UNIVERSITÉ DE PARIS
FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES
LABORATOIRE DE GÉNÉTIQUE
13, RUE PIERRE CURIE, PARIS Ve
TÉL. ODÉON 16-40

February 3, 1948

Dear Joshua,

Thank you for your two notes. The first one did arrive, but only after a long stay with the postal authorities.

I was interested in your brief report on the APAS meetings and the people you saw there. I miss the "gossip" of this kind, naturally. On the whole, though, I think there is a great deal to be said for a little isolation, since one can work more independently, and with less pressure from outside to join the great rat-race for fame. I am too recently here to have much of an opinion, and speak still too little French to gather material, but feel that it is not the isolation which has harmed French science so much as it is certain vicious traditions. But more about that when I have better formed impressions.

You really should come work in Europe some time. It is most interesting to see another society – a highly complex society – and try to be part of it. I think you could become quite fascinated, especially since, as I remember, you are possessed of a vague feeling of political liberalism and not a rigid left (or right) indoctrination. I dare say Cohen will return to the U.S. very early in the

coming year, and report authoritively on the situation here. I am sure he has no reason to be disillusioned in his scientific colleagues. But being a run-of-the-mill leftist he can't look at culture here as a free man. You know, in France, many well known scientists are communists — but unfortunately, few of these great philosophers are really good scientists. I dare say this fact is disconcerting and disillusioning to an American who has looked forward to real understanding at last, after having been part of the class of untouchables in America — the Marxists. France is no place for American leftists now. No intelligent person can get embroiled with the extreme left unless he has redeemed reasons to do so — such as visualizing the triumph of the left as the sole salvation of France. Their propaganda is obviously full of falsehoods. An extreme leftist of the American brand can't enjoy the best of the things Paris has to offer because he is too busy walking a tight-rope with his political convictions. It would be the same thing with any kind of extremist — such as American congressmen. They can't be neutral enough to see what is really going on. So self enclosed.

A number of people at the Pasteur Institute have had a great deal of fun over Cohn-the American revolutionary. When the strike was making life most impossible in Paris, Cohn said "Cheer up! You are living through historic days!". The next day, he announced he was sending his wife home because life was too hard. They teased him a great deal over it — and justly. It's fine to be in favor of a communist revolution if you don't have to live in it or what it produces.

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The news from here is simple and brief. Monod is working hard doing "basic research" on his E. coli strains — really digging in to isolation of enzymes etc. Lwoff and his wife are due in America in March, where he gives the Sunken lecture, and the N.Y.U. medical school lecture (with some name I've forgotten.). The devaluation of the franc means I shall not be in Stockholm.

I am doing "basic research" on how to grow pneumococci — but as soon as they grow well, I shall drop it at once and get on with my transformation studies. I have a nice lab, and slowly my equipment arrives —

Enclosed is a note from one of my colleagues here who works with Boris on yeast genetics and physiology. Perhaps you will feel like answering with some details. He reads English —

My regards to Esther — and you, of course.

Harriett