DER RISS IN DER ZEIT
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The world did not stop while we were in Grunewald. That much was clear from the beginning. And yet, this was a beautiful year. The Wissenschaftskolleg provided tranquility, peace, and something even rarer: a friendly and humane community. For a few precious months, it was possible to pause the relentless race of regular life and to return to a slower,

deeper way of thinking. But even in our seclusion—surrounded by lakes and trees, deer, foxes, wild boars, and (more dangerously) excellent scholars—it was not easy to remain entirely calm. The world continued to intrude, and at times its weight was almost unbearable: the ongoing slaughter in Gaza, the war in Ukraine, the gathering clouds of authoritarianism across Europe, and the astonishing return of Trumpism in the United States. What, in this atmosphere, could be the meaning of words like "international order" or "universal values"? They felt increasingly hollow—ghosts of former certainties.

It was in this tense and fragile moment that I started to work on a century-old Ukrainian journal named *Vsesvit*—which, fittingly, means "universe." Founded in 1925, it celebrated its 100th anniversary during my Wiko year, and it proved to be an unexpected lens through which to examine the dilemmas of our time. Each phase of the history of *Vsesvit* offers a different model of engaging with the world, a different imagination of what "universalism" might be. Researching its early decades—between 1925 and 1934—was not simply a historical exercise; it became a kind of dialogue with the present, perhaps even a reckoning. As if the past, in its unresolved dreams and recurring disasters, was insisting on entering the present. Wiko, in its quiet way, became a perfect space to explore this temporal multiplicity.

There were, in fact, several temporalities shaping my year: the deep past of early 20th-century Ukraine, marked by revolutions, wars, and utopian hopes; the fractured and uncertain temporality of the Ukrainian present, in which I situate my research, and which I also view as a Ukrainian who has lived abroad since 2007, witnessing its recent history from a distance with a mixture of pain, doubt, and admiration. And then there was the slowed-down rhythm of Wiko itself, where the flow of time is structured not by deadlines but by conversation, by the rhythm of shared lunches, walks, and parties, by the generous exchanges that often happened unscheduled and unplanned.

The geography of the place reinforced this layered sense of time. Grunewald is a kind of paradox: part of Berlin, yet apart from Berlin; seemingly pristine yet saturated with traces of violence. Walking around Halensee or Grunewaldsee, one gets a sense of time folding. The trees, the villas, the stillness recall a vanished world of late 19th-century aristocracy and of bourgeois retreat, a space construed to enable an escape from the pressures of modernity. But the cracks in this illusion appear quickly. A modernist house surrounded by older splendid buildings suggests a villa that did not survive the war. The story of Walter Rathenau's assassination, which we learned about during the first walking tour organized for the German course Fellows, continues to echo. The very buildings of

Wiko—Villa Jaffé, the Hauptgebäude, and our beloved Villa Walther—carry their own haunted pasts: of exile and dispossession, of wealth and ruin, of demolition and awkward renovation.

Villa Walther, in particular, seemed to crystallize the crooked temporalities of the 20th century. Its decor, its scars, its layers of eccentric ambition and damaged grandeur became a daily reminder that the past is never past. Wiko tries—valiantly and orderly—to exorcise these ghosts, to turn the buildings into a calm shelter for thought. But the past insists. Even Wiko's institutional emblem on my office computer desktop—an angel calmly and confidently leaning forward—began to take on Benjaminian features, less a reassuring guardian and more a horrified witness to history's wreckage.

It's hard to say what shaped my thoughts more this year: the walks around Grunewald or the long hours immersed in the world of interwar Ukrainian journals. Probably both. My research on *Vsesvit* became a study not only of past dreams but also of cracks in the present. The early issues of the journal, written in Ukrainian and yet committed to world revolution, imagined a future beyond nationalist limits and postwar suffering—a dream of global solidarity that now feels both heartbreakingly naïve and strangely resonant. The effort to recover and rebuild after World War I, the rise of fascism, the way Berlin itself was once a symbol of the coming future in the early days of Soviet Ukraine: these were topics in *Vsesvit* that returned, unsettlingly, in today's headlines.

Over lunch, another Fellow recommended a biography of Reinhart Koselleck. The title—*Der Riss in der Zeit*—stayed with me. It captured not only Koselleck's idea of ruptures in historical experience, but also my own experience of this year. Between the past and the present, between Ukraine and Berlin, between Wiko and the world, there was a visible and sometimes painful rift. But it was in this crack that reflection became possible.

My research was shaped and deepened not only by solitude but also by conversation. Daniel Schönpflug's encouragement to write about *Vsesvit* and its universalism for Wiko's *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* helped me expand the project's scope and ambition. So did many discussions—around tables, during coffee breaks, after Colloquia. The presence of the VUIAS (Virtual Ukraine Institute for Advanced Study) scholars at Wiko made a decisive difference. Their projects, the talks and film screenings we co-organized, the warmth of a shared intellectual community—all helped me reconnect with Ukraine's present, not only as an object of study, but as a living, complex, and painful reality. I was especially moved by initiatives such as the Invisible University for Ukraine and the sense of the shared purpose they embody. But the overlaps of temporality were also instructive:

not all positions match, and they don't need to. It is in these overlaps, not in neat synchronization, that productive insights arise.

The conferences I attended during the year, and the talks I gave in Berlin and elsewhere, were essential in framing the larger argument of the project. But it was Wiko's unique rhythm—the deliberate interruption of the usual academic frenzy—that gave space for deeper connections. Time at Wiko is not only slowed down; it is choreographed toward human encounters. The Colloquium may be the official centerpiece of the week, but it is the common lunch that organizes the actual tempo of life. In my case, this tempo was also shaped by my family: my partner Ivana, our nine-year-old son Anton, and our baby Pavel, who took his first steps at Wiko and whose needs and routine became ours. This added a new layer to the rhythm of days—another temporal thread, grounding and joyful.

And so, this year has left me with a lesson: that even in fractured time, in moments of historical rupture, solidarity is possible. Wiko did not offer a solution to the world's crises, but it offered a space in which scholars could listen to one another across disciplines, across geographies, and across different kinds of time. This, perhaps, is the quiet gift of Wiko: to turn a crack in time into a space for thought—and, occasionally, for hope.