

# The Godmother: Germany's New Dictator, Angela Merkel?

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- Today Adenauer's legacy is being undone. East Germany has annexed West Germany and Prussia is about to conquer the rest of Europe. Merkel is about to become the most powerful person on Earth.
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For two consecutive years, *Forbes Magazine* has elected Angela Merkel the most powerful woman on Earth. It might not be long before she becomes the most powerful person on Earth. That is what Gertrud Höhler, a former advisor of former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl fears. Höhler has published a book to warn the Germans about Merkel, who, Höhler says, wants to establish a dictatorship in Europe.

The 58-year old Angela Merkel began her political career in 1991 as a junior minister under Chancellor Kohl. After the German reunification of 1990, Helmut Kohl needed some ministers from the former East Germany, the so-called "German Democratic Republic" (GDR). Although Kohl made Merkel his Minister of Women and Youth, he did not seem to have a high opinion of her; he derisively called her, "*das Mädchen*" – "the girl."

Kohl's contempt for "the girl Angela" is shared by his former confidante, Gertrud Höhler. The 71-year old Höhler has just published a Merkel biography called "*Die Patin: Wie Merkel Deutschland umbaut* – The Godmother: How Merkel Is Reconstructing Germany." *Patin* is also a derisive term. It is the female version of *Pate*, godfather. Francis Ford Coppola's movie "The Godfather" is called *Der Pate* in German. In Höhler's view, Merkel is the real life version of what Marlon Brando was in the movie.

Höhler considers Merkel to be a danger to democracy. She is said to be establishing a dictatorship. Not just in Germany, but in Europe. Merkel's aim, writes Höhler, is to become the Chancellor of Europe. And her rule will not be democratic. "Merkel has left the path of democracy," says Höhler. The Chancellor imposes her will on the Germans and the other Europeans, without caring about the rule of law, national constitutions or even earlier treaties which she signed herself.

Höhler explains, however, that Merkel is not an ideological dictator. According to Höhler, Merkel has no principles. All that matters for the Chancellor is power. Höhler calls Merkel's governing method "*das System M*." The M stands for *Macht*, the German word for power. Merkel, the most powerful woman on earth, is a power-obsessed egomaniac, driven by just one thing: a desire for more power.

Höhler says she wishes to protect the Germans from Merkel's autocratic regime, which would be Germany's third dictatorship in less than eighty years, after Nazism and East Germany's Communism. Höhler describes how Merkel orchestrated the end of the political careers of all potential rivals within her own Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which also happens to be Höhler's party.

Höhler's fury at Merkel is excessive and some observers hint that it probably originates from Höhler's frustration over her own political ambitions. These were thwarted twenty years ago when Kohl did not appoint Höhler as a cabinet minister, but gave a junior position to Merkel, a woman who emerged in Germany with the collapse of the Communist GDR.

Höhler is not the only critic of Merkel in the CDU. Two weeks ago, CDU business policy expert Josef Schlarmann sharply criticized "System M." Those who do not agree with Merkel are excluded from the party leadership, he said. Schlarmann, too, pointed out that Merkel has removed all potential challengers from the party, making it impossible for a successor to come forward as long as she leads the party.

Höhler's book has caused a stir in Germany -- possibly due not only to squabbling within the CDU, but also to the unease among former West Germans about current German politics. Many West Germans seem to resent the fact that, twenty years after the reunification, they are being governed by former East Germans. The Chancellor, Höhler says, is an "alien" to the political nature of the Federal Republic of Germany. She is a politician molded in the politics of "regimes that enforce political conformity."

Twenty years after the reunification, Germany has not only a Chancellor, but also a President, Joachim Gauck, who grew up in the East. President Gauck is a former East German pastor, and Merkel is the daughter of a former East German pastor. Shortly after her birth in 1954, her parents moved from West to East Germany, at a time when thousands of Germans were doing the opposite: fleeing the Communist East for the free West.

Höhler's main thesis that a politician such as Merkel is not a politician in the liberal Western mold echoes the feelings of many Germans from the former West. Twenty years after the reunification, Germany is in many respects still two different countries. Of the 15,000 marriages which take place annually in Berlin, fewer than 1,000 are between someone from the former West Berlin and a partner from the former East.

In his memoirs, Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic, did not regret the fact that West Germany was separated from the East in 1945. In the 1920s, Adenauer had been a separatist who wanted his native Rhineland to secede from the Prussian heartland in the East. In Adenauer's view, the Rhineland had more in common with liberal Western states such as the Netherlands and Britain than with authoritarian Prussia.

Today, Adenauer's legacy is being undone. East Germany has annexed West Germany, and Prussia is about to conquer the rest of Europe. While the former West Germany was pro-Atlantic, the new Prussia goes her own way.

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