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August 29, 1963

Dear Mr. Bercovici, -

I do wish to apologize most urgently for my prolonged ~~time~~ silence. But then I've been ill all this time - hospitalized most of it - and subsequently I took a holiday in this "Einfried" sort of a place where my secretary has only just joined me. Hence the delay. There were, however, various additional reasons:

1. Whilst your letter of July 1st reached me at the clinic in Zurich on July 4th, your manuscript arrived for days later. This was unfortunate inasmuch as you'd definitely promised to have all the revisions agreed upon ready "on or before July 1st". Which was why Mr. Curt Bois came to Zurich and stayed there until July 3rd. As no news from you had been received by then, we both assumed that you hadn't managed to make the deadline, and Mr. Bois made sudden arrangements to spend the month in the Swiss alps. Without him I shouldn't have wished to work on the play even if I had been able too- which, at that time, I just might have been.

come

2. Having read your scenes I became somewhat doubtful as to the advisability of some of the new material. It might - or might not - be a good idea to have both, that birthday party and the sleighs. To my mind the latter are being introduced far too casually, and the effect of the excursion i.e. all the excitement on the part of the patients etc. can't possibly ~~come~~ off when the real excitement consists of the doctor's birthday. Moreover I am very much afraid that there is far too much directness during the party. Leander's dialogues with his patients are surely greatly overwritten, as is all that talk about Gabrielle and Spinell which, of this I am fairly certain should never take place at all.

3. You say that Gabrielle's absence during the third act (i.e. its dramatization) is merely a technical matter. I don't really think it is. I rather believe that in order to explain the situation, - a situation which, as matters stand now, is far too crudely explained before the intermission we should resort to a "trick" employed by Thomas Mann: Right in the beginning of the short story he announces that "a doctor Müller" is in charge of the very light and uninteresting cases. And that said Dr. Müller quietly takes over whenever a patient is obviously dying. In the third act we should learn that Gabrielle is now being treated by Dr. Müller. It's a good trick and should make matters far easier.

4. Although I should have been willing to work on the German adaptation even before Mr. Bois' management had seen the play, I have not decided to wait for what they have to say. In about a week Prof. Barlog, president of Berlin's "Schiller-Theater" will return from his furlough, and Mr. Bois will show him the English original, explaining that certain alterations are to be made and that I'd be ready to adapt the play for Mr. Bois and in cooperation with him. Possibly, Prof. Barlog will have to have a German raw translation before being able to judge. This intern may take some time. However we are in no particular hurry. Mr. Bois' time for the coming season is to fairly densely booked up, and in all probability the play wouldn't go in production before autumn 64 - if that soon.

I am extremely sorry - not so much about the delay which isn't really my fault - but mainly about having to seem so critical. But, as stated in one of my former letters, I couldn't possibly keep praising all that I find good and attractive and take it for granted that you take my objections and question marks for just what they are: efforts to improve on a piece of work which I like.

I need hardly tell you that I was disappointed when you failed to come and see me in Zurich. This sort of collaboration needs a certain measure of personal contact, and a good talk is far more useful than the exchange of ten letters. Let me suggest that for the present we just wait for Prof. Barlog to have his say. If he is interested - as I confidently hope he will be - we should then try for a meeting. As soon as I hear from Barlog I'll let you know.

Meanwhile I'll have to undergo a tiresome cure in Vienna. My address there until further notice: Hotel Imperial, Wien.

With best wishes
yours very sincerely,

PS. As your London agent was so tremendously taken with the play, I wonder whether he is doing anything about it. Would you kindly inform me regarding this point?

