

PC11/7/26/9

215 East Dulwich Grove
London, S.E 22

Oct 11th 1961



Dear Alan

Thanks for yours of the 6th. I am glad to hear the book is making good progress.

In regard to the point you raise about 'roots' this is a matter on which it is very difficult to be positive and still more difficult to express what was in my mind. I am not sure that we are so far apart. Certainly I never meant that J.H.H became in any sense English. Let me try to explain more fully. I am naturally prone to rate highly, perhaps to exaggerate, the influence of the Balliol Club on J.H.H. The reason I said what I did in my last letter was that I felt in reading what you had written about the club that you had given no inkling of anything underlying the personal relationships. It is perhaps a pity that the quotations from the letters to and from the inner core of the club boys give an impression of a sort of boy-man relationship rather than a mature friendship. I fear this is inevitable because both J.H.H (as you have made clear) and his club friends had a reticence about revealing their inner selves, a characteristic which we here are inclined, maybe wrongly, to think peculiarly English. Hence the superficialities of the correspondence-fighting, fatness and such like-which in my view covered something much deeper. I do not really see how you can express this, given the material you have, but it bears on the point I am trying to make. I can only judge from the long standing impression made on me by my contacts with J.H.H over the years. This is that the club, and, I think in a less degree, Balliol gave him not only a love and a loyalty but an abiding sense of belonging. If as you say his resentment of the British went deep, nevertheless there were some human bits of Britain with which he was permanently entwined. Can I put it like this? I do not think that the memory of the dark tunnel of Littlegate St, the smell of del Nevo's fish, the sound of young voices and the crash of the bashing room had for him an air which was consciously foreign. These things remained part of him and he of them. It would be absurd to suggest that such things consciously affected his attitude in the second war. He was concerned then with basic issues for humanity. Nevertheless at the subconscious level it may be that they sweetened in some degree the old bitterness of which you speak. I can't put it higher than that and even in putting it that high you may think that I am wrong.

Yours sincerely

Hubert

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