

Reham Halaseh

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Words of thanks

First of all I would like to extend my deepest and warmest gratitude and thanks to Frau Op de Hipt for all her help, support and assistance, and mostly for being there for us. She had dedicated her time to help us in a way I found so touching. She would call almost every day to ask how our day was, and if we had any problems. I was always astonished because when ever I had a test, she would call and ask how it was, and I was pleased that she cared. Also, I would like to thank Frau Ingrid Lategahn, who is a German TV professional sent by CIM to train TV personnel nel at the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC), Frau Lategahn was the one who told us about the Heinz - Kühn - Stiftung and encouraged us to apply for a scholarship. She always called to make sure we were fine and happy in Germany. Also, I would like to thank the teachers and the personnel at the Goethe Institute, particularly: Frau Barbara Frankenberg, Frau Marles Happe and Herr Andreas Deutschman. During my first days at Goethe Institute, I was a little bit depressed because I found the German language really difficult. I had learned German at school, but I almost forgot everything because I never used the language. Frau Barbara had always encouraged me, and she had always said: 'I know that the German language is in your brain, you had learned German for a long time and it is all there somewhere, it will come back, just give it time'. Also, I would like to thank all the people who assisted us in the Heinz - Kühn - Stiftung, Goethe Institute - Iserlohn and in WRD and made our stay in Germany useful and interesting.

My first time

It was the first time for me. The first time in everything, well - not everything. It was the first time I travelled abroad, the first time I travelled by plane, the first time I visited Europe and consequently, the first time I visited

Germany. Travelling was a bit of a problem to me. In 1992 I was forbidden by an Israeli military court order from leaving the country as a means of punishment for what they called 'being active and taking part in demonstrations against the Israelis'. In 1995 my lawyer won a court sentence abolishing the first, and I was able once again to travel. I received after that several invitations to visit media institutions in European countries. At that time Palestinians used to travel using either Jordanian Passports (only to cross the Jordan River and then to travel from Amman Airport) or Israeli Travel documents, not really a proper passport. Of course at the time you will need a lot of other papers with a lot of signatures from all places to 'prove' that you are not a terrorist, and one of those papers was a document that will allow you to travel to Tel Aviv (a permit).

At one time I had an invitation to visit Germany. I was glad that I could travel and go abroad. I had all my documents and necessary papers ready, and I was sure that the next day I would be in Germany. But it was only a dream, for at the Ben Gorion Airport in Tel Aviv, a 'security' check up was conducted - usually such check ups last from 2 to 3 or even more hours, depending on your nationality, where you are going to, what your profession is, and a lot of other questions, or in other words reasons to prevent you from going abroad. One of the security personnel came and wanted to check my passport and my documents. Of course three or even four weeks before I was supposed to travel, I had to run from one place to the other in order to get all the necessary papers and documents. Then the Israeli security personnel at the airport took my travel document and the other papers. He came back after half an hour. The plane had already gone, so I had to postpone my flight to the next day. The next day I was at the airport with all my papers once again. When the same security personnel made the check up he told me that one very important paper was missing. I inquired what it was and he said the permit to come to Tel Aviv, 'But I have it and it is pinned to the inside of the Travel document', He opened the travel document and there was nothing inside. The place where it was pinned was visible, but it was not there. Then I was really angry and I demanded to speak with someone in charge. When he came, I told him that they themselves have taken the paper out when I was here yesterday, because when I was delayed at the check up yesterday and could not travel, I went home and everything in my bags and of course my documents were kept as they are and were not to be touched or removed. But, whom would they believe: me or their security personnel. And so my travelling days were over, and I said to myself that travelling was not meant for me, and that I would never travel or even try to travel once again.

Then, one day I heard about the Heinz-Kühn-Stiftung in Düsseldorf, and the scholarships it offers. I was tempted to apply, because from the experience of my colleagues at work, who have attended training courses in various countries, language was a big problem and it prevented the trainees from benefiting 100 % from the course. And so, when I heard that the scholarship consisted of two German Language courses and then the practical training, I found it most convenient. It was an opportunity to learn German and live in

Germany with Germans for 6 months. And in order not to have any problems at the Airport with the Israeli Security, my husband and I decided to go to Jordan and to travel to Germany from Amman Airport.

Finally in Germany

My first day in Germany was a day full of distress. We had to wake up at 3 in the morning to go to Amman Airport. Our plane was due to fly very early in the morning. Our flight from Amman to Paris was supposed to last 5 hours, but due to some reasons there was a delay and so it was a 6 hour flight. I did not like the food offered on board the plane so I stayed hungry the whole time. Then due to the one hour delay in arriving to Paris, we had to run quickly and find out from where our plane to Düsseldorf was supposed to take off. The difference in time between the two flights was one hour, and since we were delayed one hour, then there was no time for us to have a rest, or even buy anything to eat or drink in that short rest period. When we finally were ready to get on board the plane to Düsseldorf we were told there was another delay, and so we had to sit and wait.

When we finally reached Düsseldorf, we tried to look for our luggage, but without success. Obviously it had not left Paris. I was depressed, tired and hungry, and then no luggage. The whole time we were in the plane I was thinking of the time when we'd reach the place we're going to stay in, then I would have a hot bath, wear something comfortable, and we would eat something good and delicious. We had to run from one place to the other in order to inquire about our luggage, then we gave details about the whole thing to the office in charge of missing or delayed luggage. Then we were welcomed by Ruth from the Heinz-Kühn-Stiftung, she was really very nice, and had been waiting for us to arrive, and I felt that things might start to get better. She went with us and spoke with the people in the office of missing luggage and gave them the address of the hotel we were going to stay in that night.

With Ruth there was a tall, American styled, young man. Until that moment I had not noticed him. When we were about to get in the car to go to the hotel, he came forward and introduced himself: 'I am Ivan, from Croatia', and we shook hands. The way he came and introduced himself, with that big smile, like comforting us, knowing how distressed we were that our luggage was missing, I knew that we would be very close and good friends, and so it was.

Goethe Institute: learning and getting to know Germany

We arrived to Iserlohn on a Monday. It was a cloudy day, and as usual there was some rain. I could recall that day as if it happened yesterday. Everybody at Goethe Institute was so friendly and smiling. Goethe Institute personnel welcomed us, helped us with our bags and they explained a little bit about the place and then gave us a list of things we were supposed to do on that

day. Not only the Goethe Institute personnel were helpful, but also the teachers and the other students, who were already there since two or three months. Most of them came, introduced themselves, and asked if we needed any help. On that day we met three students from Yeman, and it felt good to know that some Arabs are here also. Next day with the beginning of our first lessons, our life in Germany began.

In Iserlohn everything was different. It always rained and there was almost never a bit of sunshine. It was really rare to have any sun shine there. And as my Mittelstufe 2 teacher Herr Andreas Deutschman once said 'When the sun comes out in Iserlohn, all the people run out into the streets to take photos of it'. And one time one of the students said that he saw a small documentray film about Iserlohn, and it was always sunny in the film, and then our teacher said: 'Yes, of course, but the film must have been made in three or four years, because everytime they wanted to shoot something or somewhere, they had to wait for the sun to come out!'

During my first language course I met one student from Morokko. Khadija is her name. We would always sit and talk about the Palestinian problem. She always said that it was not only a problem of the Palestinians but also a problem of the whole Arab world. She would sit for hours and talk about the former Soviet Union. She could never understand why the people in countries that once belonged to the Soviet Union are happy that they no more constitute one big united country. That was a very big, feared but respected country, she said, 'now the Americans have no one to be afraid of, and they act as if they were the police of the world. At first I also could not understand that. To us - the Palestininas - the Soviet Union was our first ally, like the United States is the everlasting ally of Israel. The USA would always take into consideration the USSR regarding any world problem, but after there was no more USSR, the leaders of the USA would do whatever they liked without consulting the UN Security Council or the concerned parties, and as for us we had no allies any more.

After two months in Germany I could understand why those nations wanted independence. I had always looked at the world from my small and narrow point of view. I had never been abroad, and I would always compaire everything to Palestine. It is a very small country, and I had never imagined that the USSR would be so big. Whenever somebody talked about those former USSR states demanding independence, I would laugh because to me it was like Ramallah or Bethlehem were demanding independence and forming their own states. Then I realised that these were nations, where each one of them had it's own language, traditions, history and characteristics of its people. They were independent countries put together under one government. It also would have been a good idea to unite the world instead of having so many borders and so many governments and leaders, at the end we are all equal and we are all the children of Adam and Eve. This would only be possible, when such a government would think about the benefit of it's people first and not itself. Khadija and I are still friends, she went back to Morokko after the end of the first course, she was a very clever student. We still write to each other

and hope that maybe one day all problems of the world would be resolved once and forever.

During my second German language course at Goethe Institute there were about 6 or 7 students from Spain. These students made Goethe Institute so lively, that I had just at least to mention them. They were 18 or 19 years old. Everyday there would be a party at the Students House in Stennerstraße 4, and of course it would be the Spanish students. They were so full of energy and life, all the time partiyng, dancing, singing and shouting, they never spoke in a low voice, I think they never knew how to do that, but to me it was fun to watch them, mainly because they reminded me of our Arab characteristics. Always shouting, and laughing the whole time.

In Mittelstufe 2 I got to know one student who was a good friend of mine and with whom I could speak freely. This was Maria from Brazil. Maria spoke very well German, and I think that she was the best. She was older than me and had children. I felt when she was talking with me that she was treating me like her own daughter. She was so kind, and once I was sick and could not go to class, and she was really worried and asked me if it was bad and if I felt any pain. We talked also about Palestine and Brazil. She told me that the people have a wrong idea about Brazil, and that they always think of it as a the land of poverty. There is strong industry and people lead a comfortable life, of course there are poor people, but it is not the majority. I told her that it's the same with us, because we are under occupation and because we are Arabs, Europeans and Americans tend to treat us like poor needy and stupid people. They don't know that we have the highest rate of educated people among Arab countries, and that we are a more free, open minded and democratic nation than perhaps other countries in the region.

There was one thing she could not understand, and that was why Israelis and Palestinians would not live together in this land. To her Palestine was the land for both Palestinians and Israelis. She knew nothing of the Belfore Promise for the Jews to give them a homeland in Palestine. She did not know that Palestinians were living in Palestine long before the United Nations decided a give a homeland to the Jews after what was done to them in Europe, mainly after World War II. It was also difficult for me to explain all this. People always tend to believe what exists infromt of them. To her there was Israel, in which Israelis and Palestinians lived.

Knowing Germany and Europe

We have made a lot of trips with thr Goethe Institute. Trips abroad to Amsterdam and Paris, and trips in Germany to: Münster, Altena, Bonn, Weimar, Bremen, and Wuppertal. One of my dreams was to visit Paris and London, and part of the dream came true when the Goethe Institute organized a trip to Paris. It was just too amazing, we went in tours on foot and in bus, we toured in the various sections of the city, and we visited the Eifel Tower, and the Louvre. In Germany , for me the most impressive trips were the trips to

Weimar and Bremen. Weimar introduced me to the literary and poetic face of Germany, and Bremen introduced me to the industrial and rich face of Germany. On our way back from Bremen, I was so impressed of what advancement I have seen in the fields of industry and trade, that I said to myself: 'No wonder everybody was afraid of the union between East and West Germany. This is a great country and a powerful nation. They have all means of self satisfaction. They possess natural resources as well as intelligent minds and experience in all fields of life, whether industry, trade, science, literature, medicine or others'. I have always admired the German way of working: strict, hard but fruitful, and my admiration increased the more I got to know this country. I never realized how big and wonderful our world could be. So many people, so many places and all fascinating and unique.

Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger

During our first German language course in Iserlohn, we were told that there was a project between the Iserlohner newspaper 'Iserlohner Kreiszeitung' and the Goethe Institute, and that every month there was a page in the newspaper for Goethe Institute 'Goethe - Seite', where students would write about their countries, their experiences in Germany or any other subject of interest. We were seven journalists, and all had scholarships from the Heinz - Kühn - Stiftung. The Director of the Goethe Institute told us that it would be nice if every one of us made an interview with the other, and so we would have articles about each one of us, but at the same time we would not be the ones who have written them. We would be the ones to ask and at the same time the ones to answer. It was very interesting. Basheer and I had to write about Viktoria from Ukraine, and Ivan wrote about us. Our articles consisted of a mixture of personal feeling, politics, social life and every day work, and that's why I think they were interesting to read.

Weimar: Europe's cultural center / 1999

Our trip to Weimar is very special to me. This place was a completely new experience. For one thing it was in former 'East Germany'. There was a huge obvious difference between West and East Germany. It was like traveling from one world to another, from a developed country to a 'less developed' one. The difference between the two parts was vast. West Germany was a much 'advanced' place, everything was new and modern - industry, technology, etc.... On our way to Weimar we could see that the situation in East Germany was really bad, and most of all, bad and difficult for the simple people who lived there.

Weimar itself is very special and unique to Germans in particular and to the world in general. It was the home of Goethe: Germany's greatest poet and writer.

He had lived in Weimar from 1775 till 1832. I always have had interest in European Literature . It was a hobby of mine to read mainly English and French Literature. I had rarely read anything from the German Literature. Of course, I had read 'Faust' and 'Werther Leider', but these were only in simplified forms. During our two day stay in Weimar we visited Goethe's house and museum and saw a film about his life and works. I was disappointed that I had not read earlier about this genius and some of his work, but as we say 'better late than never'. The nature surrounding Weimar, was so magnificent, that it makes it so clear that such a great poet like Goethe would choose such a place to be his home. We were also told by a local guide that Carl August who lived in Weimar wanted to make the place the capital of culture and the a center for German and European literary activities.in the 18th century, and that is why he build libraries and sent for many poets and authors such as Goethe to come and stay in Weimar. Nowadays Weimar has one of the most valuable literary libraries, where original works of some authors are still reserved. Weimar is this year ,1999, the Cultural Capital of Europe, it is also the 250 anniversary of Goethe's birthday. There was a lot of reconstruction and renovation taking place during our visit.

Also, there was Schillers house, I wanted to visit it but there was not time, instead we had to visit the Bauhaus museum. It was interesting to know that this Bauhaus, or school of Arts of Architecture, started with the beginning of this century in 1919, but the Nazi regime had abolished such Bauhauses, and it was forbidden during Nazi time. It was also the place where the first German republican constitution was established. In 1919 the Weimar Republic was established not to last long, but it was the first German Republic. It was really a very interesting visit.

Buchenwald

On the next day, we were told that we would visit Buchenwald, and I had no idea what that was. Then when I was told it was a former Nazi Concentration camp, I was a little bit astonished. Such places are no exhibition. On our way to the main gate, I was thinking: 'If I was being taken to this place, and I knew that I will never come out alive, what would be my last thoughts of the outside world, would I look at the beautiful nature surrounding the place, and be thankful that at least I have had some happy days, or would I wonder at the injustice of life and what wrong have I done to deserve such a fate'. My feelings were a mixture of bitterness, astonishment... At the main gate there was only one sentence there and in German: 'Everyone Gets What He Deserves' What wrong did the children do to deserve such a fate, what wrong did the women do, or the men. Their only wrong was that they stood up for what they believed in, for their country, or for their religion. Inside everything was silent and horrible, you could see and feel death all around you. It was a big barren, grey land with a big huge forest surrounding it. I could fully understand why such a consentartion camp was being built here, it was almost impossible to

escape from such a big huge forest. Besides, there were electrical wires, guards, watch towers and dogs. Inside we saw the gas chambers, and in other corners of the big camp some paintings done by the former prisoners were exhibited. I could feel the shivering of the hand that drew such paintings, the pain and misery. It was a sort of connection with the outside 'free' world, and a way of registering the pain of one who is being dragged to untimely death.

Then we saw a documentary film about the place, and how the American and British allies came to the place with the end of the war and the defeat of the Nazi armies. This was live footage taken from the place, dead people being piled up as if they were some kind of dirt or rubbish. Others who miraculously survived barely alive, they were simply human skeletons. Then the American general ordered his men to bring the people of Weimar to the camp. When they came and saw what was going on, they were shocked and some of them were crying. The American General asked if they knew about all this, and they said that they never knew, then he said to them: 'We are so far away and we knew that such thing was taking place here, and you, so close to the camp and you never knew, I can't believe it, this is a lie'. I also find it very difficult to believe that they did not know about it. People being killed in such a horrible way, and what about the prisoners who escaped from Buchenwald, didn't any of them mention what was going on.

From the names and tags of prisoners I have seen in Buchenwald, I have realized that not only Jews, or members of resistance from countries occupied by Nazis face such a horrible fate in Buchenwald, there were also Germans who stood up for what they believed in, they were against the Nazis, they did not want to be part of that regime, they believed in freedom and liberty to all nations, and so they had to pay the price.

Bonn

During Christmas holidays we received an invitation from a German friend to visit her in Bonn. We stayed in Bonn for a couple of days. These were our happiest days in Germany. We would go every day to the city center, walk around, sit a little bit in the main square and enjoy the sun. The people there are very friendly and helpful. We wanted to visit Beethoven's house, but we did not exactly know where it was, so we asked a man to describe the way. He not only described the way to reach the house, but also went with us, to make sure we found it. In the main market, the fruit and vegetable sellers were shouting out the prices of the various fruits and vegetables, it was like we were walking in Ramallah, Bethlehem or Jerusalem. Everyone was smiling, children playing in the streets of the main square, old women sitting together and talking, the sun shining, and even to my astonishment, women sitting at the window sills of their houses and watching the people in the market. It was like a piece of Palestine was placed here in Germany. You could feel the warmth of the people against the cold weather. To me this was the warm heart of Germany.

Our Old Friend From the ‘Zug’

On our way back from Bonn to Iserlohn, we sat next to an old woman in the train. At first no one of us said one single word, but after some time the woman said that the sun was coming in her eyes and she asked if she could change her place, we said it was alright and then she asked us from where we are, and we replied: ‘From Jerusalem’. She did not give us the chance to add anything more, for she immediately said: ‘I have nothing against Jews, I am No Nazi and never was’. Then she started talking about the Nazis and that neither her family nor a lot other Germans had anything to do with Nazis, as if apologizing for what had happened during World War II. Then when finally she had a little break, I said: ‘We are not Jews, we are Palestinian Arabs from Jerusalem, from Palestine’. She was a little bit shocked, or maybe a little bit embarrassed because she kept talking about Jews without giving us a chance to say that we were not. But she recovered quickly from the shock and once again started talking about the Palestinian problem. She knew about it and about the Peace Process and the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank, and the problems concerning withdrawal and Jerusalem. I was really pleased that she knew so much and that she had given some of her time to hear about this problem. We discussed about this problem and the Israeli obstacles being placed every now and then in order to hinder the Peace Agreement. She sympathised with us. She was pleased to see that we were foreigners, yet we spoke with her in German. She asked us what we think of Germany and whether we liked it here or not, we answered that it was really a very good experience for us.

Then she asked if we would like to stay here in Germany, ‘Yes I would’ I said, but that was only to myself, I told her: ‘Everything is great here, but our home is where our work, families and friends are’. I felt she was relieved to hear this, for then she started talking about foreigners who come here, to work or study and they stay and receive German citizenship, then they bring their brothers and sisters also to live in Germany. I knew what she was talking about. I have had a lot in the last four months about this problem. She was particularly annoyed that these people, who have been living in Germany since 15 or 20 years don’t speak German. They don’t even bother to learn German or ‘even when they know German’ they don’t want to speak in German. They want German citizenship, but at the same time they want to remain foreigners. She did not feel good about such an attitude. Then she said that it was not that easy and comfortable in Germany, now with the East and West parts united once again, pensions are less, and taxes are more in order to cover for the deficiency in East Germany.

To conclude: It was a long conversation, but interesting. Then to my amazement she started talking about her private life, I left happy because she liked us enough to speak about so private things in her life. And when finally we reached our station she said: ‘The most precious thing a person can have is health and so I wish you both good health and long life and happiness’. It was the first time I saw that old woman, and maybe the last, but I will never forget her, because I could feel her wishes for us coming deep from the heart.

Christmas in Germany

It was a custom of mine to celebrate Christmas every year in Bethlehem. I would go with friends or relatives to the old city, walk around, and then visit the Nativity Church. We would spend Christmas Eve with all others who have come from everywhere in front of the Nativity Church. Usually there would be a lot of fire works, singing and dancing. At midnight most of the people present would go into the church to participate in the Midnight mass. It is also a tradition in Palestine that the Patriarch would come from Jerusalem to Bethlehem in a huge parade, and at the entrance of Bethlehem a big crowd would welcome him. This crowd normally consisted of representatives of the various Christian sects, representatives of the Moslems in the area of Bethlehem, mayors and heads of the various towns and villages in the district of Bethlehem. Then they would all go together to the Nativity Church.

Here in Germany I have witnessed other Christmas traditions. The streets of Iserlohn were decorated for Christmas from the first of November. We had an Advent calender in our class with how many days remaining till Christmas. Then, a week before Christmas, our teacher Barbara Frankenberg organized a small Christmas 'party' at Goethe Institute, where students from various countries sat together and sang Christmas corals in German. It was very nice and it reminded me of my school days, where we used to sing Christmas carols in our last music lesson before the Christmas holidays. Then of course there was the Christmas celebration with Santa Claus and a lot of gifts. We were invited to a Christmas family dinner .

Our teacher Frau Frankenberg had invited the students who spent Christmas in Iserlohn to a warm traditional German dinner. We sat by candle light and near us there was a wonderfully decorated Christmas tree. We sat and talked like one big family about our traditions and habits. It was like an international dinner, for there were students from Japan, Croatia, Ukraine, Lettland and last but not least Palestine. We were also invited by Frau Op de Hipt for dinner, where we talked for hours about various subjects including our own experiences at home and in Germany. It felt good to know there are people who would welcome you into their homes and hearts, and with whom you would feel you are no stranger , but at home among family.

WDR: Mehr hören - Mehr sehen

We had to do a two month practical training at WRD studio in Siegen. I was very disappointed at the beginning because I thought that the practical will take place in WDR in Cologne. It would have been a chance to see work in a big station and also to live for two month in such a city as Cologne: the capital of German media. Siegen was to the very south of North Rhine-Westphalia. It was cold most of the time, well the sun practically never shone during our stay there. But at least it was a big city, not in any way like Iserlohn. The people still went to bed early, and all shops would be closed at

7 or 8, but still there was a lot to be seen. It was a lively place, and that was good.

Our first day at WDR was a Monday, we arrived there at 12 and we were accompanied by Frau Op de Hipt. We were introduced to the others and the radio editor called Stefan Michel took and showed us the whole studio. He was very nice and helpful. I was to stay in the radio for two weeks and then I would go to the TV. The work in the radio was never interesting to me as with TV. I went with Stefan to a number of press conferences, and with another radio editor who went to make some interviews with the people in the streets.

It was really very difficult for me to cope with the people in the radio section. Most of them were very friendly and helpful, and I had enjoyed talking with them, but the working conditions under which we were all placed were not that comfortable, which in turn affected us all. I had been told that some time ago the WDR Studio in Siegen was given sufficient time for local radio and TV programmes, but a new policy was being passed by the main Studio in Köln, which prevented small regional studios such as Siegen studio from having long hours of local transmission. They would only transmit one radio newsbroadcast every hour (for only 2 or 3 minutes), and one TV news broadcast for half an hour. The radio crews would usually sit in their offices or the technicians would usually sit in the studio or editing rooms, and most of the time there would be nothing to be done.

It was very frustrating for everybody and they were all complaining. Some of them told me that this policy was not good for the WDR in general, because they would lose more and more listeners to the newly opened private radio stations, but nobody would listen to them. One technician told me that the private stations in Siegen are now broadcasting the same type of programmes the WDR Studio in Siegen used to produce and transmit from this studio, programmes that really interest the people here in Siegen. They were all complaining, but they had quarters in Cologne thought that it would be better to have a unified programme for all regions in North-Rhine-Westphalia, but not all people agree, because for example when I am in Siegen I would like to hear what is going on in Siegen even it is not important, and not what is going on in Cologne. The employees have most of the time no work to do, they are always complaining, the people in Siegen are complaining, and WDR studio in Siegen is losing listeners to the private stations.

As for the internal organization, I was impressed by the way they conduct their work, and the cooperation in which they work. I had noticed that there was a very big number of trainees there, and I was told that whenever somebody applied for the WDR in Cologne to get training, they would send him to Siegen. Unfortunately there was no training plan, and sometimes we would have something to do and sometimes not. Whenever we asked to do something we would be told that because our German is not that good we can't conduct our own interviews or make our own reports. I spoke with several journalists and they told me that I spoke German well enough to do what I wanted, and that the language was not such a problem, especially that I was not a trainee trying to learn a job, it is what I do and what I have been doing for some time

now. But I thing with the TV section it was much better, everybody was nice and they were all more cooperative. They took good care of us, whenever there was something to be done they would tell me and I would accompany them. Unfortunately, I was still supposed to go to the TV in February so I did not have that much of a chance to work closely with those people.

I went with the TV crew one time to Soest, there was a story to be covered. It was about a young boy of around twelve years old vom Eritria. He lived in a small village near the borders with Ethiopia, and he use to study at a nearby school in the Ethiopian part of the borders. That part of the land was previously a stage of fierce fighting between armies of both countries. It was an area planted with land mines.

One day this small boy was going back home from school, and unfortunately he stepped on one of this mines, which almost cost him his life. He lost one foot which was immediately amputated as a result of the explosion, and the other leg was severely damaged, it was all burned. He lost one arm, his lower jaw and became blind. It was obvious that he was in a very critical situation, and it was not possible to treat him in Eritria. He was operated in one of the hospitals here in Soest. He was able once again to eat, drink and talk, which was after the accident almost impossible. It was not that easy because the was there since six months and he was able to speak again with a lot of difficulty only very recently.

We made an interview with the head of the hospital, with the little boy who could speak English very well (in fact it was the way by which the doctors and the nurses could communicate with him), and with some of the nurses who took care of him. We were told that during the last five or more years this hospital had treated several cases such as this one, and all were small children who were innocent victims of wars. The head of the hospital told us that this was all possible through a German organization which has opened offices in areas of war such as Eritria and Kabol and other parts of the world, and they have opened clinics there to treat the victims of wars, who otherwise don't have the financial means to get medical treatment. But usually very critical cases would be sent to Germany to get the necessary treatment.

It was really very interesting to hear about this organization, unfortunately I don't remember exactly its name, but I think it is the „Hammer Forum“ or something like this, and from what I have seen, it was very active in helping and assisting people who otherwise have no one to care for them in their own country. The journalist who made the interviews told me that as soon as the news spread that there was a young boy from Eritria, and that he was a victim of a mine explosion, a lot of his native people who were living here in Germany started calling him and several of them even visited him.

I remember that last December, when I was still in Iserlohn, I had read in one German newspaper an article about a young boy from Bethlehem who was brought here to Germany to get treatment from a severe disease, because the necessary treatment for him was not available in Palestine. These young children were brought here to get treatment for severe injuries or diseases, which otherwise was not possible in their native lands, and those German physicians

and nurses would take these children into their hearts, and take good care of them, and stay with them till they were well and fit again. One of the nurses who took care of the young boy from Eritria told us that he was brought here to Germany alone, and he had not seen any member of his family since six months, and yet he never showed any signs of distress or homesickness. He missed his parents and brothers and sisters of course, but the hospital team were so friendly, helpful and kind that he never cried or asked to go home.

Deutsche Welle: One big world

Frau Op de Hipt organized for us that our second month in practical and last month in Germany would be in Deutsche Welle, in the Arabic section. It was very interesting, because most of our colleagues in PBC had attended training courses at the Deutsche Welle, also our friends (the other scholarship holders) were here. In the Arabic section we got to meet a lot of colleagues from different Arab countries. There were three Palestinians working there and they took good care of us. We could sit together and talk about Palestine and one of these three spent some time at the PBC training radio people there. They told us that some colleagues of theirs went to Palestine because a radio training center was opened at the Bir Zeit University in Ramallah and it was founded by the Germans. These Palestinians are training at the training centre at the moment in Ramallah.

The colleagues at the Arabic section told us that the Arabic section is one of the biggest sections here at Deutsche Welle. I could understand that very easily because every section here transmitted to one specific country, like the Russian to Russia. But the Arabic section is to transmit to about 24 Arabic countries, so in the newsbroadcast they have to mention everything that has to do with the Arab countries or the Arabs, and it would be much and that is why they transmit three hours daily, while other sections transmit one or one and a half hour daily.

Deutsche Welle is one big world all gathered here in Germans, specifically here in Cologne. I feel like one family member in this international media centre. Every day we would gather in our section, discuss the major news in the world and what interests the listeners, distribute the work and then everybody would do what we asked from him. Our news would mainly be about the Arabic world and it would include Germany's political point of view of world crises and problems. It is a hard work knowing the number of listeners but also a very interesting one. The people here are very helpful and friendly and I like it here a lot.

Kölle Alaaf

Every year the Germans celebrate the famous carnival. It is always before the fasting of Easter. At school in Jerusalem we had always celebrated carnival, but

it was only a small parade and we would wear strange costumes and put on make up. No other school celebrated this carnaval and so whenever I told my friends from Bethlehem that we had carnaval they would ask what it was. Here in Cologne I had the chance to witness the famous Cologne carnaval. It was really fascinating. Everybody dressed up in wonderful costumes. There were people from all over the world, and all had come to watch and participate in this carnaval. I have never seen the Germans so happy and full of humour. They were talking with us and laughing and everybody was friendly. The parade itself took 6 hours and at the end of the parade there was the carriage of the Prince of the carnaval. Several carriages carried political motives and others expressed social problems which the people were facing and talking about daily. Also, a lot of chocolate was being thrown to the people who came in thousands (I think there were one and a half million people in Cologne). There were also carnivals in Düsseldorf, Bonn, Mainz and Aachen, but the most famous and the biggest was the Cologne carnaval. It was a wonderful experience, and I hope that I can attend this huge event once again.

Schlusswort

The time I spent in Germany was a new experience for me. I met new people, had the chance to work in the WDR and at the Deutsche Welle, and visited several places in Germany and in Europe. I believe now more than ever that peace and harmony are the solutions to all our problems. In a region like our region where there is war, hatred and every day someone is killed all you think of is death and sorrow. Here I was given the chance to see new places and to express myself in more free unlimited dimensions. Once again I would like to thank all those who made it possible for me to visit Germany, and I hope I will have the chance to travel again and see more free dimensions.