

Understanding the EU, Angela Merkel's red/green past

By David Archibald, for Autorenkollektiv, a writer's syndicate based in Switzerland. 12 September 2017

Red before she was green, the German Chancellor's rise from dutiful communist to elected politician testifies to an eye equally adept at spotting both the main chance and the next back to stab. Who is this woman who opened Europe's borders to the Third World? A two-part series...

Angela Merkel has been Chancellor of Germany for 12 years. Of all the leading politicians in Europe, only Vladimir Putin has been in power longer. The next German federal election is on September 24. If she wins that and completes her next term, she will have ruled as long as Helmut Kohl, and longer than Konrad Adenauer. Merkel is now campaigning with this slogan: *You Know Me*.

What do we and the German people really know about Angela Merkel? Her visions, agenda and background? It is not easy to grasp. Do we really know?

Two recent books try to give a clearer picture of the person now called 'The World's Most Powerful Woman.': *Merkel's Maske* by Hinrich Rohbohm and *Merkel -Eine Kritische Bilanz* (A Critical Analysis). The latter is a collection of 22 articles by German intellectuals. They paint a picture different from the one served up by German mainstream media. Rohbohm's tome goes through the information about Merkel's time in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), which she reported to various journalists and biographers over the years. Of some 20 books about Angela Merkel, the author of this Quadrant Online article has read 13 of them.

Her father, Horst Kasner (right, shortly before his death in 2011), was a young, left-wing Lutheran priest living in Hamburg, West Germany in 1954. A few months after his daughter Angela was born, the family moved to Templin, north of Berlin, in the former GDR. This was perhaps not the most obvious choice of settlement for a young West German priest, less than a year after the brutal Soviet military crack down on the revolt against the GDR regime in Berlin on July 17, 1953. Normally people fled in the other direction if they could. Hundreds of thousands left the GDR in 1954.

Soon Mr Kasner became known as "The Red Pastor." In the early 1960s he became leader of a priest seminar, its mission was to train a new generation of socialist church leaders. In the GDR, the Lutheran church was dominant. Mr Kasner worked closely with the ruling party, the Socialist Unity Party, to build the new socialist church, *Kirche im Sozialismus* (the Church in Socialism) completely separated from the church in West Germany. Unlike many of the children of priests who were often denied access to higher education, Kasner's daughter Angela was given the opportunity to study physics at Leipzig University, and later at the GDR's foremost scientific institution, the Academy of Science in Berlin.

Angela had a traditional party career, starting with membership of the Thälmann pioneers (motto: Be ready) followed in 1969 by the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ), the communist youth organization. No doubt Angela was gifted, diligent and smart. She was the best in school. She won a national award 'Russian Olympiade' in the Russian language 1970 at the age of 16. It gave her the opportunity to travel to Moscow on the *Zug Der Freundschaft* (The Train for Friendship). Her excellent knowledge of Russian opened many doors.

At Leipzig University she became one of the leaders in the FDJ. Merkel distinguished herself by devoting a year to study of Marxism-Leninism's foundations for students, according to the weekly *Junge Welt*. Thus, the road was open to becoming head of the FDJ's local department for Agitation and Propaganda at the Academy of Science, the Institute of Physical Chemistry in Berlin, Adlershof. It coincided with the intensification of propaganda activities by the GDR regime in order to counteract the influence of Solidarity in Poland and to campaign against NATO's Double Track Decision on nuclear, medium-range missiles in West Germany. GDR propagandists studied techniques from the 1930s to improve their ability to fanaticise the GDR population in favour of the socialist system.

Merkel's father had many privileges as part of the nomenklatura. The family had two cars! According to Merkel, her father had a large library, with books usually not available to ordinary GDR citizens. Merkel eagerly read books by Marcuse and left wing critics of the GDR, like Robert Havemann and Rudolf Bahro. She befriended Havemann's son, Florian, who later fled to West Germany.

Merkel also visited the home of Robert Havemann, who endured a glorified house arrest, constantly monitored by the Stasi. Havemann had ideas about ecology and zero growth that go back to German nature-romantic tradition that characterized the Artaman movement at the beginning of the century. They were not far from the ideas of the Greens of West Germany though not popular in the GDR communist party. On the face of it, it is hard to understand why a careerist/opportunist like Merkel was staying in contact with the likes of Havemann and his son. But here she found her ideological base.

Merkel's surname comes from her marriage to a fellow student, Ulrich Merkel, when she studied physics in Leningrad in 1977. Their marriage ended in 1982. According to Merkel, the GDR system needed a socialist renewal. When Michael Gorbachev was appointed Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985, she belonged to those who saw opportunities in a renewal of the communist system through Perestroika. This was actually an old idea of Lenin's, who conducted the New Economy Policy in the early 1920s. The goal was to get access to foreign capital and technology and thus strengthen the Soviet Union. Merkel became a Perestroikaist with an ecological leaning.

Gorbachev gave a speech to the top leaders of the Warsaw Pact in Budapest in June 1986 after the Chernobyl accident. He spoke of the need to reform the economy, using competition and market forces to become more effective, and also to care better for the environment. The communist leadership in the GDR was not particularly interested in these new ideas.

The head of the Stasi foreign intelligence division, Markus Wolf (right), was officially told to retire in 1986. This was a cover so that General (three stars) Wolf could build a new political structure in the GDR, which could implement Gorbachev's visions even against the will of the ruling party. Wolf was considered by others in the intelligence community as the 'master of deception'. His memoirs have been published in English and German. The content and message, for each language, is different because he had two different audiences to manipulate and influence.

Outwardly, Merkel held a low profile and devoted herself to research in physics with her new husband Professor Joachim Sauer. He was a leading light in the field of quantum physics. With Sauer's prominence, the pair of Sauer and Merkel was allowed to travel to the West for conferences from 1986 and at one point stayed in the West and did research for six months.

Merkel also met her grandmother in Hamburg on a private trip. For a childless couple, active in important scientific research, this opportunity to travel was very rare.

For a long time Merkel denied that she had ever been to the West before the fall of the Berlin wall of 1989. It was only when confronted with hard evidence, of her and her husband's western voyages by biographers and journalists that she recovered these memories. For someone hailed by admirers as having a mind like a computer, this indicates that she has not always been honest and told the truth. Travel to the West was a favour only offered to particularly reliable *Reisekader* (literally Travel Squad). This was a privileged minority required to provide written reports of where they had been, who they met and what they discussed. No reports of Merkel's western voyages have been found in the Stasi archives since the fall of the wall.

And there is at least one more document missing. A PhD student in the GDR was not only judged by her specialist knowledge, political reliability was also important in order to be approved. Therefore, before the dissertation, they would write a 50-page essay *Sozialistische Lebensweise* (The Socialist way of Life). The PhD student would describe her own attitude towards socialism and the system. Merkel's essay has never been found, despite the fact that many journalists have tried to obtain it.

When the Berlin Wall broke open on the evening of November 9, 1989, it was the beginning of the end of the Communist Party in its then form. New "reform-friendly" forces that followed Gorbachev's direction took over. There would be free elections in the spring of 1990. Merkel joined the Democratic Party Revival Party, led by a good friend of her father, Wolfgang Schnoor, a lawyer. The party motto was *Aufbruch – Sozial – Ökologisch* (Renewal-Social-Ecological). Merkel became Schnoor's press officer. The party was part of an election alliance with East-CDU (Christian Democratic Union) led by the lawyer Lothar de Maiziere.

A couple of weeks before the election, the weekly *Der Spiegel* revealed that Schnoor had been a secret informer for the Stasi for many years. So the party received only 0.9% of the votes in the elections of 1990. Merkel then transferred quickly to East-CDU, becoming deputy press secretary to de Maiziere. East-CDU had received 40% of the vote. Lothar de Maiziere was active in the church and a friend of the Kasner family.

De Maiziere became prime minister in the last GDR government, leading a coalition. On October 3, 1990, the two halves of Germany were reunited and the East CDU was merged with West CDU. Mr de Maiziere became a minister without portfolio in Helmut Kohl's government and vice chairman of the CDU Party. *Der Spiegel* soon revealed that even Lothar de Maiziere was a long-standing informant for the Stasi under the cover name 'Czerni'. Almost all leading people from the East CDU party were revealed as have been informers for the Stasi, leaving Merkel as the only one untainted. Merkel had become a member of the Bundestag on December 2, 1990. She succeeded Lothar de Maiziere as vice chairman of CDU, without ever having applied for membership of the party. Helmut Kohl appreciated Merkel's fast intellect, industry and ambition. So she was soon appointed to the position of minister for families, despite being childless and living with her partner, Professor Joachim Sauer, without being married.

In 1994, Merkel was appointed federal minister of the environment. Her over all ambition was to combat anticipated climate change. She organized the first UN conference on climate, COP 1 in Berlin in April 1995. Both Merkel and Helmut Kohl spoke in their introductory statements about carbon dioxide as "Climate Poison Carbon dioxide." As a PhD in physics she should

have known, that carbon dioxide at levels of 400 ppm is not a poison. Only at concentrations of greater than 5% (50,000ppm) is it toxic.

The climate issue perfectly suited Merkel, if her aspirations were to change Germany and the world according to ideas developed by Hermann Flohn and Green Socialist ideologists like Bahro, Harich and Havemann. With her position as a minister in the governing CDU party, she could have much more influence on policy in Germany than as an activist in the Green Party.

Merkel committed herself hard to negotiate the Treaty of Kyoto to combat global warming. It implied binding emission limits for Western industrialized countries with no requirements at all for developing countries, such as China and India. She collaborated with Vice President Al Gore about Kyoto, but soon realized that Mr Gore was mostly out to enrich himself. He lacked ideological conviction. The United States did not in the end ratify the Kyoto agreement.

CDU and Kohl lost the election in 1998. Merkel was appointed as the new CDU Secretary General. Kohl remained as the party's chairman. In one of her sparse interviews, Merkel said she saw herself more as a general than a secretary.

It was well known in the party's inner circles that the CDU was partially financed by black money. For example, some had come from the French government through the oil company ELF before the election 1998. For many years the Stasi had been monitoring Kohl's telephones. This was well known in government circles. During the new Social Democratic government led by Gerhard Schröder, information about this black money financing began to leak to the press. Former junior Minister for Defense in the CDU government and then head of the Constitutional Protection Agency (German secret service), Mr Holger Pfahls fled the country after being investigated for bribes from Saudi Arabia in relation to arms sales. The pressure against Kohl increased.

On December 22, 1999, Merkel contacted the editorial board of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and offered an interview and a debate article. She proclaimed that the CDU needed to be renewed, that they had to deal with the "old men", who sometimes stepped over the law and lacked any new ideas. This overture was made without Merkel informing Kohl and his deputy, Wolfgang Scheüble, in advance — a Machiavellian stroke, just before the Christmas weekend, which had maximum impact in the media. Kohl was forced to resign. Scheüble succeeded him as chairman of the CDU.

It only took a few months for the next shoe to drop: it was revealed that Mr Scheüble also received a suitcase with money, from the arms dealer Karl-Heinz Schreiber. So Mr Scheüble had to leave. The road was now open to Merkel to become new party chairman.

Prior to the 2002 elections, Gerhard Schröder's Red/Green coalition was well ahead in the polls. Merkel thought it was best to let the ambitious chairman of the Bavarian sister party CSU, Edmund Stoiber, become the chancellor candidate. Schröder easily won the election. So the conservative CSU's position weakened. Merkel worked deliberately to eliminate competitors within the CDU party, so she became a more obvious chancellor candidate for the next election. After the SPD defeated Kohl in the 1998 elections, the Germany economy had stagnated. In the UK, Tony Blair had started a new reformed social democracy he branded 'New Labor'. The labour market in Germany needed to be reformed. Gerhard Schröder had an ambitious agenda to implement the necessary liberalization in the labour market combined with tax cuts. This created great resistance in the SPD. Finally, Mr Schröder asked for a vote of confidence and lost, then called for new elections in 2005.

Merkel seemed to have a very good chance to win this time. She then ran a market-liberal agenda before the election, which had not been seen since Ludwig Erhardt's campaigns in the 1960s. She was compared by the *Wall Street Journal* with Margaret Thatcher. The elections became a much narrower victory for the CDU than expected. Merkel needed to form a coalition with the Social Democrats in order to form a government. Promised tax cuts were forgotten. Instead, the VAT increased by 3% percentage points, the largest tax increase ever. So the new "big coalition" actually returned to a typical traditional social-democratic policy.

Merkel was committed to building an international position for herself, which we would call globalist today. Among the like-minded politicians, she found Tony Blair and the Democratic Party Junior senator from Chicago, Barack Obama, who soon would gain a prominent profile in US and world affairs. When Obama proclaimed his presidential candidacy, he was supported by Merkel. On June 24, 2008, Obama addressed 200,000 enthusiastic Germans in the Tiergarten, Berlin. The speech was held at the Siegessaule, a monument to German militarism and revanchism, moved to its present location by Albert Speer. Obama's speech was broadcast in all the German state media such as ZDF and ARD. German TV and newspapers cheered over Obama as the 'Anti-George Bush'. One paper called him the "New Messiah." No German politician had used Siegessaule after the war for a public event. The monument was toxic, intended to celebrate Hitler when he had won the war.

Perhaps the most astonishing thing about Angela Merkel is her immunity to the political consequences of her decisions. Contrary to all promises, the cost of power has soared, yet this has not impacted her popularity. As to the 1.5 million migrants she has admitted, they haven't budged the polls at all

In Barack Obama, Merkel had found a younger partner sharing her basic views about climate and social values, a man of mostly talk and little substance. Merkel increased the resources for a government-funded network, WBGU (Scientific Council to the Government, for Global Environmental Policy). The goal was set of a global transformation of the capitalist system in the ecological direction. The Germans on the board included Joachim Schellhuber, Nebosja Nakicenovic, Ottmar Edenhofer and Claus Leggewie, all well -known to be left-wing.

In 2009, a conference was held in Essen 'The Great Transformation'. In addition to German ministers, Obama's Chief Counselor John Podesta and William Antholis from the Brookings Institution were in attendance. Lord Giddens, one of Tony Blair's closest ideologists, was a speaker. The conference was about values and lifestyles in a globalized interdependent world – how governments through 'nudge' could reprogram their people's brains to make them choose a 'sustainable lifestyle'. The conference was summarized thus:

- Decarbonization of the whole society, through use of renewable energy.
- Implementation of the Öko-Soziale Marktwirtschaft (a euphemism for a planed economy)
- People should avoid using private cars, travel as little as possible.
- A vegetarian lifestyle was proposed, proteins from insects are more sustainable than eating meat. Eat bugs.

- Organize society more like ant heaps – it's resilient.
- It is doubtful if this vision of the future would be possible to implement in a democratic society. It would be necessary to consider appointing a global expert council who can make important long-term decisions without risking disturbances of short-term populist ideas.

The conference had 500 participants, including four ministers, but had almost no impact at all in the media. Only four journalists attended.

In the 2009 elections, the FPD (Free Democrat Liberal Party) won more than 15%, becoming the natural coalition partner for CDU, instead of the Social Democrats. The FDP had promised significant tax cuts and a reassessment of the former nuclear-decommissioning policy by 2022. They also wanted to limit wind and solar development because the exorbitant cost of subsidies (EEG). In 2000 it was claimed that the EEG would cost the typical household the equivalent to one scoop of ice cream per month, or 3.5 cents per kWh. Merkel promised not only that the EEG would not only not rise any further, it would be capped and subsequently lowered. That promise was false. Today, in 2017, the EEG is expected to cost about 6.88 cents per kWh. The total cost of *Energiewende* in Germany until 2030 is estimated at least EUR 1,000 billion. It seems to be an economic apocalypse. German households now, next to Denmark, have the world's highest electricity costs. At the same time, carbon dioxide emissions have not decreased at all over the last three years. Fossil fuel power is always needed as back-up.

But renewable energy has created a new class of financial investors, the so-called 'WindJunkers', who earn amazing amounts from subsidies. This is possibly the largest transfer of money from households to a group of privileged investors in modern times. Merkel was a long time in favour of using nuclear power to save the climate, as Minister for the Environment and later Chancellor. So the government decided in 2010 to extend the use of nuclear power until the reactors were technically and economically depreciated. The nuclear industry was allowed to continue using the facilities against a significant charge on nuclear fuel, which would counteract supposedly unfair 'super profits'.

In Spring, 2011, however, Japan was hit by the strongest earthquake ever recorded in the country, followed by a tsunami that surged ashore and claimed 25,000 lives. Then came the Fukushima nuclear meltdown and the world held its breath. As it happened, only two people died as a consequence of the accident and some radioactivity was released. Merkel realized that the dramatic TV images would influence the German popular opinion about nuclear power. On state television in Germany, Fukushima was presented as if the thousands of casualties were killed by the reactor accident, rather than the tsunamai. The government quickly convened an "ethics council", consisting of church leaders and community scientists but no technicians, charging the panel with assessing if Germany should continue with nuclear power.

The outcome in the prevailing state of opinion was a given. Merkel quickly announced all reactors would be closed, the last to remain in operation no later than 2022, exactly as the red-green government had announced would happen way back in 2000. The vote was taken unanimously by all six parties in the Bundestag. The nuclear industry would have to continue to pay the new tax on nuclear fuel. The decision was popular among the Greens and Left, but hardly within the CDU Party. The German power industry initiated court proceedings, which the government lost in 2017. The Constitutional Court ruled that the charge was illegal, so the government ordered to return €6 billion to the power companies.

In connection with the urgent Euro crisis of 2010, Merkel took the lead to save the single currency. Her famous statement was “If the euro collapses, then the EU collapses.” The politicians conducted a number of rescue operations for Greece, Spain and Portugal. Merkel swore there was no alternative. She became known for the term *Alternativlos*. All commitments were guaranteed by the European Central Bank, where Germany’s share is 27%. This means that other central banks in Europe now owe Germany an amount of EUR 850 billion under the so-called TARGET 2 mechanism. This is money that returns zero interest and has no fixed amortization plan. Normally, this kind of non-performing debt would be considered worthless and be written off, according to Professor H.W. Sinn at the IFO Institute in München. He is one of Merkel’s sharpest critics on the Euro and the *Energiewende*.

The rescue of the weak EU countries by the ECB is completely contrary to what Helmut Kohl promised the German electorate before the introduction of the euro in 1998. It would never ever be a debt union, he said, and the euro would be as strong as the D-Mark. This was guaranteed by the European Treaties and ECB charter. Several politicians in the Union parties complained to the Constitutional Court. It was also what triggered the political movement that became the new party Alternative for Deutschland (AfD), attracting some CDU members joined the new party.

The ECB also introduced a policy of negative interest rates, which was a hard hit to German savers and pensioners, whose savings are mostly in bank accounts and in bonds. Now the German government can borrow money and is paid interest by the capital market for the bonds. The ECB’s policy is based on an idea that has its roots in the radical political ideas prevailing in Germany after the end of the First World War. The Schwundgeld theory (“disappearing money”) is now applied by the ECB and Swiss National Bank. It was invented by Silvio Gesell, a fruit farmer without a formal education. He was appointed as minister of finance and confiscation in the short-lived Bavarian Soviet republic of 1919. Another German economist, Gottfried Feder, one of the founders of the Nazi party had similar ideas about ban of interest on money.

German savers and retirees have lost around €300 billion in returns on their savings since 2012. During the 12 years of Merkel’s three coalitions, the government take of GDP has increased from 40% to 45%. The taxes and fees from households have been steeper, with only Belgium and Denmark having imposed higher tax burdens on their citizens.

THREE DECADES ago, in 1986, the GDR organized a refugee intake of Tamils from Sri Lanka. About 50,000 flew to East Berlin, where they could pass the Friedrichsstrasse border control into to West Berlin without any problem. This was a way to exert political pressure on the government Kohl, while at the same time getting hard currency.

In the winter of 2014, the EU Commission and the Obama regime decided to halve the contribution to UNHCR (UN Refugee Commission) operations in Iraq and Syria. The number of calories per refugee was reduced from 2800 to 1600 per day. A famine catastrophe threatened millions of people. They left refugee camps and began moving towards Europe. It created opportunities for windfall profits for human traffickers in Turkey, Greece and Italy.

A rational solution would have been to increase the appropriations for refugees in their home countries to the old level while strengthening the border guards in Italy and Greece to keep the Schengen border tight. Instead, Merkel opted for what is now known as ‘Welcome culture’ — a new term that captures what the Green Party had always wanted: open borders and unlimited immigration. Germany has so far received 1.5 million migrants over 2015-16, with at least

100,000 arriving with no papers or dubious ones. According to a judgment in the Strasbourg European Court of Justice, the refugees are entitled to family reunification. Merkel's spin doctors claimed many refugees were "qualified" immigrants – physicians, engineers and professionals – who would contribute to the German economy. The reality is otherwise, "unskilled shepherds" in the words of one critic, with many illiterate even in their native tongues.

It will be a hard putting these "New Germans" in meaningful work, but that is far from the only problem. The Constitutional Protection Agency (Secret Service) has reported there might be as many as 10,000 potential terrorists hidden among those immigrants. A retired judge of the Constitutional Court, Udo Di Fabio, has stated in a legal analysis prepared for the Bavarian authorities that the federal government violated the law, as the new arrivals' identities had not been verified.

Yet none of this has diminished Angela Merkel's standing, with the polls say she is favoured by some 50% of the population. How could this be? Merkel's predecessor Dr Helmut Kohl was constantly under siege from the media. He was demoted and declared incompetent until the 1990 reunification. After that, Kohl's popularity began to drop again. To understand this, look no further than the media, very much Merkel's ally.

In GDR, journalists were regarded as soldiers of the revolution. The Leipzig Journalist College was known as "The Red Monastery" and that mindset would appear not to have changed very much after unification. According to Manfred Güllner from the Forsa Institute, about 36% of German journalists sympathize with the Green Party, Social Democrats have 26%, the Free Democratic Party 10% and the CDU 9%. The balance of their sympathies is distributed among different extremist left-wing parties. In radio and television, state media ARD and ZDF dominate the ether with a clear left-wing agenda. Here we can really talk about journalists as ideological soldiers in the ether. As with journalists throughout the West, they are group-thinkers and exponents of political correctness, meaning Merkel has largely escaped consistent critical journalism. In addition, traditional newspapers are shrinking, their business plans are failing and they must increasingly depend on government assistance. Obviously, this does not encourage dispassionate analysis and commentary. This makes "old media" increasingly dependent on the state.

Merkel has been the great beneficiary. It is not an edifying thought, but when Germans vote on September 24, it looks very much as if Merkel will win at a canter. The Great Transformation will go on!

Autorenkollektiv is a writer's syndicate based in Switzerland. These reports were prepared for publication in English by David Archibald