

Georg G. Iggers and Wilma A. Iggers
100 Ivyhurst Road
Buffalo, New York 14226-3441
Tel: 716-836-1216
Email: iggers@buffalo.edu

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Dear Friends:

Quite a number of you have asked how our application for immigration to Canada was going. Several weeks ago we were finally informed that the application had been approved, more than three and a half years after our son Daniel in Toronto had sponsored us. Apparently they are hesitant to admit people of our age who may become a burden on their health system. As you may know, in Canada unlike in the U.S., all residents are health insured. This past year we underwent three very extensive medical examinations which preceded the approval of our application. The irony now is that we may not move to Canada after all. The physical state of our son Jonathan has deteriorated over the past several years since he was in a serious automobile accident and reached a critical state just now. So we do not want to leave him unless he improves markedly. We must appear at a border by February 17 to register and be landed formally, but as we understand it, we can then return to Buffalo and slowly move our belongings. It seems that we need to spend a total of two years in Canada in the next five years, which need not be consecutive, before we lose our residence permit. We thus have some time to decide. We prefer Toronto because Daniel, his wife Janet, and two of his children, Kelly and Adam live there. His other daughter Sarah her partner Phil, and our great granddaughter, Ivy, live in Niagara Falls, Canada. Besides relatives on Wilma's side live in the Toronto-Hamilton area.

We are fortunate that at our age we are in good health. The Canadian Immigration service has certified this. I have recovered fully from my bypass operation two and a half years ago. I have some minor problems in walking and need a hearing aid, otherwise I am fine. Wilma is in amazing good shape and as active as ever. We are still living in our house into which we moved when we first came to Buffalo forty-five years ago and intend to stay there for the time being. Ultimately we shall probably move to a senior residence. We prefer Toronto not only for family reasons, but also because the residences which interest us there are in an urban setting with good public transportation available, while those we have seen in the Buffalo area are on the outskirts of town and would require our keeping an automobile if we do not want to be largely isolated from the outside world.

We did little traveling. In early October we took the train to Philadelphia to visit our friend Qingjia Wang, with whom I have worked closely for the past twenty some years since we first met in China, his wife Ni and their small son, and our and Dan's longtime friend, Timmy and his wife Joan. In late October we visited Wilma's sister, Marianne, in Urbana, Illinois, as we do every fall, a very relaxing and pleasant visit. Our main trip, from which we just returned last week, was to Germany in early November. Most of the time we spent in Göttingen where we still feel very much at home. We spent four days in Berlin where we saw many friends. We unfortunately did not have time to visit Leipzig, a city where we spent quite a bit of time during the Cold War, but our friends Gert and Waldtraut Klitzke came to Bad Sachsa in the Harz Mountains to meet us. We also did not have time to go to Vienna to see our grandson Micha and his mother. We finally spent two days with friends in Darmstadt and former

students who had been part of the Darmstadt-Buffalo exchange before boarding the plane in Frankfurt last Tuesday.

In Göttingen I went to the Friday evening services in the synagogue, of which we are still members, and to a very impressive Hanukah candle ceremony lighting. I was able to establish a cooperative relationship between the liberal temple to which we belong in Buffalo and the Göttingen synagogue, two very different congregations, the one American suburban, comfortable middle class, the other predominantly consisting of recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The Buffalo rabbi is seriously thinking of coming to Göttingen next year to participate in the annual observance on November 9 of the pogrom (the term Kristallnacht has been replaced in Germany by the term pogrom which more exactly describes what happened on that night in 1938). A good number of local citizens including the mayor and school classes participate every year in the observances in Göttingen..

We have not been entirely inactive as regards scholarship. Wilma in April participated in a conference at the Czech embassy in Washington on Jewish immigrants from Czechoslovakia to the United States. She presented a paper on the historian Hans Kohn, one of the early founders of Zionism in Prague around 1913, who migrated to Palestine in 1919, but soon became disillusioned with the Zionist policy towards the Arabs, left Palestine in 1929 and devoted most of his scholarly career in the U.S. to a critical study of nationalism. She was accompanied by our granddaughter Kelly who had received her B.A. from the University of Toronto in history and Bohemian studies. Wilma has been an avid reader and also keeps in touch with friends and scholars in Bohemia. The edition in English translation of the theoretical writings of the German historian Ranke which I mentioned in last year's letter has been published this past October by Routledge in London.. I thoroughly rewrote the extensive introduction keeping in mind the changed interpretations of Ranke in the past forty years not as the "father of historical science" as he was dubbed in the nineteenth century, but in terms of the aesthetic aspects of his writing. Since then I have worked on an essay for a panel which my friend Wang organized for the International Congress of Historical Sciences that met in Amsterdam this last August. The theme of the panel was the continuing relevance or the irrelevance of Marxist perspectives for historical writing at the beginning of the twenty first century from a global perspective. Papers included Marxist historiography in present day Japan, China, India, Greece and Italy, and Latin America. I wrote on Western Europe and North America. I was not able to go to Amsterdam but my paper was read there. My paper had to be short, twenty-minutes, but I am now extending it for a special issue of the Italian journal *Storia della Storiografia* which will include all the papers plus one which is being written now on Russian historiography today and possibly one on historical writing in Sub-Saharan Africa. I also have several projects ahead for this coming year about which I shall write in our annual letter next year. So I still keep busy in my retirement as does Wilma. I was just reelected to the board of the local chapter of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). This coming January it will be sixty years since Wilma and I joined the NAACP in Little Rock.

As to our children, there is little new since last year other than Jonathan's health situation. We appreciate that we hear from Dan several times a week and that he frequently comes to Buffalo, alone or with Janet or one of his children. We, of course, also hear regularly from Jeremy and Carol. As to our grandchildren, Kelly and Adam have both begun their graduate studies. Kelly decided not to pursue a doctorate in Bohemian studies, at least for the time being although her professor urged her to do so, and is in a teacher training program at the University of Toronto which she very much enjoys. You may remember that Adam spent his junior year abroad in Ghana. He is now in the graduate program in developmental studies at

York University in Toronto. We see Sarah and Phil and our great granddaughter Ivy fairly often. We really enjoy Ivy, who is now almost three and a half, and is articulate, enthusiastic, and affectionate. Our youngest grandson, Jeremy's son Micha, in Vienna, just turned twenty.

As for the political scene, I think you know how we feel. We are very worried about the way America is going, wondering how much democracy there is left in a country where almost all persons in politics are dependent on the money from corporate institutions and special interests to be elected. We are very saddened by what is happening in Israel. In comparison Germany today seems relatively sane, although there too the attitudes towards immigrants and the economic policies of the present government which have disadvantaged the poorer segments of the population worry us.

Wilma and I wish all of you all the best for the holiday season, Georg

Georg and Wilma Iggers
715 Renaissance Drive, Apt. B-111
Williamsville, N Y 14221-8033 USA
(716)-639-7605
iggers@buffalo.edu

December 24, 2011

Dear Friends:

This has been a very busy year. This explains why this letter comes so late. The most time consuming part was certainly the move out of our house on Ivyhurst Road in which we lived since we arrived in Buffalo in the fall of 1965. During that time we accumulated all sorts of things and hardly ever discarded anything. One problem was disposing of books and papers. The university library took a lot of my books, particularly those in German. I kept only the minimum which I expected to need for further reference; this, however, means that I now have to borrow my own books from the library. Wilma had a much larger library. Her Czech books went largely to the University of Illinois, the University of Toronto, and the Czech-Slovak National Museum in Iowa. Her German books were more difficult to place, although some with Jewish themes went to the Leo Baeck Institute in New York and some to a book store specializing in German Jewish books. And then there were things we had collected over the years with which we found it hard to part. Fortunately two friends, Dagmar Friedrich and Renate Schieldrop, came from Germany for three weeks to help. They were of immense help as were neighbors who helped us with the actual move on June 15, as did our son Dan and our grandchildren Adam and Kelly from Toronto and our son Jeremy who came from Minneapolis. Now the sale of the house has finally been closed.

We believe that we made the right decision although, as we shall explain below, our first move to the Weinberg Campus senior residence turned out to be a mistake. We are both in good shape, but we believe that at our advanced age it was time to move. As you know, we had originally planned to move to Toronto, and after considerable delay had received permanent residence in Canada, but because of the serious health problems of our son Jonathan decided to stay in the Buffalo area. He has serious heart and also other health problems, and has great difficulties organizing his life. After investigating various senior residences, we decided on Weinberg Campus for a variety of reasons: its proximity to the university, the fact that it has several stages of care, from independent living to assisted living and skilled nursing, and its location adjacent to the Jewish Center with its physical facilities and pool. Some of the Jewish activities at Weinberg such as Friday evening services also appealed to me. I also expected there to be people with whom we could talk. However, we very soon realized that we did not fit in. I was asked to chair the weekly current events session, which I gladly accepted. But I quickly encountered antagonism when I sought to discuss serious questions in the weekly news, specifically the death penalty and the Buffalo schools. But the straw which broke the camel's back was when I spoke out against a campaign originating with some tenants but having the full support of the management to "support the troops." This meant collecting tooth paste, shaving cream, etc. to thank them for "defending our freedom." When leaflets lay on all dining room tables urging the tenants to attend a rally to show their solidarity with the "troops", I placed my own letter explaining why I would not attend the rally. Half an hour later the manager and the assistant manager came to our apartment irate, telling me I had no right to express what they considered my personal opinions, and informing me that they had confiscated my letter. Subsequently I was also insulted by a resident for my lack of patriotism. But already before this incident we were

isolated in the dining room. Moreover, we found the facilities at Weinberg inadequate. We did have a very nice apartment. The food was mediocre at best. It seems that they were cutting corners left and right. The elevator in our part of the building was not repaired for almost two weeks. On the other hand, the CEO of this non-profit organization, as you can read in the Internet, received a compensation of \$951,776 in 2009, including admittedly some back pay.

On October 1 we moved to Canterbury Woods nearby. We had looked into it before, but decided against it because the cost was considerably higher and it was more luxurious than what we needed. It required a very massive deposit, 90% of which will be returned to our heirs or to us if we decide to move out. Considering the fluidity of the stock market, this seemed like a relatively safe investment. And there were other advantages. Canterbury Woods has the three stages which Weinberg has, but includes a very generous long term insurance scheme which covers what would normally be the extra cost of these higher stages. And the atmosphere is totally different from Weinberg. We feel very much accepted. At almost every meal we have been joined by other tenants. The clientele is very different. Recently a recipient of the Nobel Prize died here. There are a fair number of retired colleagues from the university, some of whom we already knew. There is an active cultural program, and there is an indoor swimming pool which I try to use every day. Transportation, some of it free, is available during the day so that we need to do very little driving. There is a very elegant dining room with a broad selection of foods. This residence is sponsored by the Episcopalian Church, but there are actually a fair number of Jews here and some Jewish religious activities. This week there is a lighting every evening of the Hanukkah candles; today there is a Sabbath service.

We have traveled more than in the last few years. On March 23 we celebrated Wilma's ninetieth birthday. Wilma was flooded with congratulations by e-mail and phone calls, many from overseas. We had a very nice gathering, still in our house on Ivyhurst, with all children and their spouses, grandchildren, and our great granddaughter present, except understandably for our grandson in Vienna, and local friends. Afterward I took Wilma on a very enjoyable, brief honeymoon to Niagara on the Lake. After that we stayed put until fall, except for two short trips which Wilma made, one to Hamilton for a gathering with her cousins and with her sister who had come from Illinois, the other to Minneapolis to visit Jeremy and his wife Carol. In late October we flew briefly to St. Petersburg, Florida, for the opening at the Florida Holocaust Museum of a traveling exhibit "From Swastika to Jim Crow", about refugee scholars who had fled from the Nazis and had taught at Black colleges in the American South. We seem to be the last survivors. Two weeks later we flew to Germany. I flew with Rabbi Alex of the Reconstructionist congregation, Temple Sinai, to which we belong, to Göttingen, where he was invited to participate in the commemoration of November 9, 1938, known to most of you as Kristallnacht, but now more properly called by Germans, the Pogrom, which marked the beginning of the Holocaust. He made a very good impression and in turn this was a very important experience for him to get to know a new and different Germany. Wilma and I then stayed three weeks in Germany, half of the time in Göttingen which for us has become a second home, several very crowded days in Berlin and Leipzig to visit friends, and to Herford, where a group is working on a dvd on us, and as usual the last day and night with friends in Darmstadt and Griesheim near the Frankfurt airport. While in Berlin, I also participated in a memorial conference in Potsdam for Fritz Klein, a highly respected East German historian with whom I had organized an exchange of doctoral candidates between Buffalo and East Berlin before the Wall came down, and where I also gave a talk. I was consequently invited to participate in a conference comparing the work of historians in East and West Germany during the Cold War, many of whom I knew personally. I have also have been asked to join the planning session for the conference in Jena the beginning of March and shall make a quick trip to Germany, this time without Wilma, and from Jena shall take the train to Vienna to spend the weekend with our grandson Micha and his mother Christa.

We have also been occupied with various scholarly projects. Wilma has spent quite a bit of time getting the English translation of a book by an old friend, Rudolf von Thadden, into shape. It is a fascinating book, a history of the von Thadden estate in Pomerania from the Napoleonic period until it became Polish after World War I, tracing the social and political transformation of a village. The book has already gone through four German editions and is about to appear in Polish and is scheduled to appear in French. Berghahn Books has accepted it for publication in English. I have probably taken on too many projects. The book, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, which I co-authored with a Chinese friend, Q(ingjia) Edward Wang, and an Indian friend, Supriya Mukherjee, first appeared in 2008, has already appeared in Chinese and is being translated into Russian and Greek. A German edition is now being planned by a German publisher who has received a formidable grant for the translation, but this will not be a straight translation but will be a very thorough revision and updating, which will involve quite a bit of work. In addition the three of us have committed ourselves to publishing a global historiography reader to accompany the English book, a selection of significant historical texts since the eighteenth century. There already exist several historiographical readers, but they all restrict themselves to Western historical writing, that is to European and North American historians. Ours will be the first reader to include historians, including women, from the rest of the world as well. In addition I have several minor projects. One, which will have to wait, is the revision in book form of articles on the relevance or irrelevance of Marxist historical writings in various parts of the world today which Wang has edited and which are to appear in a journal 2012, but which he and I are planning to rework in book form. The time has come when Wilma and I should cut back. A few weeks ago, we regretfully cancelled a two week visit to which we had looked forward to the Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar in Quito, Ecuador, where both of us were to lecture. It would just have been too much.

One positive aspect of our living in Buffalo is that we are actually very close to Canada. Dan, not only calls almost every day, but visits us very often from Toronto, either with Janet, his wife, with our grandson Adam, or with our granddaughter Kelly and her partner Eric. In May Adam completed his MA at York University in the political science department with a focus on developing countries. As you may remember, he spent his junior year abroad in Ghana. His MA thesis dealt empirically with the negative effects of neoliberal economic policies on migrants and ethnic minorities in Ontario which is being published in an international journal on migration. He is now working for an NGO to help train leadership persons in Indian reservations in Ontario. Kelly is completing her MA in education at the University of Toronto. After completing her BA in history and Bohemian studies, she was urged by her mentor to enter the Ph. D. program, but instead decided to become a teacher. She recently invited Wilma to come to the elementary grade class in which she was practice teaching and Wilma was impressed. Dan's oldest daughter, Sarah, and her husband Phil live with our four-year old great granddaughter in nearby Niagara Falls, Ontario, and come over quite often to see us. Sarah and Phil work in restaurants. Ivy is alert and affectionate, a real joy. Understandably because of the distance we see less of our grandson Micha in Vienna, but, as I mentioned above, I shall visit him this March. Jeremy manages to see him much more often. He is earning a living, believe it or not, playing poker. Austria still has selective service and he is currently doing his alternate civilian service.

Wilma and I are very disturbed by the political situation at home and abroad. We are disappointed in Obama's presidency, having had high hopes in him. We can forgive him some of the economic compromises he has had to make, but are very disturbed that he has continued Bush's policies on detention which constitute serious threats to civil liberties. Yet we see no alternative to voting for him this coming November. The alternative, considering the extremism of the Republican party, would be disastrous. America has become a very flawed democracy in which most of the legislators and many of the elected judges depend on

the financial contributions of the corporations. And as persons who once very much believed in Israel, we are disturbed not only by the settlement policy, which is making peace impossible, but also in the resurgence of an ultra right nationalism, supported by Orthodox fundamentalism, which seriously threatens civil liberties. Following Reaganite policies, Israel has experienced an economic takeoff so that per capita income now almost approximates Western European standards, but with this takeoff a gulf similar to the one in the United States has occurred so that according to the CIA Factbook, which is certainly not an anti-Israel publication, in 2010 23.6 % of the population lived in poverty. This is very far from the model of social justice which we once, probably very naively, expected Israel to become. Ironically in contrast Germany today, despite and in part because of its catastrophic past, seems a relative voice of sanity, although there are too problems of social inequality and xenophobia. We in our old age are no longer involved very actively in today's problems other than contributing to causes which we consider worthy. I still regularly attend the meetings of the local board of the NAACP. And there are some signs of hope. In our suburban congressional district which has been solidly Republican for many decades, for the first time a Democrat was elected, incidentally a woman, after the Republicans with the assistance of Speaker Boehner, concentrated on the repeal of Obama's health care reform. And the world wide "Occupy Wall Street" movement is an encouraging sign. Not that we have any illusions that it will affect substantial changes in the economic or social system, but it is making people aware of the injustices of the status quo. The other day I joined the peaceful demonstration in downtown Buffalo to show my solidarity.

Wilma and I wish you somewhat belatedly a pleasant holiday season and all the best for the coming year.

Georg

Georg and Wilma Iggers
715 Renaissance Blvd., Apt. B-111
Williamsville, NY 14221-8033
(716)-639-7605
iggers@buffalo.edu

December 4, 2012

Dear Friends:

This has been a very busy year, on the whole good, but also with some worries. The greatest worry has been the health of our son Jonathan here in Buffalo who was in the hospital for almost eight weeks this summer, a good deal of it in intensive care, most immediately with a gall bladder infection, which poisoned a good deal of his system, but also with ongoing heart problems. He has been out of the hospital now for some time, has actually returned to work, but is still not well so that we worry. We are also worried about Wilma's sister in Urbana, a retired professor of economics at the University of Illinois, who until two years ago was very active, and since then has deteriorated both physically and mentally. Wilma and I have some smaller age related problems with walking and hearing, but basically we are in good health.

This has not prevented us from leading very active lives. This past year I have done more traveling and taken on more scholarly tasks than for a long time. I was in Germany in March in connection with a project in which I am involved in preparation for a conference on how German historians in East and West Germany during the cold war viewed the history of the time. The conference in which I shall participate will be held at the University of Jena this coming January. This May I went to Santiago de Chile for the presentation of the Spanish translation of a book of mine. The publisher flew me there; it was my first time in South America. Wilma was going to accompany me, but because of Jonathan's sickness had to cancel her trip. She could not get a refund on her ticket which, however, remains valid for a year and which we are going to use to go to Chile this coming February to spend a vacation. I met very interesting people at the presentation of my book with whom I intend to remain in touch and whom we shall see again in February. Both of us gave talks this September about our biographies at Columbus State University in Georgia. I just returned from a very nice four day visit in Little Rock, Arkansas, at Philander Smith College, the historically African American school where Wilma and I taught in the 1950s. We have been in touch with the school over the years and I was welcomed like a long lost son. As you may know when we were there in the 1950s we were both actively involved in the incipient civil rights movement and I organized the law suit which led to the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School in 1957. Wilma, who has some hesitations about traveling, decided not to come along, and she still has not decided whether she will come with me to Germany in January, although I and our friends in Germany are very much urging her. She did, however, go to the Czech Republic this spring to see friends, perhaps the last time she can make this trip. Last year on the occasion of Wilma's ninetieth birthday the mother of our grandson Micha in Vienna offered to take her by car to the Czech Republic and this spring they went. I had a very nice two day stay in Richmond, Virginia, the city where we first settled when we arrived in the United States, and where I went to college. I still know a few people there whom I wanted to see once more, knowing that this might be last time.

I have continued my scholarly work. My main project at present is the version of a book, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, which I coauthored with a good Chinese friend, Qingjia Edward Wang, and a good Indian friend, Supriya Mukherjee, which was published four years ago. Since then a Chinese edition has been published and it was translated but not yet published in Russian. We are now rewriting the English text and

bringing it up to date for a German translation. This has been quite a bit of work but the end is now in sight. We intend to submit the text to the German publisher, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, by the end of this month. We are now negotiating with a Spanish publisher who is very much interested. Wilma at present has no major project but she reads a lot and has a busy correspondence, both personal and scholarly, with friends and colleagues primarily in the Czech Republic but also in Germany.

As you probably know we sold our house last year and after a brief interlude in a senior residence where we were not very happy moved to the present one, Canterbury Woods, where we feel very comfortable. Considering our age the decision to give up our house as well as the decision four years ago to sell our apartment in Goettingen, was the right one. We regret particularly having left Goettingen where we felt very much at home and had and still have many friends, more than we have here. But we wanted to be closer to our children and grandchildren, who except for the grandson in Vienna, are all on this side of the ocean, and except for our oldest son Jeremy and his wife Carol, who live in Minneapolis, are within an easy drive to Buffalo. Jonathan joins us several times a week for meals. Our granddaughter Sarah, her husband Phil, and our five year old delightful great granddaughter, Ivy, live in Niagara Falls, Canada, a forty-five minute drive from here. They come about twice a month to have dinner with us, and sometimes to go swimming in the nice indoor pool in this building. Our son Dan in Toronto, which is two hours away by car, also comes frequently, sometimes with his wife Janet and with our granddaughter Kelly and her partner Eric and our grandson Adam, and calls every day.

Everything is taken care of here and there are good meals. I take advantage of the pool almost every day, often joined by Wilma. We have given up driving, but there are provisions for rides. We have a very nice, spacious apartment – two bedrooms, a very large living room, and a small kitchen. We can put up guests in the second bedroom. Our rent includes an insurance which provides that when it becomes necessary we can move to assisted living or skilled nursing care in this retirement home without extra cost, which we hope will not come very soon. One thing which frankly bothers me is that only affluent people can afford to live here. But because of the cost there is not a single person of color living here. People here are very friendly and often join us for dinner in the dining room, but we do not have any real friends here or people with whom we can have serious discussions. This is very different from Goettingen or elsewhere in Germany or Vienna where we have lived or in Wilma's case the Czech Republic. And as an emeritus I am treated as a total outsider by the history department, except for our good longtime friend Roger Des Forges. The people I knew in the department have retired and the new team is not interested. I had good interested audiences in Santiago, Washington, Vienna, Columbus, and Little Rock this year, but when last year I gave a talk about my work in the department except for Roger Des Forges only one member of the department attended, although there was a good student audience. In this sense I am quite isolated, but not quite. After all we have our kids, grandkids, and Ivy here. And we have had a steady stream of visitors this year, three friends from Goettingen, a couple from Heidelberg, one of the friends from Santiago, and at the end of this month an interesting friend from China is going to visit us. So we are really not isolated after all.

Our grandchildren are all doing well. Sarah and Phil are working in restaurants and enjoy life and Ivy. They are very good parents. Kelly has started with much enthusiasm to teach fifth and sixth grade in the Toronto schools. Adam completed his MA in political science last year at York University in Toronto with a challenging empirical thesis on the negative affects of neo-liberal policies on migrants and ethnic minorities in Ontario which is being published. He is currently working with an NGO with young people on Indian reservations in Ontario. Micha has just completed his alternative civilian service in Vienna which he had to perform as an Austrian citizen.

Now to our three sons: Jeremy, as you may know, left the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* several years ago to found an online paper, the *Twin Cities Daily Planet*, which you can read on the internet. I spent a very nice weekend with him and Carol last month while Wilma visited her sister. Dan, a lawyer, continues as a legal consultant. Jonathan will have completed his thirty years with the Erie (Buffalo) County Division of Social Services at the end of this month and can then retire with a full pension.

We are quite worried about the political situation, domestically but even more so internationally. We were relieved that Obama was reelected, but aware of the xenophobic and racist sentiments which almost led to his defeat. Wilma and I voted for him, although in many ways we were disappointed in him, less in his economic concessions which we could partly understand, but in his continuation of Bush policies restricting civil liberties, using the war against terrorism as an excuse. But it is the Middle East which worries us most, the civil war in Syria with its many civilian dead, and with the world just watching. I realize that there is no simple solution. But what upsets me most as a Jew, who still has an emotional attachment to Israel, is what is happening there. I read the English edition of the Israeli paper *Haaretz* every evening and often also the more conservative *Jerusalem Post* and thus am fairly well informed. We were shocked by the anti-Black riots in South Tel Aviv this past summer which received the support of members of the government, And we are deeply disturbed by the announcement several days ago of the plans for the construction of 3,000 housing units in Palestinian areas between East Jerusalem and the West Bank which will cut the West Bank in two and prevent any peaceful solution. We are frightened at the aggressive nationalism of a broad segment of the population which supports Netanyahu and his extreme xenophobic foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman, but are also aware that many Israelis, some of whom we know, do not share these outlooks, but they are unfortunately in the minority. I know that some of you who read this letter will not like to hear this, but if you care about Israel and want to see it survive, this has to be said.

Wilma joins me with best wishes for the New Year which we hope will see some advance towards decency and peace, Georg

Dear Friends:

I had promised some of you, that I would write an account of Daniel's and my trip to Cuba. Wilma did not come along. Since America forbids its citizens to go to Cuba, she would have needed special permission. There are exceptions to the prohibition, such as academic exchanges, which applied to me. In fact many Americans do go to Cuba, either legally as parts of a group, or illegally despite the prohibition. Our son Daniel, who lives in Toronto and is a Canadian citizen, accompanied me – Canada has no such restrictions. We had a wonderful reception in Cuba, but then we had the privilege of being tourists. Tourism is today Cuba's main industry. We lived in an old fashioned but very comfortable hotel, the historic Hotel Ambos Mundos, where Ernest Hemingway wrote *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, in the midst of historic Old Havana. I would like to have talked with average Cubans in the countryside, but we were too busy to leave Havana. The closest we came to speaking with ordinary Cubans were cab drivers, especially one with whom we drove several times, who on the one hand believed strongly that the "Revolution" as they call it had achieved a great deal in terms of health, education, social equality, lack of crime – he considered Cuba today the safest country in the world - but also stressed that Cubans are afraid to express their criticisms in public because of the retribution which could follow, in other words positive social reforms at the expense of personal freedoms.

Three historians who had close contacts with Cuba had urged me to go to Cuba and had mediated my invitation from the Department of History at the University of Havana for a week as guest of the department. I had expected a situation under strict control as I had experienced it in the old GDR (Communist East Germany) where I had lectured frequently, but things turned out to be much more open. In East Germany my lectures were always restricted to a small circle of distinguished historians with no students except for occasional doctoral candidates, although I had always asked that I wanted to meet with students. This became possible only after 1985 in the last days of East Germany. I made a similar request in Havana; the request was granted. The organizers arranged for me to meet with three classes, a second year history class, a fourth year history class, and a class with graduate students. In addition there was an informal session with the Center for US Studies which cosponsored the invitation. They preferred that I lecture in Spanish, which I did. I can express myself freely in Spanish, but have problems understanding the spoken language; and there was always someone there to assist me when I did not understand. I sent them three Spanish texts on three very different topics, which they thought were very appropriate. One was from Wilma's and my autobiography, which has been translated into Spanish, the chapter "Unequal but Separate" on the Little Rock crisis in the 1950's and our involvement in the civil rights movement; the second my development as a historian in the context of the historiographical trends of the time; the third about Marxism and historiography. The first class was to deal with civil rights. The day before Dan and I had a very frank discussion with a professor about racial equality in Cuba, where over half the population is of African or partially African descent. He obviously identified himself with the "Revolution", felt that a great deal of progress had been made in the direction of racial equality, that in this way Cuba was ahead of the United States, but that there remained definite inequalities in terms of social mobility. He pointed out that in his department of thirty professors there were only two of African descent. Thus a lot still had to be done and he saw the roots of this inequality not as you would expect of a good Marxist in economic but largely in cultural factors. The atmosphere in all three classes was jovial and open in a way which would not have been possible in the old East Germany; each time there were about thirty five attending. In my paper I spoke of the situation at the time of the US Supreme Court decision of May 17, 1954, declaring the doctrine of separate but equal unconstitutional. I talked then freely in Spanish, in part using statistics, to point out the great advances which had been made since then, but that the schools are almost as segregated today as they were in 1954. The first question which followed was

surprising and did not relate directly to the topic, but revealed how the students felt. The question was how I felt about North Korea, a country with which Cuba has friendly relations. I answered that I see North Korea as an oppressive, essentially Stalinist regime with gulags; he replied that he fully agreed with me. The students applauded. I had circulated a page from my FBI file which indicated that the FBI began a file on me when as a teenager I became involved in civil rights. This led to the question how I was able to get at the file. I explained the Freedom of Information Act and discussed what freedom of information means.. Somewhat off the subject, I compared my visit to Santiago de Chile the previous month with my visit now to Havana and said that I saw something positive in the absence of international commercial chains, including fast food restaurants. One of the students replied that once in her life time she would like to eat at a McDonalds, and everyone laughed. The next class was less exciting because it dealt more narrowly with historiographical issues, specifically with the question of the objectivity of historical inquiry and the challenge of postmodernism. There was nevertheless a good discussion which prepared the way to the next session on Marxism and historiography. Several faculty members were well informed, but few of the students had heard of the linguistic turn or for that matter of postmodernism. One student, however, was able to talk about Hayden White's relativistic theses in his *Metahistory*. But the most exciting session was the final one on Marxism and Historiography. I originally intended to discuss a project on which my Chinese-American friend Edward Wang and I are engaged, a volume with contributors from throughout the world on the question of the role of Marxist theory for historical writing at the beginning of the twenty-first century. I cited Eric Hobsbawm's last book in which he, a life long Marxist, wrote that much of what Marx wrote was outdated and other parts were, to use his word, unacceptable. In a short introductory paper I presented Marx's basic ideas of economic determinism, class struggle, and stages of historical development and compared them with the remnant of Marxist ideas in historical writing today, particularly in the non-Western world and specifically Latin America. One of the professors spoke about the revisions which the Italian Marxist political activist and philosopher Antonio Gramsci had made of Marx's theories, particularly class, which did not fit the actual realities of industrially less or unevenly developed countries. The question immediately was raised why there had never been a significant socialist movement in the United States or even, as in England, a labor party. According to Marx's prediction it should have been exactly in highly developed industrial countries like the United States or England that a revolutionary proletariat would develop rather than in less developed countries like Russia and China – one could hardly speak of a significant proletariat in China. The class was to last ninety minutes; we were still discussing well after two hours. Students and faculty, including the chair of the department, asked how they could get my publications and I promised to send them online. I am confident that we shall remain in touch.

All of this is very encouraging for Cuba's future. But there are also many disturbing signs. The strict control of information: There are no independent newspapers; all the newspapers I was able to buy, not only *Granma*, the *Pravda* of Cuba, were published by the party. Normal civilians have no access to Internet. They can receive only six TV stations; the only foreign one to which they have access is a Venezuelan one. And of course outspoken dissidents face incarceration under harsh conditions. We can only hope that there will be an opening which will grant greater freedom and democracy, and also create room for economic initiatives without abandoning the social reforms which distinguish Cuba today.

April 10, 2013

A P.S. to my account of Dan's and my visit to Cuba last month, my impressions in retrospect, partly a reaction to yesterday's article in the New York Times, "Trip to Cuba By Beyoncé and Jay-Z Investigated." They were being investigated by the

Treasury Department because they spent a weekend in Cuba to celebrate their wedding anniversary. The Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet empire and its form of state socialism almost a quarter of a century ago, but somehow it does not appear to have ended for the United States and Cuba as regards Cuba. [According to news reports today, the Treasury Department has acknowledged that the couple's trip to Cuba was authorized under a program "that encourages "meaningful contacts" with the Cuban people."]

As one Cuban remarked to us: "Cuba and Israel have a lot in common. We are both small countries, surrounded by enemies intent on destroying us." And on both sides there are bitter attempts to distort the achievements of the other, in Cuba as part of official policy, in the United States by the anti-Castro lobby in Miami. The U.S. is pictured in the official Cuban party press as the imperialist enemy committed to destroying the achievements of the "Revolution"; Florida Republican congressmen of Cuban origin seem to mirror the Cuban communist party as they call for destroying – I am quoting the NY Times article – "the machinery of oppression that brutally represses the Cuban people."

The Cubans we spoke to, including persons very much committed to what they see as the achievements of the "Revolution", are aware of short comings; they praised the health system; but also saw the miserable state of hospitals; they felt rightly that there had been considerable advances towards overcoming racial inequality, but also like the professor we interviewed, who had a picture of Fidel and one of Bolivar in his office, recognized that there were still considerable social inequalities in regard to race.

The account which I sent you reflects the positive impressions we had about the openness of our discussions with the students and faculty. It is also clear where they stood, when they applauded what I said about North Korea notwithstanding the friendly relations which Cuba still has with North Korea. But I also took notice of the fear which exists regarding dissident opinions, reflected very clearly in the comments the cab driver made to us who identified with the social reforms brought about by the "Revolution" but also stressed the fear Cubans have of differing with official policies. I had made it very clear in the discussions where I stood and tried to give a balanced picture of advances in the United States not only in civil rights but also civil liberties. I brought up the question of freedom of information in connection with the page from my FBI file which I circulated, both its extents and its limits, and the lack of it in Cuba.

Comparing the racial situation in the United States on the eve of the US Supreme Court decision of May 17, 1954 declaring the doctrine of separate but equal unconstitutional with both the great advances which have been made since then in the realm of civil rights and the continuing inequalities today with the schools almost as segregated as they were in 1954, I tried to give a balanced picture. I strongly feel that both the concerted efforts by voices in the United States to declare the achievements which have actually been made in health, education, housing, and crime prevention as total shams and the picture which the official Cuban media paint of American imperialism are gross distortions.

One thing of which I became increasingly aware after Dan and I left Cuba is how anachronistic the situation in Cuba is today. I already mentioned above that the Cold War which ended globally in 1989 is still very much alive between Cuba and the

United States. But Cuban socialism is anachronistic too. Cuba has been largely cut off since its Revolution of 1959 from the globalization which since the 1990s has affected most of the world. I briefly touched on this when in my talk to the students I compared my impressions of two Latin American metropolises, Santiago de Chile, which I had visited the month before, and Havana. At every step I was aware how global interests, from Walmart to McDonald's, had taken over Santiago de Chile and were totally absent in Havana. I saw some positive aspects in this regarding Havana which led one of the students to remark that she would sometime have the opportunity to eat at a McDonald's. But Castro essentially took over the form of state socialism as it had existed in the Soviet bloc and had failed. Except for minor revisions in recent years this anachronistic model is still alive in Cuba today. Reading the Cuban press, you have the feeling that you are reading the Pravda or the Neues Deutschland of long ago. Castro's socialism has not developed since 1959. It is badly outdated and in its present form doomed to fail. If socialism is to have any chance and not to succumb totally to global capitalism it has to move to greater openness and democracy on the political and economic level. Although I was encouraged by the openness of our discussions with Cubans, I am not very optimistic.

Best wishes, Georg