



ARBEIT MACHT SPASS  
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Wiko ends today, July 31, 2009. Last minute, *ganz verlegen*: why am I having so much trouble writing an *Arbeitsbericht*? Browsing through the images posted to the T: drive by Fellows and Partners, above all the photos of the *Abschiedsfest*, I recognize the problem: in my memory of the year, *Arbeit* does not loom very large, and not because I didn't do any.

I did plenty, but it was off the radar screen of emotion (and thus of memory) that was dominated by a familial *Sturm und Drang* resulting largely from my daughter's autistic condition. My household was in a state of constant turmoil, leading me to cancel five planned lectures that would have required me to travel and only once to dare a trip to a manuscript collection (undertaken *en famille* in any case). But almost every day, for at least a little while, it was possible to get lost in *Arbeit*. During the year here I edited two journals, made excellent progress on my monograph, organized and secured a fabulous book contract (my first-ever advance!) for an essay collection that will be aggressively marketed for classroom use, submitted a long-promised book chapter, and wrote book reviews, tenure recommendations, book and article manuscript evaluations, and various and sundry other smaller things. The Wiko (the Fellow Services, the famous library, and my God! what an IT department – there is no praise high enough!) functions so smoothly that my attention was never actually drawn to my work; instead, it just happened, it simply flowed. There was never *Ärger in Arbeit-land*. Indeed, the photos of the *Abschiedsfest* say it all: Fellows, Partners, the Villa Walther kids, everyone working very hard yet looking very happy. At Wiko/im Wiko/au Wiko, *Arbeit macht Spaß*.

So all of that perhaps helps explain why it's not the pleasant daily grind of *Arbeit* that leaps to mind now that I must reflect on my experience of being a small part of the most wonderful academic community on the face of the earth (with some claims to being the most wonderful community *schlechthin*). Everybody was not only "scarily smart" (as Anemarie Surlykke noted in her Tuesday colloquium) but unfailingly nice. It's certainly the first time in my life I ever felt like an intellectual lightweight (not to mention a bit of a grouse). Everyone around me seemed to be taking refreshing daily dips into the works of Kant and Heidegger, while I was reading *Feuchtgebiete*, *Fucking Berlin*, and Gayle Tufts's *Miss Amerika*. Any dim similarity of style between the scattered memories in this (non *Arbeit*-related) report from *Miss Verständnis* and those three entertaining "memoirs" is both intentional and (alas) hard won.

The single most important day for me at Wiko/im Wiko/au Wiko was:

28/04/09	Tuesday Colloquium
Tuesday	Juri Andruchowytsch
11.00 AM	What Language are You from: A Writer between Temptations of Temporality (a Ukrainian Case)

The entry is misleading, for Juri/Yuri/Jurij/Юрій actually spoke in German, *was mich sehr gefreut hat – es war so eine Seltenheit!* Only now, BTW, do I notice that the day was personally significant independent of Wiko, for April 28 was my father's birthday (in 1917). He was born in America, but his parents had just emigrated from Łomża, Poland, near the border with Belarus. What language was *he* from? Yiddish actually, as was my mother, herself an emigrant (in 1927) from Sedlice, near Warsaw. In both cases, most family members remained in Poland; I believe they all ended up in Treblinka, but I never really researched the matter. My (non-Jewish) husband's family also has roots in "the Slavic World", though in his case even more k.u.k., so I had very much a personal interest in Juri's subject. Juri was also my next-door neighbor all year in the Villa Walther, but we'd never really talked. Then came the *Vortrag*, and in that moment I realized the extent to which I was surrounded by incredibly important and fascinating people. It was sadly late in the year for something so fundamental to dawn on me, but better late than never. Upstairs I ran, *sofort nach dem Kolloquium, zur Fellow-Bibliothek und holte seine Bücher aus dem Regal. Ich fing an, laut durch die Sammlung 08-09 zu lesen.*

It was the right decision. I laughed out loud at Michel Chaouli's delightful and insightful takes on the German language. I finally got the low-down on an erstwhile hero of mine (Karl Lamprecht) from Roger Chickering's biography. I marveled at the clarity of prose displayed by the jurists, Böhler and Eidenmüller. I was mortified by my own bafflement when confronted by the written works of those very far removed from me in discipline (such as Holk Cruse). The high point, however, came in Pomorie, Bulgaria where I read Sheila Fitzpatrick's *Everyday Stalinism*. Her analysis of strategies for dealing with the shortages that were chronic under Stalinism enriched my stay at the Black Sea resort where I never managed to land a pool lounge chair (people got up at 5 a.m. to "reserve" them – against the posted regulations). I also suffered the indignity of the theft of my 50-leva hotel-issue pool towel, but at least I now understood the historical and cultural roots of my predicament! But I started too late and only made it through "I". When I return Ruedi Imbach's books tomorrow, that will be it. If I could live the year again, I would start sooner. *Arbeit macht Spaß.*

Once upon a time, though, it was different, when the saying was "*Arbeit macht frei*". And somehow there was no escaping the Nazi past here in Berlin this year. It was stronger and more present than during any of my previous stints living in Germany (in Leipzig, Freiburg, twice in Frankfurt, and once before in Berlin itself), even stronger than in my office at the Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, where the Historisches Seminar is now

housed in the former *IG Farben-Gelände*. Eisenhower et al. had thoroughly exorcized that place of its Nazi demons, and if any were still lurking in the Paternoster they surely fled before the riotously joyful students of that happy German WM summer of 2006. It was stronger here in Grunewald than down in Dahlem, the other “heart” of the US occupation, where I lived in 1995. The thing is, Nazis took center stage here at Wiko, at least in the German course I took. I joined *Gruppe C*, composed entirely of people who had lived in Germany before and could speak the language well. Our curriculum tended towards a certain monotony: discussions of Uwe Timm’s *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*, of Hannah Arendt’s televised musings on returning to Germany after writing *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, of Ingeborg Bachmann’s fictional meditations on postwar memories and personalities, of Bertolt Brecht’s *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches* and of George Tabori’s *Mein Kampf* (the latter two complemented by visits to the Berliner Ensemble to witness live performances). The list could go on ...

And we lived, did we not, in the former Reichsfinanzschule, where committed young men (and women?) learned the precise, strict rules and regulations for handling finances associated with expropriated Jewish property. We had some of that in our family, curiously enough: a building in Berlin-Weißensee, which somehow passed from a Jewish woman who had married into the family of my husband’s grandfather (she survived the war hiding in Linz) to my mother-in-law. She sold it, sight unseen, as soon as she could, but finally did see it when she visited us this year. Somewhat ironically, my husband and I fell in love with the neighborhood, and were especially charmed by a new condo development near the enormous Jewish cemetery (largest in Europe!) out there. We might even buy in.

It helps that Weißensee is in the East, in the former GDR. That’s what I had really wanted to learn about this year. As a European historian who also grew up with the Holocaust, I’m frankly (and finally) just bored by the Nazis. But the communist East bloc, that’s something new and exciting for me (which explains my particular interest in the work of Juri Andruchowytch and Sheila Fitzpatrick). At the end of a year in Berlin, I believe I’ve begun to get a handle on the old East. Marzahn. Treptower Park. Multiple trips to the O2 Arena for concerts, basketball, above all for yet another championship season for the Eisbären (“Dynamo!” “Dynamo!” “Dynamo!”). Walking various stretches of The Wall, several different times, and visiting the relevant museums. Watching every old GDR show that came on the TV, and every show about the GDR. Going to a yoga studio in the Rosenhöfe at the Hackescher Markt. And again and again: the stunning

vistas of the bike ride down Straße des 17. Juni: Brandenburger Tor, Rathaus, Fernsehturm in ever-shifting perspectives, each one dominating at different moments on the trip as they did at different moments in time. Quite a bit of travel (everything from day trips to week-long stays in a FeWo) in these here parts, not only places like Brandenburg (Stadt), the Spreewald, Warnemünde, and Güstrow, but also places like Stettin and Franzensbad, where I acquired some (highly politically incorrect) *großdeutsche* sympathies. For Father's Day my daughter (Quinn) got her dad an inflatable *Fernsehturm*.

All Quinn's favorite parts of Berlin also took us into or right up against the old East: the Hauptbahnhof, LOXX am Alex, Legoland at Potsdamer Platz, the Chinese Restaurant (Ming Dynasty) across the street from the Chinese Embassy at Jannowitzbrücke, and all the Christmas markets over in that part of town. Quinn was adopted from China when she was eleven months old. Her English name alludes to her Chinese one, transliterated as "Qian Guo" (thousand flowers). We have lived mostly in Miami Beach, where everyone speaks Spanish, where her pre-school was entirely Spanish-speaking. She's also been to Kindergarten during two summers in Vienna and Frankfurt, also full immersion in German. What language is she from? It's still not clear, and she has a lot of linguistic challenges, certainly compounded by her autism. She attended the Nelson Mandela Schule, a public bilingual (German-English) school. According to the website, they offered Chinese as an after-school option. Quinn was excited and all ready to learn it. For the first week she was here, she carried all her Chinese flash cards in her backpack wherever she went. She was going to love this school, which promised to be filled with highly mobile kids from all over the world who needed English-language instruction. We pictured a class full of South Asian Indians. But we were wrong. All the kids were basically German, they spoke German among themselves, and to add to the shock, math and science instruction were also in German! She freaked. Immediately. The teachers freaked. The headmaster really freaked. He wanted her out of the school. The year began with a massive crisis from which we never really recovered. It looked like we needed to try to go back home.

The Wiko saved us. We'll never know how many strings were pulled behind the scenes, but within days Quinn was assigned a special *Schulhelferin*, paid for in part by the Wiko, and she was able to stay in school (albeit only for half the day). Reverberations from that *Ausgrenzung* caused no end of problems, though by some miracle my overburdened husband finished his own book anyway! There were nightmare low points, far too difficult to describe. If any Villa Walther parents read this, they'll know anyway, they were there. Many times the complexities of the social dynamics were far too much for this

particular (“high functioning”) autistic girl, and consequently for me. Most of the kids were great with her most of the time, but it got to be too much for them sometimes too. But everyone got through it ... Quinn was not permitted, as it turned out, to take the Friday afternoon Chinese classes (which would have been taught in German anyway), but she went through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade exactly as she was supposed to, loving all her teachers, and (beginning in March or so) making the morning commute all by herself (7:22 M19 bus to Halensee, Ringbahn, and U-3). What a thing to have under her belt! And she learned an awful lot of German from the TV, primarily from American shows dubbed into German. It will be a difficult adjustment to watch the original versions back in America, because the voices will just sound wrong. Our favorite show as a family was “Gorilla, Panda & Co.” on RBB, about the keepers and the animals in the Zoo and the Tierpark (both of which we visited regularly).

In closing this report, I can do no better than offer the text of the adaptation of “Cabaret” that I sang as part of the entertainment portion of the *Abschiedsfest*. It’s a souvenir for anyone who didn’t catch, and would now like to know, the words, but it also conveys much of my feelings about the Wiko. In the end, it really did seem like a very short stay.

What good is sitting alone in your room?  
Come hear some Tuesday talks!  
Wiko’s a paradise my friend,  
Come do some Grunewald walks!

And if you’re hungry, pangasius filet  
Awaits in the restaurant!  
Wiko’s a paradise my friend,  
Gigondas is what I want.

Come taste the wine,  
Come hear Vorträge,  
Take a Spreefahrt  
Start celebrating  
Right this way  
Your Wohnung’s waiting.

We're all regretting  
October to now,  
It isn't that long a stay!  
Wiko's a paradise my friend,  
And that's why we want to stay.

We used to have a Rektor named Wapnewski.  
A formal guy the place was kind of stuffy.  
He wasn't what you'd call a blushing flower.  
He put the Wiko on the road to power.

Once he was gone the place got ziemlich locker  
We've now got yoga, ping-pong, kids, and soccer.  
And when I see us, froh und fancy free,  
I know that this is the place I want to be.

I'll think of Wiko till my dying day.  
I'll remember what we did here  
And I'll say ...  
What good is sitting all alone in your room?  
Come hear the music play!  
Wiko's a paradise my friend,  
But we say goodbye today!

And as for me, I've got to say  
I made my mind up, gonna find some way ...  
I may go ...  
But I'm coming back some day.

We're all regretting, from August to now,  
It isn't that long a stay!  
Wiko's a paradise my friend.  
Durchaus ein Paradies, mein Freund  
Deswegen, we want to stay!