



## **Olga Ivinskaya**

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## Olga Ivinskaya



*Olga Ivinskaya in 1937*

TO THE EDITOR, *THE OBSERVER*

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Oxford

Sir,

In Mr Carver's letter of last Sunday on 'Mr Surkov and PEN'<sup>1</sup> he speaks of a promise given by Mr Surkov to me in connection with Madame Ivinskaya's release. While I am in full sympathy with Mr Crankshaw's views, and those of the PEN as expressed by Mr Carver, in this entire matter, I feel obliged to set the record straight.

Mr Surkov, in the course of a conversation during, I think, a bus ride in England, did bring up the matter of Mme Ivinskaya's arrest. So far as I recollect, he spoke of the possibility that she might be released much sooner than at the end of the period to which she

<sup>1</sup> 8 March 1964, 30: 'Mr Surkov may perhaps remember the promise he gave to Sir Isaiah Berlin on the occasion of a visit to England organised by the Great Britain/USSR Association, that Madame Ivinskaya would be released from prison within a few months if the interventions by writers and organisations such as PEN on her behalf were stopped.'

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had been sentenced: but he certainly made no 'promise', and was obviously in no position to do so. This is all, to the best of my recollection, that occurred.

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

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