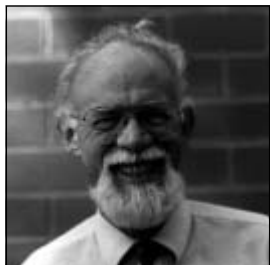


Eric Jones

Five-Star Hotel



Born in Andover, Hampshire, England, on 21st September, 1936. B.A. (Nott.), M.A., D.Phil., D.Litt. (Oxon.), F.A.S.S.A. Professor of Economics (Economic History), Northwestern University and La Trobe University, 1970–94, thereafter Professorial Associate, Melbourne Business School, University of Melbourne, and Professor of Economics (Part-time), University of Reading. Visiting appointments have included Yale, Princeton, Manchester, Munich. Worked mostly on long-term economic change – major publications, *Agriculture and the Industrial Revolution* (Blackwell, 1974), *The European Miracle* (Cambridge University Press, 1981, 1987), and *Growth Recurring* (Clarendon Press, 1988). Now teaching and writing widely about political economy. – Address: Melbourne Business School, 200 Leicester Street, Carlton 3053, Australia.

The temperature was minus 14 Celsius when I left the Villa Walther a few days ago. Here in Melbourne, on Christmas Day, it is 31 above and I feel I should record my observations on our autumn sojourn before my brains boil.

I came to the Wissenschaftskolleg for the pleasure and profit of working with Ekkehart Schlicht. We began work on a book about the interaction of economics and culture, aiming to dissolve the anomalies that arise when social phenomena are explained exclusively from one side or the other. In this context, working came to mean intense daily talks during which I strove to grasp the all-too-cogent objections that Ekkehart raised to anything I (and everyone else) had ever ventured on the subject. By the end of my stay we had an annotated plan, a sizeable collection of photocopied sources, and a few pages of draft. I shall have to complete the writing of my half of the book in Antipodean exile; at least I am rescued from struggling to explain to other Fellows why we are trying to account for regional differences in the shapes of builders' trowels.

My work on the project was interrupted by the need to follow the East Asian currency crisis attentively. I had planned to give my Colloquium on East Asian economies, since I had lectured on the topic in Copenhagen *en route* and was to do so again at the Max-Planck-Institut, Jena. The daily

disclosure of policy errors and corruption in Southeast and East Asia, however, obliged me to do far more extra work on the subject than I had intended. Like many Fellows, I also arrived trailing a number of miscellaneous academic jobs that took too high a proportion of my time and which might have seemed less of an interruption over ten months than over ten weeks.

The opportunity of using the facilities of Wiko's 'Virtual Library' to gather material on all sorts of topics was another irresistible diversion. The formidable and immensely helpful combination of the staffs of the Library and EDV taught me, to the restricted extent that I am technologically teachable, how to search a number of data bases. On top of this, the Library performed what are obviously its routine miracles by quickly assembling the unusual mixture of sources I asked for.

Beyond a Fellow's own project, Wiko requires one to talk. Here I certainly fulfilled my norms. Since my diary tells me I held interesting conversations with twenty-two other Fellows, it would be wrong to mention individuals, but I will note that discussions with the economic historians of the Ottoman empire and the biologists were outstanding. Nevertheless, I felt excluded from parts of Wiko's academic life such as Colloquia and discussions conducted in German without translation. I plead that the Institute reconfirm its international role by adopting for scholarly purposes the use of English, which is after all the only global language.

Berlin as a city went a long way towards teaching me that not everyone's priorities are those of an English-speaking liberal. Whereas, from Australia, European Protectionism had seemed an aberration, on the spot the mind-set was disturbing. Moreover, the city released like marsh-gas memories of my early childhood, part of which was spent in bomb-shelters in England with the *Luftwaffe* overhead. My Berlin experience this term culminated in the last Colloquium, which was Antonia Grunenberg's talk on Political Guilt. This proved more upsetting for some of those present than might have been anticipated, given that the war has been over for fifty-two years. In Berlin one cannot avoid reminders of the past (neither my wife nor I slept after visiting the Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz). One is assailed by signs of reviving German nationalism, including the immense construction sites around the Reichstag and the signs announcing the rebuilding of a monumental new capital. An Englishman of my generation cannot be expected to view this with equanimity. Thus, over and above the special way in which the autumn advanced my current interests, it insistently supplied a deeper understanding of Europe's past, present and maybe future.

A feature, maybe *the* feature, of Wiko life that I found appealing was the warmth of the welcome given to my wife. No other institution among

the several we have visited has put itself out for wives in the same way. This was evident right from the start. The boat trip around inner Berlin with which the 1997–98 year opened gave the whole Wiko community a marvellous chance to get acquainted. Sylvia had not brought an academic project with her, claiming with blatant effrontery that looking after me and acting as my research assistant was work enough. But she began to learn German under the incomparably patient Eva Hund and was otherwise given the complete freedom of the Haus and its facilities.

Having mentioned this, it is appropriate – and no convention on my part – to dwell on the help and kindness received from Wiko’s staff in general: from Frau Bottomley and the librarians, from Dr. Lindenberg and the EDV staff, from Frau Klöhn and the staff of the dining hall, from Barbara Rexilius who translated for me so winningly, and from the supreme co-ordinator of the whole establishment, Barbara Sanders. As a former Australian Fellow commented when I was first checking on the Wissenschaftskolleg’s invitation, ‘it’s like a five-star hotel, take it – but it’s hard to come down to earth in Australia afterwards.’ He was right on both counts.