

27 March 1969

Dear Ruth,

Really I am in a quandry. Yesterday I received your aerogram letter II. I slit open the wrong end and tried to reconstruct the letter by means of the salutation. There was none; and finally I noticed that it was marked "II" and that the beginning of the letter must be in the non-arrived section "I"! With that cleared up, I still have the problem of where to send this reply--to the Kiron address? I want to feel sure that it will reach you directly and no one else. Perhaps when section I of your letter arrives, it will give me a clue, so I will hold on to this reply for a little while. I just hope I do receive the first part of the letter. From time to time, I find mail to other persons in my mailbox, and of course I turn it in to the doorman; but if my mail is mistakenly placed in the wrong box, there is no guarantee that it will be re-delivered to me.

In any case, I deduce from section II of your letter postmarked 3.23.69 that M. returned, apparently some weeks ago, that you gave up your 1½ room apartment, and that you are both (or with Varda as well) now installed in the original apartment that was discussed back in December--hopefully, with your own furniture and possessions. What is not clear is, what is M. doing in the way of work...where is Varda...what is the situation with Seth...and what is the situation with Madame H.

But, whatever the details, it seems to me that your situation is far from resolved and that you remain, with every justification, unhappy and uncertain of the future. My heart really goes out to you, for when you have been subjected to such prolonged physical strain and mental anguish and you have every reason for tears, to be told that "your crying is inhuman" is despicable--coming as it does from the person who has engineered and inflicted your misery.

I do not think that A.K. warrants much discussion, after his coldness, inhospitality, and misrepresentation of his "concern" for your welfare. His behavior certainly seems inconsistent with his alleged role of the moneybags who is the real claimant to those mysterious holdings---which I continue to regard as a fairy-tale.

I have had a couple of seiges of bronchial asthma, and for some days suffered a really frightening emotional depression. It turned out to be due in part, or predominantly, to the fact that I had discontinued my minute daily doses of cortisone. When I resumed the intake, much of the depression lifted and the congestion cleared up. But I think part of the depression stemmed from the lingering trauma of the break-up of a friendship that was really central to my life for more than two years. In the first shock of discovering what I considered, and still consider, a gross deception and betrayal---not to say a swindle---I was bitter enough to nullify retroactively the whole of the friendship, to consider that it had all been a sham a fraud and a fiction. Now that I am calmer, and can look back more objectively on my relationship with M., I realize that much of the friendship was genuine. I remember particular incidents that prove that there was real devotion, real solicitude, and real delight, on both our parts. I remember, for example, how I returned from work one night and found M. in the lobby...how surprised I was, and then how expectant, realizing that something very special must be behind the visit. We went to dinner, and he kept feeding me copy for the next TMO, which I read with as much interest as I could muster, and finally the fifth or sixth ms. turned out to be a typescript of Conor Cruise O'Brien's marvelous review of my book---M. had teased me, kept me in suspense, knowing that my pleasure would be all the greater, and then his own pleasure on my behalf exceeding even what I felt. And I remember other such incidents which make me realize that the friendship was real and unique, in many ways, and that I have sustained a really profound loss.

It is strange, very strange, that M. and I should now be hopelessly alienated, because I would have said two years ago, even one year ago, that nothing could ever destroy our mutual devotion. "Strange," because M. in an almost compulsive way, found one of the few ways to destroy it, as seems almost a fixed pattern in his life---the repeated estrangement from those he valued most, professionally, and the tragic situation with

his son, and now the danger in which he has thrust his family life by his reckless and ruthless actions since last June. If I was a Freudian (which emphatically I am not) I would be tempted to say that M.'s overpowering egotism is only a mask for self-doubt and self-hatred, and that he is trying to satisfy the self-hatred by a kind of rush to destruction of that "self" from which he refuses to be deflected by warning signs or strident alarm signals.

One cannot know how much of this pattern of self-sabotage is attributable to M. inherently and how much to his unspeakable sufferings at the hands of the Nazis. In a way, the question is academic to anyone who is experiencing pain and terror because of M.'s words or actions. It becomes relevant only after there is some distance between the emotional assault and the contemplation of it in intellectual or psychological terms.

It also seems clear to me, in retrospect, and remembering occasional petty incidents of the past few years, that for all his intellectual giantism, M. is rather infantile or adolescent as a male animal, and that his outreaching to a woman has urgency not because of a genuine regard or real attachment but because of the clamoring of ego for gratification and reaffirmation—which is fairly common to all forty-ish men, of whatever intellectual endowment or deficiency. That he found a Madame H. is really only a commonplace and a stereotypical phenomenon. What makes it a dangerous phenomenon is his loss of perspective, his compulsion to make the experience known where it should most be guarded and concealed, and thus to jeopardize that which is really durable, fundamental, and indispensable to his life in the long term.

Well, I will see if section I arrives when I pick up the mail tonight, and will then know better how to complete this letter and where to address it. Had things not altered so radically, I would be writing interminable letters to M. to report developments in l'affaire Garrison, the Shaw trial, the James Earl Ray and Sirhan trials, etc. etc. But I think you have enough troubles on your plate without hearing about those matters, and I suppose even M. has lost much of his interest in the subject. To be continued.....

10 p.m. same day

Yes, part I was in the mailbox when I came home from work. Now that I have read it, I still feel as if I missed one letter at least, somewhere along the line, for your s of 3/20/69 seems to assume that I knew already that M. had returned to Israel. Actually, I did not know that, and I still do not know when he returned, on what basis, or what state of mind. Since your description of the moving-in does not mention Varda, I suppose that you did succeed in getting her back into the school. Is Kiron anywhere near Ramat-Gan? The reason I ask is that I have a cousin, Ester Nudel, who lives at Ramat-Gan, at 31 Hachail Street, whom I know only by correspondence which began at the time of my father's death a year ago. She is a grandmother, probably in her fifties, but seems to be a very warm-hearted, good-hearted motherly woman. She went so far as to study English in order to be able to write to me in her own hand, rather than asking someone to write for her, and her English letters are remarkably understandable, already. I mention my cousin just on the off chance that you might want at some time to have access to such a person...to have a spare "friend" in case of contingency. I think she would do anything helpful she could do for anyone who was a friend of mine. M. went to see her, by the way, on his first trip last year, which I appreciated and still do appreciate, to take her my greetings.

I guess this will be it, for now, but please Ruth try if you get the opportunity to write more often, as I am concerned and sometimes anxious about you, and hope for your well-being, and for the end of this ordeal of uncertainty. My warmest greetings to you and the children (and please tell me in your next letter the situation as to your receipt of my letters, I am assuming you intend me to write to the Kiron address).

Love,