



## **Gavriel Cohen's Conversations with Isaiah Berlin: No. 23**

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## Gavriel Cohen: Conversation No. 23

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Place: All Souls

Transcriber: Henry Hardy<sup>1</sup>

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Recording: **23A** | **23B**

### Selected topics

Saw Aline on ship to US in 1941

Brief meetings in New York

Reason for marriage

Parties on 1948 boat to New York

Developments in the early 1950s; telephone conversation  
overheard by Halban; Aline breaks things off

IB throws party at All Souls; secret assignations; episode at a  
chemist's shop

Letter from IB to the Halbans in Deauville torn up and stuck  
together

IB confronts Halban at Headington House: weekly meetings with  
Aline arranged

End of the Halbans' marriage; 'After that all was well'

IB proposes marriage and is accepted; wedding in Hampstead  
Synagogue

IB's previous loves: Rachel Walker, Hilda Averbach

Patricia de Bendern; she offers marriage; IB refuses

Patricia marries Herman Hornak; his polygamous ménage

Clarissa Avon attacks IB's London life

<sup>1</sup> In this single instance, if there was a contemporary transcript, it has been lost.

Penelope Felkin and Freddie Ayer; his identical letters to  
Penelope and Patricia  
Affair with unnamed woman (Jenifer Hart) from 1950  
IB fails to tell Jenifer about marriage to Aline  
James Joll  
IB's father Mendel on Aline  
Mendel's death; his opposition to Nuffield  
The differences between Mendel and his wife Marie  
Mendel's funeral; IB declares himself to Aline in car on journey  
to Oxford  
Marie and her sister Ida on Aline: Aline not *Gemütlich*  
*Gemütlichkeit* in various languages; examples of persons with the  
quality  
Marie's strong character  
Aline's parents

*Side A*

GC Monday 5 December 1988.

IB Very good. You begin.

GC [?] exactly where we started. Where we stopped. If you  
remember, we stopped at the last meeting ...

IB Have I ever told you about my meeting with Freud?

GC Yes.

IB Have we done that? All right. Good.

GC I may ask you again after ...

IB All right. I just want to get it in. All right, yes. The details are [?]

all right. Continue.

GC I thought of doing one of ...

IB Whatever you want. Just go forward. Don't choose. Don't ask me. Just go forward. Ask your questions. I mustn't choose which questions you ...

GC I know. But ...

IB It's much better to go forward.

GC But whenever you want to, don't hesitate. Whenever something comes to you, don't hesitate to ...

IB To diverge, yes, all right, yes.

GC Sometimes I come with questions and I see that you prefer to speak on another topic, so I follow you.

IB Thank you.

GC You know.

IB Continue, yes.

GC We tried last time to describe your life in *All Souls*, all along, the ups and downs, your feelings, your attitudes; and we stopped actually in describing *All Souls* in 1945–50, the period you were in New College. And to my amazement, even then ...

IB The period of 1938–50.

GC So 1938 you were a member.

IB I became – I went to New College in 1938.

GC In 1938 you told me that you were quite miserable in New College. You didn't like it.

IB No. Not in 1938, that's wrong; that's quite wrong; 1932.

GC No, in New College, not in ...

IB In New College. That's a muddle. Let me explain.

GC Aha.

IB Let me make it plain. After I ceased to be – after I took my final examination in PPE in my fourth year, I was offered – even before that – I was offered a lectureship in New College. Not a fellowship, lecturer[ship]. But I moved to New College to live in September 1938 [sc. 1932 x 3], and I remained living in New College from September 1938 to November, mid November, or even late November 1938. So that was something like two-and-a-half months. During that period I was very – yes, I didn't like it. In 1938 I became a fellow of New College of my own free volition. I left All Souls. And then I was quite happy.

GC In 1932 you were in New College ...

IB For two-and-a-half-months.

GC For two-and-a-half-months.

IB Then I was elected to All Souls.

GC And then All Souls. In 1938 ...

IB I [?] – I resigned from All Souls, and became a fellow of New College.

GC And you said that then you were happier.

IB I succeeded Crossman. Not [?]. I wouldn't have gone to New College. I didn't have to go.

GC Yes, but ...

IB I could have stayed (GC Yes) at All Souls.

GC That's the period you said that Joll joined and Bullock joined [?] 1945?

IB No, that was after the war.

GC In 1938 you set off again after ...

IB 1946.

GC In 1938 you stayed two years, no more?

IB That's right.

GC And then you say you were happier, but still I have the feeling that – you told me that there were not so many people to talk to in the College?

IB Well, there were more than there were in 1932, but I wasn't – not enough. I was – I got on quite well. I wouldn't have gone there if I didn't feel the company was sympathetic.

GC And yet, again ...

IB But in 1950, or 1949, I found New College terribly boring again, and went back to All Souls.

GC To All Souls.

IB But not only for the – not only because New College was boring; that was different. Because I didn't want to be – didn't want to go on teaching philosophy. That was the reason for leaving All Souls [sc. New College?] – not because of the common room. The common room was quite all right in 1949.<sup>2</sup> Absolutely all right.

GC Even to compare with – I see, yes.

IB I enjoyed All Souls much more, but life was perfectly tolerable in New College.

GC And then you went to All Souls in 1950. And you found it was not the same All Souls that you remembered from 1932.

IB No, not quite, but not that different. It's the difference between 1940 and 1950, which was not very great. The war in between.

GC This myth, which is partly real, that All Souls was the pillar of the Establishment ...

IB No longer. These people were gone or dead. Some were still here, but no longer in power. Labour government, so they didn't count.

GC Yes, as you said, [?] Douglas Jay was, and Douglas Jay was not

<sup>2</sup> This account appears to be hopelessly confused.



that important in the Labour government, he was a junior minister.

IB To begin with: 1950 he was in the Treasury.

GC In the Treasury, with Cripps.

IB With Cripps. He was Financial Secretary. And then he became Board of Trade.

GC But in daily life – there are periods in a college like All Souls that life is more social, political, I don't know what, and appear to [?] than (IB Yes) from this point of view. Could you compare All Souls of the 1950s to All Souls of the 1930s?

IB Yes, the political part was entirely at weekends, not the weekdays. Weekdays it was absolutely academic. Well, not entirely, because these junior fellows were not all academic. It was lively company, many more junior than senior, but still it was a college. At the weekends came these statesmen and men of the world and people who ran England. After 1950 they declined. Geoffrey Dawson was probably alive [d. 1944], but not functioning, and died soon after.

GC Amery died soon after.

IB Amery died soon after [1955]. When did Amery die?

GC The early 1950s, probably.

IB I think so. Because I remember writing him a letter in 1947 to save Jerusalem when it was under siege[?].<sup>3</sup> So I remember he was

<sup>3</sup> Sounds like 'sage', which appears to make no sense: perhaps IB misspoke. He possibly remembers his letter to Amery of 27 May 1948 (E 49–50).

certainly in power then. Wait a moment. Who else would have been here? Halifax was ...

GC Chancellor.

IB Yes, but that didn't – he was Chancellor, yes. Mmm – yes he was. Who else? He certainly was. He was already Chancellor – he became Chancellor in the 1930s, but he wasn't at All Souls much. Lionel Curtis was alive, but no longer as important as he was: the Cliveden set had become discredited, radically, particularly under the Labour government. Who else were they? Sir Dougal Orme Malcolm had a [?] company. He was here still, but old, and – they became decrepit, these people. They were not succeeded by a similar group of young active Conservatives. Harry Hodson was the Editor of the *Sunday Times*, all right. It was quite a good position, but not quite the same traditional power. I don't know: who else were they? Quintin Hogg was in Parliament, certainly. I think he was in the House of Lords then, already [1950]; [or] the House of Commons, I can't remember – when he renounced his peerage [1963], Lord Hailsham. He renounced his peerage.

GC [?] a little later.

IB Maybe.

GC I think.

IB He only got into Parliament later? In the House of Lords, was he? (GC Yes) I can't remember when his father died [1950].

GC That's what I can't remember either.

IB No. But he didn't renounce – he must have renounced immediately. You can't renounce later. Whenever that was. And

then [?] was in the House of Commons. And then became a peer again. [?] But these people weren't of central importance. I'm trying to think. A Labour government, only a Jay ...

GC Plenty of people from the City. Archbishop of Canterbury.

IB He was dead [d. 1945]. Lang was gone.

GC And Fisher was not.

IB Fisher was nothing to do with us.

GC You are still not ...

IB So All Souls was simply academic, plus occasional people from London came, who were quite lively, who did quite [?] – some of them quite interesting posts. I wish I could remember who they were, but I can't remember very clearly. John Foster was a very active barrister. Who else was about? Salter was a Member of Parliament who had been Professor. Henderson, who became Warden afterwards, was much involved in government affairs, but it was not quite the same. There was a contact with London, nothing like the 1930s.

GC You are not married then, yet.

IB No.

GC But you would go very often to the [?] when you were at College?

IB Oh, I lived here.

GC You lived here?

IB Certainly, because I dined quite normally.

GC And on Fridays you went very often to other colleges, or ...?

IB Not particularly on Fridays.

GC High Tables.

IB Yes, occasionally. I dined elsewhere, yes, in the ordinary way, if people invited me. I used to go to New College occasionally, still. David Cecil was there, so I used to ...

GC So your friends there in the 1950s were, in the University, [?]. Herbert [Hart] was already here.

IB Herbert was certainly here and by this time, in the early 1950s [1952], he moved to his chair, University College. He left New College, after me, but he left it. James Joll left it for St Antony's. Who was then here? Christopher Cox, who I knew, was in the Colonial Office. I'm trying to think. Woodward, who I knew, but didn't like very much, went to Princeton – the Institute. First became one kind of professor, then another kind, first went to Balliol, then went to Worcester, and after, as my friend Pares said, kicking two perfectly good chairs into the gutter, went to America. Sumner was Warden in All Souls. Who else was at New College then?

GC Stuart was here.

IB Stuart was in London. Stuart was a fellow, but a £50 fellow, he wasn't an academic fellow, because there was a question whether he should be renewed, and he was accused of sexual misconduct. There was a scandal about all that.

GC Here?

IB Oh yes. Stuart went off with the wife of Freddie Ayer in 1937.

GC [?].

IB Certainly. In 19... – during the war, Keith Feiling, who was at Christ Church, and who became professor here, after Oman – he became professor of history, for two or three years [1946–50], very old [sixty-two], went to see the Warden, Adams, and said, ‘A very bad situation has occurred. One of my colleagues, Alfred Ayer, has lost his wife to your colleague Stuart Hampshire. They are both philosophers; they are likely to meet at philosophical societies. We are a small society here, and if either of them will speak to each other – either they won’t speak to each other, which will be awkward, or they will speak to each other, which will be disgusting. Therefore you must get rid of Hampshire, who is the adulterer.’

GC Feiling?

IB Feiling.

GC His own initiative?

IB Entirely. And then Adams came to me, as Stuart’s best friend, and told me this, and said, ‘What shall I do?’ I said, ‘There is a war going on. They are both officers, both fighting in the [?] – both in the British Army. You can’t do anything now – they are both civic – you can’t do anything while they are in the army. It would be monstrous. You must wait till the end of the war, and then we shall see what can be done. It’s an awkward situation, admittedly, and people will take different views about it. And’, I said, ‘you must talk to Professor Ryle, who is a friend of both.’ He did talk to Ryle.

Ryle said, 'Feiling acted entirely on his own. It's absolutely monstrous what he did. People at Christ Church didn't feel this in the least.' So nothing happened during the war. Stuart went to Gambia, Freddie Ayer went to Sierra Leone, or vice versa – I don't know what happened – and then Adams retired at the end of the war. We then had Sumner from Balliol. Sumner was a great friend of Stuart's, and, being a very cowardly man, was particularly anxious not to be thought to be in favour of him; so he raised the issue. Stuart had come to an end of his original fellowship, which is for seven years: he was elected in 1936. The seven years ended in 1943, but the war didn't count, so he had four more years, from 1945 onwards. So towards the end of that period the question was: should he be renewed? He applied for a research fellowship, which Sumner, who was very nervous about this, refused on the ground that there might not be enough rooms in which he could teach. He set up a special committee called the room allocation committee to prove that there wasn't the room: it was disgraceful, really – it was very obvious what was happening. Then, by this – after 1950, when I left All Souls, Stuart's term was up, he was not given a research fellowship, he was still a fellow: the question was about his renewal. There was a debate, a very acrimonious debate, but the majority voted for him.

GC In the College?

IB In the College. The majority voted for him. So he was retained, but without any money, simply as a fellow. But by this time he was first in the Foreign Office, then he was in the Ministry of Food: in 1947 he was certainly in the Ministry of Food.

GC He was with Noel-Baker?

IB You mean the Foreign Office – head of the Foreign Office. Noel-Baker was in the Foreign Office: he was Minister of State

under Bevin.

GC Yes, for a while, and then he was ...

IB No, under Bevin, under Attlee. Before that Stuart was in the war. He was secretary, yes, certainly; he went to Noel-Baker, to Geneva and all that. Certainly. But he went to the Foreign Office at the beginning – he was in intelligence until the end of the war. At the end of the war, Labour government. Noel-Baker. He was with Noel-Baker and the present Lady [Tessa] Rothschild till the end of the Labour government – not quite to the end. In 1947 he was transferred to the Ministry of Food under John Strachey, and then he remained there. In 1950 he was still there, yes; then Conservative government must have come in when? 1951 or 1952.

GC 1951.

IB 1950 I resigned from New College. He succeeded me in New College. Then there was a debate in New College. People talked against him, on those grounds. So the whole point was that Mrs Ayer didn't marry him: she refused. He would have married her at any moment, but she thought marriage was an obsolete institution, talked about a dog collar, and she – they lived together, but she didn't marry him. That put him in an anomalous position.

GC Had she married him, everything would be all right?

IB Perfectly, by that time. I would guess so. I'll tell you in a moment why I think that – I'll tell you an amusing story. But anyway, then there was a great debate in New College. I was present at this debate. I was still there, still a fellow, when this happened, and three people talked against him, very forcibly. But fortunately the Warden of New College liked him – Smith was his name. So he was elected, and he became my successor at New

College quite simply. He became the philosopher with Hart. It was certainly the best period in New College philosophy, I would say. And then he came back to All Souls as Bursar.

GC Stuart?

IB Yes. Debate again, here. And by this time, still not married. He came back, because he wanted to be able to do research. He came back in 1954 [1955]. Then he became professor in London, succeeding Freddie Ayer, who became professor in New College. Box and Cox. And then he went to Princeton as professor. That's the whole story of Stuart.

GC The affair lingered ...

IB Until 1950.

GC Until 1950?

IB No, it was not mentioned when the question of the bursarship came up. Nobody objected openly because he was not yet married to her. He did marry her, quite soon after that, because he had to go to the University of Illinois, and that was very straight-[laced] and difficult. So she agreed reluctantly. They were married in some Chicago register office. They were married in the end, yes.

GC And all this – it's gossip, but it is interesting. You obviously – what did Freddie feel?

IB Freddie did the following. When she left him – well, it was a complicated situation. There was a time when Freddie always believed she would come back to him, but she kept him in that belief. She played them both, one against the other. They would deny it, but that's exactly what she did. All through the war Freddie



believed she would come back. He was terribly humiliated by what happened – terribly. At the end of the war he still believed it, I think. But in the end Freddie – oh, in the 1940s, the late 1940s it still went on, and in 19... – I forgot one little item. After Stuart failed to get back to All Souls, and I was still a fellow of New College, she forced Freddie to make him his assistant in University College, London – Stuart, his number two, which very generously he did because he always obeyed her orders. At that time they spoke to each other, with difficulty; but they did, relations were not too terrible. In 1950, when he came back to New College, for some reason they became bitter enemies, and remain so to this day. And each says things about the other which are extremely violent and totally untrue.

GC To this day?

IB To this day. They accuse each other of totally unreal conduct. And I know them both. Each – I don't know about facts, but the attributes, the qualities of character are completely wild, in both cases. That is the fault of the late Mrs Ayer.

GC And did it upset some in the philosophical community of your generation?

IB No.

GC After all ... [?] it didn't?

IB In no degree.

GC How come [?].

IB Why? [?]

GC Sometimes somebody [?]

IB No. There was no split. People who talked to Stuart talked to Freddie, and vice versa. Nobody in the philosophical community – they may not have liked it, they didn't show it in any fashion. Nor did anybody in Oxford. Let me explain to you. Before the war, if a don went off with somebody who was not his wife, he resigned immediately. No question of being kept on. Certainly. There was a man in New College who was a research fellow in biology who certainly had to go. I wasn't a fellow but I was told that. The ex-chaplain of Balliol, who went off with somebody in Balliol during the war, was immediately removed by Lindsay. Christopher Hill went off with somebody, and I think the Master, who liked him, said, 'Well, if it's kept out of the press, maybe we would keep you, but if it's in the press you must go.' It *was* kept out of the press. The trouble about Stuart was, it appeared in the *Oxford Mail*. It didn't appear anywhere else. 'A Captain Hampshire was a correspondent ....' That was the trouble. Otherwise it could have been kept quiet, because Freddie Ayer wouldn't have done anything against him. It's only because it became public. That was how Feiling found out. Things changed when Trevor-Roper went off with the wife of a vice admiral – NATO vice admiral in Paris, the daughter of Lord Haig. To his wedding there came – Scottish Presbyterian church – to the reception, given at the cavalry club by Lord Haig, her brother, came two canons of Christ Church and the Dean's wife. That settled the difference. After that, free for all. That altered the entire morality.

GC A real revolution ...

IB Quietly. I noticed it. I really – I'm the only person who told that story. I noticed that was the moment at which morality changed, or was recognised to have changed. Fascinating, isn't it? That's what happened.

GC Now let's turn to All Souls after Wolfson.

IB Yes. Did I tell you about leaving All Souls for Wolfson? You didn't ask me that.

GC Yes, but you spoke very shortly about it. You left for Wolfson – the whole story of caring for those dons that didn't have fellowships in colleges, and ...

IB I know, but that didn't affect me very much. That's why Wolfson existed, but the question is why did I leave All Souls to do this? I was quite happy as professor. First I was a research fellow, then I became professor – same college, so I simply changed the quality of the fellowship. First of all, I did not want to go on being Professor of Social and Political Theory. Why not? Because I felt, probably, that I was too historically minded, that there were a great many political issues which were boiling in England, and that a professor of political theory should have views about them. And I didn't have very strong views, not strong enough to discuss them or analyse them for the benefit of the students. And that came home to me when there was a book published about the Vietnam War. There had been a book about the Spanish Civil War, edited by Leonard Woolf's nephew, something [Cecil] Woolf,<sup>4</sup> in which most people of course were anti-Franco, and some people were pro-, like Evelyn Waugh, Roy Campbell or other Catholics. Same thing was done with the Vietnam War. I was invited to participate – for and against. I did

<sup>4</sup> *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War* (London, 1937) is not attributed to any editor. The question that begins the pamphlet (p. [3]) is signed by [Louis] Aragon and eleven other authors. Roy Campbell does not appear within. The five in favour of Franco included the Catholics Evelyn Waugh and Arthur Machen. *Authors take Sides on Vietnam* (see previous discussion of this issue in no. 22, pp. 23–5) is edited by Cecil Woolf and John Bagguley.

it, but I didn't enjoy doing it. I thought: here am I, I haven't got a very clear view. If I am attacked on it, I am not sure – I said something, typically, which displeased both sides. What I said was that I didn't believe in political crusades, and therefore I would not have gone to war, maybe, but I didn't believe in betraying friends either. Therefore the idea of keeping out of Vietnam and telling them, 'Very sorry, you can't go on; do your best for yourselves', that if what Mr Lippmann suggested, which is that the ports should be occupied, and the pro-American Vietnamese should live in [sc. on?] those terms – if that was feasible, I was in favour of that. But I didn't think it very likely. But I thought that, on the whole, massacres were worse than wars, and there might be a massacre, and for that the Americans would be responsible. That both sides hated. I was attacked by – what's his name?

GC Dancy[?] told me about it – Peregrine Worsthorne.

IB Peregrine Worsthorne attacked me from one end, and Conor Cruise O'Brien from the other. That's my regular condition, of course. So then I thought, if I can't have a strong view on Vietnam and similar issues, then what do I feel about the Labour Party, socialism? I left the Labour Party because of Bevin, simply, because of Palestine policy.

GC Were you a member of the Labour Party?

IB I was before the war, certainly. Not very active, not at all. But I went to this famous Pink Lunch,<sup>5</sup> I told you about that. I don't think many – I think [?] Labour Party. Then. No. I left it over Bevin, entirely, and then I thought: well, here I am, Lib–Lab, in the middle. Maybe that's wrong for a professor of political theory. I can't just go on discussing the past thinkers in whom alone I take

<sup>5</sup> See no. 15, pp. 7 ff.

an interest – because fundamentally I just want to do history of ideas, Russian thinkers, that kind of thing. That's one factor. So I got a bit tired of it. The other factor was, I think, an election here which went wrong, which had a profound effect on me, profounder than I ever thought it would. That reminds me of something. There was – a research fellowship was offered, and there's a man called Kreisel, K-r-e-i-s-e-l, who was a mathematical logician of very great powers, whom the research fellowships committee, of which I was a member, put top, easily the most distinguished. He was not elected, because people thought he was impolite, he was rude, various people didn't like him, for very frivolous reasons. He got a big majority against him. I thought I did not want to go on belonging to a college where academic values were not sufficiently respected. I was shocked – deeply shocked. I didn't resign, of course, immediately or anything; but when I was in America, and I received this telegram or whatever it was from the Vice Chancellor, saying, 'What about Iffley College?', as it was called, I didn't say no. I'll come home, I'll consider it. That's what happened.

GC When you were shocked about it, did you discuss with somebody in the College?

IB Oh, everybody, yes. There was a protest meeting in which I took part – a private protest meeting to discuss what could be done. Nothing could be done, but there was a meeting of people saying, 'This is very bad.' Oh yes.

GC It was already Sparrow, or Sumner?

IB Sparrow, who didn't mind at all, wasn't very interested, didn't think it was terrible, didn't think anything, couldn't care less. But it was a kind of Philistine vote on the part of a lot of academics who thought he was rather rude, and a difficult man, a Viennese Jew,

on the one hand, and all the London people – letters were received from [Jean] Seznec, professor of French, saying – couldn't tell us exactly what, but he was such an awful man that really we shouldn't think about him. It turned out – all that happened was, it turned out he was very rude to the servants, probably rude to the fellows. He came here for a term as a visiting fellow, and made enemies – bad luck, you think? – made enemies. I get on – he's back in Oxford, curiously enough. He's a Fellow of the Royal Society, and he's a very difficult – he's not a very nice man, but intellectually tip-top, still is; very – Wittgenstein greatly admired him.

*Aline*

GC At this period you met – you married – you met ...

IB Yes. Ah well. I met Aline in – shall I tell you the whole story?

GC Let's – you told me parts of the story.

IB About the marriage?

GC Aline – about the stages that you married her – let's ...

IB I told you about 1941 and all that?

GC You met her on the boat.

IB I didn't meet her. We were on the boat.

GC You noticed ...

IB I saw her, yes.

GC And remembered her. And apparently she made a sort of

impression on you.

IB Certainly. I made no impression on her. She did not remember.

GC And she was on her way to America, flying from Portugal, or from ...

IB We went by boat.

GC Fleeing, I mean.

IB Fleeing, yes.

GC Yes. And then, again, you met her in New York in a certain party that you were asked to by [?] some of the Rothschilds.

IB Robert de Rothschild. So I saw her for two minutes exactly. I saw her for exactly two minutes. She left immediately. Then I saw her with Victor Rothschild – I stayed ten minutes.

GC It was in Pierre's.

IB Pierre is correct. And then I met her when Victor asked me to look after Professor Halban when they came to Oxford. I met her again in New York. When they came here in 1946.

GC And then you ...

IB Became friends.

GC And you were more or less a bachelor.

IB Yes, certainly – not more or less, more rather than less. Certainly. Had no designs.

GC You are a typical bachelor don ...

IB Absolutely.

GC And your friends thought that you would be ...

IB For ever.

GC For ever. Now how did they take the fact that you married?

IB I've no idea. They were extremely surprised.

GC They were extremely surprised.

IB Extremely surprised.

GC And how did it influence your life?

IB Totally, of course. I can't tell you. Difficult question. It did influence my life. First of all, living in a house is different from living in a room. I'd lost a certain number of friends, which are always helped by marriage.

GC Yes, but that's interesting.

IB I gained some friends of hers. She lost some of her friends, which always happens in marriage. The total number of friends diminished. My social life, which was very active in London between, let's say, 1944 and 1954 or 1955, became contracted because there was less opportunity for it, because I stayed at home rather more. I used to stay weekends with people. I no longer enjoyed that. She never did.



GC She never did.

IB Not much. So I became more domesticated. I was much happier, because I used to get rather lonely in the evenings, and I felt I didn't know whether I really wanted to be a bachelor for the rest of my life. And I married her because I fell in love, directly and very deeply. That was my sole reason for marriage. It was not desire for married life as such; not desire to leave All Souls as a bachelor; nothing except being in love; it was my sole, sole motive, not modified by anything whatever, and in due course she fell in love with me.

GC You fell in love first.

IB Yes, certainly. She liked me very much. When we went to America together in the same boat in 1948, Christmas time, we behaved like a what the French call *faux ménage*: we were together, because we had a great many friends on that boat for some reason. On the same boat – we had some accident in about Christmas, December 1948: I was going to Harvard. There were on that boat Alain de Rothschild and his wife, Siegmund Warburg, Ella Cadogan, Judy Montagu, and people I knew: Ronnie Tree, who was in the – his wife ...

GC In 1948?

IB 1948 – December 1948.

GC Was [?] in the same boat?

IB I was going to Harvard, and she was going to see her mother in New York.

GC And you knew her well, of course.

IB Very well I knew her. I was very intimate – we were intimate friends. There were all these people – endless parties on the boat. They all knew each other very well. There was M. Margolin of [?], there was a man called Frank Figgures, a civil servant whom I knew very well; I had about fifteen friends on that boat, and perpetual parties in various cabins – Brian Urquhart, Dr Katkov, all in the boat, same boat.

GC What month [?] was it?

IB December 1948. It took twelve days because it fouled itself in the harbour at Cherbourg, and came back to England, and then went off again two days later. It took a very long time. Aline and I were inseparable, but we never had any affair of any kind until we were married. There was no affair in the practical sense. That didn't happen. Well, I don't know about exactly when we were married: certainly not until he left her, or she left him. But it was very stormy, our courtship.

GC How did you court?

IB It's a very stormy story. Where did I leave the story last time? Where did we stop last time about this? Just now? We are in 1949.

GC You are in 1948.

IB OK. Nothing happened in 1949. I think I fell in love with her, I should say, in some sense of the word, in 1951 – not later, certainly. Or was it earlier? We were in Aix-en-Provence musical festival together in the late summer of 1949,<sup>6</sup> but I don't think I was in love with her then, no. I don't think so. Maybe I was without

<sup>6</sup> But see B 307.

knowing it. In 1951 I knew myself to be. I did not speak of it. So in 1951 I was – she was married; she had by this time three children, one by one husband, two others, which I thought was quite hopeless. I continued to be hopelessly in love with her. I never confessed anything. Whether she felt it or not I can't describe to you. We went on seeing each other a great deal. 1952 I was in America for most of it; still I came back. 1953 we saw each other a great many times, and – what happened then? Wait a moment – in the proper order. In 1953, or might be 1954, that's what bothers me. No, 1953. In 1953 we began writing each other intimate letters which only people who had some kind of what the French call *amitié amoureuse* have. We didn't have an affair, but there's no doubt that we were on – in some sense, more than normal affection; we had some kind of relationship of an emotional kind. I was in Geneva with my mother – went to see an eye specialist, and I was going from there to Nice with her for the Passover; there's a good kosher restaurant there for her. Aline was in Paris. I talked to her on the telephone from Geneva, and Dr Halban intercepted this conversation: he listened on another receiver, and made a violent scene. It was quite clear that we were talking in an improper manner, confessed feelings for each other of one kind and another. He said that he would divorce her and keep the children. They had a very violent scene. He was jealous, he was passionate, and all kinds – I realised that by that time she was not in love with him. That was clear. And I only liked him for about half an hour, when he drove – we were driven from Mrs Otto Kahn's house to their flat in 1946. After that I never liked him at all. Perhaps it made matters a little easier – it's more difficult if one goes off with the wife of a great friend. But I never liked him. I thought he was heavy and snobbish and boring, and just not a nice person. Anyhow, so then I received a letter from her in Nice which said, 'I'm very sorry: this must end. I must go back to my children, I have a family; I can't go on; this is no good.' That made me ill, so I must have been very much in love. And I took to my

bed in Nice, and remained there for about two days, I should say. However, I came back to Oxford, and then there was a party, about a fortnight after I came back, to which I invited Alan Pryce-Jones, who was a well-known man of letters, who was staying with the Halbans. I'd invited them before all this to a party which I was giving here in All Souls. Dr Halban was afraid that if it became known that we had a certain rift, his position in Oxford might be damaged. So he told her that we must behave as if we were all still great friends. That itself shows you the kind of man he was. His career is what mattered. So they came to this party. Aline looked like a sheep led to the slaughter. I didn't speak to her. Nor did she speak to me. I talked to him quite amiably; we pretended and so on. [?] I can't remember how I knew they were coming: I think he rang up and said, 'By the way, we're coming. Is that all right?' I said, 'Yes.' Then nothing happened. Then about a fortnight after this – we are now in winter 1953 – no, Nice is spring; we are now in summer 1953 – she telephoned me and said, 'We must meet.' So we began to meet, secretly. We met in shops, we met in cars, we met in London. In summer of 1953 they went on holiday. I had to avoid going to the places in which they were: we had some common friends with [whom we both] stayed – I was very careful not to .... We corresponded secretly, we sent letters to accommodation addresses; that's what happened; that went on. She said no, we must – she was not prepared to break with me for one single moment, and she began not to be able to bear it. Still, it went on; she said, 'You know, my life is like a vase which has been cracked; I'm trying to hold the bits together, but I don't quite know how long this can go on.'

GC She said this to you, or ...?

IB She said it to me.

GC At the end of the summer, about autumn 1953. He was very

anxious to preserve relations, and he used to ask me to meals, all kinds of things like that. We went on seeing each other, secretly. About the, I should say, end of 1953, maybe November, I remember making an appointment with her to meet in a chemist opposite All Souls. There's no chemist there now. There's a wine shop. I delivered a lecture at 11 o'clock – 10 o'clock, I think. At 11 o'clock I went to the chemist, and I saw Halban and her on the street corner. How he discovered I don't know, but we think that he put a detective on to me, and tapped telephones, and did all that, because he formed a certain – his jealousy was unbelievable. Wait, I think there must be an intermediate moment which I haven't told you about. The date is what bothers me. I think before this happened, and before the telephone conversation occurred ...

*Side B*

IB And between the story I am telling you about the secret meetings in Oxford, I went in summer and stayed with Alix de Rothschild in a place called Reux, which was near – it's a village near Deauville. The Halbans were staying in Deauville. I saw them – I saw them both, and they came to see Alix, who was a great friend of Hans Halban. But it was plain that he obviously suspected there might be something. And I think I must have written them a letter, because she tore it up on the beach in Deauville and he picked up all the little bits and stuck them together.

GC [?].

IB I don't know whether the letter contained anything very compromising, actually; but he was eaten with jealousy. I don't blame him. Jealousy is a very violent emotion, which I recognise. I don't know if he was in love with her or not, but he wanted to remain married to her. Then, at the end of 1953, we were discovered – I was discovered: I went into the chemist; I bought

things I didn't want to buy; went out; they were still talking to each other at the corner of High Street; I went back to All Souls, more dead than alive. He then telephoned me, and I remember Bill Deakin came to see me about then. I told him, more or less, what had happened; he was more amused than sympathetic. But anyway. And he telephoned me and said, would I come and see him? Halban. So I went along to Headington House, where they were already living, and I had a talk to him, and I said, 'Look, you are perfectly right. I have no criticism to make of you. You are behaving perfectly naturally. I'm in love with your wife. You are her husband. You must obviously hate it, and the fact that you are indignant and want this to discontinue is perfectly natural, and I have no possible argument against it, except one. I wish to give you a piece of advice. I am rather biased in this matter, so you needn't accept it, because clearly I have an interest. So I can't pretend to be objective. But I wish to tell you that if you imprison her, as you have done, and forbid her to see me, as you have done in the past, she'll escape, as she has done already. You will not be able to lock her up for ever. The prisoner is more anxious to escape than the jailer to keep them locked: that's invariably the story. So I recommend you, I advise you, not to do it, because in the end you will see, it'll lead to another crisis, it can't be helped, I don't say it will, but that is a consideration I would like you to bear in mind' – which I meant. He then said, 'All right; go and talk to Aline; ask her what she wants to do.' So I went for a walk with Aline in the garden of Headington House. Dr Halban rushed out and put a letter in my hands. He said, 'I accept your argument. I think it would be good if you could see her once a week.' That led to a ridiculous situation. She used to come to tea with me in All Souls once a week. That was sufficient as far as I was concerned to solve the situation. Well, we went on having tea quite peacefully, it was quite nice. He didn't seem to mind. In this way things went on until about, I should say, the early summer of 1954. Then she telephoned me one day. I was standing in the porter's lodge, and

she got through to that. And she said, 'I can't bear it any longer. He's gone. He's left me. I've done it. I've sent him away. I'm coming at once.' After that all was well. She'd talked about it to him; she found the situation unbearable; and he agreed to go. She paid him a very large sum of money. Without that it could not have been done. He removed every object which he happened to have in his room, including a Cézanne which belonged to her, and removed himself to Paris, where shortly afterwards he married an even richer wife. But – and then we – this is about late summer 1954. No, what am I talking about? Yes, I think that's right. Yes. I think after that we went on holiday together; we saw a great deal of each other; and in late 1955 I went – no, I think it was the beginning of 1955, maybe, all this. No, it was 1955. No, 1954 was what I was telling you about; 1954 was the troubled year. No, 1955, about spring. The summer was very happy; we saw each other a great deal, non-stop. And then we really were in love with each other, and everything was very happy. I proposed marriage to her in the Botanical – she didn't want to marry, particularly; she thought we would go on like this as a kind of unofficial – didn't mind what is called a *faux ménage*, simply as lovers. But I said, 'No, no, marriage or nothing.' I wanted marriage. And so I proposed to her in the Botanical Gardens of Oxford University, to which she said, 'Well, if it must be, it must be' – which she then accepted. No other way out. 'All right. Very well then.' I then went to America, to Chicago, for two months, to the University. She came to see me there. We travelled back on a kind of honeymoon boat back to England. We were married in the Hampstead Synagogue in February 1955 [7 February 1956]. Her witness was Victor Rothchild; my witness was Eliahu Eilat. Our mothers were there. There were about five people at the wedding, maybe seven. A perfectly good Jewish wedding. And then we went and stayed a night at the Ritz Hotel. And then we travelled about, went to Russia that year – 1956. That's the story.

GC And then you started ...

IB It was a romance.

GC A real romance.

IB I never thought – didn't think it was going to happen to me, no.

GC But was it your first love or when you were younger ...?

IB No, it was not my first love. I was not in love – I was attracted by girls in the 1930s. Not at school. But in the 1930s, one or two, yes. Nothing happened; I don't think they particularly liked me. I had in effect proposals of intimacy from people I did not want .... There was a girl who was in love with me, very greatly, called Miss Walker, who was a pupil of mine. And she was so passionately in love that I thought perhaps I was in love with her, but I think I recovered in time. It was clear to me. She subsequently went mad, so perhaps I was wise. But anyhow she was a kind of hunting shooting lady, who was particularly unsuitable – in the middle, late 1930s – very clever, [?] curious girl; still alive, I think [d. 1992], in a loony bin. And her nephew is Edward Mortimer. She is Mortimer's aunt. She was his mother's sister.

GC I think you told me about her.

IB I could have done, yes, but I wasn't in love with her. At least I thought perhaps I was. We had a romance. But it was a little crazy. During the war there was a lady from Israel who obviously developed feelings for me, whose name was Averbuch.<sup>7</sup> She married an atonal composer called Wolpe. Very good composer.

<sup>7</sup> Hilda Averbach (1916–98), later Morley, m. Stefan Wolpe 1945.



GC Very good composer.

IB He's dead, I think [d. 1972]. He was in America, I think. Anyway, she married Wolpe. She was called Averbuch or Averbach – Averbuch.

GC You met her where?

IB In London, because she came from Riga, a friend of my aunt. She was a lady from Riga who my family knew. We knew the father. We knew the family. But she was rather hysterical. Quite pretty. It was in New York that she laid siege to me, I say ungallantly, but I knew that it was no good, and then she married Wolpe. She wrote me letters.

I was in love in Washington during the war, quite extremely. It was not returned. We saw each other a great deal. [?] No affair. With a lady called Lady Patricia de Benden. Let me explain. Her name was Patricia Douglas. She was the daughter of Lord – wait a bit – what was the name of Oscar Wilde's lover, Alfred Douglas, who was Lord what? What was his father called? [Marquess of Queensberry]

GC Wasn't he Douglas?

IB No – no, you the family name. No, but what was the Lord ...?

GC I can't remember now, but I'll find it.

IB No, I must remember it. It's ridiculous not to. Wait a moment. The name was – it's an Earl of some sort. Anyhow, she was Patricia Douglas, daughter of the relevant Lord. She was a great-niece of Alfred Douglas. She was extremely pretty and very attractive; she was a strong character, and very fascinating, and is still alive [d. 1991].



I met her in Washington. She was a tremendous liar. She got herself into Harvard. She was married [?] – now, who is Bendern? There was a man called Baron [Maurice de] Hirsch. Baron Hirsch had a natural son who he adopted, and whom King Edward gave a title to, and called de Forest because Hirsch is [?] forest. He was made a baron by Francis Joseph at the request of King Edward. He was called baron de Forest, became a Member of Parliament. He got a Graf, he got a countship from the Grand Duke of Liechtenstein, and became Finance Minister of Liechtenstein, Forest[?] zu Bendern, called himself ‘de Bendern’ in England. His second son was called John de Bendern, and is alive [d. 1997], very

nice man, and he was married to this lady. This was wartime, he was in the army; although he was a Liechtenstein citizen, he was a volunteer, and he was taken prisoner by the Italians. She was very attractive, I fell madly in love with her. I stayed with her – she, by forging some documents, she got herself into Radcliffe College at Harvard, by forging a certificate from school. Real forgery [?]. She was not very faithful to anybody. She was very sexy – sex was rather – [?] Marlene Dietrich certainly had a great song, ‘[Ich bin] von Kopf bis Fuß zu [sc. auf] Liebe eingestellt<sup>8</sup> – love was her element. But I was in love, and I used to go and stay with her at Cambridge, Mass. We were great friends, and I saw her a great deal, and then – but I don’t know whether – anyhow, she then went back to England. Her husband was interned in Switzerland after running away, and then she divorced him, because she really couldn’t go on living with him. And then she offered me marriage, which I refused.

GC [?].

IB Yes, in 1945. I realised that it was madness. I was terribly in love still. But she was too promiscuous, too far – it was impossible. She was – it was clear that faithful she couldn’t be to anyone. But I was in love. I didn’t even like her very much. I loved her, but didn’t like her that much. I rather disapproved of her. I didn’t like the form of life, I didn’t like the mendacity, I didn’t like the attachment to sex. But there’s no doubt her company was delightful, and she had a number of affairs, each – with all kinds of people. My brother-in-law, Aline’s brother Philippe, had an affair with her for a week in Paris during which he went mad with love, he told me. She was undoubtedly attractive, and she – oh, lots of people. She married a Yugoslav man [Herman (‘Marno’) Hornak] who kept an antiques

<sup>8</sup> ‘I am from head to toe ready for love.’ The song is known in English as ‘Falling in Love Again’.

shop somewhere in Chelsea, who was a drug-taking abnormal figure of some sort. That's what she liked, really. He lived with three ladies: one he was married to; one was Patricia, whom he outwardly married; and one he was not married to. The one he was not married to married Hourani – Albert. So Patricia usually used to come to Oxford to see her husband's stepchildren: she was on quite good terms with Hourani. But I was clear that I couldn't marry her. And I then went to Moscow in 1945, and received a letter from the present Lady Avon, Clarissa Churchill, more or less saying that I was very nice when I was at Oxford, I was very pure and good, but since then I was corrupted by London society, which was not for me: I really must recover myself, and I mustn't live that kind of life. It really sprang from her extreme dislike for Patricia de Bendern, and I thought that this was monstrous, and – so somehow she was both jealous and disapproving. She wasn't in love with me, but ...

GC She *was* in love with you?

IB I don't think so – Lady Avon, no. In love, not. But rather possessive in those days. But it took the form – she denies that she ever wrote the letter, but the letter is probably in my papers somewhere. Anyhow, it was a very violent letter telling me that really I mustn't go on like this, I must return to my pure Oxford life instead of going to all these dinner parties and all these society people who in the end would deeply corrupt me. Well, I came back from Moscow and resumed life; went to Washington, as you know, from Moscow – first Oxford; and then – I must go on with the story, because it's quite amusing. I continued to be in love with Patricia, but it just – it was clear to me that I wasn't going to do anything. She was unhappy; she had nobody. She had an affair with somebody called Alastair Forbes, who was a [?] journalist [?] writes things in England. Then she had an affair with somebody else, I think. Her husband, de Bendern, became secretary of Duff Cooper

in Paris, and I used occasionally to stay with them in Paris, and I continued to be in love with her but just – it was no good; it was quite clear to me – not quite so clear to her. She from time to time wondered whether it mightn't be a good thing if she divorced him and married me. I was absolutely clear that I would be unhappy for the rest of my life.

I found various ladies attractive in those days: affairs I had none. Then I remember the following happened. In the summer of 1946 I had a friend called Elliott Felkin, who was a Cambridge graduate who was the Secretary of the Opium Commission of the League of Nations, for control of the opium trade. During the war it was transferred to Washington. So he was there, I was a friend of his, and I knew him, and I knew his daughter, who was a pretty girl, who was at Radcliffe and was Patricia's best friend. In 1945, after I'd been – in 1946, when I came back to Oxford in January, Felkin telephoned me and said his daughter wanted to get into an Oxford college, and could she come and see me and discuss it? They both came to lunch with me in New College. In the street just before lunch I met Freddie Ayer, and I said, 'Why don't you come to lunch? A man called Felkin, quite an interesting – great friend of all these Bloomsbury people: Keynes, Virginia Woolf – that sort of man. He has a quite pretty daughter.' He came; then he left. I said to Penelope [?], 'He's a very dangerous man: a great Don Juan, you know.' I shouldn't have said that. When I came back from Russia – no, from America, in the summer of 1946, I found poor Penelope Felkin here, still no New College, still trying to work her way into it, looking rather unhappy. I asked why she was unhappy: she wouldn't say. Then I met Freddie Ayer. He mentioned her name, and said, 'Ah.' So then finally she came to tea with me, and she looked utterly miserable. So finally I said to her, 'Look, something is the matter.' She broke down and said she might be pregnant by Freddie Ayer. She went to a doctor: it was a false alarm. All right. Then Freddie went to Paris, where he duly fell in love with Patricia de Bendern. Wait. Penelope, who was her best

friend, then decided to make the great sacrifice of her friend to this other lady with whom he was in love. Then, when Penelope was in Paris, staying with Patricia, they talked about Freddie, naturally enough – oh no, then Patricia de Bendern rang me up in Oxford: she thought she ought to tell me this was happening. And I said, ‘Well, all right.’ She thought she might marry him: that’s the point. He thought he might marry her. In fact I think he practically – almost acquired a house in which they were going to live. He really was deeply in love, Freddie Ayer. And then while they were in Paris, they talked about it, and they talked about their mutual love for him. And then they did a thing which you seldom do: they showed each other his love letters to them. They were identical: the text was absolutely identical. There were two letters to each, each of which was a facsimile of the other. He wrote absolutely mechanically the same letters to each.

GC Freddie?

IB Yes. Then they both broke with him. And they telephoned me, both of them, and told me this. Freddie was rather upset, and couldn’t understand why: asked me if I knew anything about it. I said, ‘No, no, I know nothing.’ The last thing I wanted was to get mixed up in this. Anyway, that was the end of that. But in 1949 – 1947, when I went to stay in Aix-en-Provence – no, this was 1946 – I think I was still in love with Patricia to some extent, not desperately, perhaps – I always hoped I’d lose this feeling, and in the end I fell in love with Aline, and that cured me, because I was always in love with somebody, unless one love fixes another object. In 1950 I fell in love with somebody else, but I won’t tell you who it is, because of reasons which is best not to say. And nothing happened very much,<sup>9</sup> but that went on until I finally married Aline

<sup>9</sup> Spectacularly false, if understandably so. For IB’s affair with the married Jenifer Hart see MI2 259.

in 1955 [1956]. It was quite passionate, and very satisfactory for both sides, and the only crime I committed was not to tell this lady that I was going to marry Aline, and she discovered it from somebody else, and that was very bad – bad of me, undoubtedly. It was all right, everybody [?] recovered from it in the end. And I married her, February 1955 [1956]. So if you ask me about my love life, that is all I have to report. On some future occasion I may be able to tell you the identity of this person, but so long as both she and her husband are alive, it's better not. Nobody knows this, except Aline and her [Jenifer's] husband. Well – no, nobody else; nobody else known to me.

GC During – then, when you married and started married life, and started the process that you say – you lost friends, you gained friends, Aline lost friends, you gained friends – how did it reveal[?]? How was it? Naturally, you wanted to go on keeping your company with ...

IB No, I used to go to New College to begin with – no, to All Souls, I mean. We had certain common friends. Freddie Ayer was a common friend. Stuart Hampshire was a common friend. John Sparrow was a common friend. Maurice Bowra knew us both. I remember that when we became engaged, in effect – I became engaged to her before she divorced Halban: it couldn't be announced, but in fact we agreed to marry. The divorce went through in Paris, because they were both residents of Paris, so it wasn't difficult. But I remember it had to be kept secret. But various persons discovered it, either because I told them, or because Aline told them. I remember having to tell Maurice Bowra, whom I didn't tell it to for a long time, my great friend. When I told him, he said, 'The only possible person. If I was going to marry anybody ...' He decided it was the only possible person. And James said to me, 'Well, she's beautiful, she's rich.' Joll.

GC Ah, he was that close to you that ...

IB Oh, and to her. St Antony's, you see, because Halban was there. Halban was there because in those days – Aline used to ask me, 'Can't I get him made something?' I got him made a member of common room in Wadham, and I talked to Bill about him – about St Antony's. And Lindemann, who was his patron, also talked to Bill. That's how James came into our lives; and James liked Germans anyway. He must have some German blood, James; he can't be purely English, can't.

GC I'm going to see him on Wednesday.

IB By all means.

GC It's clear that – after all, Aline lived in Oxford; so, as you said ...

IB I moved there – the only thing is this: I moved into her house on the day after our marriage, forty-eight hours later. My difficulty was the children, of course. Michel came to the wedding; wore a bowler hat which he bought for the occasion. We had a little reception in my mother's house in Hampstead. My father was dead. My father realised that I loved her already in – my father died in 1953.

GC And he realised?

IB In 1953 we were staying in Monte Carlo, and the Halbans were staying in, I think, Cap-[?] or somewhere – south of France. Yes, he did. I don't think it's conceivable that by 1953 [?]. He said, 'I can't understand. You love this lady, but she has three children: you can't marry somebody with three children: it'd be absurd.' My mother didn't talk about it. My father did. But then when he died



in the December – I think it was December – 1953, I came flying back from Harvard. He had leukaemia. They didn't know what 'leukaemia' meant; they had never heard the word; so he didn't know he was dying. I knew he was dying; my mother knew he was dying. He thought he had, I don't know, low blood pressure, anaemia; he took various medicines [?] to keep him in pure – to keep his morale up. And then I thought, shall I not go to Harvard? In the autumn of 1953. Because that may be suspicious; if I didn't go, it would be terrible; but I must come back in time. My mother of course wanted not to tell me to – but in the end she telephoned me. I came flying back, and I still saw him before he died. And I said to him, 'I've been offered the wardenship of Nuffield.' It was exactly then, the end of 1953. He said, 'No, no, no; you mustn't take it; no, it's not one of the good colleges; no, no, I wouldn't.' He was against it: he and Sparrow were the only people who were against it. Sparrow said, 'If you want to be nearer the station, the jail is even nearer.'<sup>10</sup> (*laughter*) And then he died, and then I was terribly upset, because I liked – I loved him very much, my father. I was probably – my mother was much more of a character. My father was a gentle, sweet: you never met him, did you? No. He was a sweet, gentle, amiable, civilised man who liked nothing more than French comedies and that kind of thing, and liked to polish his fingernails on Sunday mornings: yes. He was a Hasid by origin, but still, he was very European, much more than my mother. He was her first cousin: nevertheless, socially he was a cut above her, because he was the favourite of the millionaire,<sup>11</sup> and was given a very good education; she was the daughter of a poor man<sup>12</sup> who worked for the millionaire, though his mother was a cousin.<sup>13</sup> And he was an Anglomaniac, adored living in England. He lived in my

<sup>10</sup> Not true, but it's a good story.

<sup>11</sup> Isaiah Berlin senior.

<sup>12</sup> Salmon Izchok Volshonok.

<sup>13</sup> Whose mother? A cousin of whom? IB senior's mother was Mendel's great-aunt; Mendel's mother was not a cousin of IB senior. See BI 315–19.

rooms in New College during the war when the Blitz was on; made great friends with David Cecil and everybody in New College, got on extremely well with all these people, which I don't think my mother would have done, and – she lived in a room: she wasn't allowed to live in New College, of course, in those days, [?]. And I was terribly upset by my father's death; and on the occasion of coming back after his funeral, a day later I think, I was given a lift by Aline from London to Oxford. She came to the funeral, of course, and then gave me a lift. That's when I proposed to her – not marriage. That's when I declared myself, in the car, en route to Oxford, because I was obviously in an emotional state. That's what did it. Psychologically speaking, I was in a some sort of uplift[ed] – [?] a disturbed state, yes – more of an uplifted state, and anyway I talked a lot, and suddenly I couldn't leave it any more. Aline did not then say, 'How terrible'; not at all. She responded very immediately, and then this difficult life with Dr Halban began. So I saw that our relation was a real relationship. She didn't say, 'No, no, certainly not; what you mean? No, no, none of that' – not at all.

GC And then, of course – when did you tell your mother?

IB Oh, fairly late. I think I told my mother in 1954.

GC And what was her reaction?

IB She was so relieved that she was a Jewess. The probability of my marrying [?] was quite high. I could have done it. It wasn't impossible. Not impossible. There was nothing concrete, but I could have done it. The fact that she was Jewish, and what's more, a Ginzburg – it was wonderful. Baron Ginzburg was God – [?] more divine. But Ginzburg was God enough. And then she met her, and she said to me, after about two, three meetings, she wasn't sure it was a good thing – she said, 'She's genuinely in love with

you. Of that there is no doubt.’ That’s all she wanted to be sure of. I wasn’t so sure, but she was quite clear. There was no doubt about that. My aunt Ida liked her very much – she liked Ida much more than she ever liked my mother, Aline; because she was much – from her point of view she was more – easier to – my mother was too much of a full-blooded Russian Jewess of Yiddish-speaking origins for Aline. But my aunt said, ‘Well, she’s very nice, but *gemütlich* she is not’ – which is true. In her sense of cosiness, what the Russians call – what is the Russian for that? She said that: уютный [uyutnyĭ] is the Russian word.

GC *Gemütlich* ...

IB Cosy.

GC *Gemütlich* is cosy?

IB Yes. Well, what is it? There must be – there’s probably a Yiddish word for it.<sup>14</sup> Hebrew, I doubt.<sup>15</sup>

GC *Gemütlich* is something you describe usually – Viennese Jews have *Gemütlichkeit* [cosiness], you know ...

IB Yes, of course. But it means ...

GC [?].

IB Yes. But look, there must be a Yiddish word for people – it’s probably the same word.

<sup>14</sup> נוֹחַ (‘noah’: ‘easy’, ‘pleasant’).

<sup>15</sup> הַיִּמִּישׁ (‘heimish’: ‘homely’, with special reference to how it was ‘back home’, i.e. in Eastern Europe).

GC I don't know Yiddish enough.

IB Nor do I, but I can't tell you. But the Russian word exists. The French word doesn't exist, probably.<sup>16</sup> It means warm and easy to get on with: easy-going and warm; affectionate, easy-going, warm and so on.

GC Very interesting.

IB More or less what my aunt herself was. My mother was less [?]. It's a very obvious psychological characteristic. Some people have it, some don't.

GC Oh yes, sure.

IB Pussy is quite *gemütlich*.

GC [?].

IB You were. She is quite *gemütlich*. Yes. It's exactly what she is.

GC That's what I had in mind.

IB She is.

GC So we think of the same thing.

IB That sort of thing. Who do we both know? I'm trying to think: there aren't all that many ladies. Who else do we know? Lady Dahrendorf pretends she is, but I'm not at all sure that she is.

GC It's exactly what I was going to say [?].

<sup>16</sup> 'Comfortable' is close.

IB Next person – pretends [?] not.

GC It's incredible ... fantastic.

IB Telepathy is a remarkable thing. Wait a moment. Who else do we know? What other women do we know together? People like Mrs, for example, Michaelson is *gemütlich*.

GC Whom I know less.

IB Yes, but she is; by nature she is; a jolly lady, quite *gemütlich*. Warm-hearted, and very easy to be with. You can be vulgar and *gemütlich*; you can even be nasty, in a way, and still *gemütlich*. Guy Burgess was very *gemütlich*. But they thought Aline was rather cold, and she is; but I don't think I would have married somebody very *gemütlich*. I think I needed somebody else. I am, rather, but I needed some kind of foil to this. Anyway, be that as it may. And my mother took it quite well – did not object. Never felt completely easy in her presence, nor my mother. Wasn't her kind of person.

GC I remember one lunch at your house where Aline was, Aline's mother, your mother, Batya and myself; and your mother dominated the scene.

IB She talked away; she talked so much.

GC And I was impressed by the fact that she felt so free.

IB Quite.

GC But maybe it was not that free ...

IB That wasn't nervousness. No. It was sheer strength of

personality; inability not to do it.

GC That's what I – I remember it ...

IB She never sat shyly silent anywhere. She was not shy, my mother.

GC Not at all.

IB Not shy by nature. My mother-in-law was shy.

GC Your mother-in-law I met only once.

IB She was shy, yes.

GC I don't know whether she was shy, or ...

IB She was a shy millionairess, though she was not reserved; but shy she was. When they lived in Paris, they had no friends, except people – clients, people who came to lunch because they were rich, and who they could slightly look down on. Not many equals, and they were permanently embarrassed by the Rothschilds, whose – one class above.

GC That's the mother, and Aline's father.

IB Well, the same thing. I only met him once in my life. He came to Oxford to see the Halbans, and then she came to Oxford to see me [?]. He was charming. He looked like Pétain.

GC Aline's father.

IB Yes: didn't look Jewish at all. He was gentle, sweet, rather shy, very very private, rather locked up, very very gentlemanly – that he

was.

GC Are you tired, Isaiah?

IB [?].

GC I think that you are.

IB [?], yes.