

The Isaiah Berlin Virtual Library

Supplementary Letters 1960–1975

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The red page numbers in square brackets mark the start of the relevant page in the original publication, and are provided so that citations from book and online PDF can use the same page numbering.

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Supplementary Letters 1960–1975

Most of these letters do not appear in *Building: Letters 1960–1975* (B), being later discoveries. More annotation may be provided later, but for now the texts are made available here for the convenience of readers. Sources are given at the end of letters, except for those to Robert Silvers, which are from the New York Public Library, **MssCol 23385, Series I: Robert B. Silvers Files 1955–2016**. The letters to Silvers are included by courtesy of the Manuscripts and Archives Division, the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. Those marked § first appeared in ‘The Israel Letters’, *Jewish Quarterly* no. 244, May 2021, 67–87. We are indebted to David Herman, who edited that selection, for allowing us to plagiarise his notes, and for other assistance. Thanks also to Richard Davenport-Hines and Tal Nadan for their help.

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

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SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

TO RICHARD L. SIMON¹

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.² Though the idea was kind, and I thank you for it. I think almost any competent and sufficiently [?] 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 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

¹ Richard Leo Simon (1899–1960), publisher, co-founder with (Max) Leonard Schuster (see PS) of the publishing firm Simon & Schuster.

² He had in effect already done so with *The Age of Enlightenment* (1956).

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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 M.L.S., whom my wife was very sorry not to see.

TO JOHN SPARROW

30 September 1960

Headington House

My dear Warden,

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

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

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

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

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his impending move (though someone else may reveal it) and if revealed play it down.

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

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

Yours, with much *love*

Isaiah

TO EDWARD WEEKS

25 April 1961 [*manuscript*]

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

Dear Ted

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

I *cannot*, alas, "do" Ben Gurion. I do not know him well enough: I disagree with him too often; I admire & think him terrible and splendid, but, like de Gaulle (whom he much resembles in dwelling with heroes of the past very vividly & seeing himself in dramatized historical perspective) he is not someone I can successfully describe. Churchill I didn't know at all; so that was just a review, another matter. B. G. – if at all, only posthumously, for reasons you will well understand – if then: but perhaps not at all. I wish I could tell you about Israeli culture; I know so little of it, I am ashamed to say. Yakov Talmon³ of Jerusalem University (a historian known in U.S. for his book on 'Totalitarian Democracy') could tell you; or a nice man called *Ephraim Broido* who edits a highbrow periodical in Tel Aviv (the Israel cultural attaché – surely

³ Jacob Leib Talmon (1916–80), Polish-born Israeli historian; secretary to Palestine Committee, Board of Deputies to British Jews, 1944–7; lecturer, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1949–60, professor of modern history 1960–80; author of *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (1952).

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there is one – in Washington wd forward a letter: I haven't his address). he is much the most reliable intellectual “consultant”.

Till May!

yrs

Isaiah

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

TO DAVID CARVER⁴

6 October 1961

Headington House

Dear Carver,

Thank you for your letter of 5 October. The account of your conversation with Surkov⁵ does not of course surprise me in the least. They have made up their mind to do exactly what Crankshaw said they intended to do, and that is a decision taken well above Surkov's head, and he is merely the tough and cynical executant.

All that happened in that never-to-be-forgotten bus journey from Covent Garden at midnight to Wiston House was that after Surkov had revealed the full depth of Madame I[vinskaya]'s depravity, and other members of his party joined in about her financial dishonesty and acts likely to undermine the financial policy of the Soviet Union, etc., Surkov finally said, with a sort of crocodile smile, that perhaps she would not have to stay in prison all the eight years, or whatever it was – perhaps ‘a year or two’ (that is my recollection) would be enough. I said that one year was better than two, and six months better than one year, to which he rejoined

⁴ Secretary of International PEN 1951–74. IB had joined PEN in 1961. The letter is about the Soviet mistreatment of Boris Pasternak's mistress, Olga Ivinskaya.

⁵ Aleksey Aleksandrovich Surkov (1899–1983), head of the Soviet Union of Writers 1953–9.

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nothing at all and spent himself on amiabilities about Baroness Budberg and other London friends.

I do not myself believe that anything done to expose Surkov will help Madame I. – I think they have made up their minds about that and Surkov is merely reproducing a carefully officially prepared line to which they all stick. He may, being an exceedingly clever man, have helped to work out the official version, but once it is adopted it ceases to be his property, and his personal fate has little to do with the fate of the victims. The only thing which could save them would be a change of heart on the part of some person in real authority from Mr K[rushchev] downwards – and how that is to be compassed I have no idea. If the people I still preserve a tenuous connection with inside the Soviet Union are not to get into further trouble (they have had a good deal already – I do not know if I ever told you about my conversations with various semi-condemned writers), it were best if my name were kept out of this. But there is no harm in saying, perhaps, that Surkov, in general conversation with no one in particular, seemed to hold out hope of a shorter sentence owing to the general clemency and humanity of the Soviet authorities (or similar rot).

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

TO DAVID CARVER

12 October 1961

Headington House

Dear Carver,

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

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sharpest voices were raised in England. I hope that you will have sent copies of your talk to the other national centres of PEN.

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

A FIRE AT HARVARD

From September 1962 till January 1963 IB was Ford Visiting Research Fellow at Harvard, living in Lowell House. Soon after his arrival he caused a fire in his room, as he describes in letters to his stepsons Peter and Philippe Halban (B 116–17, 127). By chance it was at this moment that Kay DeLuca,⁶ who had just been appointed as his secretary, first encountered him. In 2019, now Kay J. Lisle, she recalled the experience. She remembers that it was she who extinguished the fire, but in IB's account this role was his.

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

It took a while before I got used to his voice and the speed of his speech on those dictaphone tapes. I believe he was writing something

⁶ Kay Johnson Lisle (b. 1940), née Kay Lenore Johnson, anthropologist, m. 1st 1960–2 Louis Samuel DeLuca (a Harvard graduate student), 2nd 1964–86 Edwin Stewart Dethlefsen, 3rd 1993 Peter Grim Lisle; later assistant professor of anthropology, Franklin Pierce College (1972–8), and Dean of Admissions, Colby-Sawyer College (1981–5).

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on Kerensky. He would ask me to do errands occasionally – like going to Leavitt and Pierce to pick up his cigars. Often when I would return to his room to deliver whatever I had typed he would say: ‘Call Aaron Copeland, call Nathan Milstein, call Leonard Bernstein. Get Arthur Schlesinger on the phone. He wants me to go to the Kennedy White House this weekend.’ Those are the closest words I remember. It was great fun. He would dictate gossip letters to people at All Souls which were very entertaining.

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

A small anecdote about an amazing man.

TO ROBERT SILVERS

2 June 1964

All Souls

Dear Mr Silvers,

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

Secondly, all hope is not yet gone that I may yet write something about Stuart Hughes I have now finished his very short book and he does say a number of things which are sufficiently provocative to deserve comment. I will try and write something in the summer – July or August. Perhaps I shall fail: if so, I shall let you know. I hear that Miss Mary McCarthy thinks that the *Times Literary* review of Miss Arendt’s notorious work was written by ‘a lawyer who had

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failed in politics, and obviously a Jew': I am, I suppose, not at liberty to reveal the name of the author:⁷ but if he is a lawyer he is so only marginally, he has never been in politics, and is very, very far from being a Jew – so much for our old friend[?]s] perspicacity. Did you read it? It was an interesting piece and rose above the polemics of the *Partisan Review*. One must, I suppose, not ignore such squabbles: if one thinks of the level at which the early associates of Marx, and indeed, the Master himself, wrote against each other, that was pretty squalid too; and yet the consequences, whatever one might think of their value, were not negligible. Still, it seems extraordinary to me that mere obscurantism and desire to cause pain should get anyone so far, but perhaps I am not right about this.

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

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

TO ROBERT SILVERS

13 July 1964

All Souls

Dear Mr Silvers,

It was very nice to hear from you and I really shall attempt to produce something apropos of Stuart Hughes, and on the other book which you were kind enough to send me. I have just completed an enormous review for the *Political Quarterly* – too long for them to print probably – on Macpherson's book on Hobbes; and as he is a fanatical Marxist and has replied to all his other reviewers – except those who praise him without qualification – with the greatest vehemence and violence, I tremble. However, the review is written, the sword drawn, and I must do something more peaceful and academic for a while. But I really shall try and produce something for you. All that you say about the *Partisan Review* and

⁷ John Sparrow.

the enormous past history of scores to settle, stabs and counter-stabs, and memories of who joined the Party when, and why and when they left it, and with whom and for whom, and who displayed what cowardice in what crisis, and what betrayals there were, etc. is, in general outlines, familiar to me. I realise that the whole thing was simply the occasion for the outburst of long-accumulated resentments, and that the main subject of Miss Arendt's book was buried underneath all this. And I am exceedingly amused by the thought that the *TLS* review was written by Hampshire and myself, jointly. I do not know Mr Lionel Abel: but if you see him, you can assure him on the best authority that neither Hampshire nor I wrote a word of it, nor knew that it was to appear; although by dint of careful enquiry I have discovered who the author is, naturally after having had to take oaths of the most fearful sacredness not to reveal his name (it is a man). He is, in case anyone wishes to know, remote from all the persons concerned, remote from Nazis, Jews, political theorists, the intelligentsia – it was an original and imaginative move on the part of the editor to send this particular book to him – and what he wrote came from his inner consciousness, influenced by, so far as I know, nobody: the author is the most independent human being known to me: this is the only clue which I am allowed to give. Mary McCarthy – (how could she think, or anyone else, that either Stuart Hampshire or I would describe her as 'the egregious Miss McCarthy') – told the editor of the *TLS* that she supposed it to be a Jewish lawyer disappointed in politics. Nothing can be further from the truth. There has been a very arid correspondence about all this, I gather, in the *TLS* as to what was meant by 'the darkest hour' for the Jews. I am sure Miss Arendt imagines herself as a kind of Rahel Varnhagen and the first-class row boiling round her as a kind of great romantic collision between Schiller and Goethe and Schlegel and Hegel, etc. It has been a fearfully squalid personal imbroglio and the central issues of the whole thing – for I suppose there were some – have been buried under very dreary personal insults and counter-insults. I cannot bear to answer reviewers, even when they are insulting and

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mendacious. I am sure that Mary McCarthy, let alone Miss Arendt, would have been better off if they hadn't. It really would be nice if we could meet again soon. You will not be coming to England before I come to the United States in April? I hope that you will.

Dictated but not signed by Isaiah Berlin PU

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

TO ROBERT SILVERS

12 October 1965

Headington House

Dear Bob,

Thank you very much for the memoir of Mandelstamm⁸ and the letter of translation. I have the book on his prose which is written by a professor here whom I know – I know him and his work and it is a good book.

I ought not to be allowed to write about poetry. Everyone knows I know nothing about it. Still, something ought to be done about 'acquainting the public' with this exquisite, beautiful, severely disciplined, very undecadent master – on the contrast, a writer with a kind of Landorian ideal of life in part and his dreadful fate with the trial of his friends, persecution of the dictator, and diseased torture hounding in the camp, sordid and dreadful death, ought to be commemorated.⁹ So I will do my best. The person who

⁸ The Russian name transliterates in the system we use as 'Mandel'shtam' (the form used in Henry Hardy's editions of IB's works), but is usually spelt 'Mandelstam' by English writers. It is variously spelt by IB and/or his typists 'Mandelstam', 'Mandelstamm' (the original German form) or 'Mandelshtam'. In 1980 IB and RS differed about how to spell the name in IB's memoir of meetings with Russian writers, settling on 'Mandelstam'.

⁹ Evidently a garbled transcription, though the sense is more or less clear. IB appears to be saying that the public should be made aware of Mandel'shtam and his remarkable qualities, and of the contrast between his liberal ideals

really ought to do it is, I suspect, Maurice Bowra, who will be quite annoyed at my doing it, or, indeed, touching on the province of Russian poetry at all; although I did once do a small piece on Pasternak for [*Partisan Review*]¹⁰ years and years ago of which I am not entirely ashamed. The Lowe translations look all right. Unromanticised in the wording sometimes, but I must look at the originals.

Anyway I can do nothing before I deliver those horrible New York Columbia lectures,¹¹ and then I have to go to Europe for a week. During the European journey I shall scribble something and send it to you.

The philosophy anthology¹² is much more tricky. It is a perfectly worthy enterprise, but under the wrong label. It is as if an [anthology of] American philosophy [...] appeared containing works by Jonathan Edwards, Washington Irving, extracts from Melville, Poe, Emerson, Thoreau, Henry James, Channing, Niebuhr, Paul Elmer More, winding up with a statement about American pragmatism by an unknown professor from the University of Kansas. Some of the pieces might be quite interesting, some written by gifted essayists, critics and theologians, but philosophy? There did exist academic Russian philosophers: one or two are reproduced here – I ought to have added Santayana and Ralph Barton Petty – but it wasn't much good. Dutch

(reminiscent to some degree of those of Walter Savage Landor) and the dreadful fate he suffered: his friends were put on trial, and he himself was persecuted by Stalin; he was sent to a prison camp, where he was hounded by his jailers, suffered torture and disease, and met a sordid and horrible death.

¹⁰ **'The Energy of Pasternak'**, review of Boris Pasternak, *Selected Writings*, *Partisan Review* 17 (1950), 748–51.

¹¹ 'Two Enemies of the Enlightenment' [J. G. Hamann and Joseph de Maistre], the Woodbridge Lectures, Columbia University, New York, 25–8 October 1965.

¹² *Russian Philosophy*, ed. James M. Edie, James P. Scanlan and Mary-Barbara Zeldin, with the collaboration of George L. Kline (Chicago, 1965), 3 vols. IB dictated a 2,500-word review, of which a very imperfect transcript survives in his papers. He corrected barely more than the first tenth. The transcript is available online as **'Russian "Philosophy"'**.

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academic philosophy, and Portuguese and Swiss, exists too, but an anthology would not be of absorbing interest. This the authors haven't done; they have done the other. They have simply taken bits and pieces from 'penseurs' – who are none the poorer for it. [...]

Meanwhile, when are we to meet? Why don't you come here? November would be best, when I am back from Johns Hopkins, i.e. the second week of that month. Do suggest yourself. Stuart <whom you will have seen yesterday> and I will welcome you with [the] greatest warmth, as you know, and Aline¹³ too. I daren't speak about Mrs H.¹⁴

Yours,
Isaiah

TO VERA STERN

22 October 1965

Princeton University

Dearest Vera,

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

¹³ Aline Elisabeth Yvonne Berlin (1915–2014) née de Gunzbourg was married to IB from 1956 until his death in 1997.

¹⁴ Stuart Hampshire's wife Renée, whom IB viewed considerably askance, describing her to Aline as 'a monster' (B 123/2).

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in New York, or at least him. Relations between them appear to me to be obscure.

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

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

Yours, with much love

Isaiah

TO ROBERT SILVERS

2 March 1966

Headington House

Dear Bob,

Goodness me – what a city you live in – the publicity given to my very routine arrangement with the City University of New York by which I come for three or four months – and not every year – seemed to me fantastic. I have seldom had a nastier week than that in which that odious vignette of my appearance, character, habits, origins, appeared in the *New York Times*,¹⁵ plus an article by Alistair

¹⁵ Leonard Buder, 'Sir Isaiah Berlin, Philosopher, to Join City University in Fall', *New York Times*, 8 February 1966, 1.

Cooke in the *Guardian*¹⁶ which, in the guise of jolly banter, and [] humour and agreeable chaff, was one of the most odious pieces ever written about anyone by anyone. I feel inclined – like my colleague Cauter in *All Souls* – to rush into print with memories of Alistair Cooke’s broadcast in 1940,¹⁷ which he is certainly seeking to forget. But I shall do no such thing. I shall behave like Barzun,¹⁸ in a restrained, gentlemanly, severely Henry-Adams-like manner. What could have stimulated the *NYT*, of all newspapers, to this hideous exhibition of intolerable vulgarity? My letters are divided into genuine concern about my feelings (this pleases me very much, although it does not comfort me) and crocodile tears about the indignities to my person – and naive, sincere congratulations upon having attained such a measure of public appreciation. I find it difficult to answer the last without hurting feelings.

The Oxford Lowell affair was grotesque.¹⁹ No doubt these campaigns ought to be better organised, but there really was a rush of Philistine xenophobes to the polls, and Stephen Spender’s letter about the clergymen and cricketers brought out to vote for Blunden was not at all inaccurate. They will learn: Blunden is inaudible, has nothing to say, and despite his air of sweetness and Georgian innocence is a not very estimable character. I remember having a row with him, quite unexpectedly, in the early 1930s, when he displayed sympathies for Hitler – admittedly of a rather confused kind – because of a certain feeling that he and Hitler ultimately stood for the same rural values, were both front fighters in the war, and did not much like sophisticated intellectuals, Jews etc. in the corrupt centres of international culture. But I am very sorry for Lowell: it is disagreeable to be defeated in these circumstances, and it is the fault of whoever in Oxford originally

¹⁶ Alistair Cooke, ‘An Appointment in New York for Sir Isaiah Berlin’, *Guardian*, 9 February 1966, 11.

¹⁷ Untraced.

¹⁸ Jacques Barzun (A 48/3).

¹⁹ Robert Lowell’s failure to be elected Oxford’s Professor of Poetry: see B 362/2.

promoted his candidature. No doubt he can be elected later, and no doubt he will not wish to stand; whether a ‘draft’²⁰ is possible I simply do not know. I thought of writing to him, and then I thought I wouldn’t, for what would it have been possible to say? Only to say how awful it all was, and how silly, and how unimportant, but at the same time how discreditable.

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

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

I have received a letter from Norman Birnbaum telling me that Lichtheim has not landed his job at Essex after all. That depresses me. Everything depresses me at the moment, but with the capacity for ultimate optimism of our dear old race, I shall doubtless rise from this present mood. It will be very nice indeed to see you in New York. All kinds of old friends of yours came to a party given by Stephen to celebrate his silver wedding, his birthday, his son’s

²⁰ Meaning unclear: perhaps an election managed by enthusiasts without Lowell’s active participation.

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twenty-first, all simultaneously. The point of the party was not to invite Mel Lasky, which he successfully did. Weidenfeld, on the other hand, was there to underline this fact, and still the spectacle of elderly Labour and Conservative cabinet ministers, doing extraordinary contortions to the sound of what seemed to be tomtoms, did induce a vaguely pro-Soviet mood in me. I must repress this. You and I and Barzun and Hester must defend Western values. I shall do so at Cornell when Stuart, Conor Cruise O'Brien, Shils and Northrop Frye discuss scholarship and morals. You must come. Everything of this kind is at once grotesque, embarrassing, quite interesting, unnecessary, and ultimately not altogether discreditable to the human race.

Yours,
Isaiah

TO MICHAEL MORAN²¹

19 September 1966

Headington House

Dear Mr Moran,

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

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

²¹ (John) Michael Patrick Moran (1935–2016), assistant lecturer in philosophy, Keele, 1960–2; lecturer in philosophy and intellectual history, Sussex (where IB attended some of his lectures), 1962–88, professorial fellow, Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus, 1989–93; academic adviser to Rauf Denktaş, President, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, 1991–2000.

insight, or not known the degree of his indebtedness to the Germans.

I wonder if you know a book by Lovejoy – the last that he ever wrote – whose name I cannot remember.²² It mainly deals with Schelling, to whom he is of course not very sympathetic, but whom he treats with great scruple and fairness; he gives evidence of whole pages of Schelling copied out consciously or unconsciously by Coleridge. Indeed I think there is literally nothing original in Coleridge's basic views; what is original is the application – I think this is also your view – to a theory of poetry or art in general, in the particular way that he made it, and the 'infusion' of the personality of Coleridge himself – the quality of his own vivid self-expression and the authenticity and first-handedness of the whole thing, which is very different from some of the German theorists. But idea for idea, this can all, I think, be found more or less literally both in Schlegel and Schelling. 'The Great I Am' and the Primary Imagination, in different terms, are all there. Lovejoy stresses the importance of Jacobi, now almost utterly forgotten, but in his day, according to Lovejoy, more famous than anyone other than Kant. Certainly his theories of the intuition correspond almost precisely to certain strains in Coleridge. It is the Anglican parts, or, generally, the more Christian elements in Coleridge (although there are, of course, analogues among the Germans), that often are, it seems to me, fairly original; and you are quite right to emphasise all that, and certainly the notion of the clerisy – a kind of Saint-Simonism, of a very English sort, which is peculiar and unique.

The thing I was going to emphasise particularly, however, is this: should you not perhaps go a little more into the whole division of reason versus understanding – what you quite rightly call the laudatory as opposed to the pejorative names for the two 'faculties'? I do not know where this begins, but from the beginning of roughly the second third of the eighteenth century the Germans begin to distinguish two faculties or methods or

²² Berlin is referring to Arthur O. Lovejoy's *The Reason, the Understanding, and Time* (Baltimore, 1961).

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approaches or casts of mind – one analytic, scientific, tending towards the division of nature and everything else into uniform, artificial units, or pulverizing, deathly – bad; the other synthetic, creative, intuitive, organic, full of insight, delving into the essence of things, etc. etc. – good. This is certainly not Kant’s division of reason and understanding; but it is there in the Schlegels, in Schelling, in Fichte, in Hegel, in Maistre, and in a perverted form entered into a good deal of Nazi patter; ‘analytic’ as a term of abuse – as indeed it is more or less also used by Burke – with all its aesthetic, ethical, political and theological implications, was certainly an important phase of European thought. French Catholic reactionaries by 1815 are full of it. Bergson is only the most eloquent, though not the clearest, expositor of it. I do not know of anyone else who, in English, has stated this so plainly. The difference between secondary imagination and fancy revolves around this, and so does every anti-positivist doctrine since that day.

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

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

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§ TO ROBERT SILVERS

26 June 1967

Headington House

Dear Bob,

Here is quite a decent piece by old Talmon, with most of which I agree. I enjoyed I. F. Stone's piece very much.²³ I agreed with that too – perhaps he somewhat underplayed Nasser's addiction to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, which he did after all reprint in something like a million copies, and the work done by all those Nazis in Egypt – one might say that Arabs cannot be blamed for using every anti-Jewish weapon that they can find, given their state of mind, but the facts ought perhaps not to be concealed.²⁴ Of course Stone is right, and the only hope for the Jews is Levantinisation, and not as an outpost of Western values, culture etc., which anyway only highly Westernised Jews, German, English, American etc. (not Russian or Polish) want them to be, and which they certainly will not be, and have no business to be. Edmund Wilson²⁵ in all this, conversing with Agnon,²⁶ must have been too enchanting and characteristic. As for the Jewish sociologists in New York, blowing out their chests and glorying in the fighting men of Israel, I can well imagine that this would irritate you or anyone else; the same persons did exactly the same with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade²⁷ in Spain, or indeed any other uniform, whether Communist, National, American or Zionist, which produced fairy-story effects – transformed their rags into shining armour and healed their wounds, and made the flesh seem whole.

²³ Isidor Feinstein ('Izzy') Stone (1907–89), left-wing US journalist and author.

²⁴ Gamel Abdel Nasser (1918–70), second president of Egypt 1954–70.

²⁵ Edmund Wilson (1895–1972), one of America's leading literary critics during the mid twentieth century, and a regular contributor to the NYRB.

²⁶ Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888–1970), leading Israeli writer, awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1966.

²⁷ During 1937, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade fought for the Spanish Republic against Franco's forces in the Spanish Civil War.

It may be a vulgar and maddening phenomenon, but this is how slaves and liberated slaves behave, and it is in the end not a reason for not liberating them. It is what the whole ancient world felt about the Japanese victories in 1905,²⁸ and what poor old Deutscher²⁹ and many like him felt about Trotsky on his white horse and military uniform. Not to feel superior to this is not possible for you or me, and I expect I shall have to explain it patiently all to Stephen.³⁰ Stuart³¹ will need no explanations. The really extraordinary phenomenon is France, with de Gaulle and the Communists on one side, Sartre on the other. Extraordinary.

Are you really not coming here? My desire to go to Russia in September is ebbing. Once in Italy I know I shan't move, but don't tell the Lowells³² just yet (perhaps). I think perhaps this is the moment to go – the forces of darkness are a little bit too much in the ascendant; Lord Snow³³ and Sholokhov³⁴ are on top, and the fate of the persecuted Jewish intellectuals is too painful. One cannot meet them, and if one does it will do them no good, and cause them to be denounced, however innocent their behaviour. Perhaps next year would be better.

Yours,

Isaiah

²⁸ The Russo-Japanese War, 1904–5, led to a series of humiliating defeats for the Russians and contributed to the 1905 Russian Revolution.

²⁹ Isaac Deutscher (1907–67), a Polish Marxist journalist and historian, and Berlin had an acrimonious relationship, chronicled by David Caute in *Isaac and Isaiah: The Covert Punishment of a Cold War Heretic* (2013).

³⁰ Stephen Spender (1909–95), Kt 1983, English poet, novelist and essayist, was a close friend of IB for many years.

³¹ Stuart Hampshire (1914–2004), Kt 1979, leading Oxford philosopher, close friend of IB since the 1930s.

³² Robert Lowell (1917–77), one of the leading American poets of the post-war period and a key figure in the founding of the NYRB, was married to Elizabeth Hardwick (1916–2007), a writer and regular contributor to the journal.

³³ Charles Percy Snow (1905–80), Baron Snow 1964, British novelist and scientist whose Rede Lecture in 1959 initiated the 'Two Cultures' controversy.

³⁴ Mikhail Aleksandrovich Sholokhov (1905–84), Soviet novelist and winner of the 1965 Nobel Prize in Literature.

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TO ROBERT SILVERS

17 July 1967

Wolfson College

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

Dear Bob,

I have, as Richard will doubtless have told you, had a conversation with him about the Middle East. He is very firm in his views and, given a fez or tarbush, would be a worthy representative of the Syrian government, far more eloquent and convincing than anyone they have at present seen at the United Nations, doing rather better than Mr George ◁Tomeh?◁³⁵ – I have forgotten his surname – who does their business for them.

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

³⁵ He is right. George Joseph Tomeh (1922–2004) was Permanent Representative (Ambassador) to the UN of the Syrian Arab Republic.

more respect for him: he is a very gifted and in some ways even rather nice man: but he is madly vain, steeped in medieval values, hates the modern world, industrialism, colonialism, imperialism, rationalism, and therefore Communists, atheists, Jews, positivists, Trevor-Roper etc., and really holds a T. S. Eliot kind of outlook, plus an element of breast beating about the fearful iniquities of the West versus the East, and therefore a kind of Vichyssois, slightly George-Kennan-like, belief that anything the East does is natural revenge for the indignities and cruelties of the West, which the West must take patiently and as a deserved punishment for its betrayal of the spirit. All this I find immensely distasteful, although I think that he is an excellent writer, with a genuinely large horizon, and I have a certain respect for anyone with that kind of sweep who doesn't try and hide himself in minute scholarship from the great issues of the past and present. That, I suppose, is why, for example, the admirable Momigliano has some respect for him – Momigliano who is the most left-wing of our cosmic historians and in the matter of the Middle East passionately and uncompromisingly anti-imperialist and pro-Israel. Of course all that you say about refugees is right. Stuart assures me that Dayan, when he said he was not interested in refugees, did not mean that they were inconvenient cattle, to be disposed of somehow, and not human beings. Whatever he may have meant, the Israelis have an obligation in this respect, and if they behave badly, this has to be said. I replied to Toynbee's letter in manuscript and kept no copy and I have received a huge screed in manuscript from him, full of compliments, which embarrassed me. He is mainly concerned about the Jews not building the Temple in the sacred area and destroying the mosque of Omar and the mosque of Aksa in the process, which he rightly supposes would not be well received by the world at large and might indeed excite some anti-Jewish feeling. He does not think that the danger of this great act of vandalism is immediate, but he thinks that fanatics etc. might soon start working towards that end and wishes to record his dissent. If that were the only danger facing the Israelis they would be well off indeed. I have

never heard anyone suggest that the Temple might be re-erected; indeed I have an idea that one has to wait for the Messiah for that to happen; and unless Toynbee offers himself in that role – the marks of the Messiah as you know are known to Edmund Wilson alone – we are not in grave danger.

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

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

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

Sartre disagrees: but tougher leftists are consistent. The Jews are a caricature of their own persecutors: & must perish, at least politically, with them. So, I conjecture, the internationalists of, say, The Tribune who look on troubled Jewish Communists and chauvinists in Marxist clothing.

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

etc. these are improvements. But as soon as Djilas goes to gaol, or Gomulka threatens the Jews, one snaps back to “it *is* a horrible system all the same” – one does not receive each piece of news about communist enormities, trials, tortures, Russo-German pacts etc. with agonized reluctance – but on the contrary, as only too likely to occur, given the original denial of basic human interests or ideals on which the whole awful thing was built.

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

Beecher Stowe: & can be left to what Nabokov calls Hourani Polanyi Masani.³⁶

Why don't you come to Via Gave, Paraggi, Santa Margherita Ligure? S.M. 88441? to see Stuart & Prof. Hart – the provincial Englishman as Cal L[owell] called him? & despite Nabokov's now real distaste for U.S.S.R – he evidently hated being there – if you & Cal go, let me know in time: if this doesn't work, I may go to Israel (whither Nicolas *pants* to go: *his* Russia is *there*) to which I've stoutly refused to go thus far: I don't like joining in celebrations even if they are in respectable taste: I *would* go if there was a job to do: but at present I shall leave that to Weidenfeld who is their chief factotum here: for once out of sincere feeling: the dozen contracts for books are really only a by-product: his Zionism is his most estimable & disinterested human quality. I wonder what Mr Payson³⁷ thinks.

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

Do come to Italy.

yrs

Isaiah>

In 1967 Graham Greene proposed in a circular letter to all honorary members of the American Academy–Institute of Arts and Letters,³⁸ of

³⁶ Albert Hourani (F 292/6), probably Michael Polyani, possibly Minocher Masani.

³⁷ Charles Shipman Payson (1898–1985), businessman and lawyer in NYC, father of Weidenfeld's 3rd wife, Sandra Payson.

³⁸ The American Academy of Arts and the National Institute of Arts and Letters were sister institutions (merged in 1976 as the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters), with foreigners as honorary members.

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whom IB was one, that they resign collectively over the institution's failure publicly to oppose the Vietnam War.

TO GRAHAM GREENE

18 September 1967

Headington House

Dear Greene,

I am very sorry to have received your letter only now in Oxford, from which unfortunately it was not forwarded to me in Italy. I am not sure that my views on the war in Vietnam altogether coincide with yours, but at any rate I wish it would stop at once, immediately, everywhere, without victories. I have gone on record on these issues in language as clear and forcible as I can make it.³⁹

But the proposal in your letter concerns only the American Academy–Institute of Arts and Letters. All the members of it that I know – American members, I mean – are bitterly against the war in Vietnam and [I] certainly do not conceal my views; and any [sc. at a] meeting of it that I attended – last year – this was very clear indeed. Robert Lowell, George Kennan, Meyer Schapiro are only a few of these: those who talked that day were deeply committed and articulate in this matter. I don't think that Nevins's⁴⁰ exposition means anything much or has any relation [to reality] now. In the City University of New York, in which I worked, the professors and lecturers continually organised protest meetings, marches etc. – indeed the mood in academic circles, at any rate on the East Coast, was to the left of, say, Walter Lippmann.

³⁹ In his contribution to Cecil Woolf and John Bagguley (eds), *Authors take Sides on Vietnam* (New York, 1967: Simon and Schuster), 20–1; repr. as 'Taking Sides on Vietnam' at B 601–2.

⁴⁰ The historian and journalist (Joseph) Allan Nevins (1890–1971). Greene's circular letter quoted Nevins's 1966 presidential address to the Academy, which stated that 'It is not a proper function of the Academy and Institute to concern themselves with [...] political events.' Elsewhere Nevins made clear his support for the Vietnam War as a necessary element in the fight against Communism.

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In these circumstances I cannot see what is to be gained, except a gratuitous insult to decent persons, if one demonstratively resigns from a body whose general attitude is morally sympathetic and politically absolutely decent. You may disagree with me and think it nevertheless right to resign; I should understand that and respect it. If I do not accept your invitation, it is not either because I believe in continuing the Vietnam war (although I would not know how it is to be stopped immediately, save by measures which might lead to massacre in South Vietnam, which seems to me no better than what is going on now), still less because I believe in the ivory tower. I do not propose to follow your method of action, but I warmly applaud your motive in writing: what the Americans are doing is stupid & wrong.

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

In reply Greene wrote that as a result of IB's letter he and Herbert Read had delayed the letter of resignation until an attempt had been made to secure a statement from the Academy. He also declared himself less pessimistic than IB about the prospects of ending the war. Neither the statement nor the mass resignation was forthcoming, and on 19 May 1970 Greene resigned in a personal protest.⁴¹

§ TO ROBERT SILVERS

New Year's Day 1968

The Beersheba Desert Inn

I cannot resist sending you this rather disloyal postcard. Jerusalem is marvellously beautiful: suddenly very grand and noble, after

⁴¹ Georgetown University, Graham Greene Papers 2, Box 1, Folder 1. *The Times*, 27 May 1967, 27f. Norman Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene, Volume Three: 1955–1991* (New York etc., 2004), 561–2.

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being a kind of Berlinian Charlottenburg – Gombriches,⁴² Mo Finlays,⁴³ + New. Sch. of Social R.⁴⁴ – which I quite liked, but Stephen wouldn't (& didn't). Politically they live out of the world: remote from the opinions of mankind, self preoccupied, anxious, not at all jubilant or blown out with their prowess or expansionist, but totally provincial, localized, & sunk in local politics – not of the same race as American tourists who find them uncanny; divided between those who are ready to become Sparta & those who abhor this. The nicest are the students & the soldiers. Those from English speaking countries are the worst.

I.B.

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

⁴² Ernst Hans Josef Gombrich (1909–2001), Kt 1972, Jewish refugee from Vienna, one of the best-known art historians in post-war Britain, was married to Ilse Heller (1910–2006), Czech pianist.

⁴³ Moses Finley (1912–86), US-born ancient historian, was married to Mary (née Moscovitz) (1907–86), a schoolteacher.

⁴⁴ The New School for Social Research was founded in New York in 1919 and became a home for many well-known refugees from European Fascism in the 1930s, including Hannah Arendt and Erich Fromm.

TO JEAN FLOUD⁴⁵

Postmark 19 June 1968 [*manuscript*]

[Albany, London]

Dearest Jean,

This morning⁴⁶ The British Academy Committee met on the Skidelsky⁴⁷ case: Lionel Robbins said ‘But he *will* improve the image of Mosley.⁴⁸ Mosley is to me incarnate evil. If he came into the room I shd walk out at once. I cannot vote for this.[’] However we voted: & gave it him: Herbert delivered a noble liberal oration: about the truth & no prejudice about subjects etc. The two

⁴⁵ Jean Esther Floud (1915–2013), sociologist and college head; taught sociology at the University of London (LSE and Institute of Education) 1947–62; Official Fellow of Nuffield 1963–72; Commission of Inquiry into Oxford University (Franks Commission) 1964–6; later (1972–83) Principal, Newnham, Cambridge. She married, 1938, the civil servant Peter Floud (1911–60), who was alleged to have had connections with the Oxford spy ring to which Jenifer Hart had belonged. Her friend Robert Skidelsky described her in an obituary as ‘one of Britain’s leading educational sociologists’, her career ‘a triumph of brains, charm and presence over class and gender prejudice’ (*Guardian*, 5 April 2013, 38). JF got to know IB through her work on the Franks Commission, had many intellectual interests in common with him, and became one of his closest friends. This letter was written to her in New York.

⁴⁶ 19 June.

⁴⁷ Robert Jacob Alexander Skidelsky (b. 1939), later (1991) life peer; historian; Research Fellow, Nuffield, 1965–8, British Academy 1968–70; later (1970–6) associate professor of history, Johns Hopkins. Skidelsky had applied for financial assistance from the Thank-Offering to Britain Fund in order to pursue his biographical research into the life of the British Fascist leader Oswald Mosley. The fund’s origins (B 228/2) made Skidelsky’s choice of research topic a sensitive one, and caused serious problems when his biography of Mosley was published in 1975 (see supplement to A). The Fund was administered by the British Academy, and IB was one of its patrons with Lionel Robbins, Ernst Chain and Hans Krebs. JF argued strongly against Skidelsky’s application, but never raised the issue with him directly, and their close friendship remained undisturbed.

⁴⁸ Oswald Ernald Mosley (1896–1980), sixth baronet; Fascist politician; founder of the anti-Semitic British Union of Fascists 1932; interned during the Second World War as a security risk.

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representatives of the German Jewish donors sat there like timid rabbits, not daring to intervene in a debate between the great (Robbins) and good(?) and wise (Herbert & Wheare). They were a little shocked by Herbert's refusal to consider their feelings to which I, coward as I am, nevertheless finally gave voice: & said I wd nevertheless vote for the award: but tell Skidelsky that he was a monster of insensitiveness not to show any sign, in the interview, of the peculiarity of the application. He promised in the course of the interview to give details of Lord Nuffield's support of Mosley: but he *will* exaggerate his, M's, brilliance, intelligence, public spirit in the 1930ies: those who knew him in his socialist phase thought him personally odious: Keynes didn't but ... I don't wish to lecture you on M. [...]

I.

[...]

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

Published 20 June 1968

[Headington House]

Mr Miller's⁴⁹ attempted correction of my facts is either irrelevant or mistaken. The two circles of which he speaks, and the very cool relationship between them in the early 1830s, is, perhaps, the most familiar of all pieces of knowledge in the field of nineteenth-century Russian history of ideas. There is not a textbook, however elementary, Soviet and non-Soviet, which does not dwell on this celebrated fact. But it has no bearing upon my description of Herzen towards the end of the 1830s and beginning of the next decade. Mr Miller (relying I fear on some popular exposition) says that Herzen returned to Moscow only in 1842: but this is not the case. He was, it is true, fully pardoned only in 1842, but he was allowed to live in Vladimir by 1838, from which he paid several clandestine visits to Moscow, and he returned to Moscow more or less openly in late summer of 1839. In December he went to St

⁴⁹ To whose letter in the same issue IB is replying.

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

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

these years: of these men, with of course Ogarev;⁵⁰ while the names of earlier friends (the ‘circle’ before 1834), e.g. Sazonov, Pocheka, Noskov, fade out of Herzen’s letters. But since Mr Miller challenges my thesis, I am bound to restate these facts. The fact that Belinsky or Katkov (whose family were old friends of Herzen’s parents) lived in Petersburg, while Granovsky and Herzen lived in Moscow, did not prevent them from living an intense common intellectual life, sustained by correspondence and frequent visits. It is for these friends that the letters and articles from Paris after 1847 were written. These are ‘the men of the forties’ to whom, all his life, Herzen was conscious of belonging. So much for Mr Miller’s ‘glaring factual error’. I do not wish to question Mr Miller’s good faith: he clearly thinks he is exposing a terrible howler. The facts, however, are what they are. Mr Miller’s apparent ignorance of them does not alter them.

[Isaiah Berlin]

*TO JEAN FLOUD

5 July 1968 [*manuscript*]

Wolfson

Dear Jean:

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

I did vote for giving S. the money: although Herbert said he could not see, given my stated view, why I did. Lionel Robbins started off by saying that to him Mosley was the incarnation of evil: that if he entered a room, he, Lionel, wd leave it at once. Sayers⁵¹ did not say this: but cast doubts on the importance of the subject.

⁵⁰ This passage appears to be garbled.

⁵¹ Richard Sidney Sayers (1908–89), Cassel Professor of Economics, London, 1947–68.

Wheare (chairman) said nothing. Herbert spoke eloquently to the effect that a true and competent account of Fascism was a service not only to the truth but to those who wished to understand & avoid the evils in question. The two chief promoters of the fund were there. One remained silent but voted with the other who spoke forcibly in favour of S. (who in the interview said he *would* write about antisemitism, Lord Nuffield's⁵² contributions to the movement, etc.) on the ground that the victims cd only gain by a careful analysis: a warning that even able, interesting, sincere men etc. cd cause such disasters & become so vicious. After this I did, plucking up all my tiny stock of courage, I did say that it *was* embarrassing that Mosley *would* emerge in a better light than that in which we liked to think of him: that there was a problem: Lionel said he was impressed by Herbert's cogent arguments, & wd not oppose; Sayers too: I voted in favour because – given the donors' views – I could not see how we cd defend refusing S. given that we thought (a) that he was good enough (b) that the dangers of fascism in England were not such that the truth shd be suppressed pro tem: (c) that where the case is dubious, it was best to lean towards no censorship. But I remained guilt ridden (not difficult for me) & attacked Herbert with some acerbity when we had lunch in a Wimpy later. If you had been there & spoken as you wrote, you wd have won I think, even against dear (*dear?*) Herbert. Stuart & Wollheim think we cd not but have done as we did. [...]

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

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

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beyond the course which John P[lamenatz], in his testimonial (or silly Max B. in his) promised he would do. Aline does I think agree with you. So, of course, do I. Yet I distrust my feelings: & wd lean towards abstract liberalism (which lets in thugs?) so long as I can persuade myself that there is no real danger. I wd do the same, I suppose, for some rabidly antisemitic anti-Zionist if I thought he had something true & important to say. Thus do we crumble & Weimar fall: but I don't think it is yet time to line up & resist the enemy. I did do my best to persuade the German Jews *not* to call it "Thank You" Fund: but the 1938 Fund: they are refugees from the Kristallnacht. In the end it was called Thank Offering to Britain Fund[:] idiotic but a tiny bit better, I suppose. I negotiated the whole thing & so feel particularly upset – & promised to deliver the Thank Off. Lecture in 1970:⁵³ I cd do it on Skidelsky's book I suppose & try to expose its moral inadequacies: odd taste *that* would be in. Still. [...]

I.

[...]

*TO JEAN FLOUD

7 July 1968 [*manuscript*]

[Postmark Oxford]

Dear J.

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

⁵³ He didn't.

I am about to write to Herbert officially about senior/junior Oxford rapport:⁵⁴ nothing about discipline: but something about listening to undergraduate criticism of curricula: and about the reasonableness of their resistance to the idea that they should be treated as recruits for technological forces: Trotsky's labour battalions: the Left is deeply divided on this: the ideal of full developed human beings seems vaguely classical, reactionary, Tory to some: or rather it is theoretically accepted but only after the horrible wars are over: when the enemy has been routed: after the corridor of the dictatorship of the good: when, we all know, it will be too late. [Anti-amateurism can take hideously technocratic forms: the Fulton Report is at once feeble & anti-humane: the troglodyte Hunt who wrote it lives in a Chesterish sort of cavern. Reading Russian radicals in the sixties – who also protest against polite class ridden culture – & encourage revolt & outrageous behaviour & explosion: in the simple belief \(shared, I suppose, by Cohn Bendit etc.?\) that once the “consumer” society is blown up rich full human lives – a world Kibbutz full of natural affection & natural justice, follows – is the old fairy tale: dragon slain: the heroes lose their hideous disguises & live happily for ever after. How does one *show* that this is naive & it all costs seas of blood not followed by the reign of universal love? This is what the miserable centrists, the contemptible moderates, the crypto-reactionary sceptical intellectuals have always agonized over. Popper, Hayek, are too dogmatic & too conceited & removed from the actual lives of the people they are prescribing for: & blind, complacent, &](#)

⁵⁴ In 1968 Herbert Hart chaired the University's Committee on Relations with Junior Members, a subject largely overlooked in the Franks Report of 1966, but which had become acutely important in the interim. Hart's report, published 1969 and duly implemented, proposed reform of the disciplinary system, and ways of involving students more in the running of the university; it contributed to the quelling of student protests that had, for the most part, already run their course. IB believed strongly that student opinion should be consulted more often, and listened to with greater attention. He did write to Hart, but not until 10 October.

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scholastic. Chomsky⁵⁵ is too irresponsibly utopian. Whom shd one follow? I long for leaders: I am a natural hero worshipper: I long for a flag: I should readily suppress truth, sign petitions supported by specious reasoning, attack old friends, behave like a partisan, if I found a cause or a leader I wholly believed in: perhaps I can only say this so confidently because I know I shall not find such a one: no feet to sit at [...]. I have seen Skidelsky:⁵⁶ he is clever & nice but understands nothing about people or movements. I have lectured him & told him you & I were both “worried”. [...]

I.

*TO ROBERT SILVERS

30 May 1969

[Headington House]

Dear Bob,

I am delighted that you have recovered and long to tell you all about Chomsky here. The reception is by no means uncritical although masses of students come. To his lecture on ‘The Intellectual and Post-Industrial Society’ fifteen hundred persons came in Oxford – I presided as competently as I could. It was very like an exposition in the middle 1930s, full of charm, lucidity, acrid ironies and with the most over-simplified kind of Marxism I ever heard on such an occasion. He really does think that United States foreign policy is *entirely* dictated by business interests – stated in a sophisticated form this could perhaps be made not too unplausible; **but** in the form in which he gives it, it is exactly like one of the

⁵⁵ (Avram) Noam Chomsky (b. 1928), influential US linguist, philosopher, pioneer in psycholinguistics, and astringent political activist and commentator; joined the faculty of MIT in 1955, and has taught there ever since; John Locke Lecturer at Oxford 1969; a consistent and active left-wing critic of US foreign policy, adamantly opposed to the Vietnam War.

⁵⁶ i.e. on 8 July: a postscript?

Gollancz Left Book Club pamphlets:⁵⁷ his voice, his manner, his charm, his singularly irresistible personality that hallows it all. I am about to have a long conversation with him about the Middle East. His views I am sure will be noble, simple and tranquil, like Winckelmann's⁵⁸ conception of classical art – but not related to verifiable empirical facts. I love him more than ever and spend time with him, but his grasp of empirical reality is not very strong. I beg you not to pass this on, but when he solemnly informed us at dinner that the reason for the recall of George Kennan by Dulles⁵⁹ was that he was too friendly to the Soviet Union – when in fact he had to return because he said that [the] Soviet regime was worse or as bad as the Nazis, at the airport in Berlin, as you recollect (a fact which Ch[omsky] seems absolutely astonished to hear) – this seemed to be not altogether untypical. Still I thought his lecture was an event. Mrs Floud did not; she liked him personally but thought that the content of his remarks reminded her of the crudest and most naive & simplified form of Marxism, which she had once followed uncritically (though, she says, never as blindly as C[homsky]) and had reacted against in due course. And indeed there is a curious mixture of subtlety and sophistication about theoretical matters, great moral charm and authority, extreme unrealism, dogmatic assurance (the philosophers here refuse to accept his doctrine, either linguistic or philosophical), sense of mission, purity of soul and almost a hatred of empirical reality (his views on the actual aspirations of Arabs, negroes, American liberals etc. are very very eccentric indeed. He is a moralist: but a terribly bad observer). If he had stuck to the proposition that intellectuals

⁵⁷ Publishing venture begun by Victor Gollancz in 1936 to counter the rise of Fascism: among its cheaply produced editions, aimed at working people, was George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London, 1937).

⁵⁸ Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68), German archaeologist and art historian, a pioneering figure in the development of art history as a discipline and in the understanding of Greek and Roman art.

⁵⁹ John Foster Dulles (1888–1959), lawyer and Republican statesman, Secretary of State under Eisenhower 1953–9, a strong advocate of the nuclear deterrent in the Cold War.

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should always tell the truth, never play being politicians, never temporise or compromise, however utopian or unrealistic their ideas, that would be much better. As it is the boys love it – at least the radical ones – and everybody over twenty-seven is highly sceptical. [...]

Yours ever,
Isaiah

Wheeler Bennett is looking forward to his article for you on the Trott book by Sykes.⁶⁰ He is justifiably indignant about D. Astor loony article in *Encounter*.⁶¹

TO ROBERT SILVERS

15 July 1969

Wolfson

Dear Bob,

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

Diana is still engaged in explaining that nothing could have conceivably been further from her intentions than the remotest suggestion that anyone she spoke to should be persuaded in any way to even give a thought to not contributing to your periodical. Evidently the notion that there might have been some element of propaganda in her and Norman P's remarks to Stephen and me

⁶⁰ John Wheeler Wheeler-Bennett (1902–75), historian, official biographer of George VI; British government service, NY, 1939–45; Fellow, St Antony's, 1950–7; Historical Adviser, Royal Archives, from 1959. He reviewed Christopher Sykes, *Tormented Loyalty: The Story of a German Aristocrat Who Defied Hitler* (New York, 1969), the US edition of *Troubled Loyalty: A Biography of Adam von Trott zu Solz* (London, 1968), in the NYRB, 11 September 1969, 37–40, under the heading 'The Man Who Did Not Kill Hitler'.

⁶¹ David Astor, 'Why the Revolt against Hitler Was Ignored: On the British Reluctance to Deal with German Anti-Nazis', *Encounter*, June 1969, 3–13.

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

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

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

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

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With much love,

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

TO JOHN SPARROW

15 July 1969

Headington House

Dear John,

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

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

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writers etc., hence your words lift me, I do not know for how long, from such self-pitying contemplation to the thought that perhaps I *have* got something to say, perhaps my adversaries are not as formidable and certainly not as intellectually impressive as they seem to some – perhaps what I am doing is not useless, perhaps one ought to go on and on and do what I am doing now, which is to publish my collected works in paperbacks, one by one, instead of an impressive shelf like ALR. Hence my gratitude. That is only one reason for it. The other is wholly personal – I am absolutely delighted that you should have written me this letter and shall never, never forget it. And there may be real truth in it – a grain – two grains – I feel it may have been worth it after all.

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

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

Isaiah

TO DAVID CARVER

18 November 1969

Headington House

Dear Carver,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

§ TO ROBERT SILVERS

9 December 1969

Headington House

Dear Bob,

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

to various other newspapers, etc.) – and think Chomsky’s⁶² solution totally unacceptable. (I haven’t written to Noam yet about his piece – I suppose I ought to, but I keep putting it off for various reasons; for what can I say but that I love him but think his ideas hideously unrealistic and to that extent a source of ungratuitous irritation to the real Israeli left?) But before you go to Jerusalem it would be nice if you could have an hour or so with these extremely attractive young men, who are not clever but morally quite impressive: in particular the novelist Oz,⁶³ the philosophers Margalit⁶⁴ and Moked,⁶⁵ the biologist Chen⁶⁶ and perhaps the Prof. Ettinger,⁶⁷ who must have left Russia somewhere in the middle 1930s and is a professor in Jerusalem and a most knowledgeable and intelligent, lively man. I could drag them up to London, since you will have little time, if you tell me when you think you will be free before the actual flight, to which I look forward enormously, and so does Aline. As for what happens at the other end, it does not matter. It will right itself I feel. Your nursemaid is said to be called Sachs⁶⁸ of the English Department of the University of Jerusalem – not, so far as I know, known to me. Ryan’s⁶⁹ piece seems to me rather good – he was long underestimated both by Richard⁷⁰ and Stuart. I feel vindicated – we backed him all along.

Love,
Isaiah

⁶² Chomsky has been a critic of US foreign policy and of the state of Israel since the 1960s.

⁶³ Amos Oz (1939–2018), one of Israel’s leading novelists and intellectuals.

⁶⁴ Avishai Margalit (b. 1939), leading Israeli philosopher, long-time friend of IB and regular contributor to the NYRB.

⁶⁵ Gabriel Moked (b. 1933), Israeli philosopher and literary editor.

⁶⁶ David Chen (b. 1937), Israeli educationalist.

⁶⁷ Shmuel Ettinger (1919–88), Israeli historian.

⁶⁸ Arieh Sachs (1932–92), Israeli literary academic.

⁶⁹ Alan Ryan (b. 1940), British philosopher at Oxford and then Princeton, and a regular contributor to the NYRB. The piece was “The ‘New’ Locke”, published the previous month.

⁷⁰ Richard Wollheim (1923–2003), British philosopher.

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*TO ROBERT SILVERS

2 February 1970

[Wolfson]

Dear Bob,

The Wadham agony continues.⁷¹ The fact that the *New Statesman* today should have said something about how Freddie's withdrawal plunged them all into chaos and how Prof. Hampshire is waiting in the wings will not improve matters.⁷² **all this must come from some enemy** I have an awful feeling that, in the end, the Left will vote against Stuart and this **may** seal his fate. For them he is (**& always was**) a Bloomsbury intellectual, too well dressed, too *soigné*, too refined altogether – the Right **wing** and the Old, which is much the same, will think that he will be too bored with the details of administration, which is far from true, in fact. I hope to God he gets it. I pray for this daily and hourly but do not feel optimistic. He has done better than Freddie – what mild pleasure this bleak reflection gives him I do not know, but it is insufficient.

I have read Bar-Hillel now and it is a pathetic and touching document. I understand his feelings quite well and still his positive proposals are not related to any possible reality, any more than Noam's. For example: he wants to limit immigration in order not to frighten the Arabs. Why? Everyone knows that in normal times immigration will proceed at the present pretty low rate; but if there is a pogrom in South Africa or the Argentine – let alone Russia –

⁷¹ Wadham College was in the throes of appointing a new Warden in succession to Maurice Bowra, due to retire in August. Stuart Hampshire was a contender for the post, but the College had a long tradition of electing from within its ranks, and A. J. 'Freddie' Ayer, an honorary fellow since 1957, had been widely tipped to succeed Bowra. IB was unduly pessimistic about Hampshire's chances, perhaps because he so wished for his success.

⁷² In his 'London Diary' column in the *New Statesman* (30 January 1970, 143), Anthony Howard observed that the Wadham process 'seems to be taking an interminable time'; the withdrawal of A. J. Ayer, 'the most-fancied candidate', had left the field 'totally clouded and confused, though Professor Stuart Hampshire (now of Princeton) is said still to be visible as a late-runner on the outside rails'.

then, of course, these people will want to immigrate much as the French Jews want to at present – not the old **French** families but those who have filtered in during the 1930s and 1950s. Are they to be stopped? If the frontiers are to be established, this should surely be enough. Nobody in their senses supposes that 11 million Jews can immigrate: if Zionism means that it is the *duty* of every Jew to go to Israel **or be politically identified with it**, then it is, of course, **unacceptable &** idiotic – even I have denounced this at no less an establishment than Isaac Stern’s Foundation in New York in the presence of Sidney⁷³ and some exceedingly fanatical Zionists without being contradicted. [...] I do not believe that there are propagandists who foam at the mouth in the Messianic manner and speak of the ingathering of all the Jews into a mighty kingdom spreading over Jordan, Syria, Egypt etc. from the Euphrates and the Nile. I think he is tilting at an enormous windmill, poor man, but if he has this image before him then I do not wonder that he strikes out at it. He is, in a sense, perfectly right in saying that Zionism **as a** movement has achieved its goal and should be declared fulfilled and obsolete – **the rest, being** properly left, is natural sentiment and desire to help, etc., as in America for Ireland of the 1920s, only more so [...].

On the other hand, as far as rights of the dispossessed Arab natives are concerned, he pushed principle beyond reason. It is not a happy thing to be a minority. No doubt this shouldn’t be so and everyone should be very nice to everyone else and minorities should not have to claim rights, which should be accorded to them freely, generously etc., but we know that minorities suffer in some degree everywhere. Hence to increase the number of Arabs in Israel, by whatever means, seems to me to ask for misery for both sides. Ideally, of course, bi-nationalism would be splendid, but we know that this is not to be for, at any rate, half a century, while wounds heal. The wrongs of the refugees have to be weighed

⁷³ Sidney Morgenbesser (1921–2004), John Dewey Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University 1975–99; much prized by IB for his warmth and famous wit.

against the right (and even more the desirability) of making Israel a viable community. Hence, the laying down of *any* principle – that everyone born in what is now Israel’s territory should be allowed to come back; or that they should not be allowed to come back; or that all Jews have a right to come back in whatever numbers; or that only those whose mothers pass the religious test etc. should be allowed to come back; or any other generalisation whatever – seems to me likely to cut across actual concrete needs and situations and to draw blood unnecessarily. [...] **This is true of some of the old leadership** – e.g. the lady for whom you naturally care so little – **they** see their people as surrounded by implacable enemies; **or by powers** who will do nothing for them; **they** are suspicious of everyone, **and** want all their kinsfolk in every country to stand up and be counted, and devote themselves to one task and one only: the up-building of the State of Israel against all other claims, principles, ideals. **These are** the old, eschatological, **post-Marxist** pioneers whose analogues are old Marxists, Trotskyites, Maoists etc. etc. All that will pass. **The** possibly sometimes far less **morally** attractive, but politically and even morally saner, sabras⁷⁴ and other un-inflamed characters, equidistant from Begin and Deutscher (who are very similar to each other in some ways, **and** were brought up under very similar conditions and with very similar ideals) will, if they are allowed to survive at all, come to terms with the Arabs; **otherwise there will be awful slaughter**. Bar Hillel’s appeal to the **Great Powers** to impose a solution is **very** German again. He is obviously a very decent, upright man but the imposition of any kind of rectilinear schema upon that tangled growth would be a terrible vivisection. [...]

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

Yours ever,
[Isaiah]

⁷⁴ Hebrew term applied to Jews born in Israel.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

*TO ROBERT SILVERS

19 March 1970

[Wolfson]

Dear Bob,

Thank you so much for your excellent letter of February 25 – if I have not replied before now this was due to the fact that I fell sick and was constantly in and out of bed for about three weeks. And now I must spring into intense activity – on Wednesday I have to preside over a lecture by our old friend, Scholem,⁷⁵ who is lecturing about early Hassidism – what more terrible fate could be conceived for these simple-minded old holy rollers and shakers than to be dissected and scrutinised by a neurotic, contemptuous, old German Gelehrter? Do you think that what happened to the hippies and the Chicago Seven⁷⁶ will one day be so treated? Which reminds me that George Lichtheim⁷⁷ wishes to dine with Gerhard and Jean Floud⁷⁸ and me – I have warned Aline that this will be too much for her – which reminds me: George has written an article in *The Times Literary Supplement*, it is impossible it should not be by him – on Habermas⁷⁹ etc. – which is of monstrous length and is very polite about Popper who is very pleased, but apart from

⁷⁵ Gershom Gerhard Scholem (1897–1982), German-born Israeli philosopher and historian widely regarded as the founder of the modern academic study of Kabbalah; first professor of Jewish Mysticism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

⁷⁶ Seven defendants charged by the US federal government with conspiracy, incitement to riot, and other offences related to anti-Vietnam-War and countercultural protests that took place in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

⁷⁷ George Lichtheim (1912–73), German-born Jewish intellectual who wrote on modern European history and the history of socialism and Marxism. He was indeed the author of ‘Marx or Weber? The New “Methodenstreit” in Postwar German Philosophy’, *TLS*, 12 March 1970, 269–72. *TLS* authors were then unnamed.

⁷⁸ Jean Esther Floud (1915–2013) née McDonald, leading British educationalist and academic and a close friend of IB..

⁷⁹ Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929), leading German philosopher and sociologist.

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

On Sunday morning I set off with Aline for New York where we arrive on Sunday afternoon – the Blackstone – and where I stay until the morning of the 25th when I fly to Ann Arbor then Columbus, then back to New York for the weekend, then Princeton, Philadelphia, then back to New York to some awful political conference summoned by Prof. Richter⁸⁰ at which I am cut into very small pieces by Chuck Taylor⁸¹ summoned from Montreal especially for the occasion, so far as I can see. On this occasion, there appear R. Wolff,⁸² Macpherson,⁸³ Ronnie Dworkin,⁸⁴ old uncle Plamenatz⁸⁵ and all; I then deliver a rousing lecture on April 6, and back to Oxford on April 8 or maybe 9, where I collapse again. Hence I would rather talk about your Zionist theses when we meet. Is Elon coming? Can I have a talk with you and him and Sidney and Noam etc.? Very briefly I am in favour of rigorously demarcated frontiers, beyond which Israel will

⁸⁰ Melvin Richter (1921–2020), historian of political thought.

⁸¹ Charles Margrave ('Chuck') Taylor (b. 1931), Canadian philosopher whose doctoral studies were supervised by IB at Oxford; taught at Oxford and McGill.

⁸² Robert Paul Wolff (b. 1933), American political philosopher.

⁸³ Crawford Brough Macpherson (1911–87), Canadian political philosopher and historian of ideas.

⁸⁴ Ronald Myles ('Ronnie') Dworkin (1931–2013), US philosopher, jurist and legal scholar who taught at Harvard and at Oxford; a regular contributor to the NYRB.

⁸⁵ John Plamenatz (1912–75), Montenegrin political philosopher who succeeded IB as Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at Oxford.

not be able to expand, to allay Arab fears. But not of controlled immigration because the moral basis of the state is not an asylum for refugees (who, as such, cannot claim a state) but the strange survival of a scattered community, which has mysteriously preserved national attributes, which survive but in a diseased form and breed terrible Steiner⁸⁶-Arendt⁸⁷ fantasies, without a territorial base, and develop normally only if they are given it: as seems to have been shown in practice. My favourite Hess compares this to those grains of wheat found in Egyptian tombs which when replanted after 3,000 years, bloomed. It may, in a sense, be a great bore that this has happened, but it has. This being so one cannot ask a sovereign state to promise to limit its immigration; even though in fact, as you say, this makes no difference. There is a certain minimum of face which cannot be lost without inflicting too much collective humiliation. The Arabs of all people understand this excessively well. Internal chauvinism is another matter. I wish I thought that it is only a function of being beleaguered: even if it is, it will grow, which is a very bad prospect. Elon's words in the *New York Review* seem to be perfectly right⁸⁸ – what I do not believe is that the Arab States would have allowed this gradual trickling back, although to offer it would no doubt have been excellent for the record. Compensation should, of

⁸⁶ (Francis) George Steiner (1929–2020), British literary critic who wrote widely on Jewish culture and literature.

⁸⁷ Hannah Arendt (1906–75), German-born American political philosopher best known for *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). IB was not an admirer of her or Steiner's writings on the Holocaust.

⁸⁸ Amos Sternbach Elon (1926–2009), Israeli journalist, author and regular contributor to the NYRB. In a review article written after the Six-Day War Elon observed: 'Should there be a Jewish State? [...] During the past decade this argument has become irrelevant and certainly impractical, and today it has become largely obsolete. Immigration to Israel has come to a standstill. Two-and-one-half million Israelis are now a nation, cohesive and resourceful, whatever the argument over Zionism. For Israelis, the issue is not one of theory, but one of physical survival, of individuals as well as of a community. There is no other place to go, as there was for the French community in Algeria' ('The Israel–Arab Deadlock', NYRB, 1 August 1968, 14–20 at 14–15).

course, have been offered, and has been offered, but in so low a voice that nobody heard – this is what I said to Golda⁸⁹ when you were there, and she made Eban⁹⁰ say it again, but it was again said in somewhat muffled accents. I do not believe that the Arab nations would have rejected your individual re-emigrants; and I do not believe that after 1956 there was the slightest hope that the small minority of refugees would have been allowed to trickle back, and that this would have been regarded as sufficient, or that they would have been allowed to state freely what it is that they themselves wanted to do, or indeed that they would have known, subjected as they were (perhaps to some extent also as Jews in the refugee camps in Germany were in 1945–7) to steady propaganda, some of which they resented, but most of which they certainly swallowed quite naturally, too. I don't think that Joseph Johnson⁹¹ – to whom you talked when he was there: he was a very amiable man – had any idea what would happen if a free choice were given to the refugees – his figures were perfectly reasonable if you assume that a real free choice could have been allowed these people. The probability of that, however, seems to me too low. Do you think that I over-estimate the pressure put on the refugees by their leaders, by agents of Arab States, etc.? I do not think so. The fact that they are used as political pawns does not make their condition less pitiable, or monstrous, and absolve Israel from their duty to offer to do something of a major kind for them. Israel's major blunder, both moral and political, was, of course, after the Six Day War not to come out with some tremendously magnanimous proposal, whereby they declared themselves prepared to take back some reasonable numbers of refugees and offered to raise an enormous sum of money – far more than they

⁸⁹ Golda Meir (1898–1978), prime minister of Israel 1969–74.

⁹⁰ Abba Eban (1915–2002), an Israeli diplomat and politician who served as Israel's foreign affairs minister.

⁹¹ Joseph Esrey Johnson (1895–1990), US government official and president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

could possibly afford – something that would put them to genuine financial risk and strain the very existence of the State, if they are not to repatriate them in the empty parts of the Fertile Crescent. I do not doubt both these proposals would have been flung back in their faces by the Arabs, who by this time were, I think, in a totally exasperated and somewhat lunatic state – still, the offer would have been made and could have been repeated over and over again and perhaps might, in some form, have been accepted. This certainly would have eased the situation, morally, not only politically: what I do not believe in is that any large influx of Arabs into Israel could have ended in anything but the most terrible political indigestion, to put it at its lowest. That Jews cannot and should not govern Arabs seems to me absolutely plain. I do not believe in a peaceful symbiosis even under the most liberal idealistic administration, entirely consisting of Bar-Hillels⁹² and Lewontins.⁹³ In the long run all kinds of things are possible, but it is in the short run that people suffer and die. Hence my general belief in partition, and distrust of artificially created multi-national and multi-racial states, however right they are in principle. This I am prepared to argue and argue. Of course the problem of Arabs in Palestine is something that the Jews have shut their eyes to in a very ostrich-like manner from the beginning. Maybe they can defend this, and of course the people who tried to preach a bi-national state, the decent old professors, Bentwich⁹⁴ etc., plus one or two people in the left-wing Kibbutzim, were protesting against something very wrong and fatal, but there was something pathetic and remote about these people and their position – more like nice old anarchists, shaking their fists against the existence of the police and the army, and forbidding any violence against them, when obviously what had to be done was

⁹² Yehoshua Bar-Hillel (1915–75), Israeli philosopher; member of the left-wing Movement for Peace and Security formed after the Six Day War.

⁹³ Richard Charles ('Dick') Lewontin (1929–2021), US evolutionary biologist and geneticist and social commentator; regular contributor to the NYRB.

⁹⁴ Norman de Mattos Bentwich (1883–1971), British barrister and legal academic, was the British-appointed attorney general of Mandatory Palestine and a lifelong Zionist.

some radical transformation – the very partition scheme which Noam thinks so wicked, and indeed the United Nations resolutions of 1948⁹⁵ which precipitated bloodshed which British policy had rendered unavoidable, it seems to me. If at this stage the frontiers of the United Nations Jewish Palestine had been guaranteed by the powers which were then on reasonably good terms with each other, if the United Nations then had sent troops against the advancing Arab armies as they did in Korea, the whole military growth of Israel need not have occurred, and the country could, I think, then have been neutralised and made into an Austria. Once it was clear that military adventures were to be tolerated in that part of the world, the Jews felt abandoned, looked for allies, went to Suez, took the West Bank, and did everything that people do who think that one false step on their part may lead to their total extinction. That they were morally obliged to recognise that they were responsible for the creation of refugees, and owed these people restitution, is clear, whether they fled of their own accord or were pushed over the border or whatever happened: politically I do not think it would have done them the slightest good. The desire to remove them, if need be by extermination on the part of Arabs – from the highest to the lowest, with the exception of the few *politiques*,⁹⁶ Tunis, or Egypt, or Lebanon, or Morocco – was already at its height by the end of the 1930s. That is why I think that the plight of the refugees and the fate of the West Bank Arabs are human problems of the first order, which the Israelis are both morally wrong and unwise to try and push under the carpet. What makes me pessimistic is the thought that even if they behaved with utter virtue their general prospects would not have been improved,

⁹⁵ UN Security Council resolutions early in 1948 called for an end to violence in Palestine, and implementation of the General Assembly's Resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947 (to which IB must here refer). This resolution proposed a plan for the partition of Palestine: it was accepted by the Jewish but not the Arab side, and the failure of either the British or the UN to enforce it contributed to the outbreak of hostilities that followed the termination of the British mandate at midnight on 14 May 1948.

⁹⁶ 'Unprincipled politicians'.

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no kind of gestures or even concrete acts will begin to melt the hatred of so many. When they say that it is the existence of the refugees that has created this, this, alas, is not true, plausible as it sounds. It exacerbated it, it gave it a focus, it created a heroic terrorist mentality, but the Arabs I talked to in Amman in 1934 – and certainly the Palestinian Arabs, Lebanese and even the Lebanese I met in 1947 were bubbling with hatred. I am still in favour of the Israelis evacuating the West Bank, or at any rate saying that they are prepared to do so on certain conditions; as for the creation of a Palestinian Arab political entity now in the bosom of Israel – that seems to me a pure Manchukuo,⁹⁷ a puppet state which Fatah will either sabotage or take over, and whose resistance will be regarded as merely a piece of Israeli trickery any decent Arab was bound to reject with indignation. Am I mistaken? Is there really something that Israel can do today which will ensure both a degree of peace and [solve] the whole problem of survival? I wish I thought so.

Yours,

[Isaiah]

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

TO HAYME MARANTZ

28 May 1970

Wolfson College

Dear Mr Marantz,

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

⁹⁷ The puppet State maintained by Japan in Manchuria (north-east China and inner Mongolia) 1932–45 in order to legitimate Japanese military conquest and colonial exploitation of that region.

(to the British Political Studies Association, which met in Oxford)⁹⁸ and propose to send this paper, amended (I have by now spoken to a good many universities in this sense in public lectures), to a symposium on Machiavelli to be published under the auspices of a Harvard Foundation in Florence.⁹⁹ There I work out the very positions that you have, unaided, reached in the course of your short, but very penetrating, note to me. If I can lay my hand on my original mimeographed sheet, I will send it to you. My thesis is indeed that Machiavelli was virtually the first person to declare (without doing so explicitly) that there were two incompatible moralities – the Christian and what he represented as the Graeco-Roman – and that not only rulers, but presumably citizens too, had to choose between them, for they were conceptually incompatible, not merely unrealisable [together] in practice. He thought, as you know, that one could restore the past – that the Roman republic could be restored with enough will, energy, resources. As for whether a Christian way of life could be realised, he, it seems to me, neither knew nor cared, but, I suspect, thought this quite impractical, given human nature as it must unalterably be. So my conclusion was that Croce was wrong in saying that Machiavelli divided politics from morals, for what he divided was one moral world from another – not at all the same thing. That this is the application of what you are kind enough to call my insight to the problem of *The Prince* and the *Discourses* I fully realised when I wrote the paper. I seem to myself to be always saying the same thing.

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

⁹⁸ IB's paper was read on 26 March 1963 at the conference of the Political Studies Association held at Exeter College, Oxford, on 25–7 March. The date of 1953 that he assigned to it when it was first published, in a volume marking the 500th anniversary of Machiavelli's birth – as 'The Originality of Machiavelli': Myron P. Gilmore (ed.), *Studies on Machiavelli* (Florence, 1972), 149–206 – is an error. The essay is reprinted with many corrections in AC.

⁹⁹ Villa I Tatti, The Harvard Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, of which Gilmore (previous note) was Director 1964–73.

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*TO ROBERT SILVERS

29 May 1970

[Wolfson College]

Dear Bob,

I feel that some kind of report is owing to you by this time. [...] Sir Maurice telephoned to me, saying, 'Bad news. Mrs Stone, wife of Lawrence Stone, told Stuart that he was not wanted in Wadham and spread stories about the hostile reception that is waiting for him.' Absolute nonsense. We are all most eager. The only person who is hostile is Stone's friend Pat Thompson,¹⁰⁰ who is mad, enraged, determined to make trouble. I hope Stuart believes none of this. I have told Thompson what I think of him. He made a scene, etc. [...] One man can do a lot of harm and inflict a lot of wounds, and this, I fear, may happen. However, in the end, Stuart's beauty of character will (I know this to be an incontrovertible truth) quell opposition. Still, it was not entirely without a certain mild maliciousness – I will not say pleasure, but interest – that Sir Maurice communicated this horrid intelligence to me. It is, on the whole, best that you not know it, otherwise it will be thought a kind of spreading story; Stuart will think there is more in this than meets the eye; Renée will think that there is a campaign, etc., none of which is true. But it is as I thought about Stone – happy in Princeton he may be, and it may not be his fault so much as his awful wife's, but a certain envy grips all academics at a certain stage of their life, particularly those who, having failed in a given place, observe others succeeding in what they regard as their own particular preserve. None of this is news.

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

¹⁰⁰ Arthur Frederick ('Pat') Thompson (1920–2009), Fellow and history Tutor, Wadham, 1947–87.

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

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

Yours ever,
[Isaiah]

TO ROBERT SILVERS

18 August 1970 [*manuscript postcard of rhinoceros*]

n.p.

Dear Bob,

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

actually to Wagner & Marx. Martin Malia & Stuart will be upon us at any minute now: time was when Martin was to the left of Stuart: but visits to Moscow, even more than students, have driven him into ferocious defence of learning & rigid academic scruples against populism of any kind: which makes Stuart uncomfortable. If you want to look at something which really made me sick – & which Noam *ought* to see – look at the quotidien Libanais *Le Jour* (Beirut 6th August) which prints an interview with Jean Luc Godard on his forthcoming film *Jusqu'à la victoire* which he defines as the destruction of Israel by El Fattah.¹⁰¹ I wish I didn't get so worked up: but the thought of another (Russian) jackboot on the Jews – however sinful or mistaken, destroys all hope of anything. Yet the old sadistic O.T. God is quite capable of such Caligula like behaviour. Can you console me?

Isaiah.

¹⁰¹ An article, not an interview: Jean-Luc Godard (b. 1930), ““Les idées détruiront l'État d'Israël”” [“Ideas will destroy the state of Israel”], *Le Jour*, 6 August 1970, 4. The ‘quotation’ used as the title derives from this sentence in Godard’s text: ‘Que plus la marche sur Tel-Aviv sera longue, plus les idées changeront, qui permettront de détruire enfin l'État d'Israël’ [‘The longer the march on Tel-Aviv, the more ideas will change, and they will make it possible finally to destroy the state of Israel’]. For the Palestinian political party El Fattah (usually called ‘Fatah’ in English) and for Godard, the ‘victory’ of the film’s title (*Until Victory*) is the destruction of Israel. After most of the fedayeen who were to appear in the film were killed by Jordanian soldiers in the 1970 Black September conflict, the film was left uncompleted, but much of its footage was incorporated into *Ici et ailleurs* [*Here and Elsewhere*] (1974).

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TO ROBERT SILVERS

1 September [1971] [*manuscript*]

Paraggi

Dear Bob,

Thank you for everything: letters, proofs¹⁰² (can you *really* want to print it *all*? What will your readers say! I can just hear some of them exclaiming, & justly, I fear, that there is a limit to learned logorrhoea – I've corrected *very* little – Stuart has been over it & dissipated it a tiny bit too; at the moment he is here, so are Marietta & Roy Jenkins; R.J. is amiable & civilized & a little cagey: but he is what is called a very good, undemanding, unpompous guest. Marietta does, I suspect, pine for a little more social life than we provide: Stuart & Malia are very funny together: Malia is excited by Stuart's left wing sentiments, Stuart suitably shocked by Malia's religion & academic conservatism. They get on: & Sparrow will be here at any moment – & then Gaby Cohen from Israel, & then Cyprus & so it goes on. I *wish* you came to Cyprus: it will be even odder than the Diaghilev–Stravinsky memorial service which we went to – by the anti-Stravinskian black lifewriter: Bob Craft has written me two very sad & touching letters – he must *not* know that we ever in the same motoscafo as the hated Lifar. I hear you read an essay on Fathers & Sons by Turgenev's editor & later enemy, Mikhail Katkov, written in about 1862: very nasty & intelligent: his chief points being that Bazarov & the nihilists, so far from attacking rhetoric, phrases, pretty words, embellished life – in the name of the bleak stern truth, science, ruthless realism, harsh candour, are themselves phrase-mongers: what they peddle is *not* science – there *are* no real students [of] science in Russia – but popular science invoking trash – Büchner, Moleschott, Vogt: not chemistry or physics, but tracts which misuse popular scientific

¹⁰² Of 'The Question of Machiavelli', *New York Review of Books*, 4 November 1971, 20–32; repr. of part of 'The Originality of Machiavelli', published in Myron P. Gilmore (ed.), *Studies on Machiavelli* (Florence, 1972: Sansoni), 149–206, and in AC and PSM.

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slogans for social & political radicalism: & the nihilism is more anti-intellectual revolt against true knowledge, reason etc – & has no positive programme, only crude barbarous cries against civilization, decency etc – partly due to the protestors being the children of clergymen – priests – an ignorant degenerate *caste*, with no vocation, isolated from life & suffocating its progeny. Reactionary & interesting stuff – must be best right wing criticism of the shy liberalism of the middle roaders: Turgenev's terror of the young, exaggerated fear of being unfair to them is itself represented as leading to a distortion of the truth which a braver & more independent rationalist would state less tremulously. Malia drank it all up. *When* do we meet? I am very glad you are in love. It is a heavenly condition, whatever its difficulties & agonies – & when it ceases the owl of Athena really does come down, & life writes its grey on grey, as old Georg Hegel (as Italians call him) once said –

Love

Isaiah

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

IB

TO ROBERT SILVERS

27 February 1974

Wolfson

Dear Bob,

Thank you very much indeed for your letter. You are perfectly right about the effect upon me of my mother's death.¹⁰³ Although she was ninety-four and died peacefully and recognised no one before she died, yet it is as if a large part of the framework within

¹⁰³ On 3 February 1974.

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which I live had suddenly disappeared overnight, leaving me exposed to winds and indefinable forces. But the whole of my childhood, the very firm framework in which I was brought up, which was a very conscious part of myself until now, has suddenly receded into some kind of historical past – is now broken off by a kind of gulf and has become somewhat abstract. This is very strange and unsettling and I cannot get used to it at all. Being an orphan at the age of sixty-four is ridiculous, but it is precisely what I feel. [...]

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

Yours ever,

Isaiah

TO ROBERT SILVERS

5 April 1974

Headington House

Dear Bob,

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

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

Yours ever,

Isaiah

On 21 April 1974 Sam Sebbā¹⁰⁴ wrote to IB about Marie Berlin's death:

¹⁰⁴ Sam Sebbā (1915–2003), came from Riga like IB and knew him before they met at Oxford, where Sebbā read law at St John's 1934–7, and took his turn as President of the Jewish Society. Like IB, he attended St Paul's School.

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

On arrival in England at the age of ten, I was taken to your Mother’s house in the Addison Road area and to Ida’s flat in Sinclair Road;¹⁰⁵ what better introduction could a young boy have had – to inspiration and example, to devotion and thought, and what better memories can remain after nearly 50 years?

TO SAM SEBBA

29 April 1974

Headington House

Dear Sam,

[...] You are quite right. We were lucky. Our mothers were conceived in a firm, and indeed heroic, mould; they had positive values of a kind that, despite all our sophistication and the changes and reversals through which we have lived, still linger in you and me – perhaps more than linger – as we grow older I suspect we grow closer to them, not further. The security was extraordinary; the moral and social and personal values were warm-hearted,

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

positive, life-enhancing, and above all held with not only unswerving firmness but with immense courage which overcame all resistance and all crises. Our mothers were certainly exasperating at times; they bullied us without wishing to do so; they failed to understand our doubts and deviations; but even that gave one a firm standard to judge things by; when we deviated, we knew at least what we were deviating from, and how far, and why. This is why a good many persons without a moral base of their own tended to join e.g. the Communist Party in the 1930s – we were fortunate not to be tempted to march with that inhuman battalion. And so far as there is a moral base in Israel, it surely comes from this Russian Jewish culture, which those who have not actually grown up in it cannot, I am sure, fully understand. I see that Laqueur¹⁰⁶ is to write the life of Dr Weizmann: he was exactly like that, too – he belonged to the generation of our parents and his immense confidence and dignity, and monolithic quality, came from precisely these roots: Laqueur will not convey this – we shall get a perfectly sound record of his public activities, but as a conception of character it will – at least by you and me, and a few other such – be found painfully lacking, I am sure.

How well do I remember your visits to us – in Upper Addison Gardens and Sinclair Road – that talk we had about Napoleon once, based on a book by Sheridan Somebody,¹⁰⁷ which you were reading at the time. Sinclair Road! That really does dredge up marvellous memories. Ida is, as you know, still alive, in Jerusalem – next time I go there I shall tell her about your letter and memories of that particular past. I was profoundly moved by your letter, and most grateful for it, and wish we could see each other sometime; do you never come to Oxford?

Yours,
Isaiah

¹⁰⁶ Walter Ze'ev Laqueur (1921–2018), prolific US historian born in Germany. He did not publish a biography of Weizmann.

¹⁰⁷ Untraced.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

TO JOHN HABAKKUK

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

[Headington House]

Dear Mr Vice-Chancellor,

May I inform you that I intend to retire from my post as President of Wolfson College in the course of the academic year 1974–5, most probably before the beginning of Trinity Term 1975, but in any case before the beginning of Michaelmas Term of that year. This decision has been made known to the Governing Body of the College, and I understand that it proposes shortly to submit the name of the person whom it would wish to recommend as my successor for the consideration, in the first instance, of the Trustees of Wolfson College, and, if approved by them, to the Hebdomadal Council for its consideration. The Vice-Gerent of the College will doubtless be in communication with yourself on this matter in due course.

Yours sincerely,
[Isaiah Berlin]

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

Do advise me,
I.B.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

TO ROBERT SILVERS

[Early September 1974, *manuscript*]

Paraggi

Dear Bob,

Yes, of course, you are right about Leonard S[chapiro]'s attitude: it is only that to be a legitimist *now*, and believe that revolutions are avertible by the 'charisma' of royal descent, has a quaint ancien régime innocence about it, which sits curiously on a great grandchild of the ghetto (as opposed to my lot, & I daresay yours, i.e. grandchildren). But of course he is preferable to mechanical university reviewers or journalists; the interest & almost sympathy for Bukharin stems from his image as Danton vis a vis Stalin as Robespierre (or much worse) – *and* the fact that he was *not* a rootless cosmopolitan, almost an intellectual, and appealable to by Mme Mandelstamm etc. – which still doesn't single him [out] for me: *what* is [sc. does] his reputation as a theorist of note depend on? Have you *tried* to read his theoretical works? I know, as the Russian proverb says, where there is no fish, a crab will count as a fish: but still, compared even to Parvus or Gramsci it is all nothing at all. Still, Leonard is preferable to Chr[istopher] Hill on the Russians – the review of Ulam¹⁰⁸ was a non-review: poor Tucker is harmless to the movement, but Ulam has some bite: he made it all *sound* old hat Marxophage patter which it is far from being: it *has* a flavour of its own. We were visited by Lord & Lady Drogheda – I rather think they found conditions a bit rough: not villa-like enough, during their ten days: then Malia & Momigliano: (we led off with Hart & Mrs Floud) the former, as always, full of original points of his own – e.g. the Slavophiles' (& Dostoevsky's particular) debt to sentimental German pietism for which all the stuff about the Greek Fathers of the Church is a mere facade (70% true at least), and denunciations of Althusser as a fraud (I suspect

¹⁰⁸ Christopher Hill, 'The Monster and His Myths', review of Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879–1929*, and Adam B. Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era*, NYRB, 24 January 1974.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

true) and the Frankfurt school as an ocean of undehydratable verbiage (music to *my* ears) – & Arnaldo who reported on the fact that Peter Brown has left his wife (who is very nice & sympathetic), has received offers from the Princeton Institute & 7 other U.S. institutes + London University – what will he do? The only two true jewels in the All Souls crown are Dummett & he: both thought tedious bores by the Warden; Mom[igliano] coached me carefully about the lectures I am to give in Venice on the 11th, whom to like whom to hiss at (nasty ex-fascist clericals etc.) – I am v. nervous of lecturing in my English to Italian *laureati*, *what* is the good of being so old, & Brit. Academy etc., if one trembles before “foreign” students – and Italian academics? Stuart was here too. – *he* has no more natural authority or Gombrich-like weightiness than I. Richard passed by – gay & with a marvellous gift for turning all his friends and acquaintances into figures in a Rossini–Anatole France comedy. His twins were gay too.¹⁰⁹

Love

Isaiah.



*IB and Leonard Schapiro (1908–83) were contemporaries at St Paul's School:
Schapiro appears here in 1926 as a member of the school's Union Society*

¹⁰⁹ Richard Wollheim had twin sons.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

TO ROBERT SILVERS

10 December 1974

Headington House

Dear Bob,

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

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

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

Yours ever,

Isaiah

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

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

TO BRYAN MAGEE

7 January 1975

Headington House

Dear Bryan,

Your p.c.¹¹⁰ to hand. I myself am by now totally confused about your position on Israel. Are your alternatives 'secular state', i.e. dissolution, versus extinction? – the last merely being a more savage form of the former. Or is Resolution 242¹¹¹ the alternative? I have talked to some tough doves in Israel, who seemed to me entirely reasonable and very moderate indeed. But the issue of the Union¹¹² is surely whether Israel should commit suicide or not? The Union *did*, I am told, invite one or two notoriously doveish Israelis here to speak, but they refused, I think rightly, to discuss the question of whether it would be best for Israel to disappear. I have no idea who the main speakers are. You know what happened in Cambridge last term on this?

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

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah

Magee responded on 10 January:

¹¹⁰ Not found.

¹¹¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, adopted 22 November 1967 after the Six-Day War, called for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories.

¹¹² On 13 February 1975 an 'Arab–Israeli Debate' was held at the Oxford Union. The motion was 'That Israel should be replaced by a secular state of Palestine.' The main speakers were Said Hammami, British spokesman for the Palestine Liberation Organization, and BM.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

My dear Isaiah,

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,
Bryan

TO BRYAN MAGEE

15 January 1975

Headington House

Dear Bryan,

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

the Arabs (for this was the only feasible alternative – and was, in fact, the one adopted), which would have deprived Israel of the only claim to legitimacy that it could possibly possess – then, I think, you should change your position on [the?] racing card [*sic*], and explain that you support the position of the more moderate followers of Arafat. Otherwise you will ensure that the gap between you and any other opponents of the motion will be so wide as to create inevitable confusion in their ranks – and that is something that they have a right to protect themselves from. In short, I shall not argue about your position, from which I am sure that you cannot be shifted by perception of either facts or the moral consequences of the policy you advocate. But I do think that your allies could well exclaim ‘Non tali auxilio, non defensoribus istis’¹¹³ – the least you can do is to warn them of the line you are likely to take – if you told this to the other side too, they may not bother to speak, since I have no doubt whatever that you could put their case, at least three-quarters of it, far more persuasively – I mean convincingly and ably and sincerely, and without the emotional claptrap which on some occasions both sides are apt to employ.

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

Yours,
Isaiah

¹¹³ Vergil, *Aeneid* 2. 521. The beginning of the next line, ‘tempus eget’, is understood: ‘The occasion does not need help of that kind or defenders such as those.’

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

TO ROBERT SILVERS

30 January 1975

Headington House

Dear Bob,

I am inclined to send this¹¹⁴ to Izzy, but do not wish to offend him or draw even the tiniest droplet of blood. I imagine he is, where Jews are concerned, incurable, feeling as he does that his love for them justifies him in hitting Zionists on the head – since clearly his image of them is identified with their most reactionary and strident New York Jewish supporters. It is surely absurd to ignore the dangers to Israel of Arafat's state, even if they have brought it about and it is inevitable (about which I am not sure); quite ridiculous to ignore the mood of the vast majority of Israelis – anxiety, fear of war, desire to compromise if this is at all feasible, i.e. if the Israeli maximum can be made to coincide with the Arab minimum – that is what I found on my recent visit virtually everywhere outside extreme *Likud* circles. Equally absurd to say that Suez was designed to prevent Egypt from acquiring the Canal resources for its own development – the business about the British lifeline and the image of Nasser as a strutting dictator at the old game of defying the democracies and getting away with lawless behaviour was certainly what the Conservatives and most of the British working class felt – Eden, after all, was passionately pro-Arab at this stage; the French were concerned only with Algiers; the Israelis were genuinely driven to distraction by the bombs thrown against children within their then awkward frontiers. What is all this about enfeebling Egypt? This does seem to me crude Marxist claptrap, worthy of Chomsky but not of Izzy. However, I have tried to put it all very mildly to dear Izzy in my letter (*not* An Open Letter to I. F. Stone from Sir Isaiah Berlin, President of the British Academy – nightmare thought); if you think I can send it

¹¹⁴ IB enclosed a copy of a draft letter to Stone dated 28 January 1975, of which a slightly revised version, dated 13 February 1975, appears (with cuts) at B 589–92.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS 1960–1975

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

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

Yours ever,
Isaiah

The sources of letters to the following correspondents are:

David Carver: University of Tulsa, McFarlin Library Special Collections

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

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

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

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

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

Other letters were supplied by their recipients.