



SEPTEMBER 1, 2019: WE WERE UNAWARE  
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*UK-educated* at Repton School, Cambridge (Natural Sciences) and Oxford (Medical School), followed internationally at Harvard, neurology training in the US/Canada, and postdoctoral fellowship (Laboratory of Cerebral Metabolism, Cornell-Weil Medical Center, NYC). *Experimentally*, showed that dropping brain temperature protects brain cells in CA-1 hippocampus and that this was translatable, following resuscitation after cardiac arrest. Showed that post-ischemic slow death in the CA-1 hippocampus as described by Ramón y Cajal has features of apoptosis or programmed cell death. Discovered that the protein hamartin, the Tsc-1 gene product, is upregulated in cells surviving stroke, that this suppresses mTOR and, like rapamycin, prevents this slow cell death, and that this is the mechanism of endogenous neuroprotection. *Clinically*, showed the time course for focal stroke, which led to the intervention with thrombolysis and early reperfusion following thrombectomy, and invented a widely used clinical scoring system called the Alberta Stroke Programme Early CT Score (ASPECTS). Now developing small molecules that could be used to provide neuroprotection in combination with neurovascular therapy. *Statutory Professor* at Oxford and Fellow of Corpus Christi, since 2004, he has been the Dean of Medicine (until 2017), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Brexit Strategy), and for the last three years the Founding Director of “Oxford in Berlin.” – Address: Center for Stroke, Level 7, John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford, OX3 9DU, United Kingdom.  
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September 1, 2019, a gorgeous day in Berlin, was both the last day of swimming in the Halensee and the first day of the new academic year at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin.

Walking along Koenigsallee from the lake entrance near the Kurfürstendamm to Wallotstr. 19, I could not anticipate that the reflections I was to have at the end of my fellowship year would be so redolent of W. H. Auden's "September 1, 1939." To paraphrase the famous poem, "we were unaware."

As a result of what struck some 80 years later, a wholly unexpected pandemic, we can also repeat this thought as if it were speaking to our circumstances: We were to become "uncertain and afraid as the clever hopes expire of a low, dishonest decade." For us, too, now, "waves of anger and fear circulate." What happened during our precious 2019–2020 year at Wiko has arguably some analogies to that Fall, beginning September 1, 1939.

We, too, had no premonition of the challenges that emerged in January, unfolded in February, threatened the remainder of our academic year with the lockdown in March, and now threaten us for years to come. COVID, like a war, changed our world and undermined the ease of our international academic collaboration. It has challenged our drive for new knowledge and for truth (our expectation that "accurate scholarship can unearth the whole offence"), and has put our insistence on excellence at risk. That evening "it was sunset, and the sun of the old world was setting in a dying blaze of splendor perhaps never to be seen again."<sup>1</sup>

So how to protect our universities, how to protect Wiko and prevent, as in September 1939 and, indeed, August 1914, the sun setting once again on international scholarship?

It was so delightful in the glorious opening days of September to have the privilege of joining the new cohort of Fellows from all disciplines and all corners of the earth for 2019–2020. To embrace our good fortune at being part of this year's cohort, allowing us to travel from all parts of the world without difficulty, without quarantine, without testing, without stigma, and without the fear of transmission of disease that was to become the hallmark of a new reality in the early days of 2020.

I came to Wiko on the back of the need to see Oxford maintain a 900-year integration with Europe in the face of the populist vote of the UK in the referendum on Europe in June of 2016, which ultimately led, on the 31st of January 2020, to the Brexit legislation confirming 'article 50' and the UK's departure from the EU. In January, I was honoured to give an *Abendkolloquium* and I talked about the need to maintain the international links, ones well-established in European scholarship dating back to monks, the monasteries, and the ways in which travel connections were made from France to Germany to Italy

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1 Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August*.

to Spain, such as the Chemin du Saint Jacques, creating a pan-European network of universities dating back more than a millennium. I worried about how Brexit could threaten academic freedom, whilst having premonitions about the Corona virus emerging from Wuhan. As in the aftermath of World War I, national walls have gone up with Brexit. The integration of our global world is at risk of disintegrating, and we are faced, for the first time in 100 years, with a global pandemic – COVID. In the Colloquium, I concluded that there are four fundamental freedoms critical for academia: the freedom of speech; the freedom of inquiry; the freedom of collaboration; and the freedom of movement, essential in our pursuit of truth and excellence. This last freedom dates back to Bologna, to 1088, as it allowed students, scholars, and ideas to pass without hindrance and without restrictions by national borders.

I reiterated then that *Wiko is founded on the need that scholarship and ideas can travel and be international*. As Chekhov aptly put it “there is no national science just as there are no national multiplication tables. What is national is no longer science.” Brexit puts at risk access to talent, to knowledge, to collections, and to the sharing of resources. Ultimately, it will lessen not just the UK, but because of the hitherto strong contribution of UK universities, will also weaken scholarship in Europe at a time when Europe needs to compete with the Americas, India, and China.

I suggested that while the UK has always been a very popular destination for scholars, for students, and for research funding, this will sadly change on the 31st of December 2020 when the transition period ends and the UK no longer has access to Erasmus programmes, Marie Curie Fellowships, or ERC funding. The loss of access to shared data, as well as the loss of integration with regulations and agencies such as the European Space Agency, the European Medicines Agency, Eur-Atom, Copernicus, and Galileo, as well as with the ERC – all critical platforms for European science – will be weakened when the UK reinvents its own national infrastructure. Even more critically, Brexit puts UK data at risk, as it will no longer be covered and protected by GPDR. With a presidential election looming, we should all fear the loss of control for the evidence of efficacy and our access in the UK/EU to vaccines developed in the UK without European data (GDPR) and IP protection. This is but one example of the untoward risk of Brexit and the loss of EU protection for the UK.

I expressed my earnest hope that establishing an “Oxford in Berlin” Centre, (a cousin to Wiko?), in partnership with the Berlin University Alliance, will mean that Oxford will continue to be in Europe and will have future access to European collaborations and

research funding. The need for Oxford and indeed for Wiko is to understand how to maintain a future international dialogue and the essential freedom of movement and to consider how European institutions work internationally. While there have always been memoranda of understanding and collaborations to seek funding, I think it is incumbent on us to go beyond that in efforts to create serious opportunities for permanent and temporary relocation and ongoing, long-term joint appointments. Over the years, various models have seen the distribution of international access through schemes such as the Rhodes Trust bringing excellent students to Oxford, Fulbright Scholarships, the Marie Curie scheme, the Erasmus scheme. These now need to be reinvented in such a way that we form partnerships between institutions across national borders and share studentships, fellowships, and, critically, long-term professorships, creating hot spots that are in more than one location where ideas, resources, and positions are shared and establish the kind of interaction that is based on trust.

While “we and the public know” that in the UK we were dealing with Brexit, what we hadn’t foreseen was the impact of the pandemic and the global shutdown with lockdowns and the resulting loss of activity, loss of integration, and loss of travel, which of course makes Wiko all the more important for creating an environment where people can be for a year in a special place that personifies trust. I hope that a vaccine that we can trust will be forthcoming in 2020–2021, and I hope that we will then get back to normal, but I do think we need to rethink how we, *zusammen*, can protect our future internationalization against adversity, be it man-made or wholly unexpected, like COVID-19. We owe this to the generations that follow us to Wiko.