

ORIGIN/ACTION

INR/B-10

8

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

6306427
POL 6 GER W

RWR	REP	AF
1		
ARA	EUR	FE
	5	
NEA	CU	INR
		5
E	P	IO
	1	
L	FBO	AID
AGR	COM	FRB
INT	LAB	TAR
TR	RMB	AIR
		5
ARMY	CIA	NAVY
2		4
OSD	USA	NSA
31	8	3
		NSC
		6

FOR RM USE ONLY

A-104
NO.

CONFIDENTIAL

1965 NOV 26 PM 3 41

HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO: BONN, BERLIN, BREMEN, DUESSELDORF, FRANKFURT, HAMBURG, MUNICH, POLAD HEIDELBERG

ANALYSIS & DISTRIBUTION

FROM : AmConsul STUTTGART

DATE: Nov. 23, 1965

SUBJECT: Dr. Giselher WIRSING, and Christ und Welt: a profile.

REF :

JOINT STATE/USIA MESSAGE.

Transmitted herewith is a biographical sketch of Dr. Giselher WIRSING. As editor-in-chief of Christ und Welt he is of intrinsic interest because of the standing of Christ und Welt as one of the most influential journals of political opinion in present-day Germany, but he is also significant as representative of a type of individual who has shown exceptional staying qualities in German journalism through changes of circumstance and regime. Although he is now just 58 years old, and in full mental and physical vigor, he has been an influential journalist for 35 years.

The attempt is made in this despatch to broaden its scope to include a profile of Christ und Welt as an institution.

1965 NOV 26 PM 8 00

COPY/FO-PBR

Paul R. Sweet
Paul R. Sweet

American Consul General

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCES METHODS EXEMPTION 3828
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2003 2006

FOR COORDINATION WITH State

CONFIDENTIAL

FOR DEPT. USE ONLY

1a Other

FORM 4-62 DS-123

Drafted by: CG:PRSweet:ges: 11/22/65

Contents and Classification Approved by:

Cleared by: Coordinated in draft with USIS:EChapman

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CONFIDENTIAL

Dr. Giselher WIRSING and
Christ und Welt: A Profile

Page 1 of 10
Enclosure No. 1
A- 104 from STUTTGART

The biographical record until 1945 ^{1/}

Giselher WIRSING was born April 15, 1907, at Schweinfurt, where his father, a prosperous businessman, owned a soap manufacturing concern, which had belonged to the family for several generations. In 1926, at the age of 19, after graduating from the Humanistic Gymnasium in Schweinfurt, Wirsing took up university studies in sociology and political science. After periods at several universities (Munich, Koenigsberg and Berlin) he received his Ph.D. at Heidelberg in 1931.

He matured very early. By his own account, his early attitudes were much influenced by his father, a man of strong nationalistic views tinged with anti-semitism, who inveighed often against the Treaty of Versailles. As a youth, Wirsing joined the Freikorps Oberland, but he did not become affiliated with the NSDAP as a university student, nor indeed, until considerably later.

An important date for Wirsing was 1929 when Hans ZEHNER became editor of the political periodical, the TAT. At the time, Wirsing was finishing his academic work at Heidelberg and was soon to become assistant in the Institute for Social Science there. Zehner transformed the TAT almost overnight from a sleepy publication with a small circulation into a very influential periodical appealing to young intellectuals. Despite his youth, Wirsing while continuing his work at the Institute in Heidelberg became one of the main writers for TAT.

Because of their role in helping create a climate of opinion congenial to some form of German authoritarianism, the very small group of talented writers who wrote much of what went into the TAT has already received a good deal of attention from students of the Weimar Republic's last phase.

/Kurt

^{1/} In some respects, Wirsing's career before 1945 is more a matter of record than is his subsequent activity. His relations with the NSDAP and its formations can be sketched through the files of the Berlin Document Center. On one occasion, in a small gathering of close acquaintances, in the presence of the reporting officer, Wirsing gave a lengthy explanation of his political attitudes and connections during the Nazi period; this has been drawn upon for parts of this despatch.

CONFIDENTIAL

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CONFIDENTIAL

Page 2 of 10
Enclosure No. 1
A-104 from STUTTGART

Kurt SONTHEIMER, now professor at the Free University in Berlin, has written the best account of the TAT circle¹ and even the American Historical Review has published a lengthy article on Zehrer.²

The other main members of the group, besides Zehrer and Wirsing, were F. F. ZIMMERMANN (who used, and uses, the pen-name Ferdinand FRIED) and E. W. ESCHMANN. After 1945, Zehrer and Zimmermann again achieved eminent positions in German Journalism -- Zehrer as Chief Editor of Die Welt, and Zimmermann as a commentator on economic-political questions, also for Die Welt.

Zehrer was 30 years old when he became editor of the TAT. He evidently had a good deal of influence on Wirsing in this period. In any case, both of them had developed similar methods of sociological analysis, formed in an intellectual atmosphere in which such writers as SPENGLER, Karl MANNHEIM, PARETO, and Carl SCHMITT set the tone. Zehrer's basic conception was of German capitalism in crisis, and, most particularly, of a middle class in crisis. Renewal must come through a new amalgam of socialism and nationalism, in which a neoconservative elite would provide solutions to the dilemma of the middle class. In the years 1929-32, under Zehrer's editorship, the TAT, in the words of Professor Sontheimer, was "the most interesting, the most active, and the most influential periodical in the fight against Versailles and Weimar, and it was at the same time the organ which stood closest to the ideology of the National Socialist Movement."

Wirsing's specialty during his first years with TAT was East Central Europe, the area of medium-sized states from Finland to the Aegean. He used the term Zwischeneuropa to describe the area. His first book, "Zwischeneuropa und die deutsche Zukunft," published in 1932, elaborated the view that Germany must shape its future by a new integrated relationship with these states of Zwischeneuropa. It should bring into existence a new order in Central Europe, a federalistic, anti-capitalistic, socialistic order which would take fully into account the agrarian social and economic structure of the Eastern part of Central Europe.

At this last phase of the Weimar era, Wirsing followed Zehrer in supporting General SCHLEICHER in the hope that he might organize a "third front" against Hitler with the aid of the Gregor Strasser wing of the Nazis.

/Wirsing

- 1/ "Der Tatkreis," Vierteljahrshefte fuer Zeitgeschichte, July, 1959.
- 2/ Walter Struve, "Hans Zehrer as a Neoconservative Elite Theorist," American Historical Review, July, 1965.

CONFIDENTIAL

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CONFIDENTIAL

Page 3 of 10
Enclosure No. 1
A- 104 from STUTTGART

Wirsing has described, in private, a meeting which he and Zehrer had with Schleicher at the end of January, 1933, just a few days before the Nazi takeover. Their purpose was to persuade Schleicher to use his authority in the Reichswehr to kidnap Reich President HINDENBURG in order to keep him from becoming a tool of the Nazis. According to Wirsing's account, Schleicher listened to all this with ill-disguised contempt and practically booted the young upstarts (Zehrer was 30 at the time, Wirsing 25) out of his office.

Before the end of 1933, Zehrer (whose wife was Jewish) gave up the editorship of TAT and Wirsing succeeded him, but the periodical went downhill and never recovered its influence. It finally ceased publication in 1937. Meanwhile, Wirsing had joined the staff of the "Muenchener Neuesten Nachrichten," of which he became deputy editor-in-chief in 1936, and chief editor 1939-1942. He furthermore edited a periodical, Das XX. Jahrhundert, from 1939 to 1944.

Wirsing freely admits that he had phases of real enthusiasm for the Nazis during the 30's, as, for example, at the time of Austrian Anschluss in 1938. The record shows that later in the year 1938 he joined the Allgemeine SS with the rank of captain, and was promoted to Major in the SS in 1940.

The period 1936-1942 was one of exceptional activity for Wirsing. He traveled frequently -- to Italy and Yugoslavia, to Egypt, Palestine and Syria, to Sweden, France, Portugal; wrote several books which fitted in well with the current purposes of Nazi propaganda. One of them with the title "The Hundred Families that Rule the Empire" was published in the United States in 1941 by the Nazi-subsidized firm of Flanders Hall. He visited the United States and had an interview with President Roosevelt in 1938. Following this trip he published in 1941 "Der Masslose Kontinent" (The Reckless Continent), a sizable volume which argued the thesis that the America of Roosevelt sought world domination as a means of escaping its unresolved domestic difficulties; but Germany and Japan were on the way to bring about a sound world order based on German domination of Europe, Japanese domination of East Asia, leaving the Western hemisphere to US hegemony. The book had a sale of upwards of 60,000 copies.

Wirsing does not talk very freely now about this phase of his life, but he has stressed in private conversation his friendship with Albrecht HAUSHOFER, son of the famous geopolitician, who is best known for his influence on Rudolf HESS. Among the German political writers of the time,

/Albrecht

CONFIDENTIAL

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CONFIDENTIAL

Page 4 of 10
Enclosure No. 1
A- 104 from STUTTGART

Albrecht Haushofer was conspicuous for his realistic appraisal of the power relations in the world and for his sober estimate of the limits of the German military potential. Wirsing claims that in his editorials in the Muenchener Neuesten Nachrichten he sought to reflect something of Albrecht Haushofer's realism. About a month before Hess' flight to Scotland in 1941, Wirsing was asked to come to see the Fuehrer's deputy. Hess had read one of his articles and questioned him for about an hour. At that time Hess knew that the attack on Russia was impending, but Wirsing did not, so that it was only in retrospect that he realized the implications of Hess' line of questioning, particularly his interest in the possibilities of an accommodation between Germany and Britain. After the Hess flight, Wirsing had some uneasy weeks, but nothing happened to him.

In 1942, he entered military service. From then until the end of the war it is hard on the basis of available documentation to determine a very clear pattern of his activities. He continued to work as a journalist and editor, for a time at least was assigned to OKW, Keitel's headquarters, evidently in connection with political intelligence.

Following the war, a denazification court at Garmisch-Partenkirchen declared him a Nazi fellow-traveler and fined him 2,000 Marks. He appealed the verdict, claiming that he had protected persons persecuted on racial and religious grounds. A Munich Court of Appeals ruled in February 1950 that, though he had been a Nazi fellow-traveler, he was a lesser offender, and his fine was reduced to DM 500.

Wirsing and Klaus Mehnert

Wirsing's career since the war is largely tied up with Christ und Welt. Of central importance in this connection are his relations with Klaus MEHNERT, who was formerly chief editor of Christ und Welt, still owns a part of the paper, and influences its policies. Wirsing's acquaintance with him goes back to the early 1930's. At the time Mehnert was editor of the magazine "Osteuropa." Wirsing says he was responsible for sending Mehnert to Moscow in 1934 as a correspondent. Mehnert then, according to Wirsing, fell into difficulties with the Gestapo, as a result of which he decided to go to the United States. He lived in the United States and in Hawaii from 1936 to 1941. In this period he remained in touch with Wirsing. Wirsing says he tipped off Mehnert in 1941 that the German Foreign Office had wind of US intention to intern German nationals, and Mehnert

/thereupon.

CONFIDENTIAL

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CONFIDENTIAL

Page 5 of 10
Enclosure No. 1
A-104 from STUTTGART

thereupon left for Shanghai. Presumably Wirsing and Mehnert were already in touch regarding Mehnert's becoming editor of the English-language monthly magazine, The Twentieth Century, because the first number appeared in October, 1941, in Shanghai, and considerable planning must have been previously involved.

The Twentieth Century, subsidized by the German Government, was intended to be mainly an English version of the magazine, Das XX. Jahrhundert, which Wirsing had been editing since 1939. With the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States, however, Wirsing could not keep in touch with Mehnert in Shanghai, and consequently Mehnert's monthly was for all practical purposes an independent production. Like Wirsing, Mehnert also had had ties with the Haushofers, and his general approach to international politics was characteristic of the Haushofer circle -- i.e., German patriotism, an opportunistic attitude toward the Nazis tempered by a coolly analytical habit of assessing the power-political relationships in the world.

Wirsing joins Christ und Welt

Our records do not show what Wirsing was doing immediately after the war beyond the fact that he was arrested by CIC in June 1945 and made a trip through the US zone in November, escorted by two American officers to study the effect of US military government on the Germans. In numerous private conversations he has not referred to this phase of his life. By 1948, however, when the first issue of Christ und Welt appeared, both Wirsing and Mehnert (according to Wirsing) were on the staff of the paper, though their names were not listed among the editors.

Eugen GERSTENMAIER headed the first list of editors. In his first editorial, Gerstenmaier said the aim of the paper would be to provide a means whereby discussion within the Protestant church could be broadened into the larger community. He stressed that the paper intended to provide information, and to be only secondarily a journal of opinion.

Christ und Welt

In its first years, Christ und Welt was subsidized by the Evangelisches Hilfswerk, the large Protestant welfare organization which Gerstenmaier headed. The paper did not prosper, there was much financial disorder, and around 1951 its future was in danger. At this point Georg FEDEFER (former German Ambassador to the UAR), the son of a well-to-do Stuttgart banker, successfully undertook the raising of additional capital and put the paper

/firmly

CONFIDENTIAL

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CONFIDENTIAL

Page 6 of 10
Enclosure No. 1
A-104 from STUTTGART

firmly on its feet. It is understood that the present ownership stems from that time: Gerstenmaier reportedly still has 30 per cent of the shares, Federer and Mehnert 10 per cent each, and 50 per cent are owned by Georg VON HOLTZBRINK, a Stuttgart publisher, whose name is rarely heard locally. He is the proprietor of the Deutscher Buecherbund K.G., a large concern which has holdings in a number of publishing companies, and does a profitable business in book clubs and encyclopedias. Von Holtzbrink claims that he interests himself only in the business side of Christ und Welt, and Wirsing confirms this.

From the business point of view, Herr von Holtzbrink can evidently be well satisfied, because under the editorship first of Mehnert, and then of Wirsing, the circulation has steadily increased and is now up to around 175,000, compared to 60,000 only a few years ago. The editorial offices of the paper are in a new building in a rural setting on the outskirts of Stuttgart; the printing is done in the highly modern facilities of the Stuttgarter Nachrichten.

Since the early years of Christ und Welt the role of Gerstenmaier has diminished. According to Wirsing, Gerstenmaier now exercises virtually no influence on its editorial policy. The paper frequently causes Gerstenmaier political embarrassment, because of the widespread impression that, as founder and part owner, the paper is his personal organ, which it is not. Despite this, Gerstenmaier wants to hold on to his shares. (There was a certain implication in the way Wirsing mentioned this that Gerstenmaier might have been given opportunities to sell out if he wanted to do so, but had declined.)

Wirsing's basic outlook

To appraise the editorial course of Christ und Welt during the years of its existence would go well beyond the bounds of this despatch. One or two general observations, however, are relevant here: During the first years, the dominant influence was Mehnert; Wirsing, as editor, has continued in the general path laid out by Mehnert. In earlier years, Mehnert was suspect from the American point of view for a nationalistic and opportunistic bent. Likewise, Wirsing. On certain occasions a nationalist streak in Wirsing reappears from time to time. Basically, however, both Mehnert and Wirsing are now convinced advocates of the American alliance, and Mehnert is probably the most effective commentator at present on German TV.

/An

^{1/}A long biographic report on Mehnert was despatched by the Stuttgart Consulate General December 28, 1954 (Stuttgart's 119).

CONFIDENTIAL

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CONFIDENTIAL

Page 7 of 10
Enclosure No. 1
A-104 from STUTTGART

An illustration of how Wirsing and Mehnert work together in connection with the editorial line of Christ und Welt is illustrated by the treatment of the MLF issue during the last two years. At first Wirsing opposed the MLF, but after Mehnert made a trip to the United States and came out strongly for it in an article published in Christ und Welt, the paper took a generally favorable position for some time. When the United States, in December 1964, passed the word that it intended to de-emphasize the MLF, Wirsing reacted critically to this policy. In the first place, he thought the United States had pulled out the rug from under Defense Minister Von Haassel (with whom Wirsing has good personal relations; they went on a trip together to West Africa a year ago); he also thought that, whatever the merits of MLF, the United States should not simply abandon it without exacting some concession from the Soviet Union. This aspect of US tactics regarding the MLF still rankles with Wirsing; he referred to it again in a leading article in Christ und Welt on November 19, 1965. At the same time, he has now come out against a revival of the MLF. He advocates that the Federal Government concentrate on Secretary of Defense McNamara's proposals to give to members of the alliance a voice in atomic decision-making.

Wirsing's characteristic approach to the American alliance was well illustrated in a speech reported in Bremen's A-58 of January 25, 1965, where he noted that now, in contrast to its disastrous conduct in World War I and II, Germany had allied itself with the strongest world power. The United States had proved to be a trustworthy ally, and Germans should bear in mind that their best hope of achieving their national interests was by clinging to the American alliance.

This does not mean for Wirsing that Bonn should simply echo Washington. Upon occasion, he can be a very sharp critic of particular American policies. His attack on the American conduct of the disarmament negotiations in Geneva this past summer was a case in point, when he used Ambassador Foster's article in Foreign Affairs as the basis for a slashing attack. It is relevant, however, to point out in this connection that the aspect of the Foster article which particularly aroused him was the implication which he read in it that the United States might find it expedient to sacrifice the alliance with Germany in order to reach an accommodation on atomic policy with the Soviet Union.

There is nothing in Wirsing's background to suggest that he has any instinctive feeling for liberal democracy as it is widely understood in the United States or in Great Britain. He thinks in terms of power

/politics

CONFIDENTIAL

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CONFIDENTIAL

Page 8 of 10
Enclosure No. 1
A- 104 from STUTTGART

politics, and his approach to social problems is that of an intellectual schooled in the elite psychology of his youth who considers domestic problems in terms of social engineering rather than in humanitarian, to say nothing of sentimental, terms. He has told me that he voted for the SPD in 1961, and before the 1965 elections he said he hoped that the SPD would win. His argument was that the CDU needed a rejuvenation of leadership and that the quickest way to accomplish this was for an SPD interlude in power.

At that time he was being plagued, he said, as an editor by the problem of what he could consciously write in the paper. He thought ERHARD had failed and should be shuffled off the scene, but to publish this would not be pleasing to elements (presumably both the paper's management and readers) whom he had to try to satisfy.

Wirsing's personality

Among persons of prominence in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Wirsing to an exceptional degree lives in the shadow of his Nazi past. Several influential Stuttgarters make a point of advertising that they do not wish to be together with him at social or representational occasions. Among these is Professor Josef EBERLE, Chief Editor of the Stuttgarter Zeitung.

In consequence, Wirsing is not seen very much in public, though he is sociable and likes to entertain in his home.

He gives the impression, although it may be somewhat contrived, that he does not brood over his personal situation. He has a generally pleasant, relaxed look; smiles frequently; medium in height and weight; his white hair and bronzed complexion set each other off agreeably. To Americans he makes himself easily accessible. He enjoys political talk, and he is a very good talker; fluent in English, though he prefers German.

Gisela BONN

Wirsing is married to Gisela BONN, a prominent journalist in her own right. She is two years younger than Wirsing, has a doctor's degree from Vienna, and before the war was active as a foreign correspondent for German newspapers, including the Muenchener Neuesten Nachrichten; her acquaintance with Wirsing presumably goes back to that period at least. Her first husband was Hermann POERZGEN, the well-known Moscow correspondent of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.

/Since

CONFIDENTIAL

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CONFIDENTIAL

Page 2 of 10
Enclosure No. 1
A- 104 from STUTTGART

Since the war, Gisela Boun has made a specialty of reporting on the Near East and on Africa and Asia generally. She is also a gifted photographer and has done some ambitious documentary programs for television. She recently had a series on the religions of Asia. Her straight journalistic reporting is now mostly for Christ und Welt and reflects the paper's extensive coverage, unrivaled in Germany, on the underdeveloped countries of the world. She has just published a book on Africa entitled Afrika verlaesst den Busch (Africa Emerges from the Bush).

In personality, she is vivacious to the point of self-assertiveness, quick and ready with her opinions, knowledgeable, argumentative. She is very sociable, likes to entertain and be entertained, and evidently is somewhat unhappy because her husband's record in years past renders him persona non grata in some Stuttgart circles. She is a small brunette woman who looks younger than her 56 years.

Interest in the Non-European Parts of the World

In his editorials in Christ und Welt, Wirsing covers a broad front -- German internal politics, general foreign policy, and the problems of underdeveloped countries. He usually makes one or two trips a year to some country in Africa or Asia. This year he has been to West Africa and to Japan. He makes something of a specialty of Japan. Gisela Boun makes a similar specialty of India. She is very proud of her connection with NEHRU and of her interviews with him. Christ und Welt appears to have no doctrinaire line toward the problems of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, but conceives its function as that of bringing to the German public high quality reporting of developments in remote parts of the world. In this connection it fills a role in Germany somewhat like that which the Observer plays in England.

An article which Wirsing has just published in Christ und Welt (November 12, 1965) provides insight into his basic approach to Far Eastern problems. He considers Japan and India the two countries which are crucial from the Western point of view. It must be a major objective of Western policy to see that neither of these two pillars crumbles, because that would bring true chaos and disaster in the entire Asian area. Thus, in his view, the most important issue involved in Viet Nam is its interconnection with the internal situation in Japan. An American setback in Viet Nam would encourage the China-oriented Japanese socialists to renew their demonstrations on a scale which might shake the foundations of government. In one word, says Wirsing, it is the stability of Japan which is at stake in Viet Nam.

W/As

CONFIDENTIAL

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CONFIDENTIAL

Page 10 of 10
Enclosure No. 1
A-104 from STUTTGART

As for the Indian-Pakistani problem, he believes the United States and the Federal Republic should categorically take the public position that, whatever the theoretical rights and wrongs of Kashmir, they regard it as an internal Indian question. By taking such a stand, they would be in a position to exercise a quieting influence on the nationalistic hotheads within India.

Wolfgang HOEPAER, who now represents Christ und Welt in Bonn, is likewise a journalist with worldwide experience. He was already associated with Mehnert and Wirsing on the Twentieth Century during the war, has been continuously with Christ und Welt since the start, and still does periodic reporting on such areas as Southeast Asia.

Support for US Cultural Policy in Germany

Wirsing has been an outstandingly effective advocate of German support of American cultural policy in Germany as typified in the America Houses and the binational centers. In the summer of 1964 when it appeared likely that the Federal German Government would cut off financial support for the binational centers, Wirsing published a signed article on the front page of Christ und Welt, sharply criticizing the threatened action. He said it would be extremely short-sighted to cripple the work of these important democratizing influences in the German community. Partly as a result of this article, the Federal Government decided, for the time being at least, not to cut off its financial support of the binational centers.

CG:PRSweet:ges

CONFIDENTIAL

BEST AVAILABLE COPY