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# The Great Age of Angela Merkel



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# Prologue

This book describes Merkel's government from 2008 to 2016 and more. It's the time of many political events. In 2005 Merkel had taken over the government of Gerhard Schröder. He failed with his policy. Now she is to address what Schröder had done wrong. But he had brought about the Agenda 2010. The fruits of this Agenda she now reaps. Her reign is also a time of crises. But she manages all the crises and gains respect in the world. She will be the woman who wins a lot of prestige. Many seek advice from her. She is the boss of a nation that is an important member of the European Community.

# The era Merkel

We write the year 2008

Germany is in 2008 an important partner for the Greats of the world as before. Also America has thus a reliable friend, a friend of loyalty, but also a friend who has sometimes an own view of the resolution of certain problems.

Today the biggest problem of Germany itself is the welfare system, especially the problem of the state old-age pension. And what's the reason for this problem? It's only the demographic factor. By the demographic factor, which takes into consideration the growing-old people in Germany, is put this system at risk.

Germany's social system is known. So there is the legal pension scheme as above mentioned. Employee and employer have to pay into this scheme; so there is the unemployment, health and old age nursing scheme, also here employee and employer have to pay into. There are also other schemes for aid, so the social security for poor people, who received money for their rented flat, for cost of living, for furnishings and for clothing. Persons who cannot pay the rent for the flat because of lack of money get an

allowance; homeless persons get food and clothing by local authorities.

The old age nursing scheme belongs to a new scheme. All old people who are ill, disable or are in need of nursing receive care night and day, if necessary also young people by way of exception. Not only nursing belongs to the care, but also housekeeping aid, food service at home (food gets taken home) or mobility aid in the everyday life.

Germany is partner and helper in the world, especially in Africa. The cooperation with African states, the German development aid, has many aspects, political, economic and personal. Because it counts especially for the necessity of aid for people who are in need of help the development projects, Germany is very active in this field. Germany supports African governments, which tries to take the democratic way. So the people of other African regions are supposed to see, that it's worth living in a democratic country.

In June is the American president George W. Bush in Germany again. It should be a farewell visit. In Berlin he met with a friendly reception. Mrs Merkel, the German chancellor, called him good friend of the Germans.



**Angela Merkel.** She was born on 17 July 1954 in Hamburg. Her original name was Angela Dorothea Kasner. She grew up in the GDR. Since 2005 she is Chancellor of Germany.

On 15 September the new economic and financial crisis began. The American investment bank Lehman Brothers announced its solvency, the competitor, Merrill Lynch, was bought up by the Bank of America. The result was that the credit market froze up and the rates at the stock exchange were going downhill. Now also the collapse of the real estate market followed caused by possessors who had got into debts which were too high for them. Many people had also overdrawn their accounts too much. That was mainly caused by means of credit cards which led them to go too much on shopping sprees. Because many German banks were business partner of the Lehman Bank like other banks all over the world, they were drawn into the (financial) whirlpool too. Only state aid could help so that many generations have to pay the state debts back now. With the financial crisis came the economic crisis. Germany is the export country No. 1 in the world; therefore it was hard hit by the worldwide recession, which was caused by the financial crisis, now. But the German government tried to lessen this recession by special state programmes.

Germany is the country of new technology too. Germany participates for example in the space research by the **ESA**, European Space Agency. So there are many projects. One of these projects is the exploration of the gravity fields of the earth by satellite **Goce**, Gravity field and steady-state ocean circulation explorer. Goce is five metres long and orbits the earth in a height of 260 kilometres. It is in a polar orbit. Two Ion's engine holds it permanently on

course so that it doesn't lose height.

The research scientists expect much of new discoveries by this mission. So they want to realize better the water circulation of the oceans, to improve models for the prediction of earthquakes and to observe the rise of the sea level.

A new technological invention is the German robot Justin. Justin was constructed by the German aerospace company (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt) and can serve tea, can clean and dance. In the head this boy has sensors, stereo cameras, laser scanner and a light cut projector by which he can find out clear glass too. Justin heaves 14 kg with each arm – also drinks boxes are no problem.

Justin is sensitive as opposed to other robots. Justin grasps not only, he feels what he holds in the hand by means of sensors. If Justin touches unintentionally anything then he would react properly: He breaks immediately off exercise or asks the question: What shall I do? If someone shows Justin the cleaning of the table by pressing a rag into his hand then he imitates the movement and finished the work.

Justin is a real hard-working boy; he can help in household and industry and even in the outer space. Today Justin already helps in the production of automobiles and his arms

get tested on the outside covering of the international space station ISS.

## We write the year 2009

This year began with the situation there was at the end of the year before, economic and financial crisis. But there was the hope for improvement and Germany was on the way to recovery some months later indeed. But there was also another problem, the war in Afghanistan. Although the German troops are stationed in the north, in the so-called quiet zone, Germany has to deplore victims by the attacks of the Taliban there.

Early in September the Taliban had planned an attack with two stolen tankers in the zone of the Germans. But they were discovered in time by the German "Bundeswehr" there. Now the commander of the German Armed Forces gave the orders to destroy the tankers by an air raid. The bomb attack was carried out by the allies. The result of this attack was not only two destroyed tankers but also many dead men, amongst them more than 50 rebels of the Taliban are said to have been killed.

Early in September began also the hot phase of the electoral battle. In Düsseldorf made the German chancellor, Mrs Angela Merkel, one of her great speeches. "We have the

strength", was the slogan of her party, the CDU. Here the point of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) was, to give its electoral battle more pep before the "Bundestagswahl" (election to the Bundestag/Lower House of the German parliament). Now the CDU wanted to mobilize better its followers too. Mrs Merkel cleverly claimed also the promising themes of climate-change and family policy as her own which were themes of the Greens (and SPD). She formulated clearly the claim of her party in Düsseldorf and attacked the political opponent.

On 27 September was held the election for the German "Bundestag". Only 70.8 % of all persons who were entitled to vote went to the polls. The SPD (Social Democratic Party) was the big loser with more than 11% fewer votes than before. Its election result was the worst in post-war history. And worse, this disastrous result had hardly anything to do with its leadership, but was a consequence of the hollowing-out of its political identity. The party had ceased to produce anything that moved or convinced people. Thus the winners were the three small parties, the FDP (Free Democrats), the post-Communist Left Party (Die Linke) and the Greens. On Sunday, it's the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, the Germans were faced with a fundamental about the direction of their country. Did they want the continuation of the "grand coalition" of Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats (SPD)? Or did they want a reform alliance of Christian Democrats and Free Democrats (FDP)?

The new CDU/CSU-FDP government under Chancellor

Angela Merkel had a clear mandate and a clear majority and it is internally stable. For tactical reasons, many regular CDU/CSU voters cast their ballot for the FDP to send a clear signal of their opposition to a continuation of the grand coalition. So the politician everyone in Berlin, the German capital, wasn't talking about the Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose party won the most votes, but about the FDP a small party and a big winner now, which set to solidify the chancellor hold on power.

The leader of the FDP, Guido Westerwelle, was appointed vice chancellor and foreign minister according to German tradition. It was the reward for leading his free-market, pro-business party to its best result ever in a federal election. The party's share of the vote rose to 14.6%. That was an increase of 4.7 percentage points over the previous election in 2005 and the largest gain of any party. Meanwhile Angela Merkel's conservative bloc slightly lost ground with voters. Her party, the Christian Democrats (CDU), and the sister party in Bavaria (CSU - Christian Social Union), finished with 33.8% of the vote. The rival Social Democrats (SPD) managed just 23%, their worst showing after the last World War. The far-left Left Party (Die Linke) and the environment Green Party (Die Grünen) finished with 11.9% and 10.7% of the votes, respectively, stronger showings than either record in the last election.

The victors wanted to form quickly a new government, because the next important day was the 9 November, the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was the day

when many statesmen were expected to the ceremony in Berlin and the new government should be consolidated then. But it was to be still a hard job for CDU/CSU and FDP to form a government just because the two (three) parties wanted to rule together did not mean it will necessarily be easy to reconcile their proposals. Mrs Merkel promised labour unions during the campaign that she wouldn't scrap job-protection laws, a stance that could lead to tensions with the Free Democratic Party, which wanted stronger deregulation of the labour market than the chancellor's party. In the campaign Mrs Merkel tempered her support for business-friendly change with assurances that she is committed to upholding Germany's strong social protections.

On 7 October a sensation, the secretary of the Swedish Academy announced: The literary Nobel Prize winner 2009 is Herta Müller. – Herta Müller was born on 17 August 1953 in Nitzkydorf (Romania). She studied in Temesvar (Timisoara/Romania), after that she was translator in engineering works, she migrated to Berlin 1987. 1989 – 2001 she was visiting professor in England, America and Switzerland. Since 1995 she is member of the “Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung” (German Literary Academy).

Herta Müller grew up as German-speaking Romanian during the dictatorship of Ceausescu. In her works she described the anguishes, which the people had to endure during the dictatorship, in a hard but also pleasant diction. Some of her works in German language are: “Nie-

derungen" (Lowlands), "Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger" (The fox was already the hunter); "Herztier" (Heart-animal); "Atemschaukel" (Breath-swing); "Die blassen Herren mit Mokkatassen" (The pale men with mocha cups).



The regime had finally changed in Berlin. At the end of October had Mrs Merkel (CDU) and Mr Westerwelle (FDP) hammered out their coalition pact, the document outlining their policy road map for the next four years. This exercise wasn't a walk in the park, because their ideas clashed on many different fields. Bones of contention included tax re-

form and tax reduction, the continued existence of the Federal Labour Agency, health care, abolition of the military draft and civil liberties in an age of international terrorism.

As well as overcoming, or at least laying aside, such programmatic differences, the coalition partners will have to agree on how to deal with the pressing problems created by the global economic crisis. It is a creeping crisis that has yet to fully catch up with Germany. Most experts expect the country to be hit hard the next spring: when a credit crunch will set in once old loan arrangements run out; when short-term workers are likely to be laid off; and when the interest burden for the burgeoning state debt (€ 2 trillion all old, € 100 billion in next year's federal budget alone!) will reach harrowing dimensions.

Germany's problems are diverse, many problems are hardly resolvable. So there are the problem caused by the present crisis, many well-known companies go bankrupt, thousands and thousands of employees got jobless. Thus the new government has a hard job in order to find the right resolution for all the problems.

Another problem is the problem of the two great German Churches. In the land of the Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, with its more than 82 million inhabitants, less than 22 million in the West and just about 3 million in the East profess to the members of the Lutheran faith. So put it more precisely, these people in each of the 16 states pay a

portion of their taxes the Evangelical Church of Germany, the EKD. But that name is misleading. There is no single Evangelical Church of Germany. It has so many branches that even theologians and church historians lose track of them all.

There are some problems between Catholic and Evangelical Church. So it is forbidden for Catholic priests to let Protestants receive their communion. Confessional mixed marriages are frowned upon. Catholic leaders keep their hierarchically organized church run by clerics strictly separate from the democratically composed Protestant denomination with its various groups.

Another problem for both denominations is the empty church too. So many East Germans did not return to religion after the fall of the Berlin Wall and also in the West the people go less and less to the church.

Germany has not only Church problems, but also problems with some groups, persons who like the violence. For example there are two groups of the rocker's gangs, the "Bandidos" and "Hells Angels" who are enemies. They are owners of restaurants, brothels busy the drug trafficking. But both groups are competitors, so there is also an escalation of violence, a problem for Germany, but now it's for the politics to act too. Hells Angels or Bandidos, that is not Germany, that cannot be a matter for a country which has other problems enough, problems caused by the crisis, so

bankruptcies of great companies, companies which had made a name for themselves in Germany, in Europe, but in the world too.

In the beginning of November was Mrs Merkel in America. There she spoke in front of both American High Houses of Congress and thanked the Americans for the help with the reunification of the both German countries.

November 9<sup>th</sup>, it was the great day for Germany, the “Festival of Freedom”. 20 years ago, the Berlin Wall was removed. 20 years later, tens of thousands of people commemorated the historical day in front of the “Brandenburger Tor” (Brandenburg Gate) in Berlin. November 9, 1989 it was a day of miracle, the beginning of the freedom for 18 million Germans in the east of the divided country. Now, 2009, commemorated many statesmen from all over the world this great day together with the Germans, also the president of the United States of America, Barack Obama, spoke by video transmission to the guests, visitors and inhabitants of Berlin. It was a day with fireworks, a day of the great speeches, a day of luck, the day when a dream came true.

Thursday, November 11<sup>th</sup>, it was a historical day for France and Germany, marked by the historic visit of Mrs Merkel in Paris for Armistice. The French president Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, attended the Armistice Day ceremony in Paris, marking 91 years since

the end of the First World War. Mrs Merkel was the first German chancellor to attend the official French commemoration. Speaking at a ceremony at the "Arc de Triomphe", Mr Sarkozy called for 'an ever closer association of French and German policies', describing the reconciliation of the two countries as a 'treasure'.

The French president was speaking at a ceremony at the "Arc de Triomphe" in Paris alongside Angela Merkel. He said Mrs Merkel's presence beside the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where the two leaders laid a wreath and lit again the eternal flame, was an exceptional gesture of friendship. Mr Sarkozy intended the show of reconciliation on Armistice Day partly to conceal French and German difficulties in finding new initiatives to deepen their leadership of the European Union. Mrs Merkel spoke of history that has united the French and Germans for centuries, whether in happy or unhappy periods. Thus this day was a great day of French-German friendship, a great day of the both neighbours. One could see a united front, people wave French, German and European flags.

In the middle of November was elected a new leader of the SPD, it was Sigmar Gabriel, ex-Minister of Environment, 50 years old. The members of the party conference in Dresden voted with 94.2% for him. He should lead his party out of disaster of the last election; he is the great white hope of the party and should be the great opponent of the Black-Yellow government. But his job is difficult, the party has sunk very low, too low. So could it be a dream only to take

over again the might in four years.

Franz Josef Jung, the ex-Minister of Defence (CDU) and Minister for Labour Affairs now steps down. The bad policy of information about the “catastrophe” some weeks ago in Afghanistan, the attempt of the Taliban to attack by two petrol trucks, which they had stolen shortly before, and the destruction of these trucks by the air force of the allies by order of the German commander-in-chief in Afghanistan, caused a big discussion in Germany. The result was the political end of Franz Josef Jung because too many human beings had lost their life by the bombardment of the trucks, amongst them also many civilians what was first denied; therefore the German commander-in-chief had to go now too. Franz Josef Jung wanted to protect allegedly the life of the German soldiers, what wanted his commander in Afghanistan too. Jung’s words of farewell were: “Wie Sie wissen, war und ist es mir ein Herzensanliegen, die Soldatinnen und Soldaten in ihrem Einsatz für Frieden und Freiheit unseres Vaterlandes zu unterstützen und sie vor unberechtigten Angriffen in Schutz zu nehmen.” (How you know, I wanted to protect the life of the German soldiers; I wanted to support them in their actions against the unjustified attacks of the Taliban. How you know, they defend the peace and the freedom of our homeland in Afghanistan)

The new Minister for Labour Affairs became Mrs von der Leyen, up to now Minister for Family Affairs. Her successor as Minister for Family Affairs became Kristina Köhler (CDU), just 32 years old. Thus Mrs Merkel had already to