury it is – how heavenly how rare how unlike anything else – to be with someone, who like a tuning fork responds truly to every vibration: who thinks the funny funny, the horrible horrible; whose moral taste is not uncertain (only decisions of when to act – & even these – in all that matters – are firm and simple and impeccable) – here was I, frustrated among the good decent English (– drawn even to Americans because of the reality of their moral feelings and their disinterested & sweet pursuit of human relations, which, they are usually too crude to catch) – with only Stuart in the thirties – before Renée made him censorious – intermittently able to sympathize & respond to one's search for the moral centre of people & situations, when suddenly I felt this appalling sense of kinship – this, I don't know why – Russian, Jewish, enormously civilized, morally infallible – marvellously delicate sensibilities – tremulous, diffident and incorruptible, undeflectable, clear, firm, & punishing itself for every conscious ignoring of what it cannot help knowing is true, right etc. – don't be overwhelmed by the adjectives – that is, alas, my luxuriant Asiatic style – but when you say you wish to

³²⁹ Liliane Elisabeth Victoire de Rothschild (1916–2003) née Fould-Springer, youngest of the 4 children of Eugène Fould-Springer, and a lifelong friend of Aline, who as a child had lived in the same apartment building in Paris on the avenue d'Iéna, near the Arc de Triomphe; m. 1942 Élie de Rothschild (1917–2007), then a prisoner of war in Colditz Castle, head, Château Lafite Rothschild, Médoc, 1946–74: the marriage took place by proxy, Élie having proposed by letter 7 October 1941.

³³⁰ Thérèse Carmen ('Poppy') Pryce-Jones (1914–53) née Fould-Springer, sister of Liliane, and also a close friend of Aline.

be saved, you know that you are so already: not by me but by yourself, but that in you which made our relationship so immediately unbreakable, by that which could not bear the moral deafness of your surroundings – which made you at once respect the laboured painstaking morality of Alix and recoil from the tormented unspontaneity – the weakness unacknowledged & suppressed and disguised as firmness of conduct – of her personality: which is half noble Jewish metal & half German wood: you speak of being saved because to be reflected in someone’s love is a source of strength, & because if one is so unlike other people it is a gift from heaven not to have to walk alone: but equally I can say that you have saved me from misery, trivialization, escape from “the English” (& from work) into all kinds of worthless time wasting promenades – oh let me confess to you that when I feel I cannot sit here because I am trembling with ungovernable feeling – because I violently love everything in you – your head, your hair, your knees, your toes, and less describable ‘aspects’ (I cannot help it: I cannot write everything down: education inhibits one: & some words are impossible to write down) your eyes your voice your accent your luminous harmonious intellect, your sane & generous heart (you say you are not: but only those who are think they are not: the truly ungenerous – like Patricia – are sure they are wonderfully rich in this) your union of physical & aesthetic feeling, your religious seriousness about people & life generally, – yes & your “weaknesses” – your desire to please, your social vulnerability, your occasional taste for boue³³¹ – your flirtatiousness & self-preoccupa-tion – when I say I adore all these qualities I can no longer detach myself from them – I see myself in them all & you in me & me in you and see us as self-completed – and everything human beings were meant to be – too wonderfully made – almost flawless, unless looks count; in which case I have no illusions about my own, despite Patricia’s old reassurances. Soon I shall telephone to you: but even if you are out, I shall go to sleep peacefully & happily: I am so confident & so serene. Some things upset me: X

³³¹ ‘Scandal’.

has written starting “my dearest” (ought I to have told you this? Too late. But you may think it an error of taste) & saying she wishes to come to tea ‘to see my mother’ hoping not to make a scene & hoping I would “consent” to see her. She comes to-morrow: & I don’t know how to behave. You after all delight in seeing B., I have really no wish to see X at all: & I am ashamed of feeling mainly duty & desire not to behave badly, to prevent pain, to be – oh horrible thought – kind. She knows this & it makes everything worse. But I’ll [tell] you about that when it is over: it will not be a farewell party like yours with B. – I’ll try not to think about you continually while with her – & probably fail. Aline my darling: I love & adore and admire and exult in everything in you: I don’t want to possess or dominate or cling: but I feel at once in the most fantastic way. Save you? Yes if being with me forever, & getting a reaction to everything you feel & are in me does that: if steady idolization (I shall *always* idolize you: more than you me: partly because I am idolatrous by nature: whereas you have cool judgment and total reliance on your honesty and inability to bend & deviate – & send your presence in every instant of work & idleness – if that is enough – never were two persons more conscious of their relationship and never was a relation made, paradoxically, firmer, steadier, deeper, more rooted by such consciousness: contrary to all the rules. We love each other more than anyone else I know. The bowl is full, there is not a bubble of self-consciousness. I kiss your knees passionately. I think all you touch is made sacred: golf, sea, air, I miss you violently & unneurotically: & I am boundlessly & unbelievably happy & gay. My dearest, dearest dearest.

I.B.

P.S. And yet have I said anything? Nothing it seems to me, less than I did in the ‘restrained’ days, more philosophically, less expression of feeling: or I am wrong? You can read it, I shall not. All I know is that I am transformed by love into a being I can myself respect & even understand more: & I feel better “adjusted” in the world, too: I have a home at last: firm soil: a goal to pursue,

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a path to walk: Coup de grâce: literally: I really cannot wait: wd you *mind* if I arrive on the 23rd? & one room & – oh but I truly cannot believe it: can it be? I? So lucky? So happy? Can it really last? But then how can it fail to? So solid, so deep, so founded on truth, so very un-onesided, the lock & the key, the unbelievable, once in a million times complete coalescence, this incredible combination of deep peace & violent passion, absolute certainty and perpetual fresh excitement, & adoration & delight. I cd obviously go on like this forever: like my singing, it may grow tedious & get on your nerves: stop me: only live with me: only be with me: only be there, silent, talkative, grave, frivolous, only be there my darling Aline, only be there.

P.P.S. *Weds*

Next morning: letters are better than the telephone – but your voice electrifies me even when you are full of sleep – I (I say proudly cd not sleep for I don't know how long after that, whereas you slept beautifully at once –) such a funny letter from Lady Harcourt – our calculation *very* moving – first off the Hans ship, of course; I take *immoral* pleasure in treating her as an good old friend. Is one allowed these kind of duplicities even when they are reciprocated? Stuart & Blunt³³² say no. Victor & I say yes.

I.B.

³³² Anthony Frederick Blunt (1907–83), art historian, authority on Poussin, former Communist spy; Surveyor of the King's Pictures 1945–52; Director of the Courtauld Institute of Art 1947–74; Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures 1952–72.

TO ALINE HALBAN

midnight, Monday [7/8 November 1955; *manuscript*]

Cunard Line, RMS *Queen Elizabeth*

My darling Aline,

I am in bed, exhausted with nothing, but to-morrow heaven knows when there will be time to write – I shall, of course. But it will only go on Wednesday. So this inaugurates the series. In my airtight shut in cabin I am dark & secure and assailed by constant ‘images’. I wondered if, as so often in my past, – sudden change of scene would drive my shallow and childish imagination away from you – so that while I knew that I scarcely exist now apart from you – I shd nevertheless guiltily catch myself not thinking about you for hours at a time. The opposite has happened. I am almost driven out of my mind with the obsessive desire to see you. It interrupts everything & I can only keep it out of my conversation with strangers with the greatest difficulty. It is different in kind from the mild frustration of love which is not certain of being requited: *less* neurotic (but not entirely not neurotic), less painful, fewer violent twinges which jealous uncertainty produces: but far more constant, pervasive, and a mixture of nostalgia, violent desire, pride, happiness, and enormous warm feeling which (I suppose) is pure love of the permanent, non-lunatic, variety. I think Susan Mary³³³ is not wrong: the violent misery which made me at once excited, exciting, ill and restless and “interesting” is over; I am faintly worried about my lectures: but not really, not as [I] used to be: indeed what really worries me is that I am not worried enough, too absorbed in something else which is deep, solid and terribly sustaining – so that being unworried, I shall not suffer enough and

³³³ Susan Mary Patten (1918–2004) née Jay, later Alsop; famed Washington political hostess; wife of the diplomat William S. Patten, Jr. (1909–60), US Embassy, Paris, 1944–55; World Bank, Paris, 1955–8; a long-term sufferer from the emphysema that eventually killed him.

not be good enough – for without anxiety, no good: I am sure of that. The responsibility on you is really a little too heavy: one nervous move, one ‘wrong’ note, and I am ruined. But what I feel is I think what really religious people feel who believe in God, feel Him everywhere – need him, seek him, “thirst after” him & yet live with & in Him all the time. My worst moments of parting were a day after we sailed. I walked about ruthlessly & cd not bear what your Ma said at all. Now I am in semi-equilibrium: but until I see you all is not real, nor interesting, not worth doing, success not success, failure not failure; I am less anxious to please, to exist even. I am in love in a lifelong unalterable way: it is really not a mood or a passion but a state, like being Jewish, old, beautiful (just so that you shd not think I am describing myself) nasty etc. – I’ve never known anything remotely like it: I am appallingly happy and whenever I think about you exalté; I wish I cd express it properly without fantasy: it is like living in a new additional dimension so that all the previous objects have become thin & flat: no change is shape – colour: only in solidity: when I think of you, your voice, feelings, appearance fingers etc., or scenes connected with you, with you & me, with me vis a vis you etc. – things are real. Otherwise quite natural but without power to hurt – ghostly in that sense: for the first time in my life I can flick off trivialities (almost too much is trivial suddenly) – Susan Mary is surprisingly right. She may be a bore; but she is perceptive and devoted. I have a new feeling towards her – to do with her having to do with us: inside. Whereas say³³⁴ (I was going to say David: but no he too is ‘inside’, curiously) say Herbert Hart³³⁵ grows correspondingly thinner: what that very intelligent & nice man says, thinks etc. is less interesting, I don’t wish to know, I forget it & soon. Do you see? the sense of reality with which a relationship – i.e. love – affects all it touches is new to me. Before it disturbed, set on fire, caused a mad

³³⁴ Here ‘David, who despite a’ is crossed out.

³³⁵ Herbert Lionel Adolphus Hart (1907–92), Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy, New College, 1945–52; Professor of Jurisprudence, Oxford, 1952–68. See E 793.

disturbance etc. – now segregates what is genuine from what is not. I suppose that everyone has known that for centuries. But I am a late learner. I now think of every day in terms of it i.e. you. I love you so totally that I really cannot go on writing, I cannot bear it that you are elsewhere – minutes tick away, – time passes – & there never will be enough – & we are wasting it – & you are talking, looking, being seen, talked to by others who do not realize that all this is so – that to be with you is real, & to be with others is not – when I say ‘do not leave me’ this is what I mean – that while you are there things are three dimensional & have clear point. – [I] know what to do & why. When you are not I have to think continually about you. If I stop, drift & Debussy begins & the Beethoven like driving pattern – which is everything to me – stops. You really are my world: I really am ‘sure’. I want to talk about you as my mother about me. But I shall not. The voyage passed like a dream. I talked to Milstein at meals & your mother after them. She is almost 100% at ease with me, but, I suspect, prefers Abe & even Errica.³³⁶ Errica is very “pour”. She fills your mother with horrifying gossip about Mrs Roosevelt’s³³⁷ *vie amoureuse* (thinks she belongs – Mrs R. I mean – to the Communist party) & thinks Miss Joyce³³⁸ *told* Peter about the breach with Hans to evoke a reaction: otherwise she is discreet & benevolent. I chatted happily to your mother for 3 hours to-day: & enjoyed it greatly: particularly after a M. Fribourg left her: so I think she must have too. I think all that is “all right”. She suspects me of a little hypocrisy in complaining too much of the bores who pester me on the ship, whereas she suspects I really love being entertained by them) & I only spent 1½ hours on the Sun Deck & cling to the detested

³³⁶ Correctly ‘Erica’. Companion to Aline’s mother in New York and on Atlantic crossings.

³³⁷ (Anna) Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962) née Roosevelt, niece of the former President Theodore Roosevelt, widow of her distant cousin FDR; diplomat and humanitarian, delegate, 1st UN assembly, 1946, chair, UN Commission on Human Rights, 1946–51.

³³⁸ Nanny to (and a major figure in) the family of Aline’s elder brother Philippe until early 1950.

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Promenade Deck & sometimes not even to that. Otherwise I am not too bad. I shall go on with this while waiting for passport tomorrow: I shall now sleep (1 a.m.).

Tuesday 8 a.m.

Darling darling Aline

I begin again as if no time elapsed. I can still only think of one subject. There is brilliant sunshine, your mother & Errica are certainly on board in the sun. I can think of nothing but my feelings, your feelings etc. Your mother reported yesterday that it was *not* out of jealousy that she thought you were too busy to see Salem: also the Milsteins at the Purser's cocktail party was cold & stiff; Milstein is egocentric & intolerable in company: alone perfectly all right: & lets me sing even though he finds I distort rhythms, & modulates wildly: but he is beautifully impressed by my "range" & wants me to write gay books of musical history. He thinks all conductors very bad and superfluous. I must go to breakfast.

9.30 a.m. Your mother is really very very nice. She thinks we know each other much better & has *had* to tell the Fribourgs about "us.". An old acquaintance of mine of war days, Miss Hayes³³⁹ after taking a photograph of me & promising official 'protection' when in the Customs for the British authorities with whom she is connected, explained that she has been in love since the age of 18 with a married man, & there is no hope. 30 years of unhappy love. I "had" to tell her. The Brices naturally want to see "a lot" of us in New York. I don't mind him. He is a professional handsome cad of the old fashioned fortune hunting kind, & naturally knows Nicky de G.³⁴⁰ well. She is unspeakable. They are to be avoided at all costs certainly by you – I may have to have a drink with them some day,

³³⁹ Barbara Hayes (1910–86), head of the Speaker's Section of the British Library of Information, New York, from 1941.

³⁴⁰ Nicolas ('Nicky') Louis Alexandre de Gunzburg (1904–81), magazine editor.

but may be ‘not even’ as you say. Last night I dined in the Veranda Grill with Mrs Minna Curtiss,³⁴¹ who wrote me a note saying she knew all my friends, had translated Proust’s letters etc – a formidable widowed Jewish lady with one eminent tante and a brother (Lincoln Kirstein³⁴² who runs the N.Y. City Ballet) & another who has bought “The Nation”.³⁴³ A good sort, no good to me. A rich patroness of hommes de lettres in Paris. She has lent me 20 dollars as I was too shy to ask your mother, though she kept offering. She also offered to pay her share of the telephone call which I grandly waved aside in my new capacity as a generous grand seigneur unaware of money & incapable of counting change. My tips have evidently been adequate for attention shown. The process of my ruin is being accomplished fast.

11 a.m. I am sitting in the Cocktail Bar waiting for passport control. Your mother is sorry to have to get off the beautiful, comfortable, and familiar cosy boat. I quite agree. I’ve done some, but not enough, work & am ready to go on a huge cruise in the sun with you & do some more. I am feeling in a silly but unbelievably ‘affectionate’ mood – I don’t think it is possible to miss another human being more: even the tearful image of my mama is expelled. Simon is not on board. I shall write daily because there is nothing else I can do. I am done for. Never was there a longer, more climactic pre honeymoon. My darling I love you. Oh I must stop.

Isaiah.

³⁴¹ Mina [sic] Curtiss (1896–1985) née Kirstein, widow of Henry Tomlinson Curtiss; author, editor, translator, university English teacher (Smith College).

³⁴² Lincoln Edward Kirstein (1907–96), co-founder of the NYC Ballet.

³⁴³ George Kirstein (1909–1986), publisher and principal owner of *The Nation* 1955–65.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

TO ALINE HALBAN

9 November 1955 [*telegram*]

New York

INDESCRIBABLY MOVED EXCITED YOUR LETTER WRITING DETAILED DAILY REPORTS INWARD AND OUTWARD EVENTS REACHING HOTEL WINDEMERE EAST 1642 EAST 56 STREET CHICAGO FRIDAY MISS YOU APPALLINGLY AT ONCE MISERABLE AND INCREDIBLY HAPPY TREES SEND LOVE I DO

TO ALINE HALBAN

6 p.m. Wednesday [9 November 1955; *manuscript*]

Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts

My darling Aline

I am about to go in & lecture to an enormous audience. I am trembling with all my old anxiety & *also* don't care: I am too happy.

(midnight)

There was a tap on the door, I went to dinner with the local professors. Provincial, comical, they are incredibly sweet & kind & genuine. I keep remembering this each time I come: all the generalizations about Americans are blown up by these brave & touching mediocrities. Anyway I dined & lectured. And answered questions & went to a little party in the Prof. of Literatures little room. To-morrow I lecture again. I love you so terribly that your image used suddenly to appear before me in the middle of the lecture: I had to emit the words with terrible effort & not suddenly "go off" to my own Nijni Novgorod.³⁴⁴ Talking of which Liliane

³⁴⁴ The Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod is 264 miles east of Moscow and a metaphor for distant exile.

(according to Ronnie who is utterly trustworthy on this & cannot invent) is *very* against me & says disagreeable things. The mixture of motives I can well analyse: so *that* is who Hans's "warning" is probably about – & the "not in society" is a "blind". I really could not care less. She probably preyed on your mother a little – or perhaps not – she wd have told you? What I am deeply moved by is that my letter to you yesterday (written on the Q. Elizabeth) is identical with yours to me about the contrast between the reality of our lives together & the cardboard nature of the rest. Only that you are 1000 times more genuine than I, and your words are less inflated, & my "lyricism" sometimes defeats itself for all the reality of what I feel. I spoke to Mrs Frankfurter on the telephone to-day, she said how excited she was etc. & cd I come to see her (she is flat on her back)³⁴⁵ alone for 30 minutes & then with you. I said yes. She is v. special. Arthur Schlesinger³⁴⁶ inquired tenderly after you: & J. Alsop sent a huge cable of congratulations. I arrived late in New York: no special treatment in Customs: one English Steward rather rude to me – "Get out of the way" – then embarrassed when I said "are you really using these words to *me*?" – I prefer American boorishness, more animal & spontaneous. At the Trees Marietta: nothing to describe. I then visited the Backers:³⁴⁷ Evie deathly pale, very ill I think; full of compliments about you – usual stuff on Hans – George full of Harriman,³⁴⁸ & his own political role – though he finds all this tedious etc. – obviously delighted to be near a possible throne. Dinner with

³⁴⁵ Marion Frankfurter (1890–1975) suffered from depression and arthritis, and was confined to her bed for the last 20 years of her life.

³⁴⁶ Arthur Meier Schlesinger, Jr (1917–2007), writer, academic and commentator. See A 629.

³⁴⁷ 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.

³⁴⁸ (William) Averell Harriman (1891–1986), US politician, businessman and diplomat, heir to a railroad fortune, held numerous appointments under Democrat administrations from Roosevelt to Johnson; US ambassador to the USSR 1943–6, to Great Britain April–October 1946

Backers, Behrman, Nin³⁴⁹ (over-enthusiastic inquiries about you & me) Mrs Paley³⁵⁰ now married to a worthless Jewish stockbroker called Hershorn – & Mrs Selznick:³⁵¹ obviously “my” set. Also an amateur called Lieberson,³⁵² a witty neurotic musical ‘*je suis partout*’³⁵³ – adored by Marietta: rather too competitive with me. I really despised myself: when forced to listen to the rival talker I felt frustrated: when I talked myself, happy; his stories were genuinely funny: he was vulgar but quite a decent fellow: John Fosterish but Jewish & musical; I wondered whether I really could be so vulgar as to *mind* not being able to take part in the jolly repartee which they liked, the funny stories – & preferring little monologues of my own: I wondered whether, if I did not have enough inner dignity & peace not to mind being slightly snubbed by Mr Lieberson who was aggressive & determined not to be outshone by the visiting guest of honour – whether if I cd mind such nonsense for a moment – whether I was – it sounds ridiculous by now at all ‘worthy’ of you. Mr L., he discovered that I was not a rival really, but ready to compromise & let him shine, became terribly affable: Ronnie & his half brother Beatty³⁵⁴ were too much out of it in this

³⁴⁹ Margaret Dorothy (‘Nin’) Ryan (1901–95) née Kahn, daughter of the banker and philanthropist Otto Kahn, and herself a keen patron of the arts; married, 1928, John Barry Ryan (1900–66); ‘She loved the arts (but especially music) [...]; nothing of cultural value was alien to her’ (IB, *Independent*, 10 February 1995, 16).

³⁵⁰ Dorothy Hart Hirshon [*siz*] (1908–98) née Hart, previously married to John Randolph Hearst and William S. Paley, married the stockbroker Walter Hirshon in 1953.

³⁵¹ Presumably theatre producer Irene Gladys Selznick (1907–90) née Mayer, wife of film producer David O. Selznick.

³⁵² Goddard Lieberson (1911–77), President of Columbia Records 1956–71, 1973–5; composer and influential music executive, prominent in introducing the long-playing record and original-cast recordings of musicals, and in fostering the recording of classical music, including the complete operas of leading operatic composers; born in England.

³⁵³ ‘I am everywhere.’

³⁵⁴ David Field Beatty (1905–72), 2nd Earl Beatty, son of Admiral of the Fleet David Richard Beatty, 1st Earl Beatty, who married Ethel Newcomb Tree née Field, formerly the wife of Arthur Magie Tree, Ronnie Tree’s father.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1946–1960

jolly Jewish company: Even Nin fitted better, she was enjoying herself reluctantly. Ronnie reported seeing H. in Venice with 2 ladies, neither attractive. In the morning I spoke to Abe. He asked me to lunch. Cabled to you & left for Holyoke. So I shall go on. I am ridiculously, absurdly in love – it is too much – your letter I carry like a talisman – nobody shall see it. I am utterly exhausted by 8 hours performing.

Isaiah

TO ALINE HALBAN

Saturday [12 November 1955; *manuscript*]

Hotel Windermere East
1642 East 56th Street, Chicago, 37, Ill.

My darling,

I arrived last night after an infinitely weary journey by train – the hotel is adequate: the usual noisy double bedroom + bathroom, slow room service, soft toast, eggs without egg cups, conventions; I think about only one subject: and when I say that I count the days & hours it *is* so much more agonizingly than when I am in London and you in Paris or Mègeve. I have not been to the philosophy department yet: there are said to be letters there: I cannot go, for my suits are in my luggage (Railway Express: unpunctual: not here) & the suit – the only one I have is being pressed – & I am without it, in a dressing gown (quite a decent one) but (I fear) in long pants – in a state of acute solitude. Nor will the attentions if any, of the local people dispel this for once: as well I know. It is one thing to be solitary in general: then one can distract oneself in almost any company: another altogether to be made miserable by a specific absence: which has never never never happened to me before in my life. Waiting for Patricia never made me lonely: only nervously wrought up & slightly mad: If I *am* to wait for you, it might as well be in this artificial vacuum full of kindly & not quite human faces. You can perfectly well stay here: it is adequate: not a Negro hotel surrounded by gangster cars at all: the Irish maid who has just

MORE ENLIGHTENING

talked to me for half an hour is quite funny about the rich widows who live here, complain all day & play *poker*: the average sums won & lost vary between 50 & 500 dollars a day. I've seen "nobody" yet but go to (a splendid) *Rigoletto* alone to-night. To-morrow I go to a cocktail party to meet "the Faculty": then Joe Alsop arrives for the evening & for Monday: no work. First Class: Tuesday. First lecture: Thursday. I feel too little nervousness. Yet much is expected of me: the official foundation which has invited me is apparently quite important: & there *is* a fuss about whether I am to wear a dinner jacket while lecturing or not. Chicago is, on the whole, hideous. I mean that the sky scrapers are splendid: but as *soon* as you leave them & enter "The Loop" – the peculiar squalor of American streets – the run down "grills" & "bars" and shambling dehumanised looking customers begins – the dirty street corners, the brutal shabbiness and derelictness, quite different from the gentle, depressed, ugly appearance of those long terrible streets in London – Islington – the Holloway Road – or those streets west of Victoria down which we once drove after Greenwich – do you remember – in December 1954 – after which I fell ill, & well worth it too. The rooms are actually too hot even for me. I feel duller & duller: my letters will not recapture the tension and violent pressure of 1953 – I am afraid I am too happy – it really was too wonderful when the little schoolmistress, assistant professor at Holyoke – Miss Schuck³⁵⁵ I think – like a caricature female academic – small, sharp nosed, pedantic, sexually repressed & full of pedantic provincial angular miseries, who reads Auden & cd hardly speak to me for respect, because A. seems to have dedicated a beautiful poem to me³⁵⁶ (she showed it to me. I never saw it before) said: "is it true what we heard – that you *have a fiancée*? Oh, we did hope, you'd bring her too! Oh we did, you know!" – at *Holyoke!* Where nobody – remote girls' College – how

³⁵⁵ Victoria Schuck (1909–99), political scientist at Mount Holyoke College 1940–77.

³⁵⁶ 'Lakes' ('*Bucolics*' IV), *The Shield Of Achilles* (London/NY, 1955), 20–2.

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did they know? Lady Ogilvy³⁵⁷ of St. Anne's College, had visited: she "told them all about it". Jenifer's Principal – here in Chicago, the Asst. prof. of philosophy has *just* come in to see me, trouserless & all: he said "have [you] a picture of your *fiancée*? I cd see'. oh they *are* sweet – they *are* disarming, I can't talk to them, I long to see you & more than to see – I love you violently, terribly, with a gigantic emotion which has transformed everything – oh come here as soon as you can – I'll go on writing – & now go to look for your letters. My darling darling darling –

Isaiah

TO ALINE HALBAN

Sunday [13 November 1955; *manuscript*]

Windermere Hotel East
East 56th str., Chicago, Ill.

My darling,

Another day. I am in exile, I really am here. I love you to such a degree as can scarcely have been approached even in the most violent moments of the critical wonderful year 1954. Chicago is terrible & I hesitate to ask you here – perhaps I can get away earlier, yet you might like to survey the horrors: and there wd be more privacy here than in N.Y., & no friends. Last night I had a quite good Rigoletto, & to-day lunched with a smart Columbia Records executive called Lieberson married to Zorina the dancer.³⁵⁸ She quite nice but still a German. Danish German, but German: wrong for Jews to marry I am sure. Then I went to a Faculty Party: 200 "Dons" + wives. Worse than Oxford: a kind of endless Nuffield. Some civilized Germans: at best as good as Walzer.³⁵⁹ I see why

³⁵⁷ Mary Ogilvie (1900–90) née Macaulay, m. 1922 Frederick Wolff Ogilvie, Kt 1942; Principal, St Anne's, 1953–66.

³⁵⁸ Vera Zorina (1917–2003) née Eva Brigitta Hartwig, Norwegian ballerina, choreographer and actress; Goddard Lieberson was her 2nd husband 1946–77.

³⁵⁹ Presumably Richard Rudolf Walzer (1902–75), Oriel (senior lecturer, Arabic and Greek Philosophy, 1950–60).

MORE ENLIGHTENING

d'Entreves liked it: they are easily overawed by culture and are intellectually not formidable. All wildly kind, polite etc – their manners are the best possible: and the depression fantastic. They are *all* coming to my lectures, classes etc. which terrifies me. In the evening Joe Alsop loyally came from Washington: *very* enthusiastic about 'us' of course. Adores you, hates Hans: he was offered a job in Paris: only then you announced you cd not leave Oxford because of me. He was not displeased: on the contrary snobbishly delighted to make room for someone as eminent as me (!) – flattered in fact. It is a charming version and I shall try to persuade Joe to support it. He wondered if you wd stay with him & I at the Harcourts, or you with the H. & I with him, or what, I left it vague. Betty might well want some such arrangement. I must buy airmail paper: I *hate* this green stuff. I am oppressed by Chicago: a nightmare of skyscraper + Broadway like streets, + ghastly slums: my suburb is 12 miles from 'Downtown' – one goes by taxi (your father wd not have approved – 3 dollars each journey) or by *railway*. The hotel is full of Jewish widows who crack jokes with the lift attendants. But when I saw a crowd of *very* ghettoish Jews outside an Israeli film at some cinema, I was moved. I don't know why the fact that the Ambassador hotel is in East Goethe street should annoy me, but it does. I have cold, no headache, but feel derelict and abandoned. And yet full of inner happiness & a serenity I've never known before. I shall never come here again: New York gains fantastically by comparison: it is cosy, civilized, elegant, full of light compared with this: *nothing* is of good quality: all the faces are common, the Jews alone are tolerable. Oh Aline my darling don't let me wait too long: I really will work hard, but like someone who has taken a vow which is to be fulfilled before the reward: Tonight I feel a particular attack of nostalgia & am invaded by images & cannot go on at all. I cannot talk about you – but I long to do it: so I talk to the few people I can – not a *very* *Kosher* sweet couple called the Burton

Dreben's³⁶⁰ – who were in Oxford – but to Mrs Zorina for example, about whether, when she divorced Balanchine,³⁶¹ she disliked the way in which [he] used to get irritated or not; thinking that I *like* your expressions of frustration & even fury – & the tears – & never never never feel enraged with you even when you say one of the unforgivable things which you sometimes inject. As I have abandoned the last obstacle: in these hothouses I wear *short* pants – I am exquisitely dressed amid hideous barbarism & feel English. Except when Mme Riabushinskaya³⁶² – the Russian lecturer – was introduced; & in a moment of relief I stopped talking nonsense to the Americans & slid into easy Russian chat at last. And oh the relief Joe – the heavy egocentric aggressive Joe – was, after the petit-bourgeois nervous academic antheap of Chicago University (Div. of Humanities) – Joe who *is* one of us, who understands, (or nearly) what one says, I long to run away: it is all as unMason Hammond³⁶³ as possible. Please write: doesn't matter what: the handwriting has all & more than all its old violent electric effect: I too am settled for life: my mother wrote such a nice letter about you – in Russian – I'll send you a translation. I'll never read your letters on the campus – I am filled with light, Je te baise.

Isaiah.

³⁶⁰ Burton Spencer Dreben (1927–99), US philosopher and mathematical logician; on advice from IB he studied under J. L. Austin when a Fulbright Fellow at Magdalen 1950–1; Junior Research Fellow, Harvard, 1952–5; instructor, Chicago, 1955; assistant professor of philosophy, Harvard, 1956–61, professor 1961–73, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences 1973–5, Chair of the Society of Fellows 1976–90, Edgar Pierce Professor of Philosophy 1981–90. His (1st) wife was Raya Spiegel Dreben (b. 1927) née Spiegel, instructor, Chicago Law School, 1955–6.

³⁶¹ George Balanchine (1904–83) né Georgi Melitinovich Balanchivadze, Russian-born US ballet dancer and choreographer credited with being the primary architect of American classical ballet; 1st husband of Goddard Lieberson 1938–46.

³⁶² Tatiana Mikhailovna Ryabushinska (1917–2000), Russian American baller-ina and choreographer.

³⁶³ Mason Hammond (1903–2002), Pope Professor of the Latin Language and Literature, Harvard, 1950–73.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

Last thing in the evening – first thing in the morning – always always – I cannot know a second’s happiness without you – I feel now like someone standing all night in rain, waiting.

TO ALINE HALBAN

15 November 1955 [*manuscript*]

Hotel Windermere East, East 56th Street Chicago, Ill.

Darling Aline,

I cannot stop writing. I agree, to write from ‘politeness’ wd be terrible. I’ve just received your letter about Philippe³⁶⁴ arriving alone: surely this will delight you? I am delighted about the piece of furniture you’ve bought. I agree, the earlier the better. I am fussing about my class this afternoon (I am not a good classholder) & my lectures later: two days ago Joe Alsop arrived, & left yesterday; he absolutely exhausts me: not only the loud laugh and the flow of gloomy talk, but the monstrous exposition of mechanical data about war & peace, & armaments, and Vietnamese strategy and the Pentagon etc. etc. I physically cannot listen: it is worse than Dr J Cohn – I struggle for air – he notices – gets very angry as I do when a pupil is not listening – & he has then to restore our relations by congratulating me again on “you” etc. – he “plans” to “give us a dinner” in Washington – if I am to lecture there too to *beau monde*, that will involve a dinner with Mr & Mrs Bliss³⁶⁵ – fantastic Victorian plutocracy + ‘culture’ – you will enjoy it I think. Chicago is dreadful, & I am not thinking about it at all. I am thinking only about you; you & me; me & you. The images fall like

³⁶⁴ Presumably Aline’s elder brother Philippe Georges de Gunzbourg (1904–86 86), a hero of the French Resistance.

³⁶⁵ Robert Woods Bliss (1875–1962), diplomat, and his wife Mildred (1875–1969) née Barnes, one of the leading Washington hostesses; the Blisses, both art collectors, gave their house Dumbarton Oaks to Harvard University in 1940.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1946–1960

hailstones, & I cannot bear it: nothing else exists, I am in love not only with you but with everything to do with you – not only the physical symptoms – handwriting (which excites me worse than ever. If you have nothing to write, send me only an envelope) echoes of voices etc but your plans, your thoughts about James (or anybody) you name, your photograph (immoderately) the idea that you exist, your fingertips, indeed as I am writing my condition is unenviable – horrible as this town is – please come here, unless I *can* get away: write me how early you can fly: & about the Q. Mary cabins; & I'll act. Oh dear. There is a hideous railway bridge not far, supported by thick pillars very like those of a mediaeval French city – as I did not write yesterday, too exhausted by Alsop (he is maddeningly boring – but also not; & a friend & a gentleman; & one of us in some queer way I shall write again to-day. My solitude is absolute, rare and unexpectedly delightful: only because you exist.

Isaiah.



MORE ENLIGHTENING

TO ALINE HALBAN

16 November 1955 [*manuscript*]

Hotel Windermere East
East 56th Street, Chicago

My darling, my *super*-darling (to borrow Peter's, no Philip's famous idiom)

My darling, my darling, it really *is* fantastic: the constant wave of feeling. Yes, no doubt, we shall get through it, but it is the most appalling ordeal: I think about you, & see you with such appalling intensity all day that I scarcely recognize myself: I am not miserable because I am happy: otherwise I should be in torture: I cannot cannot wait: when, please say when, are you to fly? (if you decided to take a ship I shd endure it – must you fly?) 8th? 9th? I shall be “ready” by then I think: & perhaps had better fly to N.Y. myself & go straight to the Hotel Carlyle. Or it might be funny to be here: when I really know nobody & never will. Nobody now & nobody will ever quite believe this. The few professors I have met professionally say “I suppose *everyone* is after you; you are all booked up; it will be impossible to get a-hold of you ...” which is the situation in Harvard, Bryn Mawr etc. – here the opposite. Ronnie's friends, if he *did* tell them, have not stirred. Adlai Stevenson³⁶⁶ to whom Schlesinger has written is too busy announcing his candidature. For almost the first time in I don't know how many years, I am left alone & can work, & feel delighted – I daresay I shd complain after 3 months of this, but I cling to my freedom with relief: my one friend is Prof. Marschak³⁶⁷ of Kieff

³⁶⁶ Adlai Ewing Stevenson (1900–65), US Democrat politician; governor, Illinois, 1949–53, presidential candidate 1952, 1956.

³⁶⁷ Jacob Marschak (1898–1977) studied at the Kiev Institute of Economics and the University of Hedelberg. He was Chichele Lecturer in Economics at All Souls, 1933–5, Reader in Statistics and Director of the Institute of Statistics, Oxford, 1935–9, Professor of Economics, New School for Social Research, New York, 1939–42, and Director, Cowles Foundation for Research in

[Kiev] & Heidel-berg and I cannot bring myself to telephone him & propose myself. I sit in the hotel bedroom, look at books & notes, walk the hideous but doubtless healthy 15 minutes walk between here & the university and otherwise live an [*sic*] genuine life of a hermit – I never thought I could like it, & I don't in a sense: but I am working peacefully in an American hotel bedroom – it is so characterless, so impersonal – it does not matter what one does, what one inflicts on it – & go off my head when I think of how much I want to be with you forever & ever – never again to be separated – yesterday, I wrote you a miserable short letter; I was exhausted by Alsop & waiting to give my first 'class' as opposed to the Alexander White Lecture – the coloratura performance – of tomorrow.³⁶⁸ There are to be four of these – & my chance of being offered a job here probably depends on that. I am sure they think I'd love to stay. I shall be very offended if I am not invited – after all Franks & Austin were. The 'Class' was a great success – the formidable Aristotelian professor who is supposed to be "against" me, cooed like a dove. I was physically patted on the back by two colleagues who said "vurry stimulating. That was a fine Class. You sure did set us thinking. The students are terribly excited about you – I never saw that bastard McKeown (the "enemy") so meek – you go & give it 'em again' etc. They are sweet & intolerable. (boasting: just like Hans) I have, typically, left the indispensable lecture notes for my opening lecture in London in Oxford & will have to do the whole thing again. The Glysennid³⁶⁹ is working – wait! French toast is a mistake perhaps – the telephone bell rang – Room A29 is booked wd I take A32? Just as nice, nicer etc. – no: I am *used* to A29, I have *always* been on it – I *must* have it. Very well, they wd *trace* the passenger travelling in A29 & *offer* him A32 – wd I *pay* the person to person charges? Yes yes yes. So there we are. You are

Economics, Chicago, 1943–8, remaining in Chicago until 1955, when he moved to Yale with the Cowles Commission (as it was then renamed).

³⁶⁸ IB delivered four Alexander White Lectures in Chicago on 'The Romantic Revolution in Philosophy' on 17 and 21 November and 1 and 8 December 1955, and held classes on 15, 22 and 29 November and 6 December.

³⁶⁹ A laxative.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

sure about A29? There is no time to look at a plan. It must all be settled to-day: but your mother's agent may have to change it all, I suppose – I see the scene in Kilburn easily: & am jealous. That they shd see you & I not – poor Bill, I like him so much & understand him so surprisingly well, particularly when he becomes resentful about smart persons he does not happen to know. *He* wd be maddened by such 'neglect' in Chicago as I am so stoically enduring: that delights me too. As for Philippe, yes of course; he is not against or for; I am glad that he at least bestirred himself in Paris – he loves you; he hated Hans; unlike Liliane he is not moved by personal bitterness – but the subject bores him as much as Bill & for the same reasons; whereas Margot & I had a social aspect which I see cd fascinate him a little – unexpected juxtaposition – a disinterested chemical combination – anyway. You will probably (I say fiercely) have enjoyed yourself greatly in Paris – and think little about me in the succession of familiar sights and faces & places – will you see Alix? Liliane (tell her not to be so false) Susan Mary? I shall enclose her letter with this one – but tell me when you are coming – I am unable to think of anything else – I love you beyond life, I admire you & adore you and think you nobler, more beautiful, more responsive to the lightest tremor physical, emotional, intellectual, incompatible, untouchable, & with all this of infinite tendresse, divine charm, a lucid and firm brain, unerring taste, responsiveness – what more what more do you want? I cannot go on writing: I am overcome by emotion – principally physical: your voice, your knees; how can I work, think, telephone for a typist in *this* condition? I cannot remember my letters from Cortona – only that I was acutely miserable ill with love, & not really filled by much concrete hope. I felt sure of your feeling: but I suppose (I cannot really remember) I thought that in the course of time, against vast obstacles, it wd weaken, or you wd murder it somewhat: I knew *I* was done for; I wondered – dared not hope, that you were. Whatever I wrote was very true: I wrote, like now, because I could not keep myself: the year 1954 was a great year of truth and learning things by the hardest possible method. I love the Washington version – our quiet idyll, unknown to either, till it was

time for Hans to go to Paris, & then you said, ‘no, I cannot’ – technically correct, but oh how false in essence. I must wash, shave, & go to have my solitary lunch: you wd be quite proud of my dignified isolation. I shall enjoy saying in future years – Chicago? No, I met nobody there: I was there for a month – no – I don’t know him/them/ – I was at the University & worked quite hard ... Even this is too self conscious. And nobody will believe it. I ought to return to work: my lecture is hideously unprepared, & I cannot: your image literally floats before me and I cannot & will not leave it – this separation has induced in me a more violent desire, far more vehement & passionate & yet clear-eyed love – which delights in every aspect and smaller detail of what it loves – than even Hans in his lunatic moments of jealousy. Your mother tried to say that awful as his rages were, & nasty as he was to her & Errica – yet he was *au fond* a kindly man. I did not disagree. But I do not believe it. Hitler loved animals & children, quite genuinely I think, Goering³⁷⁰ was devoted to his wife. But there is a terrible streak which is not just bad temper or selfishness: but a view of the world as consisting of masters & slaves: people above & people below: where the central question is as Marx & Lenin (about as nice as Hans – Marx *very* good father) thought “who whom?”³⁷¹ ‘eat or be eaten, beat or be beaten’ – & the central reality is therefore power – where the happiness of the master is to dominate & the happiness of slaves is to be dominated, & everyone is both at once. This picture of the world (which Alix secretly accepts: & Miriam too:) I did not expound to your mama: but in it there is little room for kindness, except of the gruff slave-to-slave, & master-to-slave type. No, you will not ruin me intellectually: not undermine me. All I need to go on is time to read books: & a few specialists to talk to for long stretches each: & there is *nothing* I

³⁷⁰ Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring (1893–1946), senior Nazi under Hitler.

³⁷¹ Lenin’s phrase (“Who will get ahead of whom?”): V. I. Lenin, ‘The New Economic Policy and the Tasks of the Political Education Departments’, report to the Second All-Russia Congress of Political Education Departments, 17 October 1921, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1958–65) xlv 161. The shortened form is Trotsky’s.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

cannot talk to you about. You are all I love admire respect adore: all my life I have longed for it: & it is a pure miracle that I may really, at last, obtain it: I knew this when I saw you in early years in Oxford; you were then, you are now, perfect in my eyes: yes you may nag or say disagreeable things: it does not alter the fundamental image: oh Aline my darling Aline, I cannot be away from you, I had much much rather be dead than without you. I am filled with black rage when I think that Hans – of all people – *dared* raise his voice against you, whether you said – “tu m’irrites”³⁷² – I cd crush him like a beetle – my darling (I go on repeating; do not reproach me or think me in too exalté or hysterical a mood; it is only an overflowing of deep & constant feeling:) Come as soon as you can; I was going to cable to ask you to telephone – but better not: it upsets one: & we have marvellous years before us.

Good night.

I.

P.S. Je t’aime, oh mon ange, ange plein de douceur, je baise tes doigts, ton ..., je ne peux plus –³⁷³

TO ALINE HALBAN

17 November 1955 [sent later; *manuscript*]

Hotels Windermere, Chicago 37

Darling Aline,

This just to show you the beauty of our paper – your letter has just arrived – about dinner with the Deakins etc. – how *could* you think that I didn’t write you on Wednesday? I *must* have done: I must I must – I am miserable & tormented in these hideous and disgusting surroundings – we must *not* be parted – yes, for 30 years your life will be full of bliss: mine will not, for I shall be tortured

³⁷² ‘You irritate me.’

³⁷³ ‘I love you, oh my angel, angel full of sweetness, I kiss your fingers, your ..., I can’t go on –’.

with jealousy whenever anyone likes you too much, indignation when they do not. A – la *Gelosia!*³⁷⁴ All this talk, innocent, sweet, delightful in your letter about Freddie, Bill, Goronwy, how *dare* they see you when I do not. This morning I woke up *racked* with longing – I hope you do not suffer as much. As to Rees – he was the most celebrated gamin – the Oxford Don Juan – of the 30ies. (Mrs Ayer was v. bitter about “having trouble” with him; Freddie nearly called him out.) In those days young, bright, gay, with an irresistibly sexually attractive voice, penniless, a vagabond & a rogue, he was ‘discovered’ by Sparrow who I believe was in love with him; cultivated by Maurice; knocked about in Berlin & Manchester – was my great friend: – after the war he did try to make me Warden of All Souls – but I now see him with difficulty. He gets drunk too easily, & then becomes aggressive, rude, inferiority ridden – says unforgivable things, drinks with *anybody* – Bill, Footman,³⁷⁵ Zaehner;³⁷⁶ was clever enough to marry a ‘lower middle class’ wife who keeps him in order; is of course terribly disapproved of in Wales where they think him an adventurer who’s got too high; is full of warmth, charm, Welsh celtic appetites, betrays his wife a little squalidly in London (borrows flats & shocks the servants by bringing in girls from outside) – I really like him v. much when sober: *he* resents my hatred of his drunkenness & squalor – & doesn’t hate Sparrow at all. But he is a liar and when drunk says anything (in this case not being reelected to a Fellowship): so he *nearly* asked you about my habits – he is, as a human being, nicer than Sasch: made of weak tissue paper but vis

³⁷⁴ ‘Ah – Jealousy!’ Probably not a reference to the comedy *La gelosia* by Anton Francesco Grazzini.

³⁷⁵ Presumably novelist and historian of the Russian Revolution David Footman (1895–1983), Levant Consular Service 1919–29, Foreign Office 1935–53, fellow, St Antony’s, 1953–63, whose *The Primrose Path: A Biography of Ferdinand Lassalle* (London, 1946) IB had reviewed on the Third Programme in 1946.

³⁷⁶ Robert Charles Zaehner (1913–74), orientalist and intelligence officer; acting counsellor, British Embassy, Tehran, 1943–7, 1951–2; Spalding Prof. of Eastern Religions and Ethics, Oxford, and fellow, All Souls, 1952–74.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

a vis you I see him as a pure ape: & I suppose still, with his white hair, not unattractive in a Boothby-ish way. I was vaguely upset by your letter, (are you sure you weren't playing – *don't* I am alone & defenceless) upset & violently, physically precipitated into wanting to be with you this minute: must you wait till even the 8th or 9th? I *won't* go & stay in Wales, Aberystwyth with the Reeses – let Freddie, let Zaehner, let Zuckerman, let Annan, – I am burning with the most idiotic, the most baseless jealousy that you shd even have looked at him (don't reproach me): of course I am being silly (“are you mad?”) but I am lecturing to-night before some eminent & critical professors (they are regrettably good here) & am in “a state”. My love for you has reached even absurder heights – I must stop being idiotic. Have you read *Death of the Heart* by Eliz. Bowen? of which Goronwy is the villain?³⁷⁷ oh my absurd, my Hans-like nature! forget all that I have said – I am crying now, but I shall soon stop. Darling Aline I love you so desperately, forgive me.

No no! I shall love you forever & ever – it is the rock on which *my* life is built – will *you* not wander one day, vaguely, sweetly, into some cave Ondine-like – where village bravos will await you? I pray to you morning & evening. I worship you. I've never been so happy & so unhappy. I wrote you to Paris yesterday: cabin 27 does not connect with 29, & is held by Liverpool: but they will try to get it.

³⁷⁷ Elizabeth Dorothea Cole Bowen (1899–1973), novelist, chatelaine of her ancestral home, Bowen's Court. In her *The Death of the Heart* (London 1938), the loathsome Eddie (no surname) is openly and closely based on Goronwy Rees (who threatened to sue), including his tendency to burst into tears.

TO ALINE HALBAN

27 [sc. 17] November [1955; sent later; *manuscript*]

Darling, my darling,

1 hour later. I have calmed down. The lecture may not be an utter failure. I am still enclosing the original – on the ground of not suppressing anything. I live too precariously poised on an edge: & I think about you almost too continuously and I love you as I never knew one could feel, & so & so as I sit in this terrible room & think of Oxford & amorous drunkards and how on edge & full of sensibility & electric reactivity you too must be – I go off my head a little. That is all. My cup is overflowing with feeling – I can control it, I can think about you with such adoration and Guebre-like sense of one-ness – an almost incestuous love – that this keeps me going. Jealousy, like Mrs Sieff³⁷⁸ & Mr Weisgal³⁷⁹ etc, is *idiotic*. But I almost understand poor Hans, poor Billa; I always did. One feels such feelings not because one has reason – even ever so slight – but because one is in such a state of tautness & imagination plays so violently inside one – one has no contact with reality – one grows tenser & tenser – anything touches one off. You know such states surely? don't tell me about other men until you see me, until we are properly together – and you cd accuse me (I love you insanely) of already parting from you in my thoughts & planning my life on the boat or in London or New York without you – 17th to-day – another 3 weeks at least – must it be so? this is much more than Mégève. I was expecting Freddie on the 20th, but earlier may be better: I'll write him. Is it so wrong to feel proud of you? & to feel oneself superior to the broken roués of 20 years ago? Do go

³⁷⁸ Presumably Lois Mae Sieff (1923–2018) née Ross, m. 1952 2ndly Joseph Edward ("Teddy") Sieff.

³⁷⁹ Meyer Wolf Weisgal (1894–1977), Polish-born Zionist who lived, from 1905, in the US, where he worked as a journalist, editor, impresario and fundraiser; Chaim Weizmann's personal representative there 1940–9; Chairman, Executive Council, Weizmann Institute of Science, 1949–66, President 1966–9, Chancellor 1970–7.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

on writing – all that comes – men, women, Billa & all – & ignore this letter – it is much saner than the other one, but still not as beautifully tranquil as in fact I feel. It is a necessity for me to write you everything. Je t'embrasse.

I.

You have no vices, no weaknesses, only noble beauty inner & outer – I shall write a worthy description of you one day.

TO ALINE HALBAN IN PARIS

[rec'd 18 November 1955] [*telegram*]

Chicago

INCONCEIVABLE INTENSITY FEELING IF YOU MADE PERSONAL CALL FRIDAY OR SATURDAY OR ANY DAY BEFORE NINE AM OR AFTER FOUR PM YOUR TIME GREATEST JOY BUT REALLY NOT IF INCONVENIENT PARTING UNBELIEVABLY PAINFUL I ADORE YOU TOO MUCH = I BERLIN

TO ALINE HALBAN

[rec'd 18 November 1955] [*telegram*]

Chicago

MAY WELL TELEPHONE YOU MYSELF SATURDAY AFTER MIDNIGHT YOUR TIME = WINDEMERE EAST CHICAGO.

TO ALINE HALBAN

18 November 1955 [*manuscript*]

Hotel Windermere East, East 56th Str., Chicago, Ill.

My darling, my angel,

I love you. I am able to think of nothing else in every tone & mood. Yesterday I had a queer & awful day. It was the day of my first lecture & that always undoes me totally. Then I've been in absolute solitude for 48 hours & spoke only to the hotel servants: of course this is wonderful & I could work & sleep (not much: light: sound: v. like the flat: I *must* get used to it) but long hours without human beings destroy me in the end: & drive me into states of misery. So what with this Prof. Hayek,³⁸⁰ a man I much respect (though Stuart doesn't) – a most intelligent and civilized Viennese *savant* asked me to lunch. Your letter then arrived, about dinner with the Deakins, Freddie, Goronwy Rees etc. & in my then ‘funny’ state, upset me. Not deeply but still: only because I was suddenly gripped (most tiresome) by the most fearful jealousy: Goronwy – the gentle ape, the man of straw, the worthless professional lover of Rosamond Lehmann,³⁸¹ my dear old friend, whom I am genuinely fond of but cannot respect any longer – that you should even be in a room with him – like Nabokov, like Freddie, I tried to liberate myself from these extraordinary snakes which kept twisting themselves round me, now tight now looser – *that* is what the sensation is like – Laocoon is a very good example of a man strangled by *jealousy*³⁸² – & then sat down & wrote a letter.

³⁸⁰ Friedrich August von Hayek (1899–1992), Austrian-born British economist; Tooke Prof. of Economic Science and Statistics, LSE, 1931–50; prof. of social and moral science, Chicago, 1950–62. A 169/2.

³⁸¹ Rosamond Nina Lehmann (1901–90), novelist; married Wogan Philipps 1928 (divorced 1944); began an affair with Goronwy Rees in September 1936, and they then lived together until Rees married in 1940.

³⁸² Because, in one version of the myth of the Trojan priest Laocoön, Apollo sent two sea serpents to strangle him and his two sons in punishment for sleeping with his (Laocoön's) wife in front of a statue of the god.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

Very silly it was. Not awful, not mad, but idiotic. I nearly sent it: then I couldn't, it might annoy you. So I wrote another – but wait I lunched with Hayek first – he was charming but I could not listen to a word – I wrote another “covering” letter & decided to send both off to Oxford. Wisely I didn't. I still have them, sealed in an envelope like those unsent letters of the ‘black weeks’ of 1954. Indeed I went through some of the pangs of that year, for no reason. And I knew there was no reason – I knew I knew – but I thought of Sasha, & suffered. I sank to a really low ebb. Then I dressed, washed, undressed, took a bath, dressed again, read my lecture notes spasmodically in between (je m’y reconnais,³⁸³ as Diderot³⁸⁴ once said, but I hope you don't) was frightened, miserable, low, & went to “drinks” with ‘my’ professor. Then went out: I was too early, I left – I was too restless to sit waiting in a beautiful American home – & wandered about for an hour in the extreme wind & cold & in & out of drugstores. I returned to the professor, was taken to hideously jolly dinner with the Chancellor of the U.'s wife;³⁸⁵ then to the lecture hall. Instead of 150 people 400 came. Great surprise to all. We moved to bigger hall, microphones etc. & I talked for an hour, not very well: repeated myself, fussed, & in the middle of it suddenly saw you sitting not far away: stopped, fumbled, & went on by a colossal act of will. It was not a failure: but I wish you had been there to tell me. People afterwards – they are so polite – said they ‘enjoyed’ it. I don't really care: it was over. I was terribly tired, & didn't go to party for Mme Callas,³⁸⁶ the singer. To-day I am *much* better. All those telegrams to you yesterday, under the circumstances, *had* to be sent. I do apologize it is all the result of loneliness & passionate love for you. I cannot be parted from you I really cannot. Shall I send you my

³⁸³ ‘That's just like me’ (literally ‘I recognise myself there’).

³⁸⁴ Denis Diderot (1713–84), French *philosophe* and encyclopedist, a leading figure in the Enlightenment.

³⁸⁵ Economist Mary Townsend Kimpton (1926–85), wife of the Chancellor Lawrence A. Kimpton.

³⁸⁶ Maria Callas (1923–77) née Anna Maria Sofia Cecilia Kalogeropolos, legendary US-born Greek soprano.

two unsent letters? I shd like to: or wd you like to wait till you come. There is nothing in them, only an apologetic cry of ashamed jealousy, and very authentic love. It is something absolutely new to me: not at all like anything I felt for Patricia: much deeper, much less hysterical, not hysterical at all (only solitude & jealousy & desire to be with you create hysteria – & then not for too long) much nobler & prouder & completer and more natural and happy and filling all of one with joy & adoration – not painful and maddening and obviously destructive. I'll send you the letters (they won't distress you: only amuse you I think) if you want them: the mood is past, I am much better & gayer to-day, the lecture is over (I am, as always, a bit ashamed of it) a better one will follow it.

So I can write cheerfully: that I kiss your toes and your elbows & your knees: that I cannot *live* without you; that when I read your wonderful image of yourself as poor abandoned Ariadne³⁸⁷ – done in, done for, (and by me!) while I march off singing *La donna é mobile*³⁸⁸ to my next adventure – I laugh: I who am yours forever & ever, who tremble only before disease or death: who while I am with you want nothing more, not people, not books, only your presence, only that astonishing relationship that we have; which the longer & the closer, the richer (it seems to me) the warmer the more marvellous: so that we have each other; adore, admire, respect delight in each other: & are better in our own eyes. Is this literature that I am writing? Believe me no: but you make me self conscious about eloquence: I catch myself, I examine my own feelings, & I testify: I love you without end: I write down these words with *colossal* pleasure: I am sorry to have gone through the private scene with myself in a ghastly hotel bedroom: but I don't really mind: I can't be without you and had no idea what depths of torture it involves. If you left me I should never recover: I feel at least as violently attached to you – & dependant on you – as Michel: & if people see that I am drowned in happy love – even

³⁸⁷ Mythical daughter of King Minos of Crete, abandoned by her lover Theseus on the island of Naxos.

³⁸⁸ 'Woman is fickle', tenor aria from Verdi's 1851 opera *Rigoletto*.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

though I dislike any state of mine to be noticed – I shall be delighted: for I love you utterly. There is no cheque which you cannot draw upon me, none. I can go on like this forever: & when your eyes become misted over with feeling, & you become priestly, – the “love” which terrifies Bill – I am transformed too, and bless you with all that I have. At present I march about my room like a caged bear – & little do they know in the university of Chicago what goes on inside me when I “display” my urbane gifts. There are some “business” details which I ought to tell you about, but I cannot stop this *aveu*.³⁸⁹ it is morning, 10.30 a.m. & they have just told me you wd telephone at 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. my time here: I am most grateful: you could not help this after my telegram, I apologize: but I could not help it either. I ought to get on with my work, but cannot – I must go on writing a little. I think of those moments when you are in one room of the flat & I another, waiting: I cant bear it: images, love, adoration, my life is nothing without you: you have never felt & I have never felt anything in the least like this: neither your mother nor mine have any idea; yours more than mine, but she wd rather not think of it: my [*sic*] writes sweetly about how we – you & I – were brought up in the same sort of moral atmosphere – by parents whose loyalty to each other was always maximal for 50 years – & that your mother will learn by & by how reliable, solid etc. I am, but this will please her etc. – & how sweet & good you are to her. Now, I feel a little more normal, & terribly gay & particularly affectionate & can go on: Washington: tremendous fuss about my lecture & the persons my lecture arranger called Elizabeth Harcourt & William Harcourt: 16–20 Dec. is the field of operations: the facts.

³⁸⁹ ‘Declaration’.

1) the following wish to give dinners for us: Joe Alsop; Johnny Walker,³⁹⁰ the Biddles,³⁹¹ Mr Brandon,³⁹² correspondent of the *Sunday Times*; and the Blissés – kings of the smart/highbrow world. All this cannot be done. We must dine with the Blissés one night: *so* funny: she, about 90, like a dying queen Elizabeth in appearance: false French conversation, Victorian highbrow snobbery: Mr Ambassador & Mrs Bliss (chère Mildred to Stravinsky).³⁹³ Now during these days there is a ‘Mozart festival’ at Dumbarton Oaks, presided over by Mrs Bliss: participants: Kirkpatrick³⁹⁴ (harpsichord) and – Mr Alexander Schneider³⁹⁵ (ha!). Any evening from the 16–19th cuts into them & competes with them for audience. Can I lecture on *Tuesday 20th*? I don’t want to since weekend (17th & 18th) is best in Washington & stay till Wed. morning 21st is an intolerable bore (we are not sufficiently together – for one – & the most important – thing). Hence I offered to lecture on the 19th at 6 p.m. – dinner with Blissés – Sasha after dinner. They will try to arrange this, but ‘Elizabeth Harcourt’ is being a little bossy it seems. If not 6 p.m. then Friday 17th wd be best – even if involves competing with Sasha. Professor Perry, my tormentor is below, to conduct me over the library: he is not v. like a human being & does not count as a “human contact”. I cannot say with what feelings I

³⁹⁰ John Walker (1906–95), chief curator, National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1939–56, director 1956–69.

³⁹¹ Francis Beverley Biddle (1886–1968), lawyer; US Attorney-General 1941–5; US member, International Military Tribunal (Nuremberg) 1945–6; National Chairman, Americans for Democratic Action, 1950–3; m. 1918 Katherine Garrison Chapin (1890–1977), playwright, poet and librettist.

³⁹² (Oscar) Henry Brandon (1916–93) né Brandeis, *Sunday Times* correspondent in Washington 1949–83.

³⁹³ Igor Fedorovich Stravinsky (1882–1971), Russian-born composer, conductor, pianist and writer.

³⁹⁴ Ralph Leonard Kirkpatrick (1911–84), harpsichordist and musicologist.

³⁹⁵ (Abraham) Alexander (‘Sasha’) Schneider (1908–93) né Abram Szejder, Russian-Jewish-born violinist and conductor, settled in US 1938; 2nd violinist, Budapest Quartet, 1932–44, 1955–67 (when disbanded); founded Brandenburg Players 1972; ‘an old friend and a bit of a podletz [“scoundrel”]’ (to Marie Berlin, 24 December 1963).

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am waiting for our short – interrupted, I am sure – fragments of words on the telephone. All I really want to know is when you are coming here oh my darling – I can't go on – I love you too acutely, too happily, it is too heavenly – my love, Je t'adore, je te baise, je t'embrasse, je t'aime in any order you like.

yr

I.

My lecture: mixed reception: everyone telephoned about it, critical & laudatory. Nobody enthusiastic!

TO ALINE HALBAN

Saturday [19 November 1955; *manuscript*]

Hotels Windermere, Chicago 37

My darling Aline

My heavenly angel, I love you so desperately & all the time and it penetrates everything & everyone. The telephone conversation was absolutely indispensable: I do not see how we could have survived without it. The whole day is irradiated with light and I can function. Add to this that a letter from you from Paris arrived as well – how uneconomical – if only I had that to-morrow – I cd live on the telephone call for 24 hours. I enclose the two “angry” letters. They mean nothing now. The first is most unfair to poor drunk Goronwy – I looked at it, did not reread it – felt terribly ashamed – said something about Mrs Rees being “lower class” – was ashamed of that, dreadfully – pedantically altered it to “lower middle” which is accurate enough – &, on the strength of the golden opulence after hearing your voice – oh how I love & adore you & it & you again and you are of course right – my “lyricism” is not inflated – I mean more than I can say, much more & it bursts in little volcanic fountains which are not exactly comfortable – but you are so honest, & so genuine: and then you reproach me – & look my poorer gift horses in the mouth – I mean about the letter

from Mt Holyoke how disappointing it was – that I am made self conscious and begin to suspect myself of artificiality & not having enough of something – truth perhaps: But it is silly ever to have supposed that you could not love violently & passionately – I doubt if this is true of anyone: so to you my divine, beautiful, sweet good, magically beautiful, – oh I cannot go on – I feel a little too much – to you I send those quite superfluous letters written in violent misery & neurosis on Thursday. Don't keep them: & don't reply to them: I send them because I wrote them, you asked for them, they are, I suppose, part of me. I am glad about Billa: certainly why not be charitable: yet I don't want to see her or Roy ever – Maurice is like a jolly colonel – Commanding officer – who doesn't want too much nonsense in the regiment – & thinks one of the army doctors & his silly wife have gone too far. But I'd love a description of the Bovary snub from you. I hope you like this writing paper – it conveys the esprit fin³⁹⁶ of the place exquisitely. I have warm letters from: Violet Bonham Carter³⁹⁷ who says she loves me like a son (& perhaps does!) and Olivia Constable in Cambridge Mass. Now as to arrangements:

1. I don't think we can do Washington in less than 3 days: so Sat., Sunday & Monday it had best be. Two letters from 'Elizabeth Harcourt' – not suggesting staying: tant mieux:³⁹⁸ we shall be freer at a hotel. Of course Joe Alsop – the Walkers – Mr Brandon of the

³⁹⁶ 'Refined atmosphere'.

³⁹⁷ (Helen) Violet Bonham Carter (1887–1969) née Asquith, DBE 1953, later (1964) life peer; only daughter of H. H. Asquith and his first wife, Helen Melland; a leading Liberal Party activist and public figure. IB wrote to Dollie de Rothschild after VBC's death in February 1969: 'I really am terribly sorry that Violet is no more. I actually liked her as well as admired her and was amused by her, and by all her marvellous, fearless, sometimes heartless, sometimes noble public gestures. She really does date back to a grander age – Winston – Sir Thomas Beecham – indeed Jimmy [James de Rothschild] himself' (5 March 1969).

³⁹⁸ 'So much the better'.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

Sunday Times – even Sir R. Makins³⁹⁹ wd be delighted to ‘have’ us both. But I shd enjoy the Mayflower Hotel *much* more on all grounds: I am literally free on the 10th I think: I have to lecture in Evanston⁴⁰⁰ (1½ hrs fr Chicago) on 9th evening: I shall insist on being driven back same night: & pace up & down all night – I shan’t sleep I know myself – & meet your aeroplane – no, train – next day. If you tell me when your plane arrives in New York – approximately – I can tell you about trains to Chicago: in fact I’ll telephone *at once* & let you know. Wait (before I forget: I *have* after terrible trouble secured Cabin A27 or whatever it was – does look v. Intercommunicating to me – we can change both in one move in N.Y. –

After spending week-end *here* – your ‘suite’ is booked – they refuse to give it on my floor – we cd travel back to N.Y. by train. *Either* we can

1) linger here, incognito. I shall have *no* friends here for as long as you wish or

2) we can go to Boston on the 13th, stay there till the 16th or 17, go to Washington, return on the 20th & stay in New York uninterruptedly till we sail or

3) go to New York till Friday, then Washington till Tuesday, then New York & Boston on the 27th say.

or 4) or from Washington to Boston on the 20th by train or plane & bus to N.Y. on the 22^d or 23^d – & stay till we leave. Mrs Constable wants to give a party in Cambridge Mass. Offers back of her house to stay in. Again hotel wd be freer. But all these hotels in Washington & Boston are terribly full up: so I must let know at once: Washington is a fixed date – but when do you want Boston? (3) seems best to me, but any other plan is just as good: perhaps you wd cable (1) or (2) or (3) or (4) – I’ll know which you mean, &

³⁹⁹ Roger Mellor Makins (1904–96), KCMG 1949, 1st Baron Sherfield 1964, diplomat and civil servant; fellow, All Souls, 1925–39, 1957–96; UK ambassador to the US 1953–6, joint permanent secretary, treasury, 1956–9; chair, UK Atomic Energy Authority, 1960–4.

⁴⁰⁰ IB lectured on 9 December on ‘The Nature of Political Judgement’ at Northwestern University in Evanston.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1946–1960

reserve a hotel in Boston – or better Cambridge. Or if you don't cable, I'll assume plan 3. Mary will be gone from Harvard & miss us terribly. So much the better. It will be hell anyway.



Branka Juhn in 1939/40 with her mother and grandmother

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, bit.ly/juhn

At this point the secretary came in – a little Viennese student called Miss Branka Juhn⁴⁰¹ – Nationality not clear, till a sudden reference to an uncle from Israel. That is that & I dictated my letter to the American Jewish Committee, etc. much more gaily. Alix – Miriam – & their secret affairs; the assumption is that I am burning with curiosity to know who and with whom etc. – but I am not. Poor ladies – one must not be smug – but still – poor ladies – Billa, Liliane, Alix, Miriam – what *is* the common quality which creates

⁴⁰¹ Holocaust survivor Branka Juhn (1936–2004), scholarship student, Chicago, m. 1938 Harry Sondheim.

such seas of misery, & save for Alix, resentment? Some form of blindness, lack of connection with human beings – ambition – violent possessiveness – desire to push & jostle and bitter indignation at being pushed & jostled themselves – Alix is a different tragedy of being outside her time & society – Vienna in 1890ies or even Paris then wd have been all right even with Guy.

I am delighted that you enjoyed yourself at lunch with Susan Mary & Palewski⁴⁰² & were not overshadowed by my terrific personality (really whom *have* I crushed? Stuart supposedly; but you don't really believe this?) – my darling I too only want to be with you. And the dependence is too enormous. The handwriting on your envelopes is too violently disturbing: & I have to read at once of course: if the letters are delivered at odd times – when I am leaving for lunch with some strange graduate student (mostly I eat in solitude) I have to pretend to go to “The Men’s Room – (one of the most typically brutal phrases I know & hate) & there read your letter for hours over & over again. When they are plaintive, “dry” displeased, I am (like Hans, I suppose, once) upset for hours & days. When, like to-day they are brimming with love & happiness, I am in a state of fantastic joy. And then I sit torpid on one of the twin beds & think about you & see you & wonder how I could ever before.

Interruption: Betty Harcourt: she will arrange about staying at the Mayflower: dinners for us are to be given by Alsop (Saturday) Blissés (Sunday) or Walkers or somebody else – I cannot remember ... lunch with Bill & Betty to meet Roger & Alice⁴⁰³ Makins & someone else – she wants to see a lot of you – & tried to make me call you to reserve rooms in Washington because of your hotel life. Too much. Under some gentle pressure she agreed to make Lord Harcourt’s secretary do so. All trivialities. She says she has told everyone in Washington she is your lifelong friend: so you will be thought to be of immense grandeur (since Betty’s

⁴⁰² Gaston Palewski (1901–84), Gaullist French politician, vice-president of the National Assembly 1953–5.

⁴⁰³ Alice Brooks Makins (1909–85) née Davis m. Roger Makins 1934.

snobisme is not in question) which in America does no harm. I am looking forward to our lunch with Abe. Altogether New York & no pressure – I know few people there, & you not so very many – will be the nicest. I love I love you – I cannot think of anything else the images are accumulating & I am in a state of agony – I am glad your hands are fresh & young again – next door hideous voices of men playing cards – the heads & stomachs in Chicago really are revolting: I must now go to the opera with the New York funny man – we are of course great friends to see his wife – Zorina – dance in Monteverdi. Poor old Solly! Did you believe, I ask sternly, did you believe that I emphasised the parallel you–Joan?⁴⁰⁴ Can you conceive it? of course he said it – it is part & parcel of his competitiveness with me – & being “slightly above” which delights me. I was not impolite & agreed that indeed our lives & character were very similar. But he *will* invite himself constantly: will flirt (ah ah la gelosia! Don’t encourage too many apes – let them at least have some romantic quality – he is ‘good quality’ like Bill, or better) and will have to be kept off. And his question “why did you do it?” was a little nasty, a little envious, a little sordid, & perhaps genuinely uncomprehending – here am I a fat, old Jewish intellectual ... A letter from Sir Francis Simon⁴⁰⁵ has just arrived, about getting a fellowship for a scientist in All Souls. I shall answer very politely. I shall write to you a letter for the Rev. Isaac Levy:⁴⁰⁶ but shall tell him you want a synagogue even though the number of people is tiny: or wd you prefer Hollycroft? I also [*illegible*] Haywood Hill, I don’t know why. Oh yes, would you remember to bring the trousers of the poplin – the famous beautiful symbolic poplin pyjamas – pajamas – of which I only have the blue-rimmed blue-piped jacket? Otherwise I shall face you with some horrors. And another pair of pajamas (thin) wd be quite nice too – but never

⁴⁰⁴ Joan Alice Violet, Lady Zuckerman (1918–2000), née Isaacs m. Solly Zuckerman 1939.

⁴⁰⁵ Sir Francis Simon (1893–1956), German-born British physical chemist.

⁴⁰⁶ Isaac ‘Harry’ Levy (1910–2005), minister at Hampstead Synagogue (where IB and Aline were to marry) 1945–65.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

mind – if you are flying: I forgot. I loathe it here really – it is ugly, pointless, awful – but it wd I think be better to have a secret week-end here – than in New York: Unless you can think of somewhere for us to meet on the 10th – I *would* fly if need be – it seems far for you to come for 2 days – yet the journey back in bedrooms in the train – I shall book them *now* for the 12th? tell me what to do – to New York, will be so wonderful. We can't go in the same one, I suppose. But I'll find out even that. I'll say you are my sister – half sister? One must avoid premature charge of moral turpitude. I kiss you without ceasing – you will be bored when I do: oh my darling Aline, the name – the writing of the letters – with the agonies of the past which makes it so much more sacred & sweet – Aline Aline Aline: I love you absolutely. Forever & ever. I understand why people want immortality.

I.

TO ALINE HALBAN

Sunday morning 20 [November 1955; *manuscript*]

Hotels Windermere, Chicago 37

My darling – My darling

This paper!⁴⁰⁷ The telephone conversation altered my mood for hours & days: but I almost wish I had not taken your photograph with me – I look at it like a French *poilu*, & it “does something to me” (what incredible vulgarity English is capable of) – & I suffer. I ought to be working to-night – all lectures seem to me good or bad In direct rati^on [*sic*] to the amount of work expended on them, but this morning a rich political voice (whatever they may say about

⁴⁰⁷ Here IB adds two arrows, one pointing up to the printed letterhead, the other down to a picture of the hotel(s?) printed at the foot of the page, ‘fronting south on Jackson Park / [East] 56th Street and the Lake’; at the point of each arrow he adds an exclamation mark.

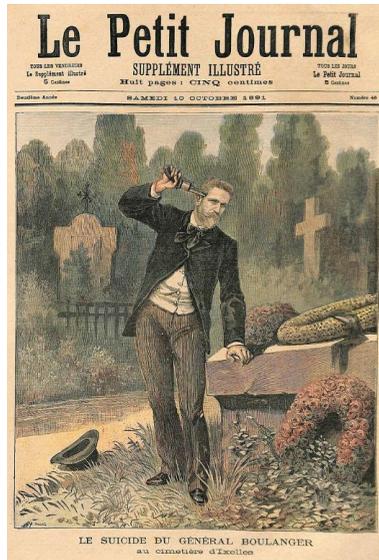
private faces), a voice not unlike Mr Acheson's,⁴⁰⁸ with a firm self assured public friendliness of tone, said "This is Adlai Stevenson. Ronnie Tree etc. ... wd you just take your pyjamas (I don't *think* he said pajamas) & stay the night with me?" I said yes. But tell no one – I'll tell my mother whom I suppose it will please, else it will get into the Evening Standard. I'll report on him in due course. This occurred 15 minutes ago. Since then I took a bath (a daily occurrence I am astonished to tell you) & am writing this. My darling Aline: I can only repeat one thing: I love you terribly deeply: I cannot contemplate life without you: I used to say to you soberly that I could not be happy without you, but of course one can *live* (unhappily or not-happily not unhappily) without anyone. This is not true. I am in a state of unbroken painful longing: it ruins social life because it breaks in on conversation & distracts & makes me travel away from all these kind good people towards you: I keep feeling terror: something will come between: an accident: you will awake from *your* dream and see me as I am, & the illusion will dissipate & *you* are too honest, too clear not to admit the truth: what will I do then? Commit suicide on your grave like General Boulanger⁴⁰⁹ whom otherwise I am not very like: but do not be taken in by these frivolities: I am *tragically* attached to you, & I think you to me: it will take months & years for us to be able to breathe freely with or without each other – the feeling is so overwhelming: I shall be jealous of everybody, tiresomely: I shant be able to see the apes touch your wrist (only wrist? It is one of the most exquisite of your bones) without terrible inner quaking: I shall do nothing, say nothing, only cover my face with my hands. Some gangsters are playing cards next door in the suite which I shall probably fail to secure for you – this neighbourhood *is* dangerous at night – &

⁴⁰⁸ Dean Gooderham Acheson (1893–1971), US lawyer and public servant; secretary of state 1949–53; one of the founders of NATO and the Marshall Aid programme, subsequently a foreign policy adviser to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

⁴⁰⁹ Georges Ernest Jean-Marie Boulanger (1837–91), French politician and general, killed himself on his mistress's grave.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

shouting at each other horribly. Very unlike the Randolph.⁴¹⁰ But this is all part of the unreality of life here. Betty H. is not too stupid about realizing tha[t] a *hotel* is better than her or anybody's house in Washington for us; true, she is relieved of responsibility for us too (she wants to see *you*, but not *me*, *all* the time she made clear – oh how angry Pussy & Bill wd have been made by the tone) still, it suits all sides. I see how awful the sudden evacuation of *all* Hans's things was: what about the children? Is Miss Lee capable of holding conversations of the right kind? Gradual approach to the subject? Or no? the telephone is ringing. I am being picked up for lunch with "Mrs Epstein"⁴¹¹ on North Shore (very grand, I believe, by our standards here) who is a patroness of the local dons. I have to stop. But I am not going to send this off. I shall return & continue. For the moment, my darling, my darling leade Aline, (oh I cannot bear the parting – 20th – to-day – 20 more days – they do pass with *leaden* feet) good bye. I shall resume later.



⁴¹⁰ Oxford's grandest hotel, on Beaumont Street.

⁴¹¹ Presumably Leola Epstein (1888–1968) née Selig, widow of businessman and philanthropist Max Epstein (1875–1954).

4 p.m. It *is* a social day & no mistake: I was picked up dramatically by Marietta (delegate from N.Y. to Democratic Diner) & Mr Stevenson; rushed here to pick up the pajamas: & am being whisked off to Mr S.'s lovely home for the night. I shall resume this letter late to-night after my evening with the Important People. But I don't wish to be with them. I wish to be with you & without them: not together with you & them. I love you I love you I think of nothing else – I must go. Wait my darling, wait an hour or two & I'll go on again.

12.30 (midnight.) In Mr A. Stevenson's country house – farmhouse in something-ville, 30 miles from Chicago. All very exhausting: after waiting about in Democratic Committee rooms in a huge hotel, I was 'transported' by a Repalli car – for – Stevenson lady to dinner in North Shore – doesn't matter why & when – with Marietta, Miss Helen Kirkpatrick⁴¹² (whom I know) Mrs Barry Bingham (whom you know) & her husband.⁴¹³ Civilized & not too much schoolboy guffawing. *Fairly* Détendu. I talked a lot & talked Adlai down a bit. He is a decent, nice, puzzled looking, amiable gentlemanly American semi-conservative. Men called Kahn – Bert Kahn – Sam Kahn – Larry Kahn⁴¹⁴ – kept telephoning. So did Barbara Ward,⁴¹⁵ adored by all Americans & a tremendous bore. I don't know whether this will need revision later, but I was disappointed. The sharp little jokes, the brave calm civilized attitude are not evident. He is not a vulgarian (exactly – a little bit

⁴¹² Helen Kirkpatrick (1909–97), American journalist; war correspondent for the *Chicago Daily News* during the Second World War; joined the *New York Post* after the war; advisor to Dean Acheson 1949–53; assistant to the President of Smith College 1953–5.

⁴¹³ Journalist and philanthropist Mary Caperton Bingham (1904–95) née Caperton and her husband (m. 1931) (George) Barry Bingham Sr (1906–88), publisher of the *Louisville Courier-Journal* 1930–45.

⁴¹⁴ All three unidentified.

⁴¹⁵ Barbara Mary Ward (1914–81), later (1976) Baroness Jackson, development economist and author.

only – say as much as Chip Bohlen) nor a hypocrite: he is not vain: not silly: but really belongs to the climate of Sir A. Eden + American heartiness, restrained, but there: jolly “men’s dinner’ not far off. Likes female society, adores Marietta (wd she leave Ronnie for him, I suddenly wondered) could not make me out at all. Listened in a puzzled, deaf, way, found it all most interesting, tried to laugh once or twice, was not sure if what I said was meant to be laughed at – thought I was probably a good fellow & as clever as they are made – & stopped thinking. Took me to his house & popped me off to bed. Where I am now, trying to compose a lecture. I am glad to have met him & will chat to him en route to Chicago to-morrow: he is thoroughly decent etc. – but heaven! Not ‘one of us’ – very much on the other side – Chip B. is 1000 times superior, & just as much on the other side – Stevenson is boyish, imitated Churchill, Eden & me(!) – sensitive & 2^d rate. 100000 respectable Americans – who are unbarbarous & dislike anti-Semitism & go to Ditchley are like him. Harriman who is a dark sort & not at all nice, is far more interesting & clever & remarkable. So is not interesting at all: & dear Schlesinger loves him rightly. But this bores you. As Stevenson wd bore you. I have a headache & must stop – It is in moments of *acute* unreality – when I am telling stories about Lord Halifax & being “brilliant” and admired by Marietta, that I feel suddenly what is real and true – & I feel ashamed of anything not worthy to stand beside you. Oh Aline, my darling Aline; your scrutiny *is* just: you really have an unerring sense of what is true & what is bogus: what is thick, & genuine & what is flimsy and blown by winds. Hans was certainly not bogus: & infinitely distilled – endlessly fine as you are you probably sometimes grasp at what is common, tough – insensitive – blindly lurching – heavy & pedestrian because of guilt about being liable to flights into remote regions – floating like an untethered balloon or cloud – though why you shd not float (which you do with exquisite poetry let me add) I don’t know. Oh why cannot the little clean white door of this farmhouse – owned by this sweet jolly, conventional little man – open – & you walk in – I am haunted & tormented by the image – & the silliness of leaving you for 10

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1946–1960

minutes – & I hope you will telephone on Friday at *your* 8 a.m., my 2 a.m. (I think) & whether I do & wherever I go & wherever I am – the criterion – the solid reality – what gives meaning & taste to anything – is only the fact – both violently exciting & very quiet & solemn of “us”. I kiss you & kiss you.

I.

Vassar College – the smart one for women – offer me 150 dollars for a lecture: 1¾ hs from N.Y. at Poughkeepsie. Better not, I think, no time, & a bore. Or wd you come? Wd it amuse you to see me with 300 earnest girls? say.

TO ALINE HALBAN

6 p.m. Monday [21 November 1955; *manuscript*]

Hotel Windermere East, East 56th Street, Chicago

My darling

This is hors de série⁴¹⁶ – (hors sèrie?) – I posted a letter to you this morning from Stevenson’s “farm” – but then came here & found your last letter – from Paris – and cannot not answer – I’ll write again to-morrow of course – the hotel has no stamps – hence this repellent but only possible method⁴¹⁷ – oh Aline: we *do* use the same words by ‘fantastique’ (as you spell it) telepathic rapport – I said “absolute” & you say “absolute” – and indeed this is what it is. It is an astonishing experience, and we are both so deeply and so consciously in love – nothing can alter it, we are too grown up.

– 2 a.m. I have just lectured.⁴¹⁸ it was a colossal success, I have to admit. I was warned that the original 300 wd melt – two concerts & a public meeting was occurring – 450 came & were turned away from the largest hall in the place – it is shameful virtuosity – I *must*

⁴¹⁶ ‘Out of sequence’.

⁴¹⁷ A pre-stamped air-letter form.

⁴¹⁸ The second Alexander White Lecture.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

be a terrible actor – I lectured quite well: my sponsors are satisfied. I am too tired to go on – I cannot write – I am 190 lb. in weight – I *must* stop eating butter & “Danish pastry” – I start starving tomorrow. The more I think about Stevenson, the more absurd he grows in my eyes. Mrs Constable wonders whether Mrs [Alice] James⁴¹⁹ will be shocked by our staying in an hotel. Cannot be helped if she is. Rowland has boasted that you wrote to Alice J. to say we were coming to see her & Rowland only – (what about poor Mrs Constable who is giving a party for us? I had to comfort her, explaining you only knew R. & Mrs J. – accepted.) Much competitive claims for us: we have snob value. Mrs J. announced to Rowland that she wd give me a bed, & he must give *you* one. R wrote that he wd be delighted but how bossy Alice was etc etc. All very much as normal. I must go to sleep: I am only writing this extra letter because yours filled my day with such marvellous radiance, and such love, such happiness such acute intolerable desire to be with you that I cd not not write – although *before* my lecture I was depressed & frightened – I wrote *all* my time – these ephemeral performances like a tenor – & after unbelievably exhausted. But I shall – oh soon – yet not so soon – still 19 days to go – 19 days 1456 hours to go – after this I shall be allowed to touch – I can’t go on – I only want to see you – hear your voice – but no no I don’t inflate – I understate – I can’t govern my feelings at all; goodnight my angel, good night – it is 8 a.m. in Oxford or 8.30 (2.30 here) you are waking – Miss Lee – children – Pussy – James – I can’t bear this gap: must we ever part? Even for Mègeve? For something like 12 days? 12 days? I take daily baths: the window is open at all hours – (otherwise the heat is suffocating) all in honour of you. But I am talking nonsense – did you mind the ‘angry’ letters? I am terribly sleepy – terribly in love – I don’t mind being preoccupied by your attributes all the time – forever I believe & want.

My love my angel my darling – this letter doesn’t count.

⁴¹⁹ Alice Rutherford James (1884–1957), nee Runnells, wife of William (‘Billy’) James; Cambridge (Mass.) society hostess. See E 794.

TO ALINE HALBAN

1 a.m. Tuesday [sc. Wednesday 23 November 1955; *manuscript*]

Hotels Windermere, Chicago 37

My darling – my darling,

No letter from you to-day – presumably because of Sunday. I had a not too bad day to-day: during the whole of which I thought about you continuously: it really is ‘fantastique’, the degree, length, violence of this obsessive passion. I can really not think of anything else: it becomes monotonous to repeat this – but the state of mind is continuous and increases in intensity: please come as soon as you can: I love you utterly and am miserable without you. Really it is strange & remarkable that we should depend so enormously on each other – yet we do. Everything in both our lives is poised on a precarious point d’appui:⁴²⁰ the survival of our faculties, our sheer physical preservation: the lightest thing & we are both ruined: it terrifies me at moments to think that both you & I – who in a sense were regarded by all our friends as in different ways very self-subsistent organisms: both seen very much in our own light – I sending off small sparks & glowing unevenly, you bathed in a mild & beautiful unvarying radiance – that we should surrender all our liberties & rights and enslave ourselves to each other. For this certainly is what has happened. I really am at your feet (do you remember how I vowed to try to kneel & how annoyed you used to get) and you, if not at mine, are nevertheless engagée & engaged & tied hand & foot. And we claim in this condition of utter surrender to be much happier, & are: there *is* a terrifying truth somewhere in the doctrine that by losing one’s soul one saves it: in Plato’s doctrine (I’ve never written you like this before) that all human beings are divided spheres – hemispheres seeking to complete themselves with their appropriate complementary hemispheres – & so it happened, & we were doomed to eternal happiness. Sometimes I can’t quite believe that such luck can be:

⁴²⁰ ‘Fulcrum’.

when I think of my misery before: or of what I feel for you in comparison with what I have felt for anyone else. Patricia is the only one comparable: X, alas, never occurred in my thoughts, only in what I hesitate to call the flesh (isn't it awful! I feel shame remorse & then forget them at once) – I wish to be quite honest, for honesty's sake & say neither too much nor too little: my feelings for her were always violent & hysterical, & never normal & steadily strong. I must have written her 2 or 3 lyrical letters⁴²¹ in 1944 from London; when I was living at the Dorchester. I cannot remember what I said – but I suspect they were quite good letters – worth getting from anybody. I wd give much to think them destroyed, but I shall not ask for them: I shd not feel humiliated if she lost or destroyed them. What did I feel? Violent neurotic love: some sort of Chopin attitude⁴²² – no perhaps really the Professor's attitude to the Blue Angel⁴²³ – it must have looked so – in which I thought of writing books – producing masterpieces, to lay them at her feet – although in some sense I always knew them – the feel of the worthless (they were quite pretty; but I did not adore them as I do yours) knowing all this to be nonsense: the thought of being left with her – having to marry her – filled me with horror. Her voice entranced me, & the play of life although it was very febrile and, at times, too méchant, too destructive and beastly. I liked it when she told me how honest and “real” I was in comparison with the ruthlessness of the rest of her suitors: but I could not reciprocate: even at my maddest I saw that this was a classical case of the clergyman & the femme fatale. I never thought her sincere or serious or a friend – not even, strange as it may seem, an equal: I loved, suffered agonies, & despised. I had no moral respect, & no

⁴²¹ The only missive from IB to Patricia de Benden known to the editors was written in 1947, and not sent: see E 41–2.

⁴²² To the Polish soprano Konstancja Gladowska (1810–89), who inspired some of his work.

⁴²³ Professor Unrat [‘Rubbish’], protagonist of *Professor Unrat, oder Das Ende eines Tyrannen: Roman* (Munich, 1905), and his attitude to Rosa Fröhlich (Marlene Dietrich's Lola Lola in the 1930 German film *Der blaue Engel*) at the Blue Angel cabaret.

wish to hear her opinions about anything, & no desire that she like my friends, or be liked by them: or that I like or be liked by hers (rather a difficult sentence to translate into French). When it was over I felt resentment & antipathy and a sense of alien-ness – she was too unJewish – too alien in her habits & style. And I now do not like her: & never wish to see her: whereas towards X I shall always feel guilt, embarrassment, affection desire to help. Why am I writing all this (it is 2.15 am) & I am *exhausted*) I don't know: because my present state is so very very different: because I think you are superior to her: because I admired and felt terrific affection & kinship and love before I fell in love: because, because, made as I am I am capable of being intimate only with people whose moral tastes are similar to yours. When I admire & respect morally and not only aesthetically or intellectually, & because I cd not be a friend to Patricia or Freddie or the Frenchmen whom I find it so awful to be with etc. for just these reasons. Whereas even the thought of you – scarcely even the image, though I live with it hourly & minutely – fills me with such moral security, I admire I delight in it so much – & that apart from the overwhelming love – & believe me it *is* overwhelming – it is everything everywhere all the time – that I have never in my life known with such total satisfaction – complete fulfilment of everything could be. I pray superstitiously that it may last: it is so wonderful. I cannot go on – I am too dead tired – *Stanco morto*⁴²⁴ as the terrible husband says before killing the lover in Puccini's horrible opera *Tabarro* which I've just seen – I love you I love you and the dying lover says (*l'amó l'amó*)⁴²⁵ – it *is* quite powerful, but disgusting. 3 a.m. I can't go on. I do love you appallingly. Please come please come.

Wednesday. 7.30 a.m.

No letter! Perhaps there will be one at 9 – tho' in Monday you were perhaps too busy. I must do my duty to Glysennid. I love you

⁴²⁴ 'Son stanco morto' ('I am dead tired'), *Il tabarro* (1918), line 210.

⁴²⁵ 'I love her I love her' (Luigi of Georgetta at the end of the opera).

terribly. – I am back: I am triumphant despite all. The torture of parting is worse than ever. I sleep again.

10 a.m.

No letter. Joe Alsop & Betty H. telephoned: she about arrangements – nothing special – Joe too. I talked to him long & indiscreetly about Adlai Stevenson whom you wd like better than I (I think: he wd admire you more than me: rightly I daresay) Joe has invited us to dinner in Washington on Saturday to meet: his mother; Frankfurter (Mrs F. is bedridden); the Harcourts: the Walkers: Mrs Longworth⁴²⁶ (the wicked grande dame) the Grahams⁴²⁷ (I had a terrible row with Philip Graham in 1949 or 1951 – I cannot remember which – he was v. rude to me at his own table & I've never spoken to him since. He wrote a letter of apology which I didn't answer.⁴²⁸ He owns the Washington Post & is son in law of Eugene Meyer. I hesitated then “passed” his name. It is a large dinner party – “Roger & Alice [Makins] & Allan Dulleses⁴²⁹ will come in afterwards’. We dine with the Blissés on Sunday & go to Mozart & Sascha later: on Monday I lecture at 6 p.m.: Mozart again if we want it: or we cd fly to New York. I shall try & get a suite at the *Mayflower* – Joe expressed *horror* at the

⁴²⁶ Alice Lee Roosevelt Longworth (1884–1980), eldest daughter and 1st child of Theodore Roosevelt and his 1st wife Alice, who died 2 days after childbirth; m. 1906 the Republican Congressman Nicholas Longworth (1869–1931), and conducted a long but discreet affair with Senator William Borah (260/2), who was, by her own admission, the father of her only child, Paulina; IB enjoyed her deliberately provocative, liberal-baiting views (A 259).

⁴²⁷ Katharine (‘Kay’) Graham (1917–2001), journalist. See B 636–7, A 623. Her husband was Phil(ip) Leslie Graham (1915–63), lawyer, journalist and publisher; worked on the Lend-Lease programme 1941–2; US Army Air Corps 1942–4 and 1944–5; Intelligence Service 1944; from 1946 publisher of the *Washington Post* in succession to his father-in-law, Eugene Meyer; committed suicide after several years of manic depression. E 792.

⁴²⁸ E 516/5.

⁴²⁹ Allen Welsh Dulles (1893–1969), brother of John Foster Dulles; US lawyer; Deputy Director CIA 1951–3, Director 1953–61; m. 1920 Martha ‘Clover’ Todd (1894–1974).

thought that the Harcourts shd not *press* us to stay, but I much prefer independence. I don't know what happens about Mr Roosevelt's old Cabinet – Achesons & Biddles who are said to want to repay hospitality: & I *must* see Ben Cohen & dear Dr Lattmann,⁴³⁰ a sweet old Jewish doctor who sings Beethoven quartets & old Jewish songs better than I. I am beginning not to be able to imagine what it will be like to be with you again: it is like a child to whom too much has been promised for his birthday: the imagination plays, unbelievable golden dreams begin – one gets very over-excited, one cannot sleep the night before – my darling my darling I love you so totally, with all I have, with all I am, don't let me weigh you down with so much – such quantities of feeling & passion. It is physically difficult for me to continue writing, for reasons which I leave to your imagination: I am in a precarious, pathetic & excited state. I must get up & do something: take a walk, climb a ladder – at my age! I wonder what are you doing while you are reading this: are you in bed, on the edge, I hope, of tears (why do I hope? Because I am: oh you've no idea what it is like – I've never never never known anything like it, never never I swear) or in some corner of the Red Room: is Peter somewhere near, & will you tell him before you go? Or at Mégève? Better there perhaps: I dined last night with d'Entrèves friend von Simson & his wife.⁴³¹ German: very intellectual: 6 hours talk about romanticism and the aesthetic emotions: I rather enjoyed it. In Chicago I am prepared to talk to Germans (he is of course quasi-Jewish) who are more civilized than Americans & loyally *troop* to all my lectures & express

⁴³⁰ Isidore Lattman (*sic*) (1894–1971), Russian-born radiologist, Children's Hospital, Columbia, 1932–63 (also in private practice until 1954); a passionate music-lover with an interest in history and philosophy, and a fund of Toscanini anecdotes. IB wrote to him on 11 August 1955: 'I now consider myself to have recovered in the sense that I refuse to go and have any further cardiograms from anybody, and shall indeed not do so until I see you [...] Ever since you looked after me in 1945 I have had no faith in anyone else.'

⁴³¹ Otto Georg von Simson (1912–93), German art historian who taught at University of Chicago 1945–57 (Professor 1951–7), and his 1st wife Aloysia (Louise) Alexandra, Princess of Schönburg-Hartenstein (1906–76).

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enthusiasm & are related to Fritz Simon (Sir Francis). To-night I attend a dinner in honour of A. L. Rowse:⁴³² comical & he won't enjoy it. I don't care: he may even say ambiguous things: I don't care. To-morrow Thanksgiving: I eat Turkey with a Zionist philosopher called Dreben (known to Stuart etc.) who looked at your photograph by request & said "Ve-ery handsome. Really very handsome". His wife Raya is not. He went on wistfully repeating 'very handsome' all evening. I can't go on writing because I am overflowing with feeling – there is only one thing which one can go on repeating forever: before – in 1953 – there was a mixture of emotion, words sprang out of the tensions created by love & frustration: Now one only wants to go on repeating some blessing to celebrate & sanctify the steady, violent, continuous torrent of feeling which eliminates everything else. Bless you. I kiss you again & again.

I.

⁴³² (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 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?'

TO ALINE HALBAN

Thanksgiving. in fact, Thursday 24 [November 1955; *manuscript*]

Hotels Windermere, Chicago 37

My darling,

I am getting into a state of neurosis: no letters from you for *days*: I do not know whether you will telephone this evening (your Friday morning) or not – I shall not do so myself in case you don't wish it (I love you more than you me: and am correspondingly anxious to do nothing quite purely selfish. This will, I hope, irritate you: & then you will telephone to say so. The difference in time is only six hours instead of seven as with Paris: there is no reason why you shd not ring me at 4 or 5 or 6 p.m.: it is 10, 11 a.m. or 12 here: I sleep from 7 a.m. till 3 p.m. your time) I love you more & more & more & am going off my head with desire to see you: I cannot chat, gossip, tell you about Mr Rowse's embarrassingly awful lecture last night here which caused hideous waves of indignation; or about Charlie Wyzanski's⁴³³ letter about you or Stuart's letter ditto (no bad blood this time: he writes charmingly & warmly & what he says about you is too fascinating: but if you ask him I shall not tell you: if you behave discreetly I shall preserve the letter for you – all about the change in your state – none of this can I communicate till I receive a letter – I am sure you've written: I am sure I am sure: aeroplanes are late, winter storms are raging – you travelled from Paris on Monday, you cd not write till Tuesday to-day is only Thursday, Thanksgiving & no "mails" – all this is true – but till I hear I cannot physically go on dropping letters into the unanswering void – oh but you can surely understand – I think of absolutely nothing else – I need telegrams to keep me going when no letters come, but I am determined not to be hysterical, not to send you telegrams such as my father used to send me inquiring if

⁴³³ Charles Edward Wyzanski, Jr (1906–86), appointed Federal Judge by FDR 1941; Chief Judge, Federal District Court, Massachusetts, 1965–71; governing body, Ford Foundation, 1952–76.

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I was alive – not to telephone – practise restraint – be stoical – this desire to repress my natural instinct, which wd have been to telephone at *once* 2 p.m. – your 8 p.m. – you might be in – is due to my painful memories of hanging on the telephone & trying to get through to Patricia in Boston – & the golden relief of finding her – & the humiliation about one’s weakness. I love you much more than ever I loved her – infinitely more; & I *am* suffering at this moment, & I passionately long to lift the receiver: but no: I’ll *force* myself to be normal & “forget myself” in work: as if I could. My darling, don’t let days pass without communication: I cannot read, talk, lecture, unless I am in continuous contact. I miss you violently: though you don’t like violence: for I can restrain myself no longer. I cannot go on until you answer – for all I know my “angry” letters have infuriated you: oh write – Aline darling –
Isaiah

TO ALINE HALBAN

Friday [sc. Saturday] 1 a.m. [26 November 1955; *manuscript*]

Hotels Windermere, Chicago 37

My darling Aline,

My sweetest dearest Aline, my angel – I am in a dreadfully moved condition. It is almost, not quite as late as it was when you were woken: of course I realized that the 8 a.m. call did not get through & that you saved me from being woken at say 10 a.m. your time = 4 a.m. mine: the symmetry of our *language* has become *fantastique*: All day I wondered [*sic*] about in a mist of images and thoughts – feeling is growing steadily – & rising & mounting – yet it never grows hysterical or unreal or painful in a morbid sense – how well I know – how little I can help comparing with – the agony of Patricia. But I’ll never mention that again – it is unworthy, for all its Proustian qualities, to stand beside our genuine solid – one-has-come-home-at last – feeling. Ironically I remember that in the course of the famous conversation which H. had overheard you

said sadly to me “one must come home sometime, you know’ – & I felt dreadfully wounded – as if H. was life, reality, the real roots: whereas the relationship with me was fantasy. So perhaps it had been then, but like the State of Israel very persistent & passionate dreams *can* turn into far solidier realities than the old nasty reality – the ghetto & persecution which, simply because it has gone on for a long time, without reason, is regarded as truly real, & in contrast with which the ‘dream’ – simply because it is bright, coherent, ardently, passionately, longed for, contains all that one values most in oneself – simply for that reason is dismissed as fantasy. There: a philosophical pensée. To-night I waited in a state of mounting tension till 6 p.m. when your *divine* telegram promised a conversation: then, as you know in this barbarous country as B-Muller wd say, dinner is at 6.30 p.m. for dons & students: I had to dine with a nice Jewish professor named Finer⁴³⁴ – a sweet vulgarian with a real Harry Stendoise wife – I telephoned him at 6 to say that I was waiting for a telephone call from England & *might* be a little late. At 6.30 I ring again: his guests were there: I begged him to begin: I waited till 7.30 & then went. Your call came through at about 9.15 our time: I cd not really talk because the walls are very thin. But I cd not *keep* saying all those true things: about how violently I love you: how our meeting really will be a far greater culmination than ever before: I don’t mind tempting fate in this way – for I feel secure: the foundations are too solid: we know each other really through & through. I have talked to Olivia Constable & asked her to book us a suite of 3 rooms at the Comm[an]der Hotel, whatever Mrs James thinks: for the 27th Dec. I had a letter from Edmund Wilson asking if I was in America? Was going to be married? Wd I dine on the 27th or 28th? he does not know that you are to be here. You did not like Mrs W.⁴³⁵ I seem to remember, & were oppressed by him. I shall say that *we* shall not be in New York till 29th, & dinner won’t be possible (unless you’ld *like* to dine: in

⁴³⁴ Samuel Edward Finer (1915–93), political scientist and historian, m. (1st) 1949 (Margaret) Ann McFadyean (1925–2012).

⁴³⁵ Edmund Wilson’s wife Elena Mumm Thornton Wilson (1906–79).

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which case I'll accept) & go & see them at some other hour with you (or alone: as you prefer.) – As for Washington: we lunch with Betty on the 17th: dine with J. Alsop (tout le monde de Washington – at once amusing & terrible) – dine with Bliss Sunday: & I lecture at 6 p.m. Monday & we go to hear Mozart & Sascha on Sunday *and* Monday. You approve? Lunches on Sunday & Mon. unsettled: there will not be much problem. We stay in the Mayflower Hotel.

One question: I have got rid of lectures at Columbus Ohio & Vasser, Poughkeepsie, because I cannot fit them in with stay *in* Chicago & after, they must *not* clutter our lives (250 dollars are well worth losing – though I have this mystical greed for dollars which extends to no other currency – they are the currency of luxuries & toys) I promised to talk to philosophers – Patrick Gardiner⁴³⁶ e.g., at Columbia on the 22^d: in the afternoon or morning some time. They also want me (100 bucks) to lecture to the Russian Institute in New York (also Columbia). This can only occur on the 13th 14th 15th or 16th. On 13th we shall only *arrive*. Out of question. We *must* dine with Trees, your mama, Mr Behrman etc. The only possible evening is 16th: & we cd fly to Washington immediately after, at night: *or* go on the 17th by train & not lunch with Betty till 18th: or refuse the Columbia lecture (on Herzen!) – I'll do as told: I faintly hanker to: I like to keep in touch with the Russian world: but I can do so anyway: & have provisionally refused: but if you think otherwise, I'll accept. So think: imagine our days in N.Y.: & tell me what to do. This will apply throughout our lives: the opposite of Hans: My prestige – & the etiquette of my academic life are, I fear, in your keeping now.

Here in Chicago there is no one for you to meet perhaps 1) the Drebens: he is a Jewish – even Zionist – philosopher: knows Stuart

⁴³⁶ 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.

etc. – he & his wife Raya are touchingly honest, ugly, ghettoish Jews, sweetly uncorrupted by any snobbishness, even lower middle class – crude, simple, to me endlessly funny – comically naïve – straight out of the Jewish stories in the *New Yorker*. I am fond of them: & consumed a huge “Thanksgiving” meal with them yesterday – while discussing Zionism & philosophy with Mr Gewirth⁴³⁷ (a slightly more sophisticated Jew) & a Japanese!

2) Dr & Frau von Simson. Highly sophisticated Germans: he a semi-Jew – good looking, art historian, highly civilized, d’Entrèves & Wind⁴³⁸ – German high bred charm: his wife said to be v. well born – princess somebody – therefore agreeable, clever, highbrow, a little coarse. The Americans are “terrible” & not worth meeting. No Masons Hammond. Nobody for Bill. I shall have no appointments. I shall telephone your mother to-morrow: & suggest that she book you a bedroom on one of the 3 trains which go from N.Y. to Chicago, daily. The latest wd be best, say at 5 p.m. which wd get you here at about 9 a.m. I think: unless you prefer to fly: but I have on the 9th to go to Evanston, a distant suburb, where NorthWestern University lies: there I lecture: & have refused to stay the night & shall be brought back by car to Windermere late, but the same night, 9th: & therefore *hope* to be in when you telephone from New York: but cannot be sure: if you arrive in N.Y. in the morning (which is almost certain) I shall *of course* be here: in any case I shall meet your train in Chicago whenever it comes if told: & can be wired to. Oh how I love to write down the words, even, which formulate the concrete details of meeting: I think: can I retain the cab which takes me to the station, or is that impossible? How far down the bleak bleak station will I walk? Will I be less fat (I am 187lb. instead of 173) – but doesn’t matter, as you said. I kiss you: these words are too feeble: I adore every speck which has the

⁴³⁷ Alan Gewirth (1912–2004), moral and political philosopher, Chicago.

⁴³⁸ Edgar Wind (1900–71), Professor of Art, Chicago, 1942–4, William Allan Neilson Research Professor, 1944–8; Professor of Philosophy and of Art, Smith College, 1948–55; Professor of History of Art, Oxford, 1955–67.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

remotest relation to you: I worship you morally, intellectually and ...

yr

I.

My mother writes so sweetly about you – the lunch you were to have had – I'll show you the letters.

TO ALINE HALBAN

Sunday [27 November 1955; *manuscript*]

Hotels Windermere, Chicago 37

My darling.

How *can* one love so much? & it is getting no better. The only thing is that it really is so astonishingly certain: this parting was not undertaken as an experiment, but it has, in fact, proved too much: that I cannot go on at all without you. The discomfort of being without you is too dreadful, too continuous, interferes with every process – & the agony of waiting for your telephone was *too* great the other night: next time we do it let us appoint an hour when I am asleep & can be woken: to be able to do *nothing* for 3 hours or more, answer questions mechanically, look mad and distracted – & then your voice & although we were separated from the other guests of Professor Finer's party by the thinnest of walls – I cd not keep saying something. Then your two marvellous letters. The physical things you say coincide so absolutely – the “vulgarity” of the words cannot be avoided – the things *have* to be said – have to be, have to be, have to be. I want to be physically one with you forever: and hold you in my arms and kiss you and feel that fantastic sense of fulfilment and love which makes us one (it is not possible to avoid appalling banalities – but only in words) without which I now cannot live. It will be a fortnight of agony – yesterday I telephoned your mother but she was out at 1 p.m – at 3 – at 5 – at 7 – at 8 only then I sent you the telegram saying that there are trains for New York at 5.30 – 6 p.m & 11.15 p.m: obviously the

earlier the better – & I shall be at the station, excité,⁴³⁹ at 8.30 a.m. or whenever it is to meet you. Only do make your mother book you a bedroom on a train – they are full – I daren't do it for fear of not knowing how long you want to spend in N.Y. whether it wd be 'politer' to remain till evening – I suppose I could hold out till 3.30 p.m. when the 11.15 train arrives here. Yes I have vivid images of the long, bleak, horrible platform too & then Anna Karenina.⁴⁴⁰ So it really *is* true – our “relationship” – & no inverted commas – verified, proved, tested, endlessly tried in fire & water (Chicago is a dreadful ordeal really: people keep asking me if I am enjoying it – & are rightly sceptical when I say dubiously “yes”) – bent, twisted – & it *is* true. We *are* made for each other. We are happy together & miserable apart. We are happy – happiest – alone with each other, & quite contented in society, & happy to leave together; I am ready to be amiable to your hollow Parisians, & you to my stray intellectuals, worthless social hostesses, & embarrassing Zionist vulgarians. Not only because we are in love with each other – that can sometimes, surely, accentuate the differences of habits – but because the billion particles of which we are physiologically composed – the tiny imperceptible Tolstoyan atoms – respond to each other, are sympathetic – that is what Goethe calls *Wahlverwand[t]schaft* – “elective affinity”⁴⁴¹ – the mysterious interrelationship which alone makes one like certain colours, sounds, ways of walking, moving one's hand, yellow hands, knees etc. etc. – & when that works, everything does & does forever. So here we are, blessed by good fortune, cemented – married. Mrs Bohlen writes from Moscow that a lot of people have been made happy by this event: & that she & Chip adored you as soon as they met you; Mrs Bliss (the aged doyenne of Washington) wired that she will welcome us both on the 18th in Washington: followed by

⁴³⁹ *sic*: sc. ‘excité’, ‘on tenterhooks’.

⁴⁴⁰ Who dies in Tolstoy's eponymous novel (1875–8) by jumping from a station platform under a train.

⁴⁴¹ A chemical term, ‘the tendency of a substance to combine with certain particular substances in preference to others’ (OED), here used metaphorically.

Mozart & that her husband is flying from London for it; Mrs James that she is giving us a ‘buffet supper’ on the 27th & has had a ‘darling letter’⁴⁴² from you (all this in a cable) & that Lilly⁴⁴³ is better (who is Lilly?) – & so on. Will apes still intrude in our life? if so, I must learn to “take it” I suppose but I never will. Did my “angry” letters upset you in fact? Do say – I’ve had nothing from you on that – if you have a right to know me in every mood – so {I} have I – do tell me. I have had a silly letter from Violet Bonham Carter – following one in which she congratulates me on you – & said she loved me more than anyone outside her children – not wholly false possibly – she is a queer inhuman distinguished clever cerebral monster – I appeal to ladies over 60 it seems – & blamed me for telling Bob Boothby that All Souls was pro-Munich, or something – & contradicting Samuel,⁴⁴⁴ *she* had said in the *Spectator*.⁴⁴⁵ I replied & exonerated myself. But this is all triviality. What matters is our genuine absorption in each other: in the smallest details of our lives. I want to know *everything*: about the Austrians (they invited me with you: I wrote I could not go: & that I cd not speak for you) about Pam’s⁴⁴⁶ lunch, about the good kind Andreweses⁴⁴⁷ – he is a heavy noble creature – borné⁴⁴⁸ – a don – but full of loyalty & musical sensibilities to emotional moods – she a good sort, socially

⁴⁴² The telegram of 26 November 1955 in which this phrase occurs survives.

⁴⁴³ A mistake in the cable for ‘Willy’, i.e. Alice James’s husband William James.

⁴⁴⁴ Presumably Herbert Louis Samuel (1870–1963), 1st Viscount Samuel, Liberal politician, philosopher and reformer; active Zionist who had been High Commissioner of Palestine 1920–5.

⁴⁴⁵ E 510/2.

⁴⁴⁶ Pamela Margaret Elizabeth Berry (1914–82) née Smith, second daughter of F. E. Smith, 1st Earl of Birkenhead; wife of the newspaper proprietor (William) Michael Berry (1911–2001), later (1968) life peer; a famous society hostess and a close friend of IB.

⁴⁴⁷ Antony (“Tony”) Andrewes (1910–90), Fellow, Pembroke, 1933–46; New College, 1946–77; Wykeham Professor of Ancient History, Oxford, 1953–77; m. 1938 Alison Blakeway (1913–83) née Hope, Somerville English 1932–5, then literary critic for the *Sunday Times*, m. 1935 Alan Blakeway (1898–1936).

⁴⁴⁸ ‘Narrow-minded’.

a little inferiority ridden – motherly to misfits & drunks – but how wonderful that she shd have told Billa off – pure disinterested good will – like Mr Laughlin’s⁴⁴⁹ – who was delighted by your letter – he is now convinced that you may not be a blue stocking – & asks how & where he can meet you – you probably quite like red faced white haired jolly American Republicans. Ascoli⁴⁵⁰ asks the same – but you disliked him surely? I’d better keep him away. And there is the oily Henry Brandon (né Brandeis) of the Sunday Times who wants to entertain us in Washington: how does one evade people without wounding feelings? I won’t start another page: I *must* to go bed: I love you painfully: every time I write “you” or “love” or “Aline” I am tortured by the tantalizing images – so this is what it is to be lovesick, without the hysteria & self contempt of mere physical infatuation! 13 more days: I hate their very thought. Darling darling I cannot live without your love.

I.

What am I do about Edm. Wilson? You don’t want to see him? Do tell me beforehand. Or if not, not. I dined with some hideous vulgar, warm hearted Jews last night. All howling casualties: we must go to Israel in the spring. And send cards to Clarissa & Nin from there. Shall I suggest opera in New York to Nin? do write as if you really were coming – oh my darling I cannot bear this suspense: I have never known anything remotely like it.

⁴⁴⁹ Henry Alexander Laughlin (1892–1977), publisher (The Riverside Press and Houghton Mifflin).

⁴⁵⁰ Max Ascoli (1898–1978), Italian-born writer and editor; publisher and editor, *The Reporter*, 1949–68.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

TO ALINE HALBAN

Monday [sc. Tuesday] 1 a.m. [29 November 1955; *manuscript*]

Hotels Windermere, Chicago 37

My darling – my dearest dearest Aline –

You speak of the flatness, etc. of your letters: every word every comma has an almost physical effect on me. My entire condition is different not merely just before, during, after reading your letters – that is too obvious to say – but if I merely have a letter by you – read 10 times – (actually not fewer than 4 times) in my pocket: it transforms one's entire outlook, like speaking a different language. Our parting has produced incredible effects: each of our letters sets fire to the answer: we keep each other in a state of burning feeling: & yet – & this is really the point, the wonderful marvellous point which no one who has not experienced it can possibly know – there is no inflation, no exaggeration, no rhetorical whipping up of feeling. One always knows, of course one does, when it is that one whirls oneself into a state – it is in a sense genuine & one's own & not induced for conscious motives, yet one also knows that the cheque may not be backed absolutely by the emotional bullion in the bank – that one draws on credit somewhat. That is what, with your appalling honesty, my darling Aline, (oh how I adore to write these words) you tried to say to me in 1953 – in effect that if one rows out recklessly to sea, just because the water is yielding, the exercise agreeable & exciting – one may find oneself in waters one may not have wished to be in – deep or shallow, obscure or transparent, but not what one feels one belongs in. I don't know about 1953: I was miserable & excited then, & in love & half reluctant to admit it to myself, & simply flying through the air. But now: the more pressure one puts on the scaffolding of one's emotions, the stronger & more genuine it is: there are literally no words to convey the strength & reality of my (or your – I believe – I know) love: nothing is enough, yet it is not a hysterical spinning of words & feeling in some insanely exciting & demented spiral

going up & up & up. – I know that too (Patricia) & so do you (that one day in Aix), & this is totally different: there is something true in the existentialist talk about commitment: in religious talk about conversion: one does it not because it offers greater pleasure, or a calculable degree of greater happiness, security etc: one does it because one cannot avoid it: all paths lead there: quite calmly & firmly one enters the ocean & one is swallowed and one is at home & life is solid and one is at once madly moved & excited & passionate & quite sober: one knows one belongs, that this is it, the real thing. Oh – my darling, my dearest love, my darling Aline, I love you so terribly, so entirely, I cannot go on because of the physical discomfort of feeling what I do – I am getting too warm – (the window is *wide* open – & it is 10° F. cold) & I *must* prepare a lecture & I cannot stop. 12 days: – I shall sit in my hotel all Friday – till I *have* to go to Evanston, & North-Western University – to deliver my lecture – & wait for the telephone. I did not speak to your mother: there was no reply on Saturday – on Sunday I thought it wd be enough excitement for her if *you* spoke – to-day is too soon – I'll telephone to find out what arrangements she proposes to make say on Wednesday: Mr Wiesner rang me to-day – could I come to lunch on Sunday in Washington – I thought yes – might as well – he wants to invite his “chiefs” – Allen Dulles & Russian experts – rather boring for you? If you wanted to seeing the Proppers⁴⁵¹ perhaps you cd get out of it then? But if you can bear it, I suppose Mrs W.⁴⁵² & all the “wives” of the high officials will be there: anyhow you will act as you wish: I saw no way of refusing & accepted for you too but said I did not know your arrangements – we can always sail out on the alibi.

So now our horrible social programme is: Washington: we can go there very late on the 16th, by the last train, arriving as it were

⁴⁵¹ Eduardo Propper de Callejón (1895–1972), Spanish diplomat who helped thousands of Jews escape from occupied France during the Second World War, and his wife Hélène Fould-Springer (1907–97).

⁴⁵² Vera Weizmann (1882–1966) née Chatzman, wife of Chaim Weizmann. See B 643.

midnight: lunch 17, Betty:⁴⁵³ dinner: J. Alsop (no Mozart):⁴⁵⁴ lunch 18th Wiesners; dinner Blissés (Mozart); lunch 19 nobody; 6 p.m. my lecture: dinner (quick) & Mozart: & to New York that evening (by plane) or next morning by train, or that evening, minus Mozart, by train. Mayflower Hotel – vast, vulgar, funny, impersonal, has not answered about rooms yet: nor the Cambridge Hotel: but I am sure it will all be all right. A friend of mine – John Carter⁴⁵⁵ now of Sothebys – who has just stayed with Rowland (not Roland) B-Muller (you are thinking of the Chanson de R–) says he is in tremendous form, talking non-stop, & the fuss about where you, where I, where we are to stay is colossal & the rival snobberies enormous. How this must annoy my envious, disapproving, left wing Harvard Jewish ex-communist intellectuals. But never mind. The Austrian party must really have been rather agreeable: true, I've not written to Lady Waverley: nor to anybody at all (I *must* write Stuart) – do I *have* to write to her? I think she genuinely thinks she is heart-broken about our 'engagement' – no so much the fact as that I should not have told her – when Clarissa did tell her about hers – that is what is resented. I am sure you looked marvellous & exquisite at the Austrians – you are about your appearance as I am about my lectures – they are really better than most other peoples' – one *is* complimented on it – yet one knows what real excellence is, one is aware of falling short of it even by an inch – Here there is nothing to report. I am worried about my lectures, – not enough to say – bored – Chicago is terribly brutal, vulgar & too simple –

⁴⁵³ Elizabeth Sonia ('Betty') Harcourt (1910–59), Viscountess Harcourt, née Snagge, wife of William Edward Harcourt (1908–79), 2nd Viscount Harcourt, merchant banker; Minister (Economic), UK Embassy, Washington, and UK Executive Director, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and of International Monetary Fund, 1954–7.

⁴⁵⁴ Wolfgang Amadeus (né Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus) Mozart (1756–91), Austrian composer, keyboard player, violinist, violist and conductor whose prodigious talents were exhibited in every musical genre of the day.

⁴⁵⁵ John Carter (1905–75), antiquarian book expert, Scribner's 1927–53, attaché, British Embassy, Washington, 1953–5, Sotheby's 1955–72.

but yet America has its oddities. Yesterday a Jewish boy in the local train shyly approached me & discussed a point in my lecture sweetly & intelligently – then didn't pester – didn't give his name – & left me respectfully & nicely. To-day I went to hear Oistrakh⁴⁵⁶ play the violin – & he was magnificent. Like Stern⁴⁵⁷ but better: enormous natural musical appetite – incredible sweetness & depth of tone – bad taste in the actual pieces – a sense of délices – gay, natural, unspoilt, charming & marvellously gifted & young, all at 47 yrs of age. Russian Jews – even Alix sees that. I ate a meal in a 'coffee shop'. The waitress overheard my conversation with my colleague Dreben with whom I went & began asking questions about Einstein:⁴⁵⁸ explained that she was studying physics & biology: offered views about education & Mr Hutchins of Chicago: & finally went off to supply corned beef hash to some gangster with the words "you gentlemen go on with your conversation about maths: you don't come here to be monitored by nosey waitresses. But I think you don't quite get my point about physical chemistry & where it *isn't* biological *at all*". It is a remarkable country. Yet no good to us. And Chicago is horrible. But "shacked up" in the awful Windermere hotel suite we shall be O.K. – It wd be nice if you telephoned on, say Monday 5th – evening no good, as I have to dine with my colleagues then – one cannot guarantee the hour – & it is *torture* & useless to talk from some one else's house: but your morning is all right: with six hours difference you cd order the thing for your 8 a.m. (if that is not too early) = my 2 a.m., I'll go to sleep & wake up if necessary – or even 3 a.m. – 4 a.m. – or why not sometime between your 2 p.m. & your 6.30 – when I usually have to be gone (my 12.30) – or Monday or Tuesday or any day? Your 'psycho-analytic' confessions moved me fantastically – I have had the same calculations about my father v.

⁴⁵⁶ David Fedorovich Oistrakh (1908–74), Russian Jewish violinist, born in Odessa (Ukraine).

⁴⁵⁷ Isaac Stern (1920–2001), Russian-American violinist and committed Zionist.

⁴⁵⁸ Albert Einstein (1879–1955), German theoretical physicist famous for the development of relativity theory; Nobel Prize in Physics 1921.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

my mother: & now about my mother v. you: too awful. Now I must leave you (only because I have to go to a seminar – not forever as you like to point out but the word “leave” *is* horrible) – I *am* fat – 190 lb. I keep not eating but it seems to make little difference – I am seized by images and acutely uncomfortable – I really am nothing without you & much much much more than ever before, with you. I suffer when I think of apes. I love you absolutely. I kiss you.

I.

TO ALINE HALBAN

1.30 a.m. Tuesday [sc. Wednesday 30 November 1955; *manuscript*]

Hotels Windermere, Chicago 37

My darling, I love you my angel, My dearest Aline,

To-day incredibly exhausting: in the morning graduate students: then lunch (12.15) with 3 sociologists: $\frac{3}{4}$ hrs work on preparing a “class” – 3.30–6 p.m. Class (2½ hrs, barbarous). 6.30 dinner with Prof. John U. Nef,⁴⁵⁹ a gentlemanly rich man with French affinities, quite nice. Then till now in a drug Store with a queer crippled German, born in Riga, called von Blanckenhagen⁴⁶⁰ who *begged* me to talk with him – he is starved for European life – & described the war years in Germany. Rather a nice man, honourable, a hunchback, a Roman archaeologist, but a German. Hideous description of local student sex life. Talking of which: Mrs Constable has taken us a room in the Continental Hotel in Cambridge for 27/28 Dec. *she* says that Mrs James warned her not to have the bedrooms too close to each other. This I believe to be

⁴⁵⁹ John Ulric Nef, Jr. (1899–1988), economic historian who joined Chicago in 1929 and co-founded its Committee on Social Thought in 1941; visiting professor at French universities.

⁴⁶⁰ Peter Heinrich von Blanckenhagen (1909–90), expert on Roman art, visiting professor, Chicago, 1947–9, then a tenured professor.

a lie. Anyway they communicate. She (Olivia Constable) has submitted a list of guests for her party on the 28 – which is to start at 6 & go on indefinitely. I am hostile to this; you’ll be exhausted by meeting people by 8 & we must, I think go off & dine, & not trail on into supper at 9 – or wd you prefer this? All this has to be arranged with these good, but not very metropolitan people, beforehand. Rowland also has written saying how terribly hot Cambridge hotel rooms are – & the Ritz wd be better. So it would: but here I must beg you to be patient: I don’t want to shock the poorer Harvard dons by too openly changing the mode of life, & conspicuously staying in the most expensive hotel: so bear with me & stay in a suite (27 dollars a night – not too bad) for 2 nights. Mrs James, after sternly reminding me that she had invited me to stay with her – & that I did not reply to Billy’s letter (Lilly in the telegram is Billy) of congratulation, permits us to stay in a hotel, but also submits a list of guests for her “buffet supper” of the 27th – I *suppose* we shall enjoy it – I don’t think it will be long – 2 nights & one day: what about the Macleishes?⁴⁶¹ What about the Chermayeffs⁴⁶² (“Billy likes them – but I don’t”) what about the Levins?⁴⁶³ – do you want the Weisskopfs?⁴⁶⁴ etc. I’ll settle all this – you are right about the telephone: it is too tormenting: I sat in my

⁴⁶¹ Archibald MacLeish (1892–1982), poet and liberal political activist; Librarian of Congress 1939–44; Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, Harvard, 1949–62; m. 1917 Ada Taylor MacLeish (1892–1984) né Hitchcock, concert singer.

⁴⁶² Serge Ivan Chermayeff (1900–96) né Sergey Ivanovich/Davidovich Issakovich, Russian-born English/American architect; president, Institute of Design, Chicago, 1946–51; m. 1928 Barbara Maitland May (1904–2000).

⁴⁶³ Harry Tuchman Levin (1912–94), literary critic and author; m. 1939 Elena Ivanovna Žarudnaya (1913–2006); Irving Babbitt Professor of Comparative Literature, Harvard, 1960–83; cordially disliked by IB. ‘My great friend Harry Levin met me among the books in the Library. Butter wd not melt in his mouth: they must see me etc. [...] I ignored this. Lofty politeness is my note: yes, sometime, not now, we are busy scholars etc.’ IB to Aline Berlin, 5 October 1962.

⁴⁶⁴ Victor Weisskopf’s (1st) wife was the professional dancer Ellen Margrethe Tvede (1904–89).

MORE ENLIGHTENING

room – after promising to dine at 6.30 (not in evening dress) till 8 & then went. it is not worth the torment unless you order it for some hour when I am bound to be in (i.e. 12 midnight till 12 noon my time – = 6 a.m.– 6 p.m. yours) & that if it doesn't work, give it up without torture. In which case you need scarcely warn me. I feel you wish me to telephone your mother – I will. Stuart has written another amiable letter – why am I writing all this nonsense – because it is 2 a.m. & I am dead – I live on & feed off your letters – your mere handwriting – apes, apes – I was *delighted* by Stuart's very hostile description of Rees's soft, drunken meaninglessness – & his pointless treachery to his old friends when talking to the idiotic & stuffy Astor⁴⁶⁵ – accompanied by an equally malicious description of Freddie on his "Country Club week-end to St. Antony's" – he is successfully malicious, Stuart, – but again I am divagating – all I think about is you – physically mainly – the images are too concrete – & the *idiocy* of sitting here, lecturing, wasting time, avoiding lionization as far as possible, & every night & every morning & every afternoon unable to go on because of incredible desire to be with you & kiss you underneath the arm – I can hardly sit still as I am writing this – obviously – another day gone, thank God – I've never known time go so slowly – I am irritated by my own folly in coming – I'll never again do such a thing even with you – & violently in love – at this moment I see you, in white, & I can scarcely bear it – I have purchased two bedrooms in the train from Chicago for the 12th – & told everyone I am leaving on the 10th – no engagements – we must be alone – oh but even though only 11 days are left – I don't know how to live through them – if only I could think of something else – you are everywhere – your image – sometimes a most terribly concrete one which I cannot put on paper – rises in the middle of the lecture & I practically giggle with hysterical amusement & have to concentrate horribly to drive it away while actually addressing an audience. At other

⁴⁶⁵ (Francis) David Langhorne Astor (1912–2001), editor, *Observer*, 1948–75. IB knew Astor from Oxford in the early 1930s; their mutual friends included Adam von Trott, whom Astor revered more than IB did.

times I sit or lie a bit torpid on my bed (two twin beds – separated by a table) & cannot move for reasons which I leave you to imagine – I apologize if my letters rob you of peace – but I shall go on writing them – for nothing like this has ever happened to either of us before, & I want to say over & over again that I love you, only you, that I want to kiss the ankles of your feet, your calves & knees & thighs – I must really not go on – if only I cd go to sleep for 10 days –, wake up to see you, to touch you – I really do admire & worship you & cannot understand how you can even look at me – but I suppose if Hans ... I have nothing to say – I apologize – only that I am burning at all ends – I kiss you *deeply*.

I.

Aline! think! in eleven days, despite Mègeve uninterrupted life begins! Aline, my darling, this really is incredible happiness, which nobody we know begins to possess – nobody: I feel your light, shy kisses on my wrist.

TO ALINE HALBAN

1st December or really Nov. 30: but Dec. 1 in Oxford. [30 November 1955; *manuscript*]

Hotels Windermere, Chicago 37

My darling, My angel, Aline Aline Aline.

December! I am delighted it is here. But I really cannot go on like this. I am at this moment sitting in a stall of the Civic Opera, Chicago: in the interval of L'Elisir d'Amore by Donizetti. M. Simoneau is not as good as in Don Ottavio: nor can I listen. The dialogue of which you speak goes on continually; you are right: I sounded excited & disordered when we spoke on the telephone partly from the physical malaise which comes on me in huge waves – I almost welcome it, for it is a kind of link – a physical bond – with you; partly because of the tension of waiting before. There is now a gap of 10 days – I agree not to demand the telephone. The audience round me is grotesque: they have paid almost £3 a seat:

they are dressed in slacks, coloured jackets, “loafers”, tie clips, they have huge German necks & enormous flat faces or else they are gorillas: the Jews here look peculiarly gross & shaming: nobody speaks English, even American English, as understood in the East Coast: it is all mixed with German, Swedish, Yiddish Italian etc. – a shapeless amalgam without bones – when one of Ronnie’s grand friends did ask me to lunch it was like meeting a human being: by comparison Israel is very refined. This morning I woke early and was invaded by “images” & lay there helpless and near tears. Then my old jailbird friend – Prichard whom I liked so much during the war, but who, I think I told you, went to prison for forging some votes for Truman⁴⁶⁶ – it is a dark & awful story out of which he emerges not too badly – like a silly idiot but not a criminal – telephoned. Cd he come & see me – but he was poor & dollarless. I finally ‘fixed’ him for my last Thursday on condition he left on Friday afternoon & did not linger into Saturday. “I hear you’re married’ he said “I was told by Patrick O’Donovan⁴⁶⁷ of the London Observer’ – I do not know Mr O.’D – never seen him – we are obviously objects of public curiosity. Then Mr Behrman rang up from tea with Nin: cd *he* come on th[at?] Thursday too to Chicago to see me – he too will have to be turned out in *good* time: I shd not mind *so* much (tho’ I shd) seeing somebody for an hour after, say, 36 hrs alone with you: but if these people come specially they expect “companionship”. Out of question: Nin wants us to dine on the 20th in N.Y. with various gentlemanly figures. That is the night on which we come back from Washington – I refused to commit us.

At this point darkness descended. I originally brought these sheets of paper to write to Lady Waverley a formal letter of condolence – if Pam[ela Hartwell?] is against it, so much the more. At least she, who idiotically feels that she has ‘lost’ me, hasn’t

⁴⁶⁶ Harry S. Truman (1884–1972), Democrat US statesman; senator, Missouri, 1935–45; FDR’s Vice President 1945, assuming office on the death of FDR that April; US President 1945–53.

⁴⁶⁷ Patrick Anthony O’Donovan (1918–81), journalist.

allowed her malice to play, like the Harrods: Billa looks like all the ladies on the stage before me now. But once I came here it was clear that I could not write to Lady W. or anybody else: that I can only talk, write think of you – that I am prepared to cover sheets of paper everywhere – in rooms, buses, trains lecture rooms – I can't *tell* you how awful & how wonderful it is when your presence suddenly breaks in in the middle of a lecture or a seminar – all with & about & towards you. I hear nothing, I see nothing, & yet the heart of it all is quite tranquil – I am with you there – at the point of rest – forever: I am not upsettable as before save by you: or something to do with you: & by that more than before if possible. Let Billa go on being frustrated & mad, & Roy twisted & envious & bitter & poisoned; let Freddie say this and Solly that and all the large & small apes gibber & make faces – I no longer mind; but if you look at anyone, I shall be silent (not for long: but for a bit) & I shall suffer, suffer so steadily and pathetically that you will notice it: & say something: I shall do my best to deny it: but you will always know the truth about me, & about yourself too: the whole situation with Hans rests upon such denial of the facts – however honourable & unconscious – that nothing, no little truth cd be faced: by him because he is blind: self-blinded: by you because you decided to get used to darkness and call it light: occasionally no doubt things were blurted both by you & Michel & then quickly swallowed again (or conscientiously denied) – really with us this will not be necessary. The tests have been gone through – the truth has been proved over & over again: what bit of ourselves have we not submitted to Magic Flute tests? Everything has been tried – denial, renunciation, concealment, risks, parting – attempts to detect in one's words – inflation: in one's feeling – “mere” physical desire – in one's attitude, just respect, just affection, just “adoration” – & it is all marvellously false: the game of patience only yields to one true & honest solution – your father's patient way is best – we love each other absolutely: physically, morally, emotionally, intellectually even – we trust each other, we feel derelict and purposeless without each other, we derive our sense

of reality from the thought – idea & from the presence of each other.

At this point darkness came: another act & the end & I came home & I continue. During the last act which was charming & gay I was so moved by the vision of you (like the Pope of la pucelle⁴⁶⁸ I have visions) then I suddenly & sweetly cried: alone, with gum chewing neighbours, tears rolled down my cheeks: I don't know what I can have looked like when it was over. M. Simoneau's voice broke: he retired: a man came out & said he was indisposed, but being a splendid old trooper (words actually used. It is more usual to say that people lie like a trooper) wd go on for "the show must go on" he then croaked his way through & was applauded continuously for his courage. All v. sweet & 19th century & like a very bad sentimental film. I cried *unrestrainedly*: partly from hunger – I worked so hard I forgot to dine – partly from unheard of violence d'amour. I am really malade de toi:⁴⁶⁹ oh Aline my divinely beautiful love, are you really coming at last? are you really? You will fly on Thursday: you will have to cable me flight number etc. – I shall not rest till I verify the actual arrival of your aeroplane in Idlewild: or wherever. Then I shall sit here, talking to the jailbird, trying to accumulate ideas for my lecture in Northwestern University for Friday evening, until you ring: then I shall put him out of the room (he will listen at the keyhole: he is very endearing) – I shall fling open the door as in a play: & see him running away: so when I answer, give me 1 minute to clear him out: I don't really yearn for his society: but he used to be a great friend, & is in miserable circumstances, & has consequent rights. Then we shall talk – I jumping every 3 minutes to see whether the door is spied on – & less than 24 hrs later I shall be marching up & down one of the gloomiest platforms in the world – will all this really be? I ought to be working on a lecture now – the two last ones were terrific successes – I won't deny – the 2^d more than the 1st – but

⁴⁶⁸ 'La Pucelle' means 'The Virgin', i.e. Joan of Arc, whose visions were famous.

⁴⁶⁹ 'Ill with you'.

the 3^d won't & the last is bound to be poor – I cannot collect fascinating thoughts on the topic in question. But I *cannot* I can only see you & kiss you with such tendresse⁴⁷⁰ as I cannot begin to convey on the tip of your shoulder (why? but it is so) and elsewhere – there is no language which has not been ruined by commercialization & vulgarization to describe what are deeply universal & fundamental moral as well physical needs – I want, as from the 10th December, to be married to you: I feel we are still lovers – that you are still in some sense free (I am not) even if you don't wish to be: whereas after the sacred date, Dec. 10 – when we travel together in effect as a ménage – “openly” – this will somehow symbolize & seal. A letter came to-day from Felix Frankfurter asking if we cd lunch on Saturday or Sunday; how can we? on Sat. the Harcourts (suite in Mayflower – 2 bedrooms one sitting room engaged: surely they won't object? the hotel I mean?) Sunday Wi[e]sners: we'd better go to tea: & the Biddles also ask: he is an amiable goose who was Roosevelt's⁴⁷¹ Attorney General: she a sweet rather nice austere poetess, sister of the Ninfa lady⁴⁷² – Princess ? [Caetani] whom Alan knows – in Rome. Also tea: or lunch on Monday? will you be *very* bored? I think Washington will be nice & Boston hell. Honestly, truly, I don't want this mob: I want to be alone with you more that you with me (even) & I am in torment without you and I want nothing but you, & am in a super-Guèbre⁴⁷³ state, persecuted, full of love, counting hours, I kiss you most passionately again & again. Yes!

Isaiah

⁴⁷⁰ 'Fondness'.

⁴⁷¹ Franklin Delano Roosevelt ('FDR') (1882–1945), Democrat US President 1933–45.

⁴⁷² Marguerite Gilbert Caetani (1880–1963), Princess of Bassiano, Duchess of Sermoneta, publisher, half-sister of Mrs Biddle; the Caetani family owned the Garden of Ninfa in Italy.

⁴⁷³ A Guèbre (*sic*) is a Zoroastrian fire-worshipper.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

TO ALINE HALBAN

Postmark 2 December 1955 [*manuscript*]

Hotels Windermere, Chicago 37

My darling Aline

This will have to be a short note – don't be furious: for I love you extravagantly at this moment & cannot stop writing even though I must hurry: to Iowa University, Iowa City, Iowa – it sounds, as somebody said, like a lament – Iowa Iowa Iowa – to read a quasi-paper:⁴⁷⁴ all my talks are like sonatas which are not quite regular – sonata quasi fantasia is exactly the description: I love you so hideously – more & more & more, it is boring (for you I mean – I can go on saying it forever – I adore doing so) to repeat it – last night I delivered my 3^d lecture. Hall overcrowded – hundreds – which has caused a little disapproval & envy in the breast of the most intelligent man here – a sociologist called Riesman⁴⁷⁵ who wrote a book called “The Lonely Crowd” – plenty of what Diana Cooper correctly calls “Jewish trouble” – v. anti-Zionist – long tedious argument with me afterwards about how British my point of view was, & how little I understood America & American Jews. I came home feeling depressed: I thought my lecture a flashy performance, Mr Riesman wasn't being nice, & I then, quite mechanically decided to think of you as the universal antidote to all sorrows – & at once grew contented happy & peaceful. If you want the pleasure of thinking that you are doing good – you are, I can tell you: all wounds heal, all pain goes, the mere idea is enough to heal me. A letter from Viscountess Harcourt reported her arrangements: wd we dine with them alone on Friday; wd we dine with Johnny & Margaret Walker (charming)

⁴⁷⁴ On Herzen and Russian radicalism.

⁴⁷⁵ David Riesman (1909–2002), US lawyer and sociologist, famous for his study of US society, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (London and New Haven, 1950); Professor of Social Sciences, Chicago, 1949–58; Henry Ford II Professor of Social Sciences, Harvard, 1958–80.

on Monday between my lecture & Sascha's concert (yes: I accepted) wd I go to lunch with Mr Brandon on Monday to meet "important people" alone – men only: I wrote back saying I'd rather not: he must invite ladies – my new passion – or I wd not go. Anyway all this is discussable. Mr B. rang me at 7.30 am disgusting – this morning, worried about my *début* under his roof. I telephoned your mother this morning & had a brief & most amiable conversation: she finds all our arrangements perfect & has reserved me a room but warns me it is very expensive: I explained I was terribly rich. The conversation was very very nice. Nin telephoned to ask me to stay, offering a flat etc. & saying it wd be so much cheaper. I refused indignantly & made my reasons clear. Your mother says the whole of Ort⁴⁷⁶ & portions of U.J.A.⁴⁷⁷ are most excited about "us". Mr Behrman telephoned: Marietta has asked him to dinner to meet you: he wants to stay with me here too – it is not v. convenient but he is an old friend & a very nice man. He has met a couple called the Hahns⁴⁷⁸ from Germany – he an economist – & they asked him if he knew me & you – & then denounced Hans in terrible terms (this happens too much) – she spoke, apparently, about how awful he was in Frankfurt years ago (who are these people?) as a heavy & pretentious flirt & he said he was always referred to as a "Zwockl" a Viennese term unknown to me, but apparently not very complimentary & implying phoney-ness. Torrents of abuse which Mr Behrman asked about: I defended Hans feebly out of good taste, I suppose, & said all Germans hated each other & Frankfurt was particularly bad (Alix is obviously quite brave in her loyalty to H. – he little realizes it) – the anti-Hans floods are in full tide: & although this is probably exaggerated & unjust, how could you, my darling, how could you?

⁴⁷⁶ Selective acronym of the organisation's original Russian name 'Obshchest-vo remeslennogo I zemledel'cheskogo truda', 'The society for trade and agricul-tural labour [amongst Jews in Russia]'; later 'Society for the dissemination of labour'.

⁴⁷⁷ United Jewish Appeal, philanthropic consortium.

⁴⁷⁸ Frank Horace Hahn (1925–2013), economist; m. 1946 Dorothy Salter, also an economist.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

I am beginning to think that I really have rescued you: that it wd have been not too bad for you even if you felt mere gentle friendship for me – that the rest is what Christians call Grace – something heavenly over & above the normal deserved happiness. Yes, I love you deeply & faithfully & gaily & only suffer torture from simple deprivation – last night in the middle of the lecture was a particularly bad moment – your face rose & flooded me in the middle of a paragraph: with appalling effort I liberated myself & threw out meaningless words just to play for time: & then suddenly denounced the Germans – whom I saw – 20 German professors – nationalistic German Jews – all cousins of Sir F. Simon glaring at me from the stalls: I became very fierce: but they turned out to like it. Now I must rush off to Iowa City. Too many people want to see me here by now: all the local universities, Jewish groups, even priests at Loyola University have suddenly woken up to my presence: I need protection: will you be a true wife to me & shoo these people away? or will you be bored & leave me to my own devices? & how can I prepare my lecture for Iowa if your noble & beautiful head is perpetually before me and nothing else exists? I suddenly think: supposing I had gone to New York in April 1954: & the scene in Paris had not taken place: where shd we have been? wars make nations, & agonies create “human contacts”: I kiss you “violently” as is *my* nature, & I am very Indian to-day – touch, brown hands & all. I’ll write again, but not after Sunday – your mother has booked a room in the 6 p.m. train from N.Y. – we *are* lucky. Good bye my darling.

I.

TO ALINE HALBAN

Saturday 3 December [1955; *manuscript*]

Hotels Windermere, Chicago 37

My darling My darling

I write you sadly again – for 2 days no letter – & the last one *very* sweet, delightfully wonderful & hurried – & to-morrow is

Sunday, so 3 days silence – I am heroically refraining from telegrams, telephones etc. but at really quite vast cost to myself: the last thing I want is to force you to write when it is a pure nuisance – I know well what it is – (as with my letters to my mother) when I hurry into a corner, & with guilt, haste, annoyance, shame at the annoyance & the haste, scribble something & then add, because it really looks *too* short. This must certainly not be allowed to occur: & I write now because I cannot bear not to: it relieves one’s gloom *somewhat* even to cast a letter into the void – don’t, because you are leaving on Thursday, become wholly silent – or do if you feel like it (I *am* becoming neurotic! – I imagine you in the midst of peace & enjoyments – Wollheims,⁴⁷⁹ your children, Oxford familiars – while I go to the University of Iowa & return to find letters from my mother & not you – so aeroplanes *do* fly – I feel a second’s annoyance – & then it is no good: I cannot boil: I love you too enormously: but I won’t bore you with the fantastic visit to Iowa – a university in the limitless steppes – corn, hogs, wonderful food – former-philosophers – me on Herzen – oh it was so funny: but I am not “in the mood” – only to say how much how tenderly, permanently, despite your departures to Nijni Novgorod, I love you – and I’ve never felt *such* dependence in my life: *there*, I feel a little better: I shall put on long pants, a hideous suit & feel official *anger*: but I feel relieved a little now: just by having written your name & feeling it too in every stroke of the pen. I am very late for all my appointments, but I cannot stop writing – for I love you too terribly: & don’t propose to play a part & “punish” you by silence – but perhaps some aeroplanes don’t fly and there will be 2 letters to-morrow – or on Monday: well: I must stifle my feelings & contract the vulnerable area. I am about to cancel Mr Brandons

⁴⁷⁹ Richard Arthur Wollheim (1923–2003), lecturer in philosophy, UCL, 1951–60, reader 1960–3, Grote Prof. of Philosophy of Mind and Logic 1963–82; prof. of philosophy, Columbia 1982–5, Berkeley 1985–2002; m. (1st) 1950 Anne Barbara Denise (1920–2004) née Powell after her divorce from Philip Toynbee.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

“important” lunch for Nelson Rockefeller⁴⁸⁰ & McArthur’s son⁴⁸¹ & the Republicans which will *infuriate* him & make him *bate* me but I don’t mind. I only mind one thing (there it starts again) – but no! no! no! I *shall* master myself, & go & do what I must. Darling Aline, I shall not breathe during this last week: you must know what powers you have over me & use them sparingly. I feel *much* better: & send you the sweetest kisses – & love you without measure – & take nothing I say too seriously – it will be heaven when we meet.

love

Isaiah

I am sure it is *pure* accident about the letter: no aeroplanes or something. I am happy again. I am *such* a child. Too ridiculous but I won’t do anything silly – & telephone & make you hysterical with waiting at *your* end.

TO ALINE HALBAN

Sunday evening [4 December 1955; *manuscript*]

Hotels Windermere, Chicago, P.O. Station 37

My darling

It was an idea of *genius* to telephone me. No letter from you Thursday, Friday, & on my return from Iowa, Saturday; therefore, since none on Sunday, 4 days silence. Of course to be depressed is *idiotic*: nevertheless one is: & simply to give *physical* relief to feeling I *had* to write as I did: I wonder why no letter came: weather? censorship? They will probably all be here to-morrow in a heap. But forgive me: I know one should not pour out one’s depression on anyone else, particularly if one loves them so utterly – so

⁴⁸⁰ Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller (1908–79), grandson of John D. Rockefeller, Sr, who founded Standard Oil; a liberal Republican, he unsuccessfully sought his party’s nomination as its presidential candidate 1960, 1964, 1968; Gerald Ford’s Vice President 1974–7.

⁴⁸¹ Arthur MacArthur IV (b. 1938), only child of General Douglas MacArthur.

unbelievably: but sometimes one cannot help it – & if I can not cry to you, to whom can I? I have no other intimate friend: nor, in that sense, have you: Bill & Pussy? Stuart? impossible. when I came in last night at midnight after hearing a most spectacularly brilliant performance of Ballo in Maschera⁴⁸² – which I sat through gloomily, having not eaten, I found the note telling me to ring an operator. She asked me if I wd be ‘available’ at 3 a.m. – *available!* The world was transformed: fantastic radiance. One is *so* simple & so childish: as with a hand all one’s malaise is swept off & away, I cd not sleep, I could not wait: I ate a kind of coffee bean to keep awake: I prepared to read a million books: but by 1 a.m. my eyes were closing, so I did *not* put in the wax *boules*,⁴⁸³ switched off the light, dozed, & some very splendid images duly arrived. I was semi-asleep when the bell rang, & then, very quickly, you. Oh I cannot describe it: love happiness bliss adoration, serenity – joy, above all, joy: joy! joy, joy! You were alive, well, coming. I don’t see why all should not go well: the aeroplane *will* go off on Thursday: you’ll get to New York on Friday: your mother has, I think, taken you a bedroom (I hope) on the 6 p.m. train which has a *telephone* – if you are too late I shall know it from here – & there is a train at 11.15 p.m. on which it *may* be possible to get a reservation: on that day I shall be in till 5.30 p.m. (your 6.30). definitely: I must. Then alas, I have to go to lecture in Evanston: lecture at 7.45 or 8, over by 9, ‘drinks’ with the Prof.s, & back by car at 9.45 or 10 – back here 11.15 p.m. or so: If there is no news I shall not ring your mother (it will be 12.15 in New York) but only the airline: if you arrive after I’ve left here & before I return you will perhaps send a telegram, or better, telephone message: about what time you get into Chicago. Theoretically it is best to get off at the station *before* the terminus: Englewood (as opposed to La Salle Station) which is much nearer the hotel: but a) there are too few porters b) you will forget to do it c) you might as well drive through the full horror of Chicago at once. But if you feel like being rational, let me know:

⁴⁸² Verdi’s 1859 opera *Un ballo in maschera* (*A Masked Ball*).

⁴⁸³ ‘Balls’, i.e. earplugs.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

I'll be wherever you say: if you say nothing, then at the Main Station. You are quite right: it was mad to come here: absolutely mad. But I suppose you did see more of the children: all I did was to earn some money and establish a name here: not a terrific one, but enough to get on with. Not worth it, was it – & the tortures of this last week are too awful – to-day I was driven out to Lake Forest to lunch with some rich Trustee of the University – part of the social duty of my professional promoters – to cart “lions” about. Boredom and real materialism: revolting. First question “is it true you are to marry soon? One of those *beautiful* fresh complexioned English girls?” “Who told you, I asked Mrs Graham Aldis⁴⁸⁴ (that is the name)? “Why everyone *here* knows – we are all so *happy* for you”. Too absurd. We shall soon be the most famous couple in the world. Betty H[arcourt] telephoned: there is a collision, I said I wd lunch with Frankfurters – Monday 19th & also with Mr Brandon & his Republicans. I must refuse Mr B: he is *furiosus*. Very well I'll lunch with F. on Saturday: leaving only Friday dinner with Harcourts. Betty greatly relieved: she wants you (genuinely) & me not much. All very unimportant. Lists of guests & emendations submitted constantly & comically by M-mes James & Constable: really very funny: 19th century: sortabilité discussed. In Washington & Boston our progress will be quite handsome. The last teleph conversation was *divine*. It alters my life: only you can. I kiss you “violently” – & feel a gentle return. We really are terribly in love.

I.

⁴⁸⁴ Novelist, poet and children's author Dorothy Keeley (1896–1966), m. 1922 Graham Aldis (1895–1966), real estate executive, Chicago.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1946–1960

TO ALINE HALBAN

7 December 1955 [*cable*]

Chicago, Ill

YOUR LETTER TOO WONDERFUL HAIR BEAUTIFULLY UN-
CUT PLEASE COMMUNICATE AIR LINE FLIGHT NUMBER.

TO ALINE HALBAN

6 pm Wednesday [7 December 1955; *manuscript*]

Hotels Windermere, Chicago, P.O. Station 37
Fairfax 4.6000, Room 317.

My darling

Your telegram giving the Boac flight has just arrived: so have 2 wonderful long letters of – one before & after the Wollheims dinner, the other from Oxford – Bill – Moscow: *after* the last letter you sent, why I don't know. My telegram last night referred only to your last letter – but these are wonderful enough: I love you with all my being and my excitement is certainly no less great than yours. Now: I shall be in my room in this hotel all Friday till 1 hour to lecture at Evanston. On Thursday I lecture at 8.30 p.m. & shall not be in till midnight or later: I shall telephone N.Y. inevitably to find out if your flight took off. Then on Friday I shall be in till 5 p.m. at least – or 5.15: then I am driven to Evanston (I may stay here later but probably not), lecture at 7.30, leave Evanston at 9.30 & am back at 10.30 or 11 p.m. here. My fat ex-jailbird Prichard may be with me on Friday: but if & (when) you ring I shall expel him. I have written to the Carlyle asking them to pay for my luggage if brought by Railway Express: – I shall send off the bulk of it on Friday. Also that I wd be in New York 13–16th & 20–4th January. Is that wrong? The gap 16–20th? if so, tell them, do, my darling (I cannot suddenly use *imperatives* to you) to reserve the expensive room continuously of course. It is v. nice of your mother to wish to invite me to stay: 400 dollars is quite a lot of

MORE ENLIGHTENING

money – but I think better not; Allix (as your brother spells it) is allowed to pay for me: but it is a little different: what do you think? It is not as if I were staying in her actual house: it does not matter much: it is not an issue, not even worth discussing. As we have to lunch with Frankfurters on Saturday, we had better go to Washington on Friday at 4 p.m. or so, since otherwise we don't see Betty; I promised we'd dine on Friday night; Mr Richman (of the Lecture Centre) has bitterly complained that I have treated him disgustingly (not to me) & I have: in the sense that I *loathed* being pursued for 2 years: & detest lecturing to a *salon* audience: & got my New York agent to haggle with him about the fee: he is *furiosus*. Can't be helped, but Betty who has denigrated him to me slightly now takes his side: I don't know him: he is certainly a social climber: it is all trivial & I won't waste your time with it. I shall not reply to Bill either till I see you. Certainly I shan't go to Moscow without you. The Laughlins came here to-day & long to see you – will in Cambridge Mass. But why am I pattering about those trivialities? I long to say only *one* thing: as violently & terrifically as possible: that I cannot bear to be without you ever anywhere any more. At all. Let me continue with prose items: if you arrive in N.Y. in time, do take the 6 p.m. train: that is 5 p.m. here & you cd telephone me before 5.30; I'll wait till then (train has a telephone; if after, there is a train at 11.15 p.m.: I shan't live till I hear your voice, but I shall control myself, deliver my lecture, etc. I shall hire a car & meet you (you *could* see me in bed – but better not: I *shall* be pale, your dry, light kiss, rien à dire etc. I'll wear a vulgar shirt or something – doesn't matter. It is best to get off at *Englewood* 15 minutes before Chicago: I'll meet you there at 8.30 a.m. I can't quite believe it.

I.

TO MARIETTA TREE

Thursday [1955; *manuscript*]

Mount Holyoke College, Mass.

Dearest Marietta,

How sweet & nice they all are here – friendly, kind, sincere intelligent and a balm to the wounded spirit – not that mine is specially wounded at the moment – still this beautiful courtesy & extreme moral genuineness are really delightful. So was New York – I do thank you & Ronnie: I am much too well treated – I always feel like explaining that really my true nature is being mistaken – I am given too much more than my due – someone will subtract from it somewhere on some terrible day of judgement so as to get the reckoning just – *that is* Judaeo-Protestant Angst, *if* you like. But I did enjoy it all very, very much: including Mr. Lieberson whom I thought very exhilarating, amusing, intelligent & agreeable: not really gay inside – New York neuroses – but all the brighter for that: when he smiles it is a little mirthless, like Diana Cooper: that fascinated me too, George Barker (I say with quite superfluous malice) quietly feels that all depends on him now – unlike Harry Hopkins who used to muse about how a saddle maker's son from Iowa got so far – that pleased me too. Sam B. alone retains unlimited humanity & with all *his* neuroses, a sense of proportion & interest in & love of other people. Evie I thought did look ill. But I must not say such things – cp. the Pam–Clarissa row – I am silent. Now for Chicago: I have spoken twice here already, & am to speak twice more: they *are* very kind, very disarming & exhausting to the highest degree. It is a very fine day but I must think about Coexistence & the Nature of Political Judgement. I never did ring John Russell. My thoughts are wandering I must collect them briskly and give value for money. Thank you ever so much – I'll look forward enormously to liberty after Dec. 15 – it seems “we” sail on Jan 4 & cannot wait longer.

Much love

Isaiah

MORE ENLIGHTENING

P.S. I hope I left you enough money? I sent no fewer than 4 cables –

On 6 February 1956 the American politician Paul H. Nitze wrote to IB with some questions about his Historical Inevitability, first declaring himself, with some tact, 'full of admiration for the clarity of the ideas which emerge from a richer style than most Americans are used to'. He wanted to know whether the system-builders whom IB attacks were really determinists, or left a measure of room for human responsibility and freedom; he also asked about the scope of moral judgement in taking us beyond tradition and common sense. He enclosed a copy of a reply he had written to 'some of the more extreme scientific determinists' in the USA.

TO PAUL H. NITZE

24 March 1956

Headington House

Dear Paul,

Thank you very much for your letter of 6 February, which I have read with [the] greatest possible interest. The questions which you ask are questions indeed. I have thought about them – not nearly long enough I fear: I think about things in leaps and bounds instead of, as one should, in a solid continuous way – and have a few reflections in my mind which I hasten to let you have. Let me deal with your points in order.

1. You say that the constructors of great systems do in fact leave some room for human responsibility and freedom. This is quite true. You also say that they are not complete determinists and that I too concede that human freedom is not limitless, and that consequently what one should ask [about] is the nature of the limits to freedom and therefore the extent of the area of responsibility. With all this I agree. My objection to the constructors of the systems is their methods: I do not understand the principles in accordance with which some of these, e.g. Spengler and Toynbee

(whom I think inferior to Spengler), determine the frontiers between freedom and necessity. It seems to me there are two ways at least in which this can be done that are intelligible. The first, and the only one which seems to me valid for historians who regard history as an empirical study (as e.g. Toynbee, at least, claims to do), is to do it empirically: that is to say to adduce such empirical evidence as the sciences or common sense provide about what men can and what they cannot do. The questions how far e.g. geographical, ecological, physiologic-al, psychological etc. factors produce this or that set of effects, and therefore condition human lives in this or that degree and in this or that fashion, seems plainly an empirical enquiry. And the findings of, let us say, criminologists or Freudians or agricultural economists with a historical flair seem to me to be thoroughly relevant and tend both to explain and to exonerate the behaviour both of masses and of individuals in various situations to the degree to which one regards their findings as valid.

With all this I have no quarrel. Indeed I tried to say something of the sort in one or two long footnotes in my lecture. Alternatively, there are religious or metaphysical methods of drawing these frontiers whereby you claim some non-empirical means of detecting an unalterable plan in the universe, whether made by [a] personal deity or due to some metaphysical structure in the nature of things. I do not myself hold with this: but if this is spelt out openly, as, let us say, by Bossuet or by some other openly orthodox Christian historian who claims to be able to trace the finger of God in the unrolling of specific episodes in history, I can, still, I suppose, as an empirical historian, complain that such a revelation is not vouchsafed to me – or even object that some of the empirical facts which I do know contradict this and that the intuition is therefore – if it exists – at fault. If one's a priori intuition collides with empirical findings, then, if one is to cling to it, one must with Hegel say 'so much the worse for the facts'.

This heroic proceeding is not adopted by any decent historian, almost by definition. If on the other hand the a priori intuition is of a very general kind and simply declares that whatever occurs is

necessitated, or is part of the divine plan, but that we do not know enough to determine what this plan, or any portion of it, is in any particular instance, then it is compatible with empirical history, with *all* empirical possibilities equally, and therefore sheds no light upon it, nor upon the frontiers between freedom and necessity. Whatever happens is foreordained; but we cannot tell what is foreordained, nor therefore what is necessary and to what degree man is free, or whether he is free at all. Since we are incurably ignorant of this we could behave as if we are free; this I take to be the position of Calvinism. The great system-builders take up neither of these positions: they claim that they can see a specific pattern in history, and then wobble about whether this is done on empirical evidence or on [the basis of] some kind of peculiar historical insight, which is theological, metaphysical, and yet not exactly *a priori*. They then proceed to talk in terms of vast impersonal forces, [and] claim that these are unalterable, but no one asks what their evidence for the working of these is – it is not the scrupulous accumulation of evidence of more modest claimants, say economic historians or psychologists, but merely, it seems to me, the arrangements of the facts in vague patterns.

When I say ‘vague’ I mean that for example Toynbee, with his Challenge and Response, treats almost any differences between a posterior state and an anterior state as either a response to a challenge or a failure to respond to a challenge, whichever suits him best. It is impossible to extract from him any definite criterion of what constitutes a challenge, and what constitutes its response, so that one could by means of it check in terms of some set of facts not adduced by him whether indeed a challenge has been met by the appropriate response in accordance with the provided criteria of what is appropriate. I mean that the kinds of things he regards as typical responses to challenges in one situation are so different from the kinds of things which he regards as typical responses in others that there is not enough that is common between them to give any clear sense, or criterion, of the kind of situation describable as a challenge and the kind of situation describable as a response, save the mere fact that they are in fact different from

each other, and that one is later than the other. I do not think this is an exaggeration. That is why his theory, when looked at closely, turns out [to be] nothing but a vast tautology – namely that things happen after other things in the way that they do, and that what happens is often very different from that what preceded it.

He then goes on to attribute historical situations to the working of these undefined and, it seems to me, indefinable factors. The morphology of cultures, which is Spengler's stock-in-trade, similarly imposes some kind of determined pattern upon the human beings caught in these cultures, but again it is impossible to tell from him how one determines what enters into a morphology and what doesn't, and to what degree human beings are free to alter it and to what extent these 'inexorable' forces cannot be opposed. Those who read these treatises not unnaturally begin to attribute human actions – or what they had previously been thought to be human actions – to the workings of these 'forces', which turn out upon examination to be nothing but semi-arbitrary arrangements of facts in aesthetically pleasing patterns, suddenly transformed into causally efficacious 'forces'. My quarrel therefore is not that the system-builders are determinists – determinism may indeed turn out to be true – but that they are charlatans; that is to say that the bricks out of which they build their edifices, whether the determined sections or the free, are bogus; that what they claim to be revelations are not instruments of knowledge; that neither the use of Spengler's nor of Toynbee's frameworks helps us either to discover new truths, or to have a 'deeper' understanding of old truths, and that to the degree to which people have tried to use them as instruments for these purposes, they have in fact been led into empirical blunders, as demonstrated for example by Geyl and other critics; while the antidote to this – the thesis that these schemata are not empirical keys, but frames into which all facts necessarily fit, makes them either too vague or empty tautologies.

2. Your second point is much more serious and strikes much nearer home. I do not, of course, wish to maintain that determinism is not true because it would be too bad if it were; on the contrary I do specifically allow that it may in fact be true; I do

think that the case for it has not been rendered plausible – except by loose extrapolation – let alone demonstrated; and that the science of sociology, despite all hopes and promises, remains no more than a programme, not an achievement, not even as much of one as, say, psychology. Nor do I wish to say that determinism cannot be true because to assume that it is goes too deeply against the ways in which we think or speak. But I do say something very similar to this, namely: those who easily assume that determinism may be true, and argue for it, and regard themselves as such, do not *in fact* speak or think as if it were in fact true, do not in fact practise what they preach or what they believe themselves to believe. Determinism may indeed be true; but nobody has yet faced up to the transformation of our ways of thinking that the concrete – as opposed to the merely theoretical – acceptance of this would entail. I tried to indicate that a far greater revolution in our outlook would be required than the conversion from, say, teleology to mechanistic causality; a transformation so far-reaching, affecting so many of the most pervasive and apparently fixed habits of speech, thought and feeling, that we simply lack the imagination to be able to calculate the consequences – to conceive of what a world in which determinism was seriously taken for granted would be like (in which praise and blame in the normal sense would be meaningless, it was absurd to conceive of unrealised possibilities, the notion of choice was inapplicable or unintelligible, etc.).

This certainly does not disprove determinism, nor do I, I hope, represent it as so doing: but it does show what price the acceptance of this theory involves: the number of and kind of accepted beliefs and habits that would have to be overthrown if this view were adopted. One must – I argue – consider the kind of reasons one has for believing in determinism, and the kind of empirical evidence which exists for obliterating claimed areas of human freedom, as against the reasons and the evidence for the vast structure of normal beliefs and mental habits which would have to be upset. If determinism is true, upset of course it should be; but the mass and weight and type of evidence against determinism is seen to be much greater as a result of this argument than

determinists commonly assume – it is not just one theory among many, with so much evidence for or against itself, the truth or falsity of which leaves the rest of our structure of thought and feeling relatively intact. And this, together with the absence of positive evidence for determinism, and failure of all efforts to construct a genuine human science, seems to me virtually conclusive; virtually but not literally. In theory determinism may still yet be true. If someone really were to write down at this moment something which would tally exactly with all that I shall record myself as having thought and felt etc. in let us say the next twelve hours – if protocols of this kind, minute and comprehensive, could be made on the basis of some new psychological or physiological doctrine founded on experiment – I should be shaken; if this became frequent, our outlook would, in due course, be violently transformed; more so than it was after the Middle Ages (the last really violent upheaval).

As for moral judgement, you say ‘there are moral issues for which tradition and common sense don’t give conclusive, or even very satisfying,⁴⁸⁵ answers’. This has, no doubt, always been true, and that is why there is at all times a liability to moral perplexity. But then you go on to say ‘It is the hope that cosmology, history, metaphysics and aesthetics may give some believable insights into purposes more general than the individual, the family, class, nations or culture [that sustains the interest of the student of these questions].’ Whose hope? Not mine. When in the famous argument Creighton urged Acton not to condemn the Borgias, but to consider that in their day the moral ‘climate’ was different, other moral and political considerations prevailed, etc., etc., even he was doing no more than to ask Acton, whether rightly or wrongly, to extend to the Borgias that measure of understanding which he would have extended to persons in his own time, bred in a different moral climate, with different sets of social influences prevailing, etc., etc., which still does not take us out of the bounds of common sense and tradition; and does not overrule the moral judgement of

⁴⁸⁵ Nitze’s word was ‘satisfactory’.

the individual, founded on whatever data he can find, with whatever light is available to him, by means of some super-personal purpose – some cosmic plan, to understand the working of which provides one with ‘objective’ values which put to shame one’s own ‘subjective’ personal reactions.

People have always existed who have attempted to maintain that what seems cruel or ugly or false or iniquitous in terms of current morality, or one’s own feelings, looks different if surveyed in terms of some timeless reality, or a vast historical pattern, or an aesthetic whole into which men or cultures are being moulded by forces greater than themselves. Such men are obviously not necessarily insincere; they may have before their eyes a genuine vision, as perhaps Napoleon or Hegel or Mussolini or Hitler or Marx genuinely had. Perhaps I ought to include Augustine and the authors of Genesis, and Toynbee too. But however this may be, the proposition that certain events must of necessity come to pass, or that certain forms of life are required by some universal pattern or harmony; or the belief that what seems unjust or outrageous in the normal sense of these words may yet be seen to be just or natural from some transcendent point of view; none of them alter the fact that, as we normally use words, and according to our normal ways of thinking and feeling, the ugly remains ugly, the unjust unjust, the cruel cruel, the immorally revolting revolting, and that the attempts to reconcile us to these things in the sense of some experience very different from the normal, or some invisible universe for which no empirical facts are evident (either for or against), runs directly counter to the only experience in terms of which moral epithets (and I should hold that we cannot do without them), however civilised it might to some people feel to do so, have any meaning.

I sympathise with you in your controversy with the scientific determinists, and understand well the force of your final onslaught upon them. I think that Dr [Adolf] Grünbaum’s dogmatic collection of ideals in terms of which all human actions and institutions should be judged is a very dreary, narrow and arbitrary selection. Ideals are many and they conflict at different times, and

within the breasts of the same individuals; the only point I wish to make is that they are those of individuals and that to retract them, be what they may, in the name of some non-individual ‘values’, that is in the name of some vision of the cosmos which no individual inhabits, of the values of beings different from ourselves, whether below us or above us, bestial or angelic, is to deny the possibility of a usable moral terminology and therefore of moral judgements of any kind. For all these must be founded upon such experience as we have and not on something transcending this. When Ivan Karamazov refused worlds upon worlds of human happiness as the price of the torture of his single child, he may have been mistaken; he was certainly being obstinate; but the force of his position, which seems to me irrefutable, in that his final judgement is founded upon his own moral experience and nothing else, for there is nothing else to found moral judgements on, and if something revolts those feelings or those experiences which we regard as relevant to forming moral judgements, then no amount of appeals to cosmological or aesthetic or metaphysical considerations which say that those experiences or feelings would be very different in other (‘transcendent’, ‘ideal’, ‘real’) worlds make any difference to this.

I should love to hear your reactions to this long and muddled letter, for which I apologise. I enjoyed our meetings very much and hope that we may meet again soon.

With the warmest possible regards,

Isaiah Berlin

Also in 1956 IB joined a committee set up to consider the possible development of Ditchley Park as a Centre for Anglo-American Studies. In this capacity he was sent a document about the project, on which he comments in these two letters to Wilfrid Knapp of the St Catherine’s Society, the committee’s secretary. The letters, held by the Ditchley archives, were kindly supplied in 2017 by the Director, James Arroyo, who writes of his delight that IB’s ideas match his own, adding: ‘The emphasis on an unusual mix of people that will generate some sparks and insights is what

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*sets Ditchley apart to this day. It has always felt very close to Berlin's concept of liberal democracy, and liberty as an active process, and it is great to see that it has the same DNA.*⁴⁸⁶

TO WILFRID KNAPP

16 November 1956

Headington House

Dear Wilfrid,

Here it is – too long, too verbose, but you must have known that when you asked me to respond. I still adhere to my original propositions – that the most important thing is to get together people who will strike sparks from each other – that the important thing is to get hold of a small nucleus of people who are already in some sort of touch and know about each other or wish to meet each other and then build the others round them, instead of mechanically proceeding to scatter invitations to worthy institutions asking them to nominate delegates who as often as not will simply be sent here on holiday or are regular attenders of conferences. The second thing is that it is important to bring all kinds of apparently irrelevant persons – such as literary critics or academics of various sorts – or literary journalists – or even musicians, not merely for the sake of ‘culture’ as such or the value of the contacts to the persons concerned, as because such persons circulate a great deal more widely, talk more, are more articulate, and mould opinion a great deal more effectively than politicians or businessmen suppose that they do (or Foundations for that matter). So do, if you agree, lend your support to it on this – I dread otherwise the prospect of a lot of dough-faced men, politely saying afterwards that it had all been very interesting, and in fact advancing things just about as much as any other Convention. Do let me [know] how things go on.

Yours ever,

Isaiah

⁴⁸⁶ Email to HH, 27 April 2017.

TO WILFRID KNAPP

16 November 1956

Headington House

Dear Wilfrid,

Thank you very much for the amended copy of the Ditchley Report, of which a copy was kindly sent me by Robin Davis. I have looked at it and read it carefully, and also Michael Astor's comments, which he sent me. I was very sorry not to be able to avail myself of Mr Wills's kind invitation to lunch at Boodle's last Thursday, when I gather an interesting and fruitful discussion took place.

I have only a few scattered thoughts which I should like to offer, for what they are worth.

1. The project seems to be well worth carrying through, even if it demands a good deal of trouble and expenditure of energy. Lack of contact between key figures in England and America still seems to be unnecessarily meagre, and the results of meetings between them often astonishingly fruitful. The actual results of such meetings, conversations and general association in a house as beautiful and comfortable as Ditchley seem to be likely to be even greater than the needs [*sic*] of formal papers likely to issue from conferences and conversations. I should value the result of informal contacts as being far greater than the impression made by conferences, reports, semi-formal speeches on and discussions of such reports by members of conferences etc. I can quite see that in certain fields – especially those of science and technology, conferences are the normal method of communication, and Anglo-American conferences could have the same beneficent results as similar meetings between specialists within a given country. But in certain other fields – the arts, education, and even economics and politics and social action, I am not sure that people do not get far more from casual private conversation with each other, interspersed with not over-prepared talks, which could easily be organised by the Director or the relevant Fellows of Ditchley, than

from full-blown lectures and discussions by them. I should therefore be inclined to stress this side of things, as in this country at any rate far more productive and lasting impressions are made than [by] the more formal methods pursued on the Continent and the United States. Indeed this ties in with Michael Astor's remarks about the influence of meetings in the great houses and salons in England in the nineteenth century. It seems to me that at any rate before the war more was achieved in the way of mutual understanding (for better or worse) by politicians who could come to stay at, e.g., All Souls – and I dare say at house parties too – than in the course of more formal contacts. What leaders of opinion and even technical experts above all often desire to do is to meet their opposite numbers in as easy an atmosphere as possible, with reasonable assurance that their remarks will not be quoted outside and that they can get a great many views off their chests and bees out of their bonnets without fear of being pinned down about these, and cross-examined about them afterwards. This is certainly the case with lawyers who want to reform the international law, both public and private, with academics who are dissatisfied with methods of education or organisation, and whose influence, certainly between the wars – on public opinion both in England and America (I mean especially historians, social scientists, economists etc.) was far greater than is even now generally realised; and with other similar groups. I should therefore like to suggest that although specific subjects must no doubt be provided for such discussions, the widest possible opportunity be given for roaming all over the field in private conversation, at any rate so far as non-scientific groups are concerned.

2. With regard to Michael Astor's remarks about an American v. British Director, I quite see there is much to be said for and against both these – perhaps an American long resident in England or an Englishman long resident in America would prove most satisfactory.

3. A further point which seems to me most important. The greatest good that Ditchley can, in my view, achieve is the creation of personal links between individuals in the two countries; if the

enterprise is a success, it will create a pool of mutual good will and respect which – as was shown in London and Washington during the war – was the single greatest factor in bringing many good things to fruition. Once the thing gets going, once a certain numbers of persons have enjoyed and profited by meeting each other, this in itself will make it clear to the Director and his assistants as to whom it is advisable to invite, and with whom to discuss similar problems. But the beginning is bound to be critical, and the scheme is less likely to succeed if a mechanical choice is made of individuals or organisations, without scrupulous regard to who exactly it is who is being invited, and what their personal reactions are likely to be to one another. For this reason it seems to me more important to concentrate on suitable individuals than even on suitable topics for discussion or fields of study. Almost everything will depend upon the gift of the Director and his assistants for choosing persons to be invited. For this reason it seems to me crucial that they should, either out of their own experience, or with the advice of ad hoc small panels or individuals, be in a position to choose, at any rate, initially, those Americans and Englishmen whose meetings are likely to prove the most rewarding. In matters of this kind it seems to me that it is the first steps that count; and if, for example, we want to promote a successful meeting of Middle Eastern experts or bankers or newspaper editors, or literary specialists (whose influence on young men in America is certainly greater than that of bankers), it is surely better to start with a small number of experts who really know each other and then ask them whom they would most like to meet, at any rate to form a nucleus, rather than formally get in touch with associations and official organisations and invite them to nominate ‘delegations’. To do this successfully will require great powers of imagination and wide social contacts on the part of the organisers – their enterprise seems to me to weigh more greatly than even the choice of topics and details of programming.

One final point. While of course it is desirable that papers should be written and published on important issues, it seems to be best that these be confined to live issues of great general interest

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– burning topics like the Middle Eastern situation, or policies vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, or Anglo-American atomic programmes or the like, where the impact of the written word really can make a difference to people anxious about an urgent problem in their own field. On questions either of narrower scope or smaller urgency, it seems to me not quite necessary to circulate final papers – accounts of actual discussions with précis of addresses, if intelligently done, would seem to me to suffice.

I am sorry to have gone on at such length, but the whole enterprise seems to me most timely and important.

Yours sincerely,

Isaiah

The next letter is in the Alan Pryce-Jones Papers at Yale, for a reason that is not immediately obvious. IB had told Hamilton about Pasternak's novel Dr Zhivago in October 1956 (E 541–3). Presumably Hamilton wanted to publish the book, and showed the present letter to AP-J. The link may be revealed by the following undated letter from AP-J (then editor of the TLS) to IB, on TLS notepaper:

My dear Isaiah –

We spoke of your novel. If you can entrust it to me one day *here* I can have it photographed (microfilmed) immediately in the building, and can make myself responsible for the whole matter.

yrs

Alan P-J

In late 1957 IB secretly supplied a microfilm of the Russian typescript to Douglas W. Bryant at Harvard's Widener Library. It is possible that this microfilm was made by AP-J.

TO JAMIE HAMILTON

23 November 1956

Headington House

Dear Jamie,

I really don't know how to begin this letter, nor how to go on with it. I am most genuinely upset by my own latest outrage against you, and I can only throw myself upon your mercy and beg you to believe my story.

I was absolutely convinced, ever since you so sweetly invited Aline and me, when we met that night in Croydon, that it was dinner that you meant. Aline certainly so understood, and we never had a moment's doubt about it. Even when your last letter arrived, with all those changes of personnel, all I took in was the date – which in any case was engraved upon my memory – and the words 1.15 must have been read by me as 8.15 because of the fixity of the pattern of expectation, by that time firmly set in my poor head. Perhaps if you had actually used the word 'lunch' – though there was no reason in the world why you should – this might have recalled me to a sense of the facts. But as it was, on the very morning before we set off we wondered whether you wanted us to wear evening dress or not; we set off in a great hurry at about 11 a.m. to lunch with my mother, and Aline did manage to ring your home before we left, but naturally enough the servant there could throw no light upon our problem.

We lunched peacefully with my Mama, all unknowing, and I actually arrived early at my Covent Garden meeting and was in that peculiar state of serene and untroubled innocence which often precedes – and sets off in high relief – the perpetration of some appalling crime, when Garrett came in, and in front of all my colleagues, in the august presence of Viscount Waverley himself, informed me, in slow, penetrating detail, of what it was that I had done. I said, 'Oh, but I have a letter which quite specifically says dinner', but Garrett, Lord Waverley, the other awe-inspiring figures present, begged to doubt. As it turned out, with justice. I

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could hardly sit through the meeting; when I got to Claridge's, where I was meeting Aline, I begged her to telephone to you, for I dared not face a conversation with you myself, I felt so wretched.



Fritz Wegner's drawing of Vladimir Petrovich, the protagonist of First Love, on the jacket of the 1956 edition of IB's translation, published by Hamish Hamilton

We dined alone, obscurely, and went to bed too early. But all jokes apart, I truly am most profoundly sorry that I made this muddle. That, coupled with prima facie insufficient gratitude for the splendid *First Love* – I echo David's sentiments, the joys⁴⁸⁷ of the hero do indeed rather resemble his eldest son, and what he himself must have looked like before Eton – must just about finish me in your eyes. Please forgive me. I shall write a special letter of apology to Yvonne. God has punished me very rapidly, for I am

⁴⁸⁷ sc. 'jowls'?

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full of small ailments today, which prevent me from keeping at least two other altogether less agreeable, trivial, but in their own way equally binding engagements. I wish you many happy returns of your birthday and none of my disastrous behaviour. I cannot go on beating my breast for very shame. Please forgive me. It is not Aline's fault – her error was entirely derived from mine.



*David Cecil's eldest son, the actor
Jonathan Hugh Gascoyne-Cecil (1939–2011)*

Now as to Pasternak. The situation is approximately this: I haven't read the manuscript,⁴⁸⁸ but those who have – e.g. his sisters

⁴⁸⁸ He had in fact read it, at Pasternak's request, after Pasternak gave him a copy at Peredelkino on 18 August 1956: 'I began to read *Doctor Zhivago* immediately on leaving him, and finished it on the following day. [...] I thought it was a work of genius' (PI3 394; cf E 539/3). His untruth to JH is explained by the fact that his great desire to see the work published was tempered by an overriding 'moral responsibility' not to expose Pasternak to the danger that he was sure would arise if the work first appeared in English translation. He was

who live here and another Russian⁴⁸⁹ – all swear that it is a work of stupendous quality. It contains both prose and poetry, is semi-autobiographical in character, is a kind of noble profession of faith and a message to the world, which the author most painfully and ardently desires to have published, whatever the political consequences to himself. The last letter to the sisters⁴⁹⁰ did beg them not to initiate an English translation, because there was a greater chance than before that in a truncated and emasculated form it might after all appear in Russian first. I don't know what the chances of this are, particularly in view of the latest developments, which I should have thought probably mean a stiffening of the anti-foreign and anti-liberal line.⁴⁹¹ But if it did appear in Russia, a translation could of course – of the Russian rather than the full text – appear in England safely, and perhaps the excised bits which had not appeared in Russia could be safely printed as an extra supplement after the author's death (as was done in the case of Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*, with the chapter called 'Stavrogin's Confession', which you remember Virginia Woolf and Koteliensky translated in the 1920s).

If on the other hand you can buy the rights from Feltrinelli outright, an Italian version should appear as well (the reason for this being that it would be far safer for the author if something were produced in Italy, especially on the part of such a firm Stalinite as F. is supposed to be – if an English version alone appeared, I think the danger to which he would be exposed in

treading softly, in the hope that an Italian version would first appear from the Communist publisher Feltrinelli. For Berlin's general attitude at this time towards the problem of the publication of the book see Paolo Mancosu, *Zhivago's Secret Journey: From Typescript to Book* (Stanford, 2016). We are grateful to Professor Mancosu for help in elucidating the background to this letter.

⁴⁸⁹ George Katkov (A 218/1).

⁴⁹⁰ Letter to Lydia Pasternak Slater dated 21 October 1956: Mancosu, op. cit. (note before last), 48, from Boris Pasternak, *Family Correspondence 1921–1960*, trans. Nicholas Pasternak Slater (Stanford, 2010), 385.

⁴⁹¹ Cf. Manya Harari to IB, also dated 23 November 1956, Mancosu (260 note) 59.

Russia would be considerable, and I should not myself care to shoulder moral responsibility for this; but I should have thought that F. would be unlikely to sell you the rights without intending to make some use of the manuscript himself). Then I think you really will have secured a scoop. But I can only urge upon you what I have already dinned into Mark Bonham Carter – that the translator must be exceptionally good, capable of rendering prose as well as poetry – this is certainly findable in England.

Meanwhile (again this comes from a letter written by the poet to his sisters in Oxford),⁴⁹² as a result of the excessive interest taken in him by correspondents from Bulgaria and Uruguay, and Romania and Italy and Hungary and Yugoslavia and Norway, the state has decided to punish him, and the poem and short autobiography which were to have appeared in the Soviet periodical in October or November has been, at any rate temporarily, suppressed. So his position is not easy, and one must avoid doing anything to compromise him further. Once a translation of anything of his has appeared in a foreign language, a translation into another foreign language cannot conceivably make his position worse. That is the only principle I can think of by which one can decently guide oneself. Whoever could persuade Feltrinelli to publish the work in Italian – even if need be in an abridged form – and then publish a translation of it in English as well, would certainly be rendering a very considerable service to literature, and I daresay to freedom and justice as well. Pasternak would die happy and all would be well.

Although I have not read it, I feel quite sure that the work is something very exceptional indeed. It would be bound to be a political sensation even if it were artistically inferior. But I know Pasternak well, and there is no doubt that he is a writer of genius – the last great classical nineteenth-century poet still living. To have met him and talked with him both in 1945 and this year has certainly been the most moving experience of my life.

⁴⁹² Letter of 4 November 1956, *ibid.* 76, from *Family Correspondence* (previous note but one), 385.

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Please forgive me.

Yours ever,

Isaiah

TO LEONARD SCHAPIRO

6 February 1957

Headington House

Dear Leonard,

[...] As for Plekhanov, you ask why he should have carried on so long with Lenin when obviously the latter was intriguing, treating etc. I think the reason is that he wanted some 'firm' ally as opposed to all the soft characters whom he, perhaps too unreasonably, despised. I suppose that whatever his faults may have appeared to be in the early part of the century, Lenin's devotion to the Revolution and lack of personal vanity were fairly patent to everyone; and there is nothing so tempting to an imperious professorial figure, such as Plekhanov was, as the firm if brutal and ruthless ally in the world of loose Social Democratic rhetoric and Jewish intellectuals in various stages of personal and political neurasthenia. But of course he ought to have broken before. I am reading about the mid-nineteenth century in Russia now – the revolutionaries are foolish, pathetic, sweet, the reactionaries generally repulsive – the worst, easily, is Katkov, who was the prototype of *all* the Dreyfusards.

Yours ever,

Shaya

TO LEONARD SCHAPIRO

18 March 1957

Headington House

Dear Leonard,

[...] As to Plekhanov, vanity and an autocratic temperament doubtless had much to do with his political moves – but neurotic

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I do not think he was; I daresay he made a great many unjust charges during his life, but I do not see why you think that he destroyed ‘a sane stream’ in Russian life – do you mean among the Social Democrats or among potential Liberals, Conservatives etc.? However we had better talk about this when we meet. I feel our disagreements are probably much like those which went on in Russia from about 1840 onwards and now constitute objects of much careful and fascinated (if not fascinating) research.

Yours ever,
Shaya

TO A. J. AYER

25 March 1957 [*manuscript*]

Headington House

Dear Freddie,

Thank you very much. I very nearly applied to you for a testimonial, but there was no time – I left it till 2 days before final date – so I telephoned Gilbert who wrote I have no idea what. Jolly wisecracks I expect. As to the election, Plamenatz not having applied (I don’t know why not) nor Oakeshott, only Gough, Harrison, Warrender (I don’t believe you’ve ever heard these names) & Professor Catlin, not Bowle curiously enough, I was, in Herbert Hart’s words to his wife “probably the best of a despicable collection” – a verdict I humbly accept. I am now a little nervous & depressed: can I really lecture 36 times a year for 19 years on political theory? I think I must read some Chinese or Indian Thought – perhaps there is more there than sage apophthegms & breathing exercises. I must own that depressed as I am, I shd have been more so if I hadn’t got it. I think I have always longed to be rangé⁴⁹³ & now I mustn’t complain about sticking my head in a noose. I have been invited to Warsaw by McKeon, but cannot, alas, go, it dislocated Aline & the children too much. This is my alibi

⁴⁹³ ‘Settled’.

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but in fact I have a v^y peaceful summer. I'll promise to come next time. When will you come to stay? Aline sends love. So do I. We go to Sicily to-morrow, I, rather eccentrically via Amsterdam.

Yrs

Shaya

TO JOHN LEHMANN

19 August 1957

Headington House

Dear John,

Forgive me for dictating from bed – I am under some queer spell which causes my eyelids to flutter and my addled brain to yield nothing but broken and disconnected fragments of what once may have been ideas. Otherwise I should have written by hand and coherently. Thank you for your congratulations. The whole thing is most embarrassing. I try to hide the awful prefix beneath my now most welcome professorship, as one hides a tie which one is not allowed to remove for fear of hurting feelings underneath a specially grown beard. So pray do not rub it in. I am low enough with it.

I am very grateful for the Turgenev piece⁴⁹⁴ – the whole thing is most handsome and gratifying, and the blemishes few, trivial and entirely my own fault. Yes, I think you may be right, Dr Leavis and Mr Wain will find it not quite full enough of high moral content. Ehat boobies they are even when they are right, as they sometimes are.

Yours ever,

Isaiah

⁴⁹⁴ 'An Episode in the Life of Ivan Turgenev', *London Magazine* 4 no. 7 (July 1957), 14–24 (includes translation of Turgenev's 'A Fire at Sea').

FROM GEORGE KENNAN

12 October 1957 [*carbon*]

n.p.

Dear Isaiah,

The need for sympathy when things are going badly is a commonplace, but there is nothing like the need for sympathy in moments of triumph. I am now turning to you, as the only person in Oxford I can think of who could understand why I am so pleased and what it is that pleases me. I enclose a copy of *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'*,⁴⁹⁵ which contains:

1. Under a curious guise, a review of my recent book⁴⁹⁶ by S. Maiorov, of whose identity I am not sure but who, I think, is a senior Party ideological figure.

2. A symposium of papers read at a meeting of historians devoted to questions of Soviet foreign policy: one of these papers, by Berezkin,⁴⁹⁷ also refers (p. 17) to my book.

These materials suffice to confirm my suspicion something which I have already begun to suspect from the nature of the earlier reviews of the book. Down to the present day the historiography on the Russian foreign policy with the West, and particularly the United States, in the period of the Intervention and the Civil War, has remained largely in the hands of the Stalinist hacks who were at the peak of their success during the height of the anti-American campaign in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The Party, a bit puzzled and worried to know what to do about all this, has recently placed their labors under the general direction of the relatively conservative (in the Communist sense) older authorities: [Vladimir

⁴⁹⁵ The journal *International Life*.

⁴⁹⁶ *Soviet–American Relations, 1917–1920*: vol. 1, *Russia Leaves the War* (Princeton, 1956). S. Mayorov, 'Vain Attempts to Distort History', *International Affairs* [the English edition of *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'*] 1957 no. 9 (September), 117–23, is not formally a review of Kennan's book, but concentrates its fire upon it.

⁴⁹⁷ A[leksandr] V[asil'evich] Beryozkin, 'The Leninist Foreign Policy During the Civil War and Foreign Intervention', *ibid.*, 15–22: the discussion of Kennan's book is on pp. 18–19 of the English edition.

Mikhailovich] Khvostov and [Isaak Izrailevich] Mints; but it is not going to revise anything in the structure of falsification which they have erected, the full preposterousness of which exceeds anything I have ever seen anywhere and which has to be seen to be believed.

It is clear to me, from the tone of this review and especially of the contributions to the symposium, that my own book has aroused the younger Soviet historians to a real movement of protest against the complete ‘propagandization’ of this phase of history, and that these older Stalinists are now worried and very much on the defensive. Berezkin’s statement that ‘among our comrades voices can occasionally be heard expressing doubt as to whether the role of the USA in the Intervention has not been over-emphasised in our literature’,⁴⁹⁸ coupled with the fact that all this is said in connection with my own work and with the strangely respectful manner in which, despite all outward indignation, they contrive to refer to me, convinces me that I have really succeeded in placing a bomb in their midst and in forcing them to take account of the voice of historical science from outside the borders of the Soviet Union.

Don’t let this be a burden to you. But, if you have a moment, glance this over and tell me if you don’t think I am right.

I was particularly interested to see that the book seems to have hit them hardest, ideologically, by its suggestion that the Soviet leaders were not sincerely interested in coexistence in these early years of their power. If you get *Pravda*, you may have noticed a most curious ideological article ‘Unter dem Strich’ [‘All Things Considered’],⁴⁹⁹ on September 30, which seems designed to demonstrate that far from revising Marx’s admission that revolution might come to England by means less than violent, Lenin was a protagonist of the same idea.

⁴⁹⁸ In the English edition, p. 18: ‘voices are sometimes heard among our friends expressing doubts as to whether US participation in the intervention is not too much emphasised in our literature’.

⁴⁹⁹ Not found.

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Forgive this intrusion. I knew you would understand my excitement. If I have really been able to jar these people with a book, I have done more in four years of scholarship than was ever able to do in twenty-six years of diplomacy.

Yours as ever,
[George K.]

TO EDWARD WEEKS

13 November 1957

Headington House

Dear Ted,

Thank you very much for that admirable volume, which contains so many things much more interesting than my own piece. It is a rare pleasure to receive something which has the attraction of being exciting and agreeable to read over and above the thrill of containing one's own aging child enshrined like a crystal masterpiece in its pages. The compliment is great and I appreciate it.

I see that I am described as the Ritchie⁵⁰⁰ Professor of Philosophy in the University of Oxford. It sounds eminently respectable and agreeable and I am entirely content to be that in those terms. It is true that there is no such chair in Oxford, neither a Ritchie Chair on any subject, nor a Chair of Philosophy *tel quel*. There is a Chair of Metaphysics, of Logic, of Moral Philosophy, or Natural Philosophy (that is Mathematics), and the Chichele Chair of Social and Political Theory, which in fact I occupy. I do not think that any celebrated Ritchie was educated here. Thackeray's grandchildren, it is true, were called Ritchie, and they were here, and the eldest, who died recently, was a charming and civilised man, but no chair was called after him, though he deserved it better than some. So if there is a reprint of the book perhaps this pleasant fiction could be replaced by the sober truth. But if not, let it stand,

⁵⁰⁰ Presumably a mishearing of 'Chichele'. The error was caught in time, so what IB was sent must have been a proof copy.

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to the confusion of future antiquaries of the institutions of this ancient university. After all, if such things had not been perpetrated in the Middle Ages, where would our present mediaeval studies be? Talking of which, Trevor-Roper has just delivered a most brilliant inaugural lecture, denouncing antiquaries and dead research in a splendid procession of elaborate sentences delivered before a packed assembly. Each sentence was an arrowhead and each penetrated the flesh of some unnamed but all too conscious victim dotted about the room. A most enjoyable occasion: you must ask Hugh for a copy of it. It is a little undergraduaty, but exhilarating.

I am glad your negotiations with Sir Maurice are a success.

I wish I were coming over this Christmas. I hope you have a very happy one and my warmest good wishes to you both and from Aline.

Yours ever,

Isaiah

⟨P.S. A *far* worse blunder occur in my own text: when I say that a well known thinker says history is what Alexander did and suffered. The thinker is Aristotle. He says (most notoriously) nothing about Alexander, more's the pity. The name should be Alcibiades & is so in the *Cornhill* version. If there is another edition you *will* alter this? I feel dreadfully ashamed.⟩

TO EDWARD WEEKS

29 November 1957

Headington House

Dear Ted,

Thank you ever so much for your letter – I wish I was coming over, but I am not, only my wife is.

My full title is Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory in the University of Oxford. I am no longer a University lecturer, since my 'translation' to this more elevated realm, only a Fellow of All Souls College and Fellow of the British Academy (FBA for

short), otherwise nothing at all. I should be much relieved if you put in Alcibiades.

I know nothing at all about Israeli writers – I may be there in the spring, but I cannot believe that Israeli writers are really much good – though this may be too pessimistic a view. I read Hebrew hardly at all, and the translations look terrible to me. There is only one *really* good writer, called Agnon. The rest are competent but pretty uninspired. As the purpose of the entire experiment was to ‘normalise’ the Jews and rid them of their neuroses, perhaps it is inevitable that art – which is the product of [a] certain sacred discontent – should fall by the wayside when the discontent is gone. At any rate that particular kind of discontent, which no doubt will one day reawaken, but is at present dormant. Or there may be some other explanation.

My love to Fritzzy,
Yours ever
Isaiah

On 12 December Aline left on a trip to Boston and New York.

TO ALINE BERLIN

Friday, early morning 8 a.m. [20 December 1957, *manuscript*]

49 Hollycroft Avenue

My darling Aline

I can't sleep, & I think of you non-stop. This hideous paper I bought yesterday for fear that otherwise the letter might be delayed. Anyway with Christmas post etc. you will never see it. It cannot be helped, write I must & will – It is *no* good without you. After you left I was “all right” for about ½ a day on Friday: I stayed in this cold house gloomily & thought about you, & you and me, while I imagined you were sitting at Prestwick [Airport].

5 p.m. But you were flying in fact: & on Saturday & Sunday I had old pre-marriage days at All Souls – exhausting – Dutch professors, Japanese & Turkish professors – dinner at Univ. with

Attlee⁵⁰¹ & such – lunch with Stuart & Angus Wilson;⁵⁰² Sparrow, Pears, the new Fellows of All Souls etc. etc. empty, tiring, awful, my eyelid began to tremble violently, I felt ill, deserted, old, broken, silly, futile, engaged on wasting everybody’s time, ashamed, & miserable. We have “spoiled” each other; so far from falling back into the routine of bachelorhood, I can’t even begin. But you *mind* your “enslavement”, I don’t. I have no ambition or desire to assert any portion of my miserable personality: I have no sense of my personal worth, & don’t bleed from failure & unattainability of a moral condition which I can see clearly – unlike Philippe: you too, I think suffer from a sense of wasting yourself sometimes: I hate waste – I am ashamed of it – but not indignant: I am *au fond*⁵⁰³ humbler than you & 1000 times less interesting & less “somebody”. I see myself as not much, & don’t really mind. I love you so much & am so happy with you that I mind for myself only through you i.e. to the extent that *you* think I ought to work, lecture, not be snubbed etc. Perhaps I don’t see myself as you see me, but as I feel you see me: anyway *via* you: extraordinary: I too have never surrendered so: nobody wanted me to perhaps: I love it.

I did not see the children much on the week-end, but a lot on Monday. I get on marvellously with them when alone – without Miss Lee: Peter & Miss Lee saw me off on Tuesday, Peter suddenly kissed my hand: odd but touching. I was a little embarrassed: Miss Lee, very: Peter not at all. I asked them to telegraph me from me Megève or Geneva, so far (it has become 5 p.m.) no telegram. I hope not too much fog. On Tuesday I lunched with Judy M.: miserable overpainted, hysterical. Very intelligent & touching: she

⁵⁰¹ Clement Richard Attlee (1883–1967), OM 1951, 1st Earl Attlee 1955, KG 1956, Labour statesman; Deputy Prime Minister 1942–5, Prime Minister 1945–51, Leader of the Opposition 1951–5.

⁵⁰² Angus Frank Johnstone Wilson (1913–91), KBE 1980, novelist and biographer, prof. of English literature, East Anglia, 1966–78; President, Royal Society of Literature, 1983–8; ‘a lively figure in the 1950s literary revolution’, he was, by the early 1960s, ‘probably Britain’s most distinguished novelist’ (Malcolm Bradbury, ODNB).

⁵⁰³ ‘Fundamentally’.

really does feel something about the Jews. Horrible postcards from Ed. Stanley⁵⁰⁴ etc. beginning dear Jewdy etc. I saw Liz, Diana was there – Enquires after you most tenderly. It may be false, but her manners at least are good: I was quite gay there & so marriage does not destroy me: you will (at once) say “because I was away”. So you were when I lunched with Ava on that horrible occasion. There. Dinner with the [Erich] Körners.⁵⁰⁵ Hell. Days filled with looking for birthday present for you: I have *no* imagination: none, none, I only love you very much & long to know what will give you most pleasure & can find *nothing*. In the end I bought no fewer than 3 boxes, like last year’s, not awful.

On Wednesday I lunch with Rosie⁵⁰⁶ & her girls. Nothing to report. Saw some Bechstein & Steinway pianos: new £1200, old about £300–400. (I can only go on like this – if I don’t it will only go on repeating “I adore you I want to be with you, I am counting hours & minutes, I can’t sleep alone, I have images, I am jealous of Abe,⁵⁰⁷ I am terrified that I shall die, that you will, that somebody will, that something will suddenly stop it all, I am very happy, I love you, I adore you & this begins again)

What did I do on Wed. night? Supper alone with Ava. She forgot I was coming: she sleeps in hospital⁵⁰⁸ on & off, & has to order disgusting food. From 8 till 9.30 & I took her back to hospital. She cried genuinely for him, said he wanted to see me (a lie) & talked about your marvellous proud Roman profile & your

⁵⁰⁴ Possibly Edward John Stanley (1907–71), 6th Baron Sheffield, 6th Baron Stanley of Alderley, 5th Baron Eddisbury.

⁵⁰⁵ Eric Korner (1893–1980) né Erich Körner, Austrian-born banker at Warburgs in London (one of the original directors of the firm, which began life as the New Trading Company) who dealt with IB’s parents, and then with IB; his wife was Cecilie (‘Lee’) Körner (1911–93) née Bretz.

⁵⁰⁶ 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).

⁵⁰⁷ Avraham (‘Abe’) Harman (1914–92), British-born Israeli diplomat and administrator; Israeli ambassador to the US 1959–68; president, HUI, 1968–83.

⁵⁰⁸ Her husband was in hospital with pancreatic cancer; he died on 4 January 1958.

distinction, beauty, etc. etc. I nodded & said I was v. happy: lots of Christmas cards have arrived – about 40 – & the children arranged them everywhere: I'll try & bring them to Paris. Nabokov wired, when was I coming (he was told by Stephen S[pender]) I replied evasively & told him to telephone on Tuesday afternoon, late.

Thursday: lunch at home off to look for something for you, nothing found, despair, cold, rain, new overcoat arrived, very smart, old overcoat very shabby suddenly, I'll take it to Paris to be “done” – tea with Pam (I *am* doing my duty. I refused Anne F.⁵⁰⁹ – saw her too recently in Oxford). Pam is off the Cecil family – Muggeridge influence is *strong* – love for Boothby⁵¹⁰ – critical of “Bobbity”⁵¹¹ – anti-David⁵¹² – longs to see *you* – thinks our marriage “perfect” (genuinely) will ask Boothby to stay & will bring him to dinner with us. Later saw Elath:⁵¹³ can't stop talking – & dined with Maccabeans,⁵¹⁴ where Judge Laski,⁵¹⁵ Marghanita's⁵¹⁶ father, delivered a eulogy for my parents: pity my mother was not there to hear it. Boring & pointless. A red bearded rabbi from New York gave me huge cigar. Friday (to-day): cd not sleep began letter

⁵⁰⁹ Presumably Ann [*ivi*] Geraldine Mary Fleming (1913–81) née Charteris, society hostess, m. 1952 3rdly Ian Fleming (1908–64), creator of James Bond.

⁵¹⁰ Robert (“Bob”) John Graham Boothby (1900–86), KBE 1953, life peer 1958; Conservative MP 1924–58; PPS to Winston Churchill 1926–9; parliamentary secretary, Ministry of Food, 1940–1 (resigned over a financial impropriety).

⁵¹¹ Robert (“Bobbety”) Arthur James Gascoyne-Cecil, 5th Marquess of Salisbury (1893–1972) Conservative politician.

⁵¹² (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.

⁵¹³ Eliahu Elath (1903–90) né Epstein, journalist and diplomat; Israel's first ambassador to Washington 1948–50; ambassador to UK 1952–9; President of HUK 1962–7.

⁵¹⁴ Presumably participants in the Maccabiah Games, a quadrennial international Jewish sporting event (held 15–24 September in 1957).

⁵¹⁵ Neville Jonas Laski (1890–1969), QC 1930, President, London Committee of Deputies of British Jews, 1933–40, Recorder of Burnley 1935–56.

⁵¹⁶ Marghanita Laski (1915–88), novelist, critic, journalist and broadcaster.

to you, Ava asked me to go to Caledonian Market:⁵¹⁷ thought I might find something for you: went: quite gay, found nothing & went straight to Mr Hakim & Tessin & purchased three boxes. Quite pretty, one French to show no discrimination. Ava pouring with tears, took her back to the hospital. Came home at 2 p.m. & immediately quarrelled with my mother about her preoccupation with profits & explained that [Harry d'Avigdor-]Goldsmid *hates* her & her petty attitude to money (quite false: very unfair, & wounding. *Why* does one do this? I shouted & my poor mother kept her temper & behaved angelically like yours when you scream or whisper angrily at her)

I am now waiting in a *tizzy* for your telephone: Spender comes to-night to work on Pasternak.⁵¹⁸ I am very tired: eyelid flicker: don't lets do *anything* in Paris: sit & talk at home & in cafés. Will you get this letter at all? do, *do* ring me now – but I'll post this quickly – I have as usual said nothing – not replied to *your* letter – television – Michel – naive friends at Harvard etc. I was asked to go on Brains Trust – refused again. When I think about you concretely + images – I become terribly physically happy – Aline darling do come –

Isaiah

TO DAVID PRYCE-JONES

n.d. [1957?; *manuscript*]

F[ortnum] & M[ason] Ltd, London

Dear David

Delighted you are here.

I apologise for – *most* cravenly – not visiting you: I tell myself that I must behave in a responsible paterfamilias fashion, but it is pure cowardice, really. I am told you are *much* better & am delighted. Don't have delusions and hallucinations as a result of

⁵¹⁷ Market previously in Islington, now in Bermondsey Square, London SE1.

⁵¹⁸ Boris Leonidovich Pasternak (1890–1960), poet, novelist and translator. See A 627–8.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

Pinfold:⁵¹⁹ the autobiographical passages are shaming to a degree: a howling cad shyly describing himself as a modest country gentleman with eccentricities – the rest is splendidly told. The Catholic–public school tone is repulsive but the prose is, as usual, superb. After all this perhaps you need not read it at all? do. You'll enjoy it. When am I to see you, if need be from a shamefully safe distance?

I.B.

TO ALINE BERLIN

7 p.m. [21? March 1958; *manuscript postcard*]

Paris.

I travelled all the way with T-Roper. He was peaceful, & the conversation was academic. I find the parting very difficult indeed to bear already. I now see that so far from functioning in a very neutral manner I am going to feel empty & dissatisfied till April 2. Funny.

love

Isaiah

TO ALINE BERLIN

1 a.m. 21 March 1958 [*manuscript*]

I Tatti, Settignano, Florence⁵²⁰

Darling Aline.

I travelled with T. Roper. By keeping him rigidly on history & intellectual topics I managed to make it all instructive and even

⁵¹⁹ Evelyn Waugh's *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* was published by Chapman & Hall in London in July 1957.

⁵²⁰ Berenson's villa outside Florence.

interesting. Alone he is perfectly nice. Zandra⁵²¹ left at 6 a.m. – asked him to take *all* her luggage – he roughly refused – relented – refused again, took half – & then said she might buy herself a hat if she terribly wanted to. She spent the day in Paris & arrived at the Gare de Lyon dead with fatigue & was sick at once. She was not much better in the morning: rouged, wan, broken, amiable, pathetic, crushed and yet somehow indomitable. Hugh shared my cabin, wagon lit till Paris etc. & seemed oblivious of all the Zionist talk *already* going on in the dining car by the ladies & gentlemen who *had* to be in Naples on Friday in order to avoid desecrating the what you so hate to hear called Shabbat or Shabbes. I slept beautifully (supponery!⁵²² – cd you *bear* to remember to bring *some* more? we shall need it in plenty: Two boxes wd not be too many!) and saw Florence with pleasure. I was met by car, given a reservation on to-morrow's train, kissed by the amiable Nicky⁵²³ (she really is very nice: & her Anrep sister⁵²⁴ was much nicer today) & consigned to Willie Mostyn Owen,⁵²⁵ whom also, I cannot deny it, I suddenly decided to like: he is quite nice: of no interest but *not* nasty, snobbish, or intolerable. He described the visit of Renée⁵²⁶ & Cicogna⁵²⁷ here, during which Renée took possession, conquered B.B., & reduced Cicogna to total silence. M.-O says that

⁵²¹ Lady Alexandra Trevor-Roper (1907–97), eldest daughter of Field Marshal Earl Haig, former wife of Rear-Admiral Clarence Howard-Johnston, wife of Hugh Trevor-Roper.

⁵²² A barbiturate.

⁵²³ Elizabetha ('Nicky') Mariano (1887–1968), Berenson's librarian and secretary from 1918, who in 1919 became his mistress, and an integral part of his life at I Tatti.

⁵²⁴ Alda Bertha Hildegard von Anrep (1883–1974) née Mariano, assitant librarian at I Tatti.

⁵²⁵ William ('Willy') Mostyn-Owen (1929–2011), art historian, whose bibliography of Berenson's works had been published in 1955.

⁵²⁶ (Grace Isabel) Renée Ayer (1909–80) née Orde-Lees, with whom Stuart Hampshire had a long affair that produced two children, Julian Ayer (died in the 2004 Indonesian tsunami) and Belinda Hampshire, while Renée was still married to his friend and colleague A. J. Ayer.

⁵²⁷ Countess Anna Maria Cicogna Mozzoni (1913–2004).

Cicogna is *unspontaneous*, managing, cold hearted, calculating & impossible to like: that nice as she is to B.B. & Alix, neither, in fact, *like[s]* her, nor does she expect them to. He then explained how Rheims sucked up to the Gileses⁵²⁸ in Paris & so got his picture into the *Times* yesterday: more than any one cd do for him in Paris. He says he likes Lilli.⁵²⁹ which I suppose *is* possible, & gave *very* lifelike descriptions of Guy & Marie Helène⁵³⁰ in Corsica & of Mrs Wooster⁵³¹ reading aloud Alan [Pryce-Jones]’s piece on Mr Wooster⁵³² to B.B. who slept so well that he could not sleep when he went to sleep (I *must* go to bed) – B.B. himself very old: but all senses active, & *quite* pleased to see me. I am to say goodbye to him in his bedroom to-morrow (special). Nicky, he, Mostyn-O. *all repeatedly* regretted your absence. You will ascribe this to politeness. Mistakenly. B.B. asked why we could not see him on our return. I explained. Great lamentations. Perhaps they are *all* lying *all* the time: but enough of such hypotheses and one is a consistent lunatic. B.B. endless enquiries about Pasternak & quite good on Proust, who he said, was “filthy”, “slobbered” rather than spoke, sat at the corner of parties & avoided being spoken to, & observed & observed but with incredible nastiness: When he spoke, it sounded insincere & disgusting.

After lunch I went down to Florence (rain & *snow*) bought an umbrella (folding) & some biscotti, just refrained from vino di Mandorle,⁵³³ & spent my last *francs*: (do bring some: otherwise we shall starve en route to Paris). Then tea (6 p.m.) dinner (9 p.m.) B.B. deafish, but gradually I warmed him up. Talked of nothing

⁵²⁸ Frank Thomas Robertson Giles (1919–2019), Foreign Editor, *Sunday Times*, 1961–77, and his wife Lady Katherine (‘Kitty’) Pamela (1926–2010) née Sackville.

⁵²⁹ sc. Lili Rheims.

⁵³⁰ Marie-Helène de Rothschild (1927–66) née van Zuylen van Nyevelt van de Haar, m. 1957 Guy de Rothschild (the 2nd marriage for them both).

⁵³¹ Mary Wooster (1886–1978) née Marie von Springer, m. (2nd) 1933 Francis (‘Frank’) George Leyland Wooster (1890–1953).

⁵³² Presumably his draft obituary of Wooster, now in his papers at Yale.

⁵³³ Almond wine.

but *Jews*: he thinks about this mainly now it seems: says he forgot he was one till awoken by Hitler.⁵³⁴ I delivered my lecture on Hess.⁵³⁵ Quite well received: he chatted about Zionists he had known: & their *love affairs*. Odd man, odd unexpected patches of information. Slight strain: as soon as he went to bed, relaxation, I am absolutely at home with Nicky: & prefer being at home with normal persons to efforts with geniuses: this was not so before: I wd rather be humiliated by Toscanini,⁵³⁶ say, than chat affably with, say, Dodo.⁵³⁷ Now I am not sure. I think my days of hero worship are over so far as the living are concerned. I don't mind if I *don't* talk to, or listen to, Picasso⁵³⁸ or even the beloved very old men, unless they are morally, & not merely intellectually or historically, moving (e.g. Salvemini).⁵³⁹ From 10 a.m. in Victoria, or rather 9.45 a.m. I have thought non-stop about you with & without 'images'. In a sense, too much. When Mostyn Owen said tonight that

⁵³⁴ Adolf Hitler (1889–1945), Austrian-born German Fascist leader, became head of the (then) small National Socialist German Worker's (Nazi) party 1921; chancellor, Germany, January 1933, dictator 1933–45; committed suicide 30 April 1945 as the Red Army advanced through Berlin.

⁵³⁵ Moses né Moritz Hess (1812–75), German Jewish writer, socialist and early Zionist, subject of IB's Lucien Wolf Memorial Lecture 11 December 1957, published as *The Life and Opinions of Moses Hess* (Cambridge, 1959; repr. in AC).

⁵³⁶ Arturo Toscanini (1867–1957), Italian conductor, passionately admired by IB because of his musical genius and his refusal to conduct under Fascist regimes. Reviewing a 1937 concert conducted by Toscanini, IB wrote: 'It was a personal experience of the first magnitude for everyone present: those who had never heard him before may well have found that for them it shifted the boundaries of artistic possibility, and in this respect fundamentally altered the nature of their musical experience.' [IB], 'Toscanini', *Oxford Magazine* 55 (1936–7), 719–20 at 719; cf. F 236.

⁵³⁷ Nickname of (Comte Jean) Dominique (de Hemricourt) de Grunne (1913–2007), Roman Catholic priest at Oxford.

⁵³⁸ Pablo Diego José Francisco de Paula Juan Nepomuceno María de los Remedios Cipriano/Crispino de la Santísima Trinidad Ruíz Picasso (1881–1973), Spanish painter, sculptor, printmaker, draughtsman, ceramicist and designer, generally regarded as the most influential and versatile artist of the C20th; the co-founder, with Georges Braque, of the cubist movement.

⁵³⁹ Gaetano Salvemini (1873–1957), anti-Fascist Italian historian and politician.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

Signorina Vertova⁵⁴⁰ cd not at first grasp that Ben Nicolson⁵⁴¹ wanted to preserve his bachelor life with Wollheim etc. but now got used to it, & fitted herself in, this is what I should have thought might have been expected of me by people who knew me before. Whereas – opposite. I cannot move without you in the sense that every moment in which I am not literally asleep your absence is a positive (not a negative) fact quietly pressing on me like darkness or a tight suit i.e. causing quiet continuous active discomfort, preventing enjoyment, like a box that is usually closed & suddenly feels homeless because the lid is missing: instead of lapsing into some earlier routine & ticking over peacefully, I fret: I can't read, think, talk without automatically turning to you: you have Philip, Peter, Michel, & a house to look after. I am absolutely alone & depend on you much too much: I can't go – on I shan't sleep in any case now, the images are too vivid, the longing (I wish there was a less awful word) too strong: here I am, 50 (the age B.B. was in 1914!) & in a state of violent, full, jealous & passionate love – I am done & lost & don't recognize myself – 2 days of absence when my routine is gone is enough to show me that by the side of my “nervousness” yours is bearable. We are behaving sensibly. But I am intolerably tried [sc. tired?]. I am counting nights –

love

IB.

⁵⁴⁰ Luisa Vertova (1920–2021), Italian (in both senses) art historian, wife of Ben Nicolson 1955–62.

⁵⁴¹ (Lionel) Ben(edict) Nicolson (1914–78), art historian, editor, *Burlington Magazine*, 1947–78; a close friend of IB's from 1930s Oxford.

TO ALINE BERLIN

Saturday. [22 March 1958, *manuscript*]

San Martin House
Weizmann Institute of Science
Rehovot, Israel

Darling Aline,

This is just in case it catches you in Paris: on Thursday I went to bed with a *streaming* cold (*nothing* important: if *I* say so, you may be sure ...) & had to cancel my Jerusalem appointments etc: I lay in bed with headache, streaming nose, sore throat etc. etc. – was looked after *beautifully* by the German-Jewish management of this hostel – delicious semi-Jewish food – not actual meat balls but nice greasy carrots & rich chicken broths with objects floating about & boiled beef etc. – yesterday I still groaned with a fever – the doctor came – *very* good doctor of course – Weizmann’s old doctor – told me my “heart” pains come from the spine (!)

Ben Gurion wants me to take yoga exercises (George Backer does) from some quack of his. To-day I am distinctly better: to-morrow I shall function. My poor cousin Yuzya came to-day. So did Ida⁵⁴² (yesterday). She *loves* you beyond *all* measure, & thinks you like her. I may go with B.G.⁵⁴³ on Tuesday & see a ‘Buddhist’ Indian dancer. He is very excited about [this]. You wd *not* have enjoyed B.B. – he was too old & silent: not gaga but null & void. My description was better. I’ve left all arrangements here pretty vague. Mrs W. will have her grandson who has a scholarship to New College. The Namiers⁵⁴⁴ are tremendously about. I am all

⁵⁴² Ida Samunov (1887–1985) née Volshonok, IB’s aunt (younger sister of Marie Berlin), widowed after the death of her husband Yitzhak Samunov (1886–1950), with whom she had emigrated to Palestine before the Second World War.

⁵⁴³ David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973), 1st prime minister of Israel. See A 619.

⁵⁴⁴ Lewis Bernstein Namier (1888–1960) né Ludwik Niemirowski, Kt 1952, prof. of modern history, Manchester, 1931–53, first met IB in summer 1937 and once wrote to him: ‘how intelligent you must be to understand all you write’

MORE ENLIGHTENING

alone – have been for virtually 3 days – & have worked beautifully. I *can* work here – in the Danish-Zurich atmosphere of this scientific village.

Sorry to have missed Edmond de R.⁵⁴⁵ He has [an] ambitious scheme for smart tourism & Casino at Caesarea & wants to spend 15 000·000·000 fr. here & will, I think. Cécile⁵⁴⁶ will be here yet *and* all the beau monde. How terrible. I won't go on – you may not get this or it may fall into wrong hands. I may telephone.

all my love – cannot say the real words if you mayn't see this –
IB.

TO ALINE BERLIN

22 March 1958 6 p.m. [*manuscript postcard of Naples*]

Very typical. I was hurried here by Peltour[s] to catch the *Jerusalem* at 6·30 p.m. I arrived at 5 (after a sharp defence of Wind to B.B. – *and* of Pon, *and* of Beazley⁵⁴⁷ whom he thinks a charlatan!) travelling opposite the head of U.S. information, Florence⁵⁴⁸ (*made* for me) to find the ship has not yet *arrived*. We sail at midnight. Killing time in Naples is a bore. I am sending by this post 2 postcard-gram-records of *Que serà serà* (Spanish!)⁵⁴⁹ one to Peter one to Philip. Peter's also to you to be forwarded – Italian stamp is obviously essential: I forgot school address. What else?

Love. seldom have I meant etc.

Isaiah

(letter of 10 February 1955: see E 530–1). His (2nd) wife was the Russian writer Julia/Iulia de Beausobre (1893–1977) née Iulia Michaelovna Kazarina.

⁵⁴⁵ Baron Edmond Adolphe Maurice Jules Jacques de Rothschild (1926–97), French Swiss banker.

⁵⁴⁶ Baroness Cécile de Rothschild (1913–95), sister of Elie de Rothschild and a close friend of Aline's.

⁵⁴⁷ John Davidson Beazley (1885–1970), Kt 1949; Professor of Classical Archaeology and Art at Oxford 1925–56.

⁵⁴⁸ There are US Consulates in Florence, Milan and Naples.

⁵⁴⁹ 'Whatever Will Be, Will Be', 1955 song by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans: correct Spanish would be 'Lo que será será'.



A gramophone record postcard

MORE ENLIGHTENING

TO ALINE BERLIN

26 March 1958 [*manuscript*]

San Martin House,
The Weizmann Institute of Science,
Rehovoth, Israel

Darling Aline,

I wonder if this will get to you. I arrived a day earlier than I thought – I have a *streaming* cold, headache, sore throat etc: so I am no condition to write: but I miss you more unbearably (I am sure) than even you me. I'll be brief & factual: 1) hideous scenes in Naples⁵⁵⁰ before departure. Glad you were not there. You wd be sick. I ½ enjoyed ½ loathed it. Ask me & I'll describe it. 2) Ship excellent, food good, stewards & service *impeccable*: dignified etc. passengers of unheard of ugliness & vulgarity. At my (Captain's) table: a handsome & agreeable Israeli son of an Italian general Segre⁵⁵¹ – a Jew – pious judaized Torinese wife very nice – a kind of intelligent Jewish Dodo: you will not dislike him at all. Very romantic & good genre, knows Dino Phillipson⁵⁵² etc. of course. But never heard name Uzielli. 3) I wish we cd sail 12th by *same* ship. Captain of the Theodor Herzl (8th) rather awful. Next page.⁵⁵³ 4) Met in Haifa. Temperature – about 60^o%.⁵⁵⁴ Delicious. Caught cold

⁵⁵⁰ See long account written to Bernard Berenson, E 617–18.

⁵⁵¹ Vittorio Dan Segre (1922–2014) né Vittorio Emilio Giuseppe Segre, adopted the name Dan Avni on emigrating from Italy to Palestine in 1939; sometimes known as Dan Vittorio Avni-Segre; married to Rosetta Ester Bauducco; fought for the British Army and in the Israeli War of Independence; became an Israeli diplomat in 1949; from 1967 an academic (in the US, at Oxford and Haifa, then back in Italy), author and journalist. His father was Arturo Segre, assimilated Jewish landowner in Piedmont, local mayor, officer in the Italian Army in the First World War, senior Fascist official between the wars.

⁵⁵² Dino Philipson (*sic*) (1889–1972), Italian lawyer and politician.

⁵⁵³ Because IB's writing, here on thin airmail paper, shows through too strongly to allow the use of the back – except at the top, given that the first page of the letter starts under a printed letterhead (IB writes only three lines on the back of the first page, starting with 'but never heard').

⁵⁵⁴ IB regularly used a percentage sign in lieu of a degree sign.

in draughts of Custom House. Ida,⁵⁵⁵ thank God, not present. Driven by Weisgal's people to Rehovoth. San Martin House excellent. Small, sweet Zurich rooms. When you come, we move to twin beds + drawing room. Very quiet: occasional scientists pass by below: orange blossom: Weisskopf-Danish atmosphere despite Weisgal. 5) Backers here. Evie [Backer] less exuberant than usual. No special desire to spend time with me. Tea with Weisgal + Backers: dinner Mrs W., Blumenfeld, Mrs Nicholls (English friend: knits as in any country house: imperturbable deafish guest in exotic eminent Aga Khan villa) & Namiers.⁵⁵⁶ Namier *terribly* affected. Walks on air. Julia now inscrutable. Namier overcome by emotion. Conceals his Anglican religion. Called me Shaya & is very intimate. Mrs W. very pleased – lots of guests – looks wonderful. 6) This morning: long talk to George B[acker] about “ideas” – Bill-like “chat” – then lunch in Sharon Hotel with Ben Gurion⁵⁵⁷ – *very* affable – talk with Kollek⁵⁵⁸ night before. He liked Michael Astor, but had *not* received my letter which he thinks libellous though quite accurate. B.G. very gay: Paula [Ben Gurion] mad & affectionate & very nice. Back, broken with cold & sneezing & sore throat. Visit from eminent mathematician Gillis, old friend to whom I waved from the balcony. Dinner again with Mrs W. (rather than the fast set in Tel-Aviv: Lola Baer etc.) supposed to go to see political-satirical night club at 11 pm – couldn't: back home: writing this instead: 7) It is warm & *no* rain. Cool at night: ordinary English summer clothes, light overcoat. *Delicious* weather. Contrast be-

⁵⁵⁵ Ida Samunov (1887–1985) née Volshonok, IB's aunt (a younger sister of Marie Berlin); widowed by the death of her husband Yitzhak Samunov (1886–1950).

⁵⁵⁶ Lewis Bernstein Namier (1888–1960) né Ludwik Niemirowski, Kt 1952, prof. of modern history, Manchester, 1931–53, first met IB in summer 1937 and once wrote to him: 'how intelligent you must be to understand all you write' (letter of 10 February 1955: see E 530–1); m. (2nd) 1947 writer Julia de Beausobre (1893–1977) née Iulia Michaelovna Kazarina, later her husband's biographer.

⁵⁵⁷ David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973), 1st prime minister, Israel. A 619.

⁵⁵⁸ Theodor (“Teddy”) Kollek (1911–2007), mayor of Jerusalem 1965–93, one of IB's closest and most faithful friends in Israel. A 626–7.

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tween American Jews in the shop (unspeakable!) & dry Israelis, most impressive. In the middle of B.G. visit, Leskov telephoned him. I gave my greetings, but, alas, got none back: – he is not as devoted as he shd be. B.G. asked me to go see Buddhist dance by splendid Indian danseuse produced by Bethsabé⁵⁵⁹ who is here – haven't seen her. Weisgal gave her my love: she said I was her cousin. Quite correct. To-morrow to Tel-Aviv to see 1) my aunt + relations. I see her anyway on Friday in Jerusalem: but can she see me Thursday too? unrefusable. Then cocktails at British Embassy, dinner Weisgals & Backers. Friday, lunch Agrun to meet petit Edmond⁵⁶⁰ with French Israel Bonds Delegation: Petit Edmond very popular. Guy & wife here recently too. Friday evening Kollek's political friends. Saturday back here & to concert (Giulini:⁵⁶¹ Barber of Seville: I *am* sorry you are not here for that) Sunday Namier, Talmon⁵⁶² etc. – “the Conference⁵⁶³ – Weizmann. Also Monday. Tuesday to Jerusalem with B.G. to see Bethsabé's protégée. Wednesday – lunch with Mrs W. & you arrive. After that, room ordered in King D[avid Hotel] for *Friday* night (after Seder which will be for 100 – better so, I think) Saturday in Jerusalem, calls on aunt, Chief Rabbi, & some meal (alas!) with Talmon:

⁵⁵⁹ Bethsabée (Batsheva) de Rothschild (1914–99), sister of Guy, friend of Martha Graham and supporter of her New York dance company; did much to foster modern dance in Israel even before she settled there in 1964.

⁵⁶⁰ Baron Edmond de Rothschild (1926–97), banker, philanthropist, art collector and winery owner; grandson of Baron Edmond James de Rothschild and nephew of James ('Jimmy') de Rothschild.

⁵⁶¹ Carlo Maria Giulini (1914–2005), Italian conductor; guest conductor, Covent Garden, 1958–67; joint conductor (with Solti) of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra 1969–72; principal conductor, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, 1973–6.

⁵⁶² Jacob Leib Talmon (1916–80), Polish-born Israeli historian; lecturer, HUJ, 1949–60, prof. of modern history 1960–80.

⁵⁶³ Presumably the discussions held on 30–31 March at Rehovot about Weizmann's papers.

Sunday, lunch with Kollek + Dayans⁵⁶⁴ & Yadins⁵⁶⁵ (ex commanders in chief. Good looking at least, both of them) & I hope *Segre*: the Jewish Dodo. Monday off to Yigal Allon?⁵⁶⁶ Nothing arranged yet. No news from him. Tuesday sail, unless you'd like to wait for nice Capt. Freudenberg⁵⁶⁷ (charming East Prussian socialist). 3^d: I only said I *must* take you out: we'll dine *alone* if need be, & go to Tel-Aviv follies at 11 p.m.: Your life *not* blocked. You'll like it quite well. I *must* go to bed, I am very (unseriously) ill – I have a terrible day with relations in Tel-A. to morrow. At most I'll ask Max Cohn⁵⁶⁸ to *dine* on 3d before the Follies. Harmless. I love you in a most painful & unheard of way. I miss every moment: on the ship I thought continuously: here I don't hear words – even the (to me) charming Blumenfeld can distract me: I am not physically in

⁵⁶⁴ Moshe Dayan (1915–81), Israeli general and politician, rose to prominence during the 1948 War of Independence; chief of staff, IDF, 1955–8, minister of defence 1967–74, foreign minister 1977–9, a post in which he played an important part in the negotiations with Egypt that led to the Camp David accords; m. 1935 (divorced 1971) Ruth Dayan (1917–2021) née Schwartz, activist and founder of the Maskit fashion house.

⁵⁶⁵ 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.

⁵⁶⁶ 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.

⁵⁶⁷ Captain Avner Freudenberg (1911–78), later commander of the ill-fated luxury liner *Shalom*, which in 1964 sliced through a Norwegian tanker in fog off New York.

⁵⁶⁸ Max Cohn, IB's second cousin on his father's side (, a Polish-born architect who had settled in Israel and become a close friend of the Samunovs.

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distress, but Mrs B.G. thinks I am “very nervous” & shd go to a psychiatrist. There. It will all calm down as soon as I see you. The last day will be insufferable, the pacing up & down & the lateness of the T.W.A.: I am in a sorry state despite all the attentions: I am sure you are better off: I am dreadfully in love: at my age! I literally cannot live without you: absence, parting is like a bracket – till the second bracket comes to close it, one does not breathe. I care about nothing: there is light in the window – no black clouds: I don’t mind: I am not living: it is too strange

love

Isaiah

TO EDWARD WEEKS

27 May 1958

Headington House

Dear Ted,

I am afflicted by guilt at not having telephoned to you on that Tuesday morning, but we didn’t actually manage to return to London on that day, having had to go back on the night before, owing to family complications which sprang from the abnormal life which we are living, owing to the fate of my little niece. Still, I should have rung you up from here, and then with various forms of fuss and worry it went out of my head. However, all was well in the end, save for the fact that I omitted to get in touch with you.

You asked about the Pasternak novel. The man to write about it in the *Atlantic* would be our old friend Nicolas Nabokov. He has read the novel in Russian⁵⁶⁹ and is in a state of wild enthusiasm about it, and when he is aroused you know he can write marvellously. Why don’t you get him to do it? There is not a very good article – but informative – about it in *Encounter* by Max Hayward, the translator, who is an interesting, able and remarkable rothman and an excellent translator, but who seems to me to have

⁵⁶⁹ See Mancosu (260 note) 166–9.

got the point of the novel somewhat askew. However, that is no doubt a matter of opinion. Nicolas was almost ill with excitement after he had read the novel and went about in a nostalgic dream for days and weeks. It is not so much that the novel casts a great deal of light on contemporary Soviet reality as that it talks about and describes things never described by any human being before. Moreover it is a work of genius. The first two hundred pages are not good, but after that it is incredibly good. But of course the person who really must write about it is Edmund Wilson. But for whom and when and at what length and from what angle, who can tell? He is very much a law unto himself, as I need not tell you.

With renewed apologies and fondest affection,

Yours ever,

Isaiah

TO GEORGE KENNAN⁵⁷⁰

23 June 1958 [*manuscript*]

All Souls

Dear George,

For once I shall try & *not* waste your time with a long screed: This is only to tell you that I agree deeply about Oxford being too hectic, formal, & unpropitious to spontaneous human relationships (as you so aptly & so brilliantly and so devastatingly put it) and that all my Russian ingredients rise up against this, but have lost the battle long ago, & I now feel that I can talk & listen in Harvard, Moscow, Washington, anywhere but here; with consequent steady intellectual & emotional impoverishment – I grow poorer & poorer in a sense far more real & terrible than the Marxist.

Secondly let me tell you that you make me blush too violently by your praise: I have no self confidence, I am ashamed of virtually all that I do, and words such as yours (not that anyone has said

⁵⁷⁰ In Kristiansund, Norway, at the time.

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anything like this to me before) make me wonder if I have taken you in in some dreadful way – concealed my deficiencies too successfully – that in itself being a yet further proof of my shortcomings – & yet, of course, I am not only profoundly moved & grateful, but most immensely pleased.

And now let me say to you, if I may, that you must know that your status is unique in the world. In Eastern Europe – Poland & elsewhere (and I am sure even the Soyuz) you are looked on as a pure and truthful man, seeking peace & justice, & with no hostile intent towards them. The vast mass not only of *intelligently* but I suspect even literate common people see you, as left wing Western intellectuals see Nehru, as the only independent, uncommitted figure, the last best hope. You really can do what nobody else can: in Warsaw, Moscow, probably Novosibirsk too. Like you I (ultimately) prefer the tormented, death conscious, peoples, producing works of genius out of their unhealable wounds, rather than the happy, adjusted Swiss (who are *not* happy) & excellent Scandinavians. But we shall be thought mad one day.

Love

Isaiah

TO ALINE BERLIN (IN AIX-EN-PROVENCE)

Tuesday [late July 1958; *manuscript*]

Headington House

Darling Aline

It is a very long time since I wrote you: *anything* I call you in a letter now seems inadequate. All is well here. Two telegrams from the children one of which I enclose: the other was from Crans, & said the same. I put my mother off by another wonderful day. I am really at rest – the eyelid trembles steadily – but I am in an excellent mood: this solitude is quite good for me but it must not last too long. I dislike being away from you now, but can bear it. Tomorrow I shall find it unbearable. It is a far stranger transformation

of *my* life, than of yours: till 45 I lived without knowing this sensation of irrecoverable loss of independence: I am trying to write notes for politics lectures on *why* people think feeling of necessity *is* freedom: I am certainly tied hand & foot: am I ‘unfree’? is this what political “love” for leaders produces? Is fanatical devotion, violent love = “self realization”, or is there some calm deep feeling which is not tied to “images” & goes on in some even, mystical fashion? I must go. “La cuoca” goes out to-day, Giovanni & Bruna to-morrow; everything is under control. A cheque has arrived from Morgan Grenfell. I have informed dear Mr Collins that the money from America (which has arrived in 2 lots – of 16000, & 9000,) is from income, not capital – he telephoned. I have asked *him* to get “Sir” put in my passport as the local Westminster bank (approached by Miss Townshend⁵⁷¹ who is furious that I am still here) are difficult” as I have no account with them. I shall denounce them to Sylvester Gates. Love to the Salems: give them all *my* love: and to Michel about whom Perkins⁵⁷² has *again* written favourably (in letter he says he is coming here). sorry this is so dull – Mrs Goodhart wants us to bring Perkins: Nabokov spoke of “staying several days”! oh dear!

Love,
I.B.

⁵⁷¹ IB’s secretary.

⁵⁷² Elliott Perkins (1901–85) taught history at Harvard 1937–69; Master of Lowell House 1940–63.

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TO KARL BRITTON⁵⁷³

2 October 1958

Headington House

Dear Britton,

I meant to write to you before to thank you for your delightful and fascinating piece on Mill⁵⁷⁴ and Cambridge. I have also read your Penguin book on Mill only recently with great pleasure and profit and should like to thank you for both. I read it not only disinterestedly, as I have to deliver an inaugural lecture on liberty (I only have to deliver the inaugural lecture; the choice of liberty alas was my own, and bitterly do I regret it now, for I really have made very little of it). I do not believe that anything that Mill believed plus a good many other things which he did not believe;⁵⁷⁵ in the field of political philosophy, I mean. There are so many contradictions in Mill already that when my own are added to it the situation becomes logically unmanageable. On the other hand I have a feeling that application of the precise criteria of other subjects to political philosophy leads to the most arid and corpse-like results – and that if Laslett's book of essays on political philosophy⁵⁷⁶ represented the true condition of the subject (and perhaps it does), the subject is dead indeed. There is something indecent about committing that particular corpse to a public funeral.

⁵⁷³ Karl William Britton (1909–83), Professor of Philosophy at King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne, specialised in the work of J. S. Mill; author of the standard work *John Stuart Mill* (Melbourne and London, 1953: Penguin).

⁵⁷⁴ The typist leaves a gap after this word, which may reflect (an) inaudible word(s) dictated by IB, or indecipherable shorthand. The article may be 'J. S. Mill and the Cambridge Union Society', *Cambridge Review*, 29 October 1955, 92–5.

⁵⁷⁵ This passage is evidently corrupt. The simplest amendment is to delete 'that', in which case IB is saying that, in political philosophy, he doesn't share any of Mill's positive beliefs but does share many of his unbeliefs.

⁵⁷⁶ Peter Laslett (ed.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society: A Collection* (Oxford, 1956).

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1946–1960

I meant to thank you for your offprint in Venice, but did not get a chance of talking to you. I hope you enjoyed the occasion – I enjoyed everything except the papers and discussions. Mill would have thought that too frivolous a remark, and yet in theory he was in favour of eccentricity etc. There is surely something grotesque in the spectacle of solemn admiration for the spontaneous, creative, eccentric, passionate etc. I wish Max Beerbohm had done a cartoon of Mr J. S. Mill applauding the eccentricity of genius.

Yours ever,
Isaiah Berlin

TO FABER & FABER
n.d. [1958]

[Report on] *The Human Condition* by Hannah Arendt⁵⁷⁷

I could recommend no publisher to buy the UK rights of this book. There are two objections to it: it will not sell, and it is no good. The author's reading has evidently been wide, but her comprehension has too often been incomplete. Indeed the suspicion grows, as one reads these pages, that her inadequate command of English (a language she appears to have learned only in mature years, as a refugee in America from Germany) has led her into many of the problems which she attempts to solve in these pages.

The first part of the argument of this book rests on the curious belief that the means of the word 'labour' (or 'labor' as it appears in this American text) is somehow significantly different from the meaning of the word 'work'. This notion appears to have been prompted in the author's mind by a line in Locke about 'the labour of our body and the work of our hands'. Instead of seeing this as an attempt (one of the rare attempts) of that pedestrian stylist to

⁵⁷⁷ Chicago, 1958. Faber & Faber were considering publishing the book in the UK. A separate UK edition has never appeared.

embellish his prose with a little elegant variation, Dr Arendt sees it as the adumbration of a distinction in reality: a distinction which she here sets herself to elucidate.

‘Labour’, she believes, means those efforts which are necessary for the maintenance of the human species; ‘work’ means those efforts which go beyond the minimal demands of survival, and which yield the durable goods and furniture of the world. Taken as lexicographical definitions, these definitions are, of course, simply inaccurate. Presumably one must therefore take them as prescriptive or stipulative definitions. But even if they are thus accepted, they are found to lead, not to greater clarity, but to greater obscurity. In the later chapters of the book the categories of ‘labour’ and ‘work’ are supplemented by a third category of ‘action’; action meaning not, as one might expect, doing things, but rather {as} being in some sort of quasi-personalist fusion with other people. This leads to such conclusions as the following (p. 230): ‘The instrumentalization of action and the degradation of politics into a means for something else has of course never really succeeded in eliminating action, in preventing its being one of the decisive human experiences, or in destroying the realm of human affairs altogether.’ The phrase ‘of course’ strikes an amusing note, does it not?

Subsidiary observations, as well as the central argument, illustrate the author’s characteristic weakness. For example (p. 43), she writes: ‘The unfortunate truth about behaviorism and the validity of its “laws” is that the more people there are, the more likely they are to behave, and the less likely to tolerate non-behavior.’ This sentence had me completely foxed until I realised that the author was using the verb ‘behave’ in the sense of ‘act civilly’ and must therefore imagine that the word ‘behaviorism’ had something to do with civility!

A second example (p. 31): ‘What all Greek philosophers, no matter how opposed to *polis* life, took for granted is that freedom is exclusively located in the political realm, that necessity is primarily a prepolitical phenomenon [...]’. It is perfectly true that, in thinking of political freedom, all Greek philosophers ‘took for

granted [...] that freedom is exclusively located in the political realm' (what else could they think?); but political freedom has nothing whatever to do with necessity; it is opposed to constraint. Necessity is opposed to free will, and is not a problem of political, but of metaphysical, philosophy. Once more the author has got tied up in a false antithesis.

Speaking of moral virtue, Dr Arendt says (p. 75) that 'the Christian demand to *be* good' is 'absurd'. Is it equally 'absurd' to demand that a book should *be* good? Let us hope she thinks so. Then she will not mind being told that her book is not good.

FROM GEORGE KENNAN

5 March 1959 [*carbon*]

Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton

Dear Isaiah,

This is just a note to tell you that I have read, with customary respect and enjoyment, your inaugural address,⁵⁷⁸ and also suffered for you in the writing of it. I seem to sense that this was not easy; and I suspect that you were glad to lay the pen down when the moment came. But it is a valuable and perceptive piece. You were so right to define freedom only in terms of what government has no moral right to make people do.

But, with the example of this sprawling, careless, lethargic country before me – this 175 million people, stumbling thoughtlessly into self-indulgence, bad habits, decadence and political apathy – your cogent words about the evils of paternalism fill me with despair. I fully agree that there are natural limits beyond which power must never go; but if some men are not to do the thinking for others, I despair of where we shall get. The effect of a total *laissez-faire* is ultimately to create conditions which limit the possibilities open for the individual no less cruelly than do the strictures of a benevolent despot. No single human will has said

⁵⁷⁸ *Two Concepts of Liberty* (Oxford, 1958); reprinted in L.

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that I shall be deprived of servants, or restricted for purposes of transportation to the inferior device of the automobile, or shall put up with the evils of a permanent inflation, or be dependent for my bread and butter on a cultural life dominated by the advertisers and the mass media. Yet these are all requirements which the development of American society, under the law of laissez-faire, places upon me. Could the decisions of a Frederick the Great or even a modern Salazar (provided only he recognised the natural and decent limits of power you have defined) be less enlightened than these blind workings of a society out of control?

So much for political philosophy. Here, life is – compared to Oxford – serene, regular, full of health and sunshine. But I sorely miss communion with others, and yourself above all. I sometimes think I would accept again all the asperities of English life for the delights of sheer conversation. What throws me off is the recollection of the desperate intensity with which England seems to be trying to become like ourselves.

I dreamed recently that I was trying to talk with you but we were being constantly impeded by the roar and surge of some enormous cocktail party. How the good old subconscious does go to the heart of things!

Faithfully,

[George K.]

TO ALINE BERLIN

n.d. [late October 1959?, *manuscript*]

All Souls

Darling Aline

Wonderful to use these words again. I feel *very* well. A rest in bed is all I needed: I was, however, *acutely* miserable all day yesterday: & am a little better to-day, partly as a result of delivering

another lecture on the queer Chaadaev,⁵⁷⁹ but this is purely physical exhilaration and will evaporate. Telephone calls from Ladies Cholmondeley⁵⁸⁰ (anxious to have us to meal: we escaped Freya Stark⁵⁸¹ & Paddy Leigh Fermor⁵⁸² on the 2^d March. Good!) (also anxious to know how to get to Russia in May. Told her to flirt with her neighbour Malik)⁵⁸³ Harcourt (Giovanni Spoke. No repercussions) & Mrs Sassoon (Giovanni ditto).

I stay at home to-morrow till evening. Miss Chizhova is anxious to “work with” me. I enjoyed Dodo’s lunch as much as I hated Maurice’s dinner: he is a very competent & (like Boase)⁵⁸⁴ self effacing host. Last night at Nuffield I met Jenifer⁵⁸⁵ who said that

⁵⁷⁹ Petr Yakovlevich Chaadaev (1794–1856), Russian philosopher. Chaadaev prompted the Slavophil–Westerner debate among Russian intellectuals with his series of *Lettres philosophiques*, written between 1827 and 1831. He was born into the landowning gentry and served in the imperial army during the Napoleonic Wars, afterwards travelling in Europe. When one of his letters, containing an outspoken critique of Russia’s cultural and intellectual backwardness, was published in the journal *Teleskop* (the *Telescope*) in 1836, the journal was closed down, and Chaadaev, declared mad, was placed under house arrest. Although public discussion of his ideas was strictly forbidden, Chaadaev remained an inspirational figure to many of his generation.

⁵⁸⁰ Sybil Rachel Bettie Cecile Cholmondeley (*sic*) (1894–1989) née Sassoon, Marchioness of Cholmondeley, daughter of a Sassoon and a Rothschild, scandalised her family 1913 by marrying a gentile, George Horatio Charles Cholmondeley, 5th Marquess of Cholmondeley 1923; she converted to Christianity after WW2.

⁵⁸¹ Freya Madeline Stark (1893–1993), traveller and writer about the Arab world. See F 442.

⁵⁸² Patrick Michael Leigh Fermor (1915–2011), travel writer, who fought with the wartime Cretan Resistance and spent much of his life in Greece.

⁵⁸³ Perhaps Yakov Aleksandrovich Malik (1906–80), Ukrainian-born Soviet diplomat who succeeded Andrey Gromyko as Soviet ambassador in London 1952–60.

⁵⁸⁴ Thomas Sherrer Ross (“Tom”) Boase (1898–1974), art historian of whom IB and others did not have a high opinion; President, Magdalen, 1947–68; Vice-Chancellor, Oxford, 1958–60.

⁵⁸⁵ Jenifer Margaret Hart (1914–2005), civil servant and historian, IB’s lover from 1950. See A 625.

you were praised far & wide by all “my friends” (Jays,⁵⁸⁶ Graham Harrison⁵⁸⁷ etc. who were originally suspicious, jealous etc. but found you charming, unaffected, spontaneous, delightful etc.) I said I wd pass this on to you, as you always believe the opposite. She looked rather *terrible*, I am awful enough to say: enquired about her private life. Nobody. Very tiresome for H[erbert Hart] who anyhow was angry with her desire to get into Council⁵⁸⁸ (she failed) as indicating escape from duties of motherhood.

I am very miserable without you: but may recover after lunch. I am *absolutely* incapable of solitary life & *bate* lonely nights. Susan Mary wants to stay at the Randolph this week-end (freer?) but I shall go to London on Sat. night (I now have a meeting of the Hebrew Governors at 11 a.m. on Sunday at *Hampstead*) so why shouldn't she stay in Headington? She wants no meals – & Giovanni said he wd like it. I'll wire her. Michel's letter was half intelligible to me, but it was all obviously terrific.⁵⁸⁹

I only skimmed through B-Muller: how do his dates fit with Mme Mère? American professor is sitting here while I write: I want this to go off quickly – love to the Landans – *when* will you telephone? to-night after 10? To-morrow morning? oh do! or I will: & do fix up Mrs Leadby⁵⁹⁰ quickly: or [Pensione] Argentina[, Paraggi]: I don't really mind: but I now remember that the idea of only 750·000, or whatever it was, was only for the top flat, with her below: *without* her 1·500·000: you might remind her: & agree to pay me *if* she signs a contract for 3 years at least, allowing us say 4–5

⁵⁸⁶ Margaret Christian (“Peggy”) Jay (1913–2008) née Garnett, local government politician and Labour party activist, m. 1933 Douglas Patrick Thomas Jay (1907–96), economist, Fellow of All Souls 1930–7 and Labour politician (divorced 1972).

⁵⁸⁷ Francis Laurence Theodore Graham-Harrison (1914–2001), Magdalen classics 1933–7; joined Home Office 1938; Assistant Under-Secretary of State 1957–63.

⁵⁸⁸ The Hebdomadal Council, the executive committee of the University of Oxford, dating from the Oxford University Act of 1854.

⁵⁸⁹ Possibly about his honeymoon (he married on 2 October 1959).

⁵⁹⁰ Landlady of Villa Cipressina, Portofino.

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months in all, chosen by us – something like that: perhaps you could ask her to come to Gstaad or Lausanne & pay her?

Can't go on. I love you a little too desperately. It seems to increase – both the love & the desperation, all the time. Oh dear.

Isaiah

TO RICHARD L. SIMON⁵⁹¹

16 February 1960

Headington House

Dear Simon,

Thank you for your letter of February 11. I have no idea what a Reader should look like and am quite certain that I have neither the capacity, the time, nor the desire to edit one ever in my life, for anyone, on any topic.⁵⁹² Though the idea was kind, and I thank you for it. I think almost any competent and sufficiently [word(s) omitted] professor in the Russian section of the Slavic Department in an American University could do this quite well – or perhaps a professor of literature and a professor of history could do it in collaboration. Why do you not entrust it, for example, to Professor Victor Erlich and Professor D. W. Treadgold, both of the University of Washington, in the state of Washington? They are each competent in their own subjects and might produce a good book together. Alternatively Professor H. Seton-Watson of London assisted by some literary specialist, say Ronald Hingley of Oxford, would do the job well too; and I could mention many more. As for the outline which I enclose in return, I think your editors would have to settle their own selections – if I were reading such a book I should want as much Klyuchevsky as possible, and perhaps some Pokrovsky as a kind of Marxist counterbalance, but I should not include much E. H. Carr (which would bore all but a specialist reader) and certainly Souvarine and Shub rather than

⁵⁹¹ Richard Leo Simon (1899–1960), publisher, co-founder with (Max) Leonard Schuster (see PS) of the publishing firm Simon & Schuster.

⁵⁹² He had in effect already done so with *The Age of Enlightenment* (1956).

MORE ENLIGHTENING

Deutscher – I should not exclude him but I should have to edit him most carefully in the interests of a reasonable degree of objective truth. And if one is to use Hare, his earlier book is quite a decent, lowish, second-rate performance and is immeasurably better to [sc. than] the one you have put in, which I have just reviewed as politely as I could – this has not been easy – it is not a book worthy of any anthology. Please be confidential about all this. I have no wish to hurt the feelings of any of these doubtless worthy men, some of whom I know and like, and some of whom I do not know. I assumed that you wished me to be candid –and above all I should not like to be quoted or mentioned with respect to this enterprise. I ought to add that if you are thinking about books about Russia, Maurice Baring's works, novels, translations, essays etc. are an invaluable mine – he knew and understood far more about Russia than any of the authors mentioned in your list.

Yours ever,
Isaiah Berlin

PS My love to MLS, whom my wife was very sorry not to see.

TO ALINE BERLIN

n.d., 2:50 p.m. Sunday [10? April 1960, *manuscript*]

Baur au Lac, Zurich

Darling Aline

(it is a rare pleasure to say this: in a sense, the rarer the better)

I enclose the bill. My mother wishes to pay *her* part minus items wrongly attributed to her – such as Legge's⁵⁹³ coffee, *of course*) – I sent 500 fr. sv.⁵⁹⁴ back to Dreyfus⁵⁹⁵ keeping the change – I must have about 200 or 300 or more – but I *like* that. Michel's friend

⁵⁹³ (Harry) Walter Legge (1906–79), impresario and record producer; founder of the Philharmonia Orchestra, 1945, and one of the driving forces behind the post-war success of the EMI label.

⁵⁹⁴ 'Swiss francs' (*franchi svizzeri*).

⁵⁹⁵ Paul Dreyfus (1895–1967), banker.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1946–1960

(Magdalen) does not like D. Pr. Jones⁵⁹⁶ too much. He adores (so he says) Michel & is glad he bites his nails less. Tell Elie⁵⁹⁷ not to forget to rise at the Anti-Goy *Curse* (shefokh khamoskho).⁵⁹⁸

Isaiah

TO ALINE BERLIN

n.d. [*manuscript*]

Headington House

My darling,

I think about you non-stop and even the knowledge that you were not in pain this morning is not enough to comfort – I would rather not see you now (12:30) not alone for 10 minutes only – I'll come at 3:10 and stay till 3:40 & come back at 7 – remind me to tell you about Alix – Lady Waverley – & Charlotte.⁵⁹⁹ I love you much more than I did during the most violent moments of our 'romantic' period.

Isaiah

⁵⁹⁶ David Eugene Henry Pryce-Jones (b. 1936), author and literary editor; his mother, Thérèse ('Poppy') (1908–53) née Fould-Springer, was a close friend of Aline Berlin, whose family he knew from childhood; special correspondent, *Daily Telegraph*, 1966–82; from 1999 senior editor, *National Review*.

⁵⁹⁷ Élie Robert de Rothschild (1917–2007), banker; head, Château Lafite Rothschild, Médoc, 1946–74. Presumably in IB's absence Aline was observing seder at his house.

⁵⁹⁸ 'שפך חמתך', 'Pour out thy wrath [upon the heathen that have not known thee]' (Psalm 79:6), recited from the Haggada towards the end of the Passover seder (11 [and 12] April in 1960). Immediately before this, in some traditions, it is customary for one of the family to rise from the table and open the door in the hope of greeting Elijah, who will announce the coming of the Messiah.

⁵⁹⁹ Perhaps Lady (Charlotte Helen) Bonham Carter (1893–1989), née Ogilvy, wife of Sir Edgar Bonham Carter.

MORE ENLIGHTENING

TO HERBERT BUTTERFIELD

[n.d.: p. 7 of a letter (possibly 10 April 1954) whose other pages are missing]

[...] workings of relativism, or determinism, which they would not dream of, or show, in their normal life or thoughts. I shall certainly do my best to amend my text so as not to misinterpret you, as I fear I perhaps have done, but not as much as I feel you believe that I have done.

Thank you once more very warmly for writing to me as you have. I do hope we may meet and discuss this and other things one not too distant day.

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

⟨I am terribly sorry about the messiness of this letter: & I do assure you that I realize the great amount of good which you have done & are doing by exposing shams and defending moral issues in ways & at times & before audiences where it is not always easy or comfortable to do so. And on that front I shall always be your ally to the best of my ability: I shd not be as solicitous about understanding & representing your views correctly, if I did not feel so much admiration & sympathy for your writings & attitude.

I.B.⟩

GBR/0012/MS Butterfield 531/B/80

Appendix

Berlin's report to Winston Churchill (see letter of 15 November 1947 above) on proofs of *The Gathering Storm*, Book I, 'From War to War, 1919–1939'. Original pagination marked in red (add 2 for the Churchill Archive foliation). The title of this continuous report ('General Remarks') distinguishes it from the specific comments written on the proof. The numbering/lettering of IB's headings, which is not strictly logical, has not been altered.

GENERAL REMARKS

I. The balance of the whole

The narrative when it gets into its stride seems to me wonderfully rapid and absorbing, but it seems to me to take some time to get going properly. The main theme is the rise of Hitler, and the blindness of England and the Western World. If the story is to start with the earlier 'peaceful' years, 1924–9, it may be felt to lack something unless the central events which linger in the popular memory – the General Strike, relations with Russia (the Zinoviev Letter, the Arcos raid) etc. are placed in proper focus; alternatively all this could be condensed into a general prelude to the real story – with not too rigid a skeleton of chronology – a kind of commentary on the moods and acts of those remote deluded years, not overweighted with specific detail, a background to the awful things to come. It seems to me that at present neither of these effects is altogether achieved. The account of Locarno is, if you will allow me to say so, very masterly. But after the splendid prooemium of Chapter 1, which sets the stage nobly for a procession of great events, Chapters 2 and 3 are something of an anti-climax: the play of personalities, e.g. the Chamberlains, Mr Baldwin etc., while it is both unfamiliar and interesting, and while it could appropriately embroider the big events of the period, scarcely seems weighty enough to occupy the centre of the picture. In fact the story told in these two chapters seems to me too episodic and insubstantial to act as an adequate scaffolding to the more tremendous story of the rise of Hitler, with which the book

really gets into a wonderful stride. I should like to suggest that either:

[2] (a) Chapters 2 and 3 be left out altogether – since Chapters 1 and 4 seem to me to follow one another without a break; or:

(b) That these chapters be shortened drastically and take the form of a general commentary on the lull between two violent periods, with personal and political details lightly sketched in, and no attempt to concentrate on a specific issue, e.g. neither on Locarno nor on the return to the gold standard; or:

(c) If you prefer to take up the story where the Aftermath left off, that more be done about the General Strike, Russia, Anglo-American relations or absence of relations etc., although I quite see that there may be strong political reasons against doing this.

II. The only other factor which seems to me to upset the general balance is that the swift and mounting tempo of the narrative is disturbed mainly in the later chapters of book I by lengthy quotations from speeches and letters which, relevant, important and interesting as they are, tends to hold up the reader. I have put stars in the margin of the text wherever quotations seem to me to have this effect, and should like to recommend that these be abbreviated and/or the full text be included among the appendices. I do not honestly think that any single passage could be profitably omitted altogether, and therefore should like to urge relegation to appendices in all cases rather than excision.

[3] III. There are certain topics and episodes which seem to me either unduly omitted or treated too briefly.

(a) p. 4. The circumstances in which excessive reparations were imposed on Germany – e.g. the celebrated letter by Members of Parliament sent to Lloyd George in Versailles, and the general state of British public opinion, ought surely to be referred to, if this step is not to seem simply one of gratuitous bestiality on the part of Lloyd George. As Keynes has on the whole not done justice to

Versailles in his brilliant and disastrous book, the balance needs to be redressed, if only to kill the last relics of the German and pacifist propaganda on the subject which did so much to poison Anglo-German relations between the wars. After all, Wilson himself was louder than anyone in demanding vast reparations and the full meed of retributive justice.

(b) *Chapter 3, pp. 1–2*

India and the dismissal of Lord Lloyd from Egypt

Here I feel that either more or less ought to be said. Lloyd was, one gathers, dismissed on Arthur Henderson's insistence, and without some discussion of Henderson's views on the need to alter our policy in the Middle East and to client kingdoms generally the story is surely unintelligible. Lord Lloyd became a symbol of jingo imperialism and a bugbear of the Labour and Liberal parties, and whether in connection with India or Egypt the difference in principle between your own attitude towards the right development of the Empire and the conscience-stricken anti-imperialism of Socialists and Liberals ought surely to be made clear somewhere.

(c) *Chapter 4*

The Economic Blizzard

Again I feel that either more or less should be said. [4] Although there may be wide agreement that the Labour Party leaders were weak and even craven in 1931 (not least among them Ramsay MacDonald), and Labour politicians have therefore never tried to defend their own record during that period, the proposition that Snowden's financial measures were salutary (e.g. Unemployment Relief cuts) seems to me, in view of the distress which it caused, not self-evident enough to assert without some argument. The fact that the National Government abandoned the Gold Standard after having won the Election with a virtual promise to adhere to it need not perhaps be rubbed in, but in that case it would perhaps be best

to give the whole episode in severely factual terms without comment, as neither party really emerges too well out of it.

(d) *Rearmament*

I feel most strongly that your great campaign for rearmament must be made to stand out in bolder relief: that it must be made clear that the reason for rearmament was the German menace and nothing else: that you were not, as you were sometimes represented as being, the leader of a noisy militarist party demanding arms for arms sake, or perhaps because you believed in offensive war as simply a useful instrument of national policy, as, for instance, the Kaiser may have done. The basis of your view is perhaps a trifle obscured by references to e.g. parity with the French – but this may be an over-subtlety. The rearmament campaign, it must be stressed from the very outset, was the product of your clear and ever-growing discernment of German intentions and German deeds, which led to ever-increasing dislocation of the European balance, and was the voice of one desperately calling to sleepers to awake, and not a gratuitous incitement to law-abiding citizens to abandon the arts of peace and seek glory in military adventure. I say this only because this is what you have too often been accused of doing by [5] left-wing or Germanophil or Anglophobe professors and journalists in America; and the counterblast should therefore be correspondingly powerful. I have marked the passages which seem to me to require qualification in the text of the proofs.

(e) *Manchuria* (Chap VI)

A reader might gather that the Americans did want to interfere in 1932, that we held them back, and that our excuse was the desire to keep the friendship of and the treaty with Japan.⁶⁰⁰ This material will feed the fires of those American and Chinese propagandists who accuse us and in particular Lord Simon of being prime architects of the policy of appeasement of oppressors and the undermining of the League. It seems to me that here one can take

⁶⁰⁰ WSC annotates ‘true’.

one of two courses: either one accepts the American case, believes that Stimson's plan for a naval demonstration against Japan might have worked,⁶⁰¹ that we behaved badly or foolishly, that Simon was the villain of the piece – and one then pitches into him as the true father of appeasement; or else one tries to give our own side of the case, which seems to me weak enough, but which Sir John Pratt, then the Far Eastern Adviser of the Foreign Office, has argued with some force (and so has Sir G. Sansom, then, I believe, our Counsellor in Japan, and a far wiser and more knowledgeable man than Pratt). To do neither of these things is to leave the anti-British version of this crucial event to hold the field without even the cold comfort of admitting the facts and fixing the blame of admitting the facts and fixing the blame oneself.

(f) Similarly I feel that if the essence of the story is the blindness of the victors, more should be said about the whole movement for appeasement in England and perhaps France too: Who were its authors, what was the condition of the public sentiment which they exploited, how far were they to be found in all three parties? Much [6] of this, of course, emerges in your story, but the stream too frequently goes underground. I have a feeling that it ought to be kept constantly before the eyes of the reader. After all, the *New Statesman* actually preceded *The Times* in advocating partition of Czechoslovakia; pacifism is more closely associated with the Labour Party than with the Conservative; and therefore this is not a stick with which one party can afford to beat the other even now, provided the issue is fully presented. As I feel that this is the central issue of the pre-war story, I should like to urge most warmly that it be made a stronger and more continuous 'leitmotif' than it is at present.⁶⁰²

(g) The total omission of everything to do with Palestine might seem a little strange to your readers, particularly in the United States. You have, after all, associated yourself with this issue with

⁶⁰¹ WSC annotataes 'or led on to more'.

⁶⁰² WSC ticks.

great vigour throughout the years under review, and your speeches have been used and abused by the protagonists in the dispute. Perhaps you intend to deal with all this in the later books. But if India, Egypt etc. are to be mentioned, the omission of Palestine, and indeed of Middle East policy in general, in the moulding of which you have played so vital a part, and with regard to which you have criticised successive movements with such eloquence and justice, will seem peculiar. I fully appreciate the explosiveness of the issue, but, after all, neither Zionism nor anti-Zionism is the prerogative of either party; this is an issue for which your book is bound to be scanned with narrowed eyes; and silence on your part will be misinterpreted at least as much as your words could ever be.⁶⁰³

[7] II. Detailed Points

p. 7. It might be worth saying that just as the success of Lenin's example inspired Mussolini – he closely imitated e.g. the single-party dictatorship, the concept of the Leader of the Party, divinely inspired and therefore entitled to express the popular will, however little evidence there may be of popular approval of his views by any individuals who constitute it etc. – so Hitler may here have inspired Stalin with the notion that a thorough party purge was both desirable and feasible. I doubt whether the terrible proscriptions in Russia of 1936–8 would really have been carried through without the example of 30 June 1934, which is said to have impressed Stalin⁶⁰⁴ deeply. In connection with this I am told there is a very strong case for saying that Communism was dead or dying in Italy before the March on Rome in 1922 – that while there was a certain amount of labour trouble and the governments were unstable, there was no serious threat of Communist domination in Italy after the ignominious collapse of the Communist regimes in Bavaria, Hungary etc.; the real rival dangerous to Mussolini was the

⁶⁰³ WSC comments: 'I never thought of Palestine in connexion with the war.'

⁶⁰⁴ WSC marks the previous three words.

triumph of Don Sturzo and his Popolari, a party which was growing in strength until crushed by the Fascists.⁶⁰⁵ Hence Mussolini's claim to be a saviour from Communism was less genuine than the text suggests (I have marked the passage in the margin).

The Putzj Episode

The text conveys the impression that you did not at that time feel any prejudice against Hitler – rather the contrary – save for a mild curiosity about what seemed an excessive degree of hostility towards the Jews, who did not seem to deserve such virulent persecution. This might well be misinterpreted as being altogether too sympathetic to Hitler.⁶⁰⁶

Austria–Hungary

The alternatives before Austria–Hungary in 1918 is a matter of wide speculation, but I wonder whether you wished to commit **[8]** yourself to the view that it could have been held together, desirable as this might have been, when the Czechs were so inexorably resolved to have nothing further to do with the Austrians; the Slovaks loathed the Hungarians as few oppressors have ever been loathed; and the Southern Slavs were scarcely less firmly determined to recede. The Austrian Empire disintegrated with very little help from Wilson or anyone else; no doubt a Danubian economic federation should have been organised; but the proposition that Austria–Hungary could have continued but for the mistaken application of the principle of self-determination by the Entente seems to me historically pro-foundly unplausible; and few other than Austrians and Austrophiles have tried to maintain it. That the disintegration of the Austrian Empire was a great misfortune is doubtless true. This could be emphasised without suggesting that the Habsburg Empire could have been indefinitely propped up.

⁶⁰⁵ WSC queries.

⁶⁰⁶ WSC marks with a cross.

Chapter 10. Air Defence Research

I think that for the non-specialist reader this chapter is too detailed and technical. Unless there be more about the fruits of the pioneer researches then conducted in the later chapters dealing with the war years, the story of the various committees and the controversies within them, the prejudice against Prof. Lindemann etc., breaks the rapid current of the general account into too many little eddies. Perhaps this could become an appendix. I should like to suggest the same for chapter Chapter 15, where the naval correspondence between yourself and Sir S. Hoare leaves the general reader none too clear about the essence or importance of the issues debated.

Chapter 12 on the occupation of the Rhineland is so splendid and moving a piece of writing that it is desirable to clear away anything before or after it which obstructs the general prospect.

[9] *Chapter 14 Spain*

Again opinions may legitimately differ,⁶⁰⁷ but there still seems no adequate evidence to suggest that the revolt against the Spanish Government raised by General Sanjurjo succeeded a period of Communist anarchy.⁶⁰⁸ There certainly were disorders and assassinations, and the pro-Franco account is that law and order had generally broken down; this has been hotly denied by various right-wing Liberals, Dominican priests etc. who have more plausibly maintained that the Communists, who came to power later, did little but pave the way to Franco's victories by liquidating the other left-wing and Liberal parties, while technically in coalition with them – just as their German brethren ushered in Hitler by combining with the Nazis against the Social Democrats in 1930–2. No doubt Communism was and is a real danger in Spain, but it is greater than it was in 1935–6;⁶⁰⁹ but General Franco's defence of

⁶⁰⁷ WSC marks the previous four words.

⁶⁰⁸ WSC annotates 'These were my impressions day by day.'

⁶⁰⁹ WSC marks with a cross.

his rebellion deserves no greater credence than the similar apologias of Hitler and Mussolini – or for that matter of Lenin or Trotsky or other ‘saviours of society’.

Chapter 18

I do not think that it is correct to say that the Bolshevik Old Guard was in any way pro-German. There was some talk of the Kaiser as preferable to the Tsar in 1917 among the anti-war followers of Lenin in Switzerland, but none, so far as I know, since then. I do not think that there is quite enough evidence yet to convict Marshall Tukhachevsky and his staff who were executed with him of traitorous relations with the Germans, or at any rate not until a date much later than that indicated in the charges. Their sin – as indeed that of the Communist Opposition – may have consisted mainly in banking **[10]** on the failure of the first two five-year plans – then confidently expected by many European observers, and organising themselves to take over from the bankrupt Stalin administration. But however that may be, and even if the Generals, half of whom were Jews,⁶¹⁰ did plot with the Germans, the left-wing deviationists – Zinoviev, Radek, Rakovsky and all the persons accused of being in relations with Trotsky – can certainly not have been involved in any plot with the Nazis or the German generals. The story of the Trials is hideously intricate and obscure, but the most plausible hypothesis is that Stalin got rid of all his enemies at one fell swoop by implicating them in the same conspiracy, although the left-wing Opposition were at all times more anti-German than either Stalin or Molotov, while the evidence of the right wing’s connections with the Germans is based exclusively on the confessions. But whatever the facts, it would I think be incautious to state too definitely that both wings of opposition to Stalin flirted with the German or any other non-Soviet sources. Uncle Joe liquidated persons and organisations whom, possibly not without justice, he suspected of actual or potential disloyalty to

⁶¹⁰ WSC marks the previous five words.

himself; beyond that everything is very dark. In 1938 he himself publicly declared that the purge had gone much too far.

[11] *Chapter 19*

It may be worth adding to the Munich chapter the extraordinary prevalence of Nazi-inspired talk in London in 1938 about Czechoslovakia as a ‘ramshackle state’, ‘a synthetic collection of hostile nationalities’ etc., a fact which had apparently waited twenty years to be discovered. I well remember a senior member of the Diplomatic Service who solemnly assured me that peace in Europe would be secure if it were not for ‘those filthy Czechs’. Although the Foreign Office felt humiliated by the control and interference of Mr Chamberlain and Sir H. Wilson, its opposition to the appeasers’ theses, though it existed, was not too brave or articulate, with certain notable and splendid exceptions even within the Office itself. The one diplomat who resigned rather than execute Sir N. Henderson’s policies was much disapproved of as a ‘hothead’. The FO attitude seemed to be that by 1938 it was too late to resist. But persons like Sir O. Sargent were always very right-minded and stout.

Chapter 20

Something perhaps ought be said, whether in confirmation or refutation of (or at any rate as a gloss on) what Professor Feiling says in his biography of Chamberlain about the queer change of front which seemed to occur between the Prime Minister’s speech in the House of Commons on the day on which Prague was occupied and his Birmingham speech a day or two later. A very great deal has been made of this in America – particularly by Professor W. Schumann and other widely read left-wing publicists with an **[12]** anti-British bias, their general contention being that Mr Chamberlain tried to appease Hitler again, but was turned back by a growing revolt within the Tory Party, led by Lord Halifax or yourself⁶¹¹ or unspecified backbenchers, or various other possible

⁶¹¹ WSC annotates ‘No’.

and impossible individuals and combinations. The chapter on Munich is bound to be scanned by some reviewers with this issue fresh in their memories.

Chapter 22

Something more seems to be needed on the failure of the Strang Mission to Moscow. The Soviet *History of Diplomacy*, vol. III (of which a French translation has been issued), is almost exclusively occupied with an account of Munich and its aftermath; under Soviet conditions of publication it is the equivalent of a government White Paper and it makes an immense amount out of the alleged reluctance of the British government to enter into serious defence arrangements with the Soviet Union, shown by the fact that the British Military Mission was sent in a slow ship instead of by air, and that Strang was ‘an inferior routineur [*sic*]’ who had notoriously got on badly with Soviet officials during the Metro Vickers trial and was therefore a deliberate irritant etc. etc. An article by Zhdanov, speaking ostensibly as a private individual and without committing his colleagues, appeared in a Soviet newspaper in the summer of 1939 arguing against an alliance with the treacherous Anglo-French bloc {West} and there were other symptoms of lukewarm attitude on both sides which increased the atmosphere of mutual distrust and pessimism that made the negotiations unreal from the beginning. As all this is being used in defence of the Russo–German pact by the Russians to this day, it is a crucial point, and although you are not personally involved, your own and Lloyd George’s attitude to it in the House [13] of Commons seem to me well worth greater emphasis. Again Americans are bound to scrutinise the text particularly closely for information on all the events of that fateful summer.

CHAQ/2/3/14, fos 3–15

MORE ENLIGHTENING

Sources

(an asterisk indicates that specific references are given at the end of individual letters)

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