



SNAPSHOTS OF WIKO
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Abfahrt/Ankunft

The moment I entered my flat in Villa Jaffé, I knew it would be hard to leave it. This turned out to be true. Besides the beautiful spots, the lovely garden and the stylish sitting rooms, what makes living at Wiko a unique experience is the communal rituals: the Tuesday colloquium, the Thursday dinner and the chance just to sit and read an amazing collection of newspapers in the sitting room.

Deutsch lernen: “Diese Klasse ist ein Bahnhof!”

Learning German is a painful spot for many of us, as time was never enough to focus on it. Eva and Ursula, however, were amazing teachers, always encouraging and sympathetic and most importantly PATIENT. When I apologized for the 100th delay, Eva reassured me answering: “Diese Klasse ist ein Bahnhof!” My class will long be remembered also for establishing the habit of the coffee break, which was often enriched by cakes and chocolate brought by all of us and Daniel “French’s” espresso. At the very beginning, the German class helped me to get to know the other Fellows, and during the year it became a constant source of fun and laughs with Tatiana, Srini, Victoria – who became one of the people closest to me at Wiko – and all the others.

Dealing With Daily Problems

One of the most amazing aspects of Wiko is the presence of a staff that is willing to help in all small daily problems. Vera Pfeffer and the other ladies from the reception helped me find the *Änderungsschneiderei* (needless to say, I did not know the term back then), a *Zahnarzt* and even sport facilities.

Special thanks go to Frau Lehmann, who very patiently took care of my messy flat and whom I miss a lot.

Lunches and Dinners: Chatting and Eating, Eating and More Eating ...

Dunia and the kitchen staff were always nice and helpful, guessing my wishes even before I had the chance to express them.

Thursday evenings were an enjoyable event I was always looking forward to, especially summer barbecues in the garden. They also provided a comfortable environment to start conversations with other Fellows and the staff, not only centred on work.

One of the things that I appreciated the most at Wiko was the opportunity to have informal conversation on politics and history with great scholars and bright intellectuals.

Thorsten Wilhelmy deserves a special mention not only for his work as Secretary of the Wiko, but also for what he taught me about German politics and history.

... and Working.

I realized how productive I had been at Wiko when I wrote my EURIAS report in late June. I was able to work on a different topic, thanks mainly to the great library service.

The preparation of my colloquium was very challenging at first and then turned into a very important moment of reflection on my work and its wider meaning. This, thanks to Hassan Jabareen, Rina Rosenberg – with whom I held a “rehearsal” – and especially Jane Burbank, who very kindly agreed to introduce me and did it in a very nice way.

In fact, the conversations with Jane were one of the most fruitful aspects of my work at Wiko. I had already read and loved her book *Russian Peasants Go to Court*, which had been a source of inspiration for my work on Palestinian peasants. In spite of the career-level difference between us, she was always available to discuss my research and she gave me very fruitful advice and insights.

Wiko also gave me the chance to talk about my work with other historians and to establish fruitful collaboration with some of them, such as Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, Finbarr Barry Flood and Leor Halevi. Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu – who has also become a good friend – is the one with whom I interacted the most, and at the very beginning we decided to organize a workshop together. This was made possible thanks to Daniel Schönflug, who is a great scholar and was also very encouraging and helpful in finding funds and practical solutions for the organization of the workshop. I can never thank him enough also for the very interesting conversation on history that we had.

Finally, being at Wiko allowed me to discuss my work with specialists in other fields, such as Tim Caro, who gave me a lot of insights and helped me to look at my research from a new perspective.

The Survivors

After the end of our year at Wiko, some of us stayed a week or even longer in Berlin. I moved to a flat in the city, but those who were still in the Villa Walther organized a couple more “Wiko survivors’ dinners”. It was lovely to see them again, as much as it was strange not to go back to my flat in Villa Jaffé and to see that at Wiko everything was being prepared to welcome the new Fellows.

Last Thursday Dinner

To conclude, I want to quote what one of the most amazing people I met at Wiko – Hassan Jabareen – told me at the last Thursday dinner. On that occasion there were already only a few of us left and he said: What I will miss is not the individuals, because I am sure I will see again most of them, but the “group”, as we will probably never have the chance to be together again.