Nine letters of Boris Pasternak

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Nine Letters of Boris Pasternak

Elena Levin

These nine letters from Boris Pasternak to George Reavey, now in possession of Houghton Library, cover the years between 1931 and 1960. Among the sparse number of Pasternak's letters known or published in Russia or abroad, they present a special interest. Their documentary importance lies in the fact that they are addressed to a prospective translator and disseminator, and that in them Pasternak wants to put across, as directly as possible, the nature of his literary aims and the external limitations under which he must labor. Taken together, they provide a poignant comment on Pasternak's tragic attempt at communication with the West, or, to put it differently, on the history of his penetration into the West, which did not end his intellectual isolation from it.

Mr. Reavey deserves great credit for being among the first to bring Pasternak's work to the attention of the West at a time when he was quite unknown there except in a narrow circle of Russian emigrés. In The Poetry of Boris Pasternak 1917-1959 (New York, 1959) he gave a brief description of his discovery of Pasternak and of the correspondence between them. He first read Pasternak's poetry in 1927 when he was still an undergraduate in Cambridge University. In 1930 he published an essay on Pasternak and a few translations of his poems in a Cambridge review, Experiment No. 6. He ventured to mail the magazine to Pasternak, along with a letter expressing his enthusiasm for the poet's work and a request for permission to print further translations in an anthology, European Caravan, for which at that time he was one of the editors. It is in response to this communication that Pasternak wrote his first letter to Mr. Reavey.

The distance between the bright and enterprising young Cambridge and the forty-year-old man whose face was already firmly

1 These letters were purchased in 1965 from a fund established by Bayard L. Kilgour, Jr., '27.
established in Russia as a poet of the first magnitude was greater than
can be measured in miles or difference of ages. It has to be seen in
the perspective of the Stalinist terror, the full impact of which was
then just beginning to be comprehended in the West; of the years
when— as Pasternak wrote in his autobiographical essay I Remember
—“all poetry had ceased to exist, either his [Mayakovsky’s] or
anybody else’s, when Esenin had hanged himself, when, to put it more
simply, literature had stopped.” It was in this period, when the
problem of communication had become overwhelmingly difficult for
Pasternak, that Mr. Reavey’s letters arrived from that “scarcely
conceivable London,” which Pasternak tries to evoke at Mayakovsky’s
death-bed in Safe Conduct. In the light of our present knowledge of
that period, we can fully appreciate the joy with which Pasternak
responded to them, as well as his delays in answering—not to mention
the heart-rending necessity for circumlocution by which the meaning
is conveyed to the addressee and not to the censor.

The first four letters deal with Safe Conduct and Pasternak’s desire
to see it published abroad. This brilliant essay, a kind of spiritual
autobiography published in 1931, conveys in an oblique manner,
often by short-hand of implication, a great many insights into con-
temporary life and literature. It is especially important to have on
record how Pasternak felt about this work at the time of its publica-
tion, because in later years, in his striving for a more direct form of
expression (of which The Poems of Dr. Zhivago are a magnificent
culmination), he rejected most of what he had written before 1940.

In the later version of an autobiography, which was published in
England in 1959 as I Remember, he states that Safe Conduct has
“analyzed the circumstances that made me what I am. Unfortunately,
the book is spoiled by unnecessary mannerisms, the common fault of
those years.” I Remember, an evocative supplement to Safe Conduct
and a statement of literary convictions which survived the dark years
of Stalinism, was written to serve as a preface to the proposed edition
of Pasternak’s collected poems shortly before the storm surrounding
the publication of Dr. Zhivago abroad, and was not published in Russia
until 1967.

The two letters written in English in 1943, when Mr. Reavey was
living in Russia as a member of the British Embassy, are short and
reflect what Pasternak refers to as “the steady touchingness of my local
moral position,” while indicating some concern with the projection
of his work in the West. The last letter, all the more eloquent for its uncertain English, is an attempt to interpret himself and the transition in his thinking that took place between Safe Conduct and I Remember, in terms understandable to a Westerner. One little detail is accidentally indicative of the turn in Pasternak's fortunes. He ends his last letter by thanking Mr. Reavey for typing his letter: "People who send me hand-written letters don't guess how numerous they are and how much time takes the deciphering." This irritated gratitude of a besieged and tired old man is a full cycle from that anxious inquiry about a single undeciphered word in Mr. Reavey's first letter!

Envelope:

Paris, France
Monsieur George Reavey
12, rue de la Grande Chaumière
Paris, France
[Forwarded by the P. O. to 7 Villa Brune, Paris XIV]

28, III, 31

Dear Mr. Reavey, Georgii Danilovich!

Your translations, your article, your attention, and your letter, above all, moved me deeply. At any other time I would have answered you immediately. But this winter there have been many personal events in my life. My acquaintance with you was made right in their midst. This is the cause of my long silence, which has probably upset you. Actually, this is all continuing even now. I am answering you hurriedly, and not in a way I should like to.

I want to thank you most warmly for your excellent translations. I am delighted by your taste. Your selection is quite telling in this respect. I would have liked, my friend, to tell you a great deal about your beautiful article and original verses, but that will have to be at some other time, or it might delay this letter.

I joyfully give you my permission to place translations (even those unknown to me) in "European Caravan" and whatever you would wish to

*It is in reference to this period that Pasternak writes in I Remember: "all sorts of upheavals, complications and changes took place in two families, that of a friend of mine and my own. They were very painful to those implicated in them. For some time my companion, who was afterwards to become my second wife, and I had no roof over our heads."

*The European Caravan: An Anthology of the New Spirit in European Literature. Compiled and edited by Samuel Putnam, Malda Castelhun Darnton, George
place them. Pozner has not informed me of anything, and your letter does not make it clear what it is that he was supposed to inform me about. Your statement that he took four translations for a revue is followed by a word which I cannot decipher [Morada]. If you happen to see V. S., remember me to him, please. It seems to me that he is angry with me, but I do not know why.

I always learn about myself by blind chance, when my friends happen to let me know. They write less and less — it's my own fault.

Dissemination in the West will soon interest me from a point of view which I have not considered before. My wife and son are about to go to Germany for a long time, and I shall have no opportunity to send them anything from here. Foreign editions would come in quite handy in this connection.

But I should be the first to protest against the artificial forcing of myself upon the West. Until now I have not written anything that would merit European attention. "The Childhood of Lovers" and "A Tale" are unpleasantly pretentious pieces; so far they have not developed into something larger. The latter I hope to continue, and bring to a more worthy completion, in the form of a novel.

At the moment I have finished a piece of prose which is called Safe Conduct. This is the first work that I would not be embarrassed to see in translation. It is a series of reminiscences. They would not in themselves present any interest if they did not entail an honest and direct effort to understand, by their means, what constitutes culture and art — if not in general, then at least in the destiny of an individual man. I think that this subject could hardly be remote from anyone, and the discussion of it in other languages is no less appropriate than in the original. When it is published here in book form (probably in the fall, but perhaps even earlier) I shall send it on to you. Your other requests about books I cannot fulfil. The last editions are sold out; the prose is not reprinted yet. But I shall always be remembering you as they appear.

Thank you for everything. I shake your hand warmly. Write to me that you have forgiven me.

Yours,
B. Pasternak

Reaney and J. Bronowski, Paris: France, Spain, England and Ireland (New York, 1931). A second part containing Russian selections may have been projected but was never published.

1 Vladimir Pozner, b. 1905, is a Russian writer naturalized in France.

2 Three numbers of Morada, a little literary magazine, were published in Albuquerque, New Mexico. No no. 4 appeared, but no. 5, the "International" Morada, was printed in Italy in the winter of 1931, probably because the editor, Norman MacLeod, was in Italy. No more issues were published.
Dear Georgii Danilovich!

I do not know how to thank you for your beautiful dedication, for your wonderful, remarkable translations, and for your unselfish interest in me, which probably does not bring you anything except unpleasantness and disappointments! It is even harder to justify my long silence in response to your nice letter which I received two months ago. Even though it was not without reason: during this period I have had many problems, I had to arrange my personal and my family affairs, I had to go to Leningrad, etc., etc. And still, I am very much at fault. Please write me how your affairs are working out, if your intentions are materializing, and in case they are taking a concrete form, please send me a prospectus of the journal you are planning.

I shall be terribly happy to have a book of your poems, and am awaiting it impatiently. It would also give me great joy if you succeeded in bringing out, as a separate volume, your translations from my work, the best translations I know. If it did work out, I would be interested to learn their literary fate in the West, their relative weight, the opinions of your colleagues or the press. And this is why: it has been intimated to me that I am well thought of by some writers and poets in some narrow and numerically small circles in Europe. But all this, I presume, is based merely on a naked, unverified legend, on the assertions of friends and well-wishers. None of the foreigners who have heard the sound "Pasternak" and are used to considering it as a consonance have read anything of mine. And probably, after the first test, i.e., after the first acquaintance with me, the legend will be dispersed, and they will all be left disappointed.

However, poems in general are hardly suitable for such a test, and especially contemporary ones, with their convention and their complexity. The translation of prose can convey a great deal more. My delay in answering you occurred, in part, because I did not have a single copy of Safe Contact and could not get it anywhere. Only yesterday, by chance, was I lucky enough to procure a copy, and I am sending it on to you.

But I am afraid to confess: while up to now I had been quite indifferent...
as to whether I was translated or not, while I have not been following my Western fortunes and do not know anything about them, to the same degree right now it is important for me that this book should be translated. I wrote this book, not as one among many, but as if it were my only one. I wanted to express some of my thoughts in it, some of my inherent thoughts, on a number of questions. Part of these questions it was impossible to discuss. The rest of them, which one could touch upon, I probably have not formulated successfully. The finished book turned out to be only one third of what had been planned. But even what remains is sufficient for it to be, in my view, the most important thing of all that I have done. In this book I do not represent: I think and I converse. I try to be, not interesting, but precise.

This is why the book of these thoughts is the most appropriate one for acquainting any reader — including the Western one — with me. If he does not get interested in Safe Conduct, the rest of my work cannot and should not be of interest to him. And, in that case, the interest should not be created artificially, because the point is not in the interest; that is not an aim in itself. The point is in my own need of conversing with the West; and this need is natural, and is manifest only in Safe Conduct. This is because it is mainly the thought that seeks an intercourse with people; and the deeper the thought, the wider is the need for this intercourse, while an artistic image can be satisfied with the solitude in which it was born and in which it can remain. In order to make a good translation of Safe Conduct, it should be translated precisely, as if it were a scientific treatise.

So, I summarize:

Without any shame, I force Safe Conduct upon you, and am not embarrassed to admit that I am very anxious to see it translated, because it is only in this book, whether successful or not, that I address myself to the world in my own person. In all other cases it is the arbitrariness of the apologists or the snobbery of friends, etc., etc.

Please write me whether I have not delayed too long in sending you the book, whether you still want to translate it, and whether I have not made you miss the chance by my delay.

Excuse my writing on these separate bits and pieces of paper which I have at hand, and please answer as soon as you can, I beg of you.

I give you a friendly handshake, and once again thank you warmly and sincerely for everything.

Yours,

B. Pasternak

My address is the same. You know it. Here it is:

Moscow 19
Volkhovka 14, apt. 9

If it is difficult for you to write in Russian, i.e., if it takes a great deal of time, then — lacking it — you could answer in English, but in this case with a legible handwriting; (very readable.)

*Pasternak wrote the last two words in English.
Envelop: London
    England
    Mr. George Reavey
    12, Philbeach Gardens
    Kensington
    London S.W. 5.
    England

2. I. 1933

Dear Georgii Danilovich!

Happy New Year! I wish you, with all my heart, all kinds of success in
the New Year and the easing up of your circumstances, if the crisis has
entangled you too, and your life is affected by it.

Have you received my last letter and Safe Conduct? I am much con-
cerned that it might not have reached you, judging by your silence. If
you did receive it and have read it, don't be afraid to write me sincerely in
case you are disappointed. It is very likely that the movement along a road
all too familiar in the West, which goes by the name of idealism here, does
not present any interest for the West, and that from Russian literature they
expect works rich in facts and with a completely new and different social
background.

I beg you to write me without any embarrassment, without worrying
about upsetting me by your refusal or failure with the book.

I should also like to know what became of your plans last autumn, about
which you wrote me in September from Paris. Are they being realized?
And are you in London at present? And where is the book of your own
poems that you promised?

Please write. I shake your hand firmly. All the best.

Yours,

Moscow 19
Volkhonka 14, apt. 9

6. III. 33

Much respected Georgii Danilovich:

I have kept my answer to your last letter (of January 20, '33) for a very

There are several problems in this letter worth puzzling about. First of all, the
form of address is much more formal than that of the previous letters and would
indicate a regression in the degree of intimacy. Then, the purpose of the letter is to
ascertain whether an earlier letter has or has not been mailed. It should have been
long time, and now I cannot remember if I mailed it or not. Right now I
have been tidying up my desk and I have not come across it among my
papers. Perhaps it has been mailed, but then again it might have been lost.
In any case, I shall repeat its contents. I thanked you for your translation
and dedication and informed you that at the beginning of winter I sent
you, at London (12, Philbeach Gardens, Kensington, Ldn, SW 5) a long
letter and a copy of Safe Conduct, which I have procured with difficulty;
and that it would be especially unfortunate if it all were lost, since I
wouldn't be able to get another copy of this book. A second edition of the
book was being prepared, but a few days ago it was banned. Furthermore,
I advised you to get in touch with I.G. Ehrenburg. If you see him, please
give him my best regards. He is publishing some splendid articles in
Evossin: good for him!

I am awfully sorry that it has all worked out this way. Recently I have
undertaken some new work, and am very busy, not with the work itself
but with the distractions; our life here is terribly hard, and keeps getting
harder.

Please write me, among other things, whether I have sent you my reply.
I am curious—I just can't remember at all.

Yours,

B. Pasternak

Moscow 19
Volkhovk 14, apt. 9

Envelope: Mr. George Reavey

from

[There is no stamp]

B. Pasternak

[This letter is written in English. An exact transcription follows.]

25, IX. 43

Dear Mr. Reavey!

Best and heartiest thanks for your kind letter and the precious present.

an answer to Mr. Reavey's letter of January 20. In summarizing the contents of the
letter, Pasternak actually bluntly the contents of the letters of November 20, 1932
and January 2, 1933 and brings in some new information that a "few days ago" the
proposed edition of Safe Conduct was banned. This piece of information is followed
by the statement: "Furthermore, I advised you to get in touch with I.G. Ehren-
burg." Whether it should have been interpreted as a veiled appeal for intervention
is a matter for conjecture. It might be worth noting that neither this nor the letter
of January 2, 1933 is registered, unlike most of Pasternak's other letters (and most
letters abroad from Russia at that period).

Mr. Reavey published some excerpts from Safe Conduct in his anthology, Soviet
Literature (Reavey, S賓ting, editors) in 1933. A complete translation did not appear
until much later, translated by Beatrice Scott in Collected Prose Works, edited by
Stefan Schimanski (London, 1945) and in the United States in a New Directions
volume of Pasternak's Selected Writings (Norfolk, Connecticut, 1949).
Nine Letters of Boris Pasternak

I never dreamed my modest Shakespeare applications should ever find an echo in England. If it could happen indeed some day in an official way, it would much soften the steady touchiness of my local moral position.

I send at your disposal two ragged copies of my "Hamlet" without inscription in consequence of their dirtiness. "Romeo and Juliet" will follow in a month and then "Antony and Cleopatra."

Excuse my barbarian and illiterate English. I do not speak it because I never had the luck of a real practice in it, and I forget and remember it in conformity to my Shakespeare studies and the interruption of them. Now I am in the turn of its deep oblivion.

Please take my best compliments.
Yours truly
B. Pasternak

P. S. [This is written in Russian]
I recollect you very well. Thank you again very much. We shall see each other when possible.

[This letter has no envelope.]
[In English. A transcription follows.]

Dear Mr. Reavey!

Excuse, excuse me. Be so kind and magnanimous as to make translate the enclosed and set it in the suitable order. It is poor and defective, but really I lost my books and papers and forgot the last trifles of my simple and miserable career. You know more than requisite the innermost secret of our failed lives.

Thanks for your noble cares!!
Yours truly
B. Pasternak

24. XII. 1943

[The enclosure referred to in the previous letter is two big sheets, without date, in Russian.]

Translated from English, in different periods:
Chastelard, first part of the dramatic trilogy on Mary Stuart, by Alg. Charles Swinburne. It was supposed to be printed toward the end of the last war. The manuscript was lost in the printshop at the beginning of 1917.
However, my main translations are from Shakespeare.
1) Hamlet (1941, 2 editions)
2) Romeo and Juliet and 3) Antony and Cleopatra: should come our soon, published by Goslitizdat [State Publishing House]
Besides these, there are several short translations from Byron, Keats, and Shelley in my "Selected Translations," published by Sosvetskii Pisatel' [Soviet Writer Publishing House].

I hope to continue translating Shakespeare in the future. I have a contract with a theatre to translate Otello and with the Goslitizdat [State Publishing House] to 4s King Lear. Myself, I look forward to doing the chronicles, Richard II and Henry IV.

It is difficult for me to enumerate the foreign mentions of myself and the translations, for many reasons. First, in my humble case, there are probably very few of them. With our isolation, even those who enjoy real acclaim in the West do not learn about themselves. I never collected clippings and notices about myself. Besides, the upheavals of the last three years, changes of residence, destruction, disappearance, and elimination of the necessary books and papers prevent me from remembering the small number that I probably could have reconstructed in a quieter time.

Nevertheless, apparently they did write about me abroad at certain times; in the Russian emigration, in Slavic countries—Mirska in The London Mercury, and the article on Russian literature in the Encyclopaedia Britannica published in 1929, or one after that, I don't recall. George Reavey in Experiment No. 6, 1930, and in the book Soviet Literature, London, 1933; an article by Shimausky in the magazine Life and Letters Today, Feb., 1943; Roman Jakobson in the magazine Slavische Rundschau, 1935, No. 6.

I was translated into Polish a good deal—in Czechoslovakian there are separate volumes, excellent translations and splendid editions, of Lyrika (a collection of poems translated by J. Nor) and Glei (Safe Conduct), both Prague, 1935. In French, in P. Valery's magazine Commerce, there were some translations of my poems by Helene Lavolsky, later they were translated by Paul Nizard, by Pozner in his collections, and by others. Of German translations I remember those by Traeger and some very good ones by Hugo Hupert (Neue Deutsche Blatter, Sep. 1934) and the anthology Stimmen der Volker, Querido, Amsterdam, 1938. In English, besides the translations of George Reavey and Alec Brown, before the war they praised to me the translation of the poem The Year 1905, and the story The Childhood of Lucers by an author whose name escapes me at the moment; and I don't know if they were printed. Besides these, translations and mentions of me have been appearing in different languages in Soviet, International, and Communist anthologies of poetry and prose, in monthly periodicals, etc.; but these bits of information and transposition are, for the most part, unsuccessful.

*It is relevant to mention that the article on Russian literature in the 1929 edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica names Pasternak as "unquestionably the greatest living Russian poet." Mirtska, in the London Mercury, July 1937, calls him "most important of our living poets" and suggests that "his real kin are Blake, Rimbaud and Gondel."
Envelope: Mr. George Reavey

c/o Avon Books
The Hearst Corporation
575 Madison Avenue
New York, 22, N. Y.
United States of America

[The next two letters are written in English. Exact transcription follows.]

Dec. 10, 1959
Dear Reavey, I am guilty towards you. I was wrongly warned about your supposed intention to break the rights of the Pantheon Books and to deal unwarrantedly with the destiny of my Dr. Zhn novel on the ground of the sham pretended authorization of mine. I wrote to Pantheon that I gave you none and that I should not defend you if they would litigate with you. I am happy everything proved a mistake.

Newly I received your Avon booklet, “The L. S.” The way you were gone to your lucky find of the “District” is astonishingly straight and just. It is your praise and merit and a witness of your literary taste and ingenious perspicacity. It is justly the same what I remembered and vainly sought when the Penguins were asking me for a short supplementary writing in addition to the “Summer” to make up the settled size of an ordinary Penguin issue. But I did not find the fragment, and even if I did, who would supply the necessary complements and explanations to turn this nothing into something? And so I proposed them the Chopin notice. (The inscription on the Russian title page is not of mine, but of my brother’s, A. Pasternak’s [Alexander] hand. I had never had the habit of noting my books with ex libris, etc. etc.)

I am enormously, exceedingly busy. I had no opportunity to read your translation and to judge it. But I ran through your reasoning and comments. All you write there is extremely right, interesting and deep in its contents, in its matter and scope. But for your excessive estimations! Oh, were it all so as you will assume in your exaggerated appraisal! It is an unspeakable grief and pain for me to be reminded again and again of those scarce grains of life and truth, interspersed with an immensity of dead, schematic nonsense and nonexistent stuff! I wonder your and Kayden’s attempt to rescue the things deservedly doomed to ruin and oblivion. I had not seen your rendering of poems. I can’t imagine they could succeed (but it is my fault, not yours). I only saw the hoi-poloi mug on the

“L.S.” and “District” refer to: Boris Pasternak, The Last Summer and Two Excerpts from a Chapter of a Novel, with an Introduction and a Preface by George Reavey (New York, 1955).

One should compare this letter with two of the concluding paragraphs in!

Remember: “What I have written here is enough to give an idea how life in my own case was transmuted into art, how it was born of chance and experience.
Kayden volume. What has he meant with such a cover? I think Mrs.
Slater attains much more with her fidelity to rhythm and rhyme. It is not
a question of outer form. But in a poetry deprived of other rich qualities
to communicate its inner force and impetus and music is to reach all, I
believe. Best wishes for you to Xmas and New Year's day.

Sincerely yours,

B. Pasternak

Envelope: Mr. George Reavey

158 East 88th Street

New York 28, N. Y. United States of America

February 7, 1960

Dear Reavey,

Your Russian letter of March 1959 was delivered to me just recently,
almost at the same time as your letter of January 1960 arrived. I am glad
my approvals and encouragements reached you.

Don't be surprised at my continuing refusal to give you special authori-
izations on the Tale and so on. What do you want it for? Go on as you
did up to now. I cannot do it in many respects. Even if it was welcomed
and connived in this place I could not or should not like to divide the total
body of proposals, inquiries etc. (which even as a whole I am not able to
embrace and to overcome) into several separate agreements with diverse
individual persons. You don't imagine the amount of such offers and
requests. But if not wholly prohibited, such things, especially in my case,
are looked at asksance. My moral, juridical and spiritual alter ego for the
world is Mme. de Prosper. She has the right to deal with whomsoever
she pleases and put her signature under whatever she wishes, without having
asked me about the matter, in my name. My practical executor, my pro-
ducer, the chief initiative man who carries in reality all what I give title to,
is the Italian publisher E. He will I suppose, in the future concentrate
(with full title) his centralized potentiality and claims even more and
more. These are my proxies. Find your function and place within their
powers. Treat with them without any need for you or for them to ask
me thereabout. Here are the true and outer grounds of my unrespon-
sefulness. But there are also inner ones. You are the very man to understand
them and to write me plainly what you are truly thinking of.

From the beginning I have been absorbed by the vast, earnest, vivid,
essential. It took place in an old developed traditional society with its
richly ramified familiar manners, tastes and forms. The tastes of the time

"Above all, I have described my own ambivalent attitude toward my own poetic
past and to that of others. I would never lift a finger to bring back from oblivion
three fourths of what I have written."

"Madame Jacqueline de Prosper is Pasternak's French friend and corresponden-

cite Italian publisher E. is Giangiacomo Feltrinelli.
as well as our young boyish attempts were allowed to go astray in the forest of smallest and darkest particularities and details. Those oddities were not incoprehensible then. They were bone of the bone[,] flesh of the flesh of the date. The time recognized itself in these singularities. But they could not exist independently. They could not be transferred out of that period and that society in[16] some other sphere. I think they had not the least value out of this surrounding. Not only the substance of the strange arts of the time, — far more, their contents lay in the life of the age. The sense of the poetry, and all the creative expression of the period has been furnished and supported by how it was custom to live, to err, to hope, to see, to think, to suffer in those years.

And then everything has been overturned. The society was abolished. A scheme of another order came next. The support has been taken out from under that modern artistic trend, wanting of self reliance. It was, so to say, thrown into water, — sink or swim, — and how can I believe it should not have been drowned since then!! That is the reason I cannot acknowledge the lasting or remaining noteworthiness of my former books. I deny them as being gone away along with their retired time. I condemn them for their not absoluteness, for their legless depending on the historical medium, for their inability to stand on their own feet. I cannot imagine them as yet existent. But it is not for this end (to exploit my interest to the early critical stage of my writing) that I have raised up here this subject. I spoke about my old, long standing, perpetually inherent urge towards the great and serious, towards the rapt and compressed. Through this reminiscence I would say; so was the first fate of this aspiration. This striving, though true and original in its source, was not self dependent enough to stand up the trials of the changed years. The yearning after the great firstly failed in the common deviation of the postsymbolist modernism.

Then came decades on decades of translations and translations. Now, when the first hint or breathing of intended great was at last attained in the novel, I tear my hair by the thought such great appreciable part of my life (now proved to be worthy of better use) has been wasted, relatively, to nothing. I still have much to say, and the life has come to its conclusion. The sudden acclaim I was honoured and made happy to experience lastly is not a mistake of the destiny. On the contrary, it is its natural response to the aforesaid craving after the grave and important that penetrated my whole being and life. But it is unheard of, it is a shame and disgrace to dispose of so laughably little, to have got such quantitative deficiency of originally done to support, to maintain, to justify this heavenly sign of good luck!

Thence my comprehensible reluctance against the unceasing discussing, bargaining, and handling of one and the same few objects, reminding again and again, that their vicious circle is so scandalously scant! Do you mean I can be glad and proud of this “marking time” of my fortune without her advancing? What will you say thereupon?
Truly speaking I should now have disappeared and hide myself as Knut Hamsun did to the end of his life, — and write in the secret all the rest I can still do, — but in Russian conditions it is impossible. But, be quiet, although to work in my enviable, too enviable situation is almost impracticable, I shall not submit. After tomorrow I shall return to my poor play that I have abandoned half a month ago. So stand the things.

That is the answer to all your questions. Now the turn to argue and to object is yours. But don't reckon on a new quick reply and long letter. I have received your "The Colours of Memory," I thank you. I sympathize with you, you must feel it. I was glad to learn all you wrote me about yourself. I send the enclosed photograph without a dedicatory inscription. It is an amateur snapshot of the last summer, but very very good. Perhaps you will use it in some of your publications.

I wish you health and success in all your intentions. The letter grew too long for being obtained.[sic]

Please wire me its arrival.

Sincerely yours,

B. Pasternak

Thank you for having typed your letter. People who send me handwritten letters don't guess how numerous they are and how much time takes the deciphering.