

Peter Diem

### **Wilfried Daim - Social Psychology on a Christian-Freudian Basis**



Wilfried Daim was born in Vienna on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1923. His father worked in a textile dying mill, his mother was a seamstress specialized in making gloves. Wilfried and his sister grew up in a kitchen-and-one-room apartment in a proletarian/petty bourgeois environment. In his teens, Wilfried Daim was socialized in a Roman Catholic youth group led by a progressive, culturally minded and strongly anti-Nazi chaplain. Together with his peers, Wilfried made harmless but nevertheless dangerous attempts to resist the Nazis after the "*Anschluss*", the occupation of Austria by Germany in 1938. Only with good luck he evaded prison after questioning by the *Gestapo*, the Nazi secret police. During his years in Catholic private schools, Daim trained himself in intellectual confrontation with the National-Socialist Movement. In summer 1942, Wilfried Daim was drafted by the German Wehrmacht and sent to a training center for skiing infantry in Arys, East Prussia (now part of Poland). For many months, Daim served in a reserve company equipped with several not very effective anti-tank guns (3.7 cm PAK). Only in 1943 he saw battle in the region of Kursk (Western Russia). Although in good physical condition, Daim caught "Wolhynian fever". After recovery he was sent back to the battle lines in 1944 where he was injured twice. The second injure was severe - two bullets fired by a Russian soldier had passed his left lung. Again, Daim had to join the front troops after a few weeks in hospital. During the retreat of the German army, Daim caught machine gun fire smashing his right leg under the knee. The leg had to be amputated after an infection in a Czech army hospital. For Wilfried Daim the war was over - a few weeks before the German capitulation. With luck he made it back to Vienna, where the kitchen had survived Allied bombing while the bedroom was gone.

In a 150 page report on his experience in the German army on Ukrainian and Russian soil, Wilfried Daim describes in detail how he attempted to resist inhuman action by trigger-happy and pyromaniac German soldiers and how he tried to help Russian civilians who suffered heavily by the fighting. His recollections, written in 1960, have been published in print in fall 2011:

[Wilfried Daim, Als Christ im mörderischen Krieg 1939-1945" \(A Christian in the Murderous War of 1939-1945"\)](#) Edition Plattform, Price EURO 19,90

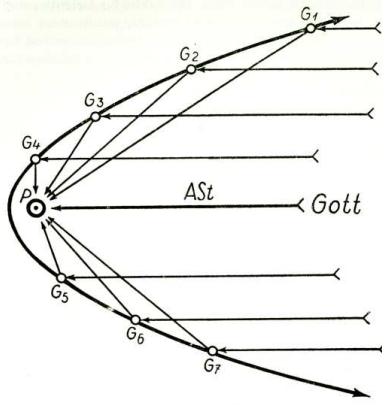
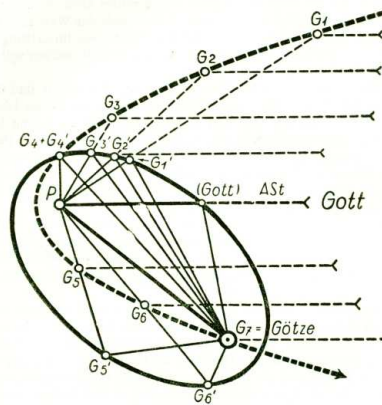
Daim's description of conditions on the front in what is now Belarus and Poland is a touching document of rank-and-file strategies to survive during the Nazi aggression on Russia. Several icons and metal crosses saved from burning houses or bought from the starving population are more than souvenirs to Wilfried Daim. They point back to one of the darkest years in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when a murderous regime waged a cruel battle against Russia - disguised for the German people as a crusade against Bolshevism. In many passages Daim expresses his respect for the Russian people and this love for the endless Russian skies.

Immediately after the war had ended in Europe, Wilfried Daim enrolled at the University of Vienna. He had long planned to become a psychologist. During his time in the army hospitals recovering from two severe injuries and dysentery, Daim had read all kinds of literature then available. After the war he could widen his horizon by reading Freud, Jung, and also the existentialists from Kierkegaard to Camus, now on the market again after the fall of Nazi Germany. Daim was determined to seek unconventional ways to probe into the human soul. But this was not so easy, as the ruling line of thought was "empirical psychology". Only

experimentally gained, and statistically analyzed, results were accepted. After some controversy with his professor, Daim wrote a thesis on "How to best remember telephone numbers." The paper was based on an experiment with 1.800 Austrian high school students - a serious empirical exercise.

Even today Daim recalls the discussions about psychological methods when at one point he challenged his professor (who was fond of using colors to describe character): "Do you really think that with this method it could be possible to analyze the differences in character between **St. Francis of Assisi** and **Adolf Hitler**?"

After two rather general reports on Parapsychology (1949) and Graphology (1950) Wilfried Daim wrote his first ground-breaking book: "Re-Valuation of Psychoanalysis" (1951). While a strict adherent of Freudian methodology, Daim in this work tried to prove the thesis that neurosis is connected with an "alienation from God" ("Entfremdung von Gott"). Daim, who never denied his firm belief in the Roman Catholic faith, illustrated his thesis by two drawings which became quite famous in postwar Germany:

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|  <p>Abbildung 23</p>          |  <p>Abbildung 24</p>   |
| <p>The <i>parable</i> denotes an undisturbed relationship between the individual and an extramundane deity.</p> | <p>The <i>ellipse</i> with its two <i>foci</i> illustrates a state in which the individual has associated himself with an intramundane "false god".</p> |

Another book extending the subject was "Depth Psychology and Salvation" which followed in 1954.

In 1958, Wilfried Daim became famous even beyond the German speaking world when he published "Lanz von Liebenfels – Der Mann, der Hitler die Ideen gab" (Lanz von Liebenfels, the Man from whom Hitler got his Ideas"). The book, based on personal interviews with **Josef Lanz** and extensive research, reveals the influence exerted by this Viennese esoteric racist on the young **Adolf Hitler** who had lived in Vienna from 1907 to 1913. The book, almost universally quoted in analyzes of the roots of the German Nazi ideology, was republished several times - the last edition appeared in 1994. Its motto has become popular: "*National Socialism is the movement which has lent the Prussian sword to Austrian foolery*". Since the book is out of print, it is hoped that a fourth edition will be feasible while the author (87) is still alive.

After an interesting publication on the possibility of a collective suicide of mankind ("Totaler Untergang" – Human Nemesis, 1959) which was largely based on the Bible and on the writings of the Russian theologian and philosopher **Vladimir S. Solov'ev** (1853-1900), Wilfried Daim embarked on his opus magnum: "Die Kastenlose Gesellschaft" ("The Casteless Society"). The 500-page book was published in 1960. It is based on several hundred in-depth interviews with representatives of all social strata of the Austrian population. Its main message: all *class differences* are associated with *caste differences*. In this way, Daim could isolate the psychological roots of the main ideologies of the last two centuries: Communism, Socialism, anti-Semitism, National-Socialism, racism, as well as phenomena like the core ideas of Judaism and Christianity or the "Space Race" between the US and the USSR. Daim's solution for overcoming class war, hatred and xenophobia: the practice of "universal brotherhood", based on the teachings of Jesus Christ's command "*Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself*". The entire German text of this extensive social theory which is still applicable to present social tensions (e.g. the Israeli-Palestinian problem) can be read on the Web at:

[http://www.austria-lexikon.at/af/Wissenssammlungen/Bibliothek/Die\\_Kastenlose\\_Gesellschaft\\_Wilfried\\_Daim](http://www.austria-lexikon.at/af/Wissenssammlungen/Bibliothek/Die_Kastenlose_Gesellschaft_Wilfried_Daim)

During the 60's, Daim published no less than six books on the subject of "Progressive Catholicism" (Linkskatholizismus). The titles can be found at:

[http://oktogon.at/Daim\\_Covers/index.html](http://oktogon.at/Daim_Covers/index.html)

Already before the pronouncements of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), in Daim's book "Kirche und Zukunft" („Church and Future“, 1963) a number of theses was proposed in favor of a thorough „De-feudalization“ of the Roman Catholic Church.

While a majority of Daim's early theses on the *aggiornamento* of the Catholic Church have become reality over the years, some of his demands, above all the abolishment of celibacy for Catholic priests, are still on the agenda – with renewed urgency after the many cases of children abuse by clerics which were uncovered recently.

One of the special accents of Daim's conception of progressive Catholicism is his thesis that the founder of the Jewish religion, **Moses**, had bestowed a special revolutionary mission on the Israelites. This, among others, is symbolized by the passage about the burning thorn-bush from which God's voice was saying:

*“I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey...”*

From the text of the preamble of the Ten Commandments:

*“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery ...”*

Daim concludes that Christians, like their elder brothers, the Jews, stand under the revolutionary order of love and brotherhood given to them by Jesus Christ. At the end of times – again a reference to **Vladimir S. Solov'ev** – Christians and Jews shall be united.

In 1969 Wilfried Daim made his last bigger media appearance when he faked a speech by **Kurt Waldheim**, then Secretary General of the United Nations, stating that Austria had abolished her army. A referendum was initiated to this effect which, however, never materialized. Only recently, on the occasion of a move by the Socialist Party of Austria to switch from compulsory military service to a professional army of volunteers, some of the discussions about the role of an Austrian army have started all over again.

All through his life, Wilfried Daim has been a collector of art. He started buying paintings already as a student. He developed a real talent in discovering good but completely unknown painters. Among others, he collected two Austrian painters, **Otto Rudolf Schatz** and **Franz Probst**, both critics of the social conditions in the time between the wars. Publications by Daim about these two painters started in 1978. Published in 1997 and 2005, two large illustrated volumes describe Daim's "Kunstabenteuer" (art adventures). Today, Wilfried Daim is known as one of the most successful private art collectors of Austria.

A detailed [biography](#) of this most original contemporary thinker was published recently:

Peter Diem, Wilfried Daim, Querdenker zwischen Rot und Schwarz, edition Steinbauer, Wien, 2011. Price EUR 22,50

The title of the biography „Wilfried Daim - Maverick Thinker between Red and Black“ implies that Daim, a conservative by upbringing has always been a revolutionary in thinking and writing – almost as if he would observe what a little-known Austrian politician from the thirties had taken as his motto: “*Stand right and think left*”.