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## Still Raising Questions: How Angela Merkel Started Her Career In German Politics

### Description

## *Submitted by Socrates F. Bach,*

**Angela Merkel is considered to be the world's most powerful woman and perhaps Europe's most powerful person.** She's about to be re-elected as Germany's Chancellor for the fourth consecutive time. Her policies have provoked a lot of debate, from Germany's decision to phase out nuclear energy over the Eurozone bailouts onto her refugee policies.

**What has received much less attention is how she entered politics.** A number of biographies have been written about her, with the most critical one perhaps being "[the first life of Angela M](#)", written in 2013 by a journalist for Die Welt who later joined the rightwing populist AfD party. This [centered](#) on how **she was a member of the [FDJ](#), the communist youth organization, when she was at school, and how she later [served](#) as cultural secretary for the [FDJ](#)** while working as a physicist at the Academy of Sciences, leading to Merkel denying this role included propaganda.

To be fair to her: in any case, she wasn't a politically active avid Communist trying to make a career in the German Democratic Republic. That however changed with the "Wende", the period during which the Berlin wall fell and Eastern Germany was absorbed into the West.

During that period, Merkel made a blitz career in politics, [morphing](#) from a stuffy Eastern German researcher in November 1989 to entering the German Bundestag in 1990, in order to be appointed shortly after as Minister for Women and Youth in the government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl in January 1991.

**What's really intriguing here is how she achieved this.**

## Merkel's first job in politics

**Her first job in politics wasn't a great success.** In February 1990, she had become the spokeswoman of the "[Democratic Awakening](#)", an East German political movement and political party which was founded in October 1989. The party didn't do well in the first democratic Eastern German elections in 1990, only collecting 0.9% of votes. This was because its chairman, [Wolfgang Schnur](#), had to confess to having been an informer for the feared and ruthless Ministry for State Security ([Stasi](#)) [for more than two decades](#). A few days before the [election](#), he had to resign, as this wasn't exactly a great sales pitch for an Eastern German pro-democracy movement. The man was later criminally [convicted](#) as well.

**How did Merkel end up there?** According to her predecessor as party spokeswoman for [Democratic Awakening](#)", Christiane Ziller, who stepped down along with some other more left leaning people over the decision of the party convention to adopt a more conservative program, "there wasn't any

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democratic legitimacy [as to how Merkel was appointed], as far as I know. Her appointment was one of these discretionary decisions by Schnur”, the later disgraced party chairman. Ziller, who otherwise speaks positively about Merkel in an interview with die Welt and later joined the German greens, [mentions](#) how Merkel “remained a stranger within the opposition network in the German Democratic Republic”.

**Merkel had joined the opposition movement [Democratic Awakening](#) only [after](#) the Berlin wall fell, on 9 November 1989. She has never claimed to have been an active dissident before the wall fell.**

The Democratic Awakening was based on existing politically active church groups and that’s where Merkel’s father, Horst Kasner, comes in. He was a pastor, who had moved from Hamburg to East Berlin in 1954, when already a lot of people had fled the Communist regime. Eastern German official documents [describe](#) him as “an opponent” of the regime, but later his nickname seems to have evolved into “red Kasner”, as he was then campaigning for the Eastern German Church to be split off from the Western Germany Evangelical Church in a bid to reconcile Christianity and “socialism”, as the Communists called their ideology. This was very much something the Eastern German regime desired, as cutting Church ties with the West would strengthen their grip on the Church, which was a vehicle to oppose the regime.

**Some sources describe Merkel’s father as someone who [toed](#) the regime line within the Eastern Germany Church community, although it must be said that other sources [contradict](#) this.**

[Gerd Langguth](#), a former European Commission representative in Germany, takes the former line and when writing the obituary of Merkel’s father in Die Welt, he points out that, [unlike](#) the children in other pastors’ families, the higher education of Kasner’s children, including Angela Merkel, was not impeded, a sign that he may have been quite friendly towards the regime. He [writes](#) that Kasner may well have taken this conciliatory stance for the good of his children. One biography of Merkel even [claims](#) that she enjoyed special treatment at school thanks to her father’s connections. It’s hard to know of course, and can we really blame a father to do everything for his children?

**Instead of speculating, let’s stay to the facts.** One of these facts is that Wolfgang Schnur, the leader of the first Eastern German opposition party who was later unveiled as a Stasi, has been pretty [clear](#) that he employed Angela Merkel because her father was [a lifelong friend](#).

Schnur was active in the Synod of the Federation of the Protestant Churches in the GDR and as an [attorney](#) he defended many Eastern German political dissidents in the 1980s. This may have helped this Stasi man to infiltrate so deeply into the Eastern German opposition movement that he emerged as one of its leaders when the wall came down. For what it’s worth: he has [claimed](#) to be acting against Stasi advice in joining the opposition movement.

**In any case, perhaps unknowingly, Merkel has her first job in politics to thank due to the regime connections of her father.**

## Merkel’s second job in politics

**After that, also for Merkel’s second jobs in politics she ends up working for a politician who didn’t only have to step down over suspected Stasi links but who also comes out of the world of Eastern-German Church politics.**

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That is Lothar de Maiziere, the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Eastern Germany.

When Merkel had to find a new way in politics after the [Democratic Awakening](#) had been crushed in March 1990 due to the Stasi – connections of its leader, she was appointed as deputy spokesman for Lothar de Maiziere, in April 1990, who was the leader of the Eastern German Christian Democracy Union, a so-called “[bloc party](#)”, whose function it was to serve as a pretense of real democracy. He had just won the first democratic elections in Eastern Germany and was about to become Prime Minister. In a later interview, Lothar de Maiziere recalls how German Chancellor Kohl was easy to be convinced to merge the Eastern German CDU into the Western German one, despite some protest in his party, because, [according](#) to de Maiziere, “in all areas of the GDR we had an office (...) and we were able to conduct a comprehensive electoral campaign. The Chancellor was always open to such considerations”. Also the liberal party [decided](#) so, given the high number of members and despite some resistance.

Lothar’s cousin and Germany’s current Interior Minister Thomas de Mazière was also appointed to his cabinet in April 1990, closely working together there with Merkel. Thomas comes from the West-German wing of the family that had been estranged from the Eastern-German wing. Merkel and him both go back a long way, especially as Merkel appointed Thomas de Mazière to serve as her chief of staff when she became Chancellor in 2005.

According to Thomas, in 1990, he would have [recommended](#) his uncle to hire Merkel. Thomas had been impressed by her qualities at the press conference where Schnur’s resignation as the leader of “Democratic Awakening” was declared. That party was in an electoral association called “[Alliance for Germany](#) with Lothar de Mazière’s CDU. In a [joint interview](#) with his cousin, Lothar de Mazière makes clear that even before his cousin’s recommendation, Merkel had already impressed him, as she “was very good at moderating” between the “squabbling” different parties of the association.

Oddly, in this particular [interview](#), Lothar de Mazière doesn’t mention that his father, Clemens de Mazière, and Merkel’s father knew each other. It’s also very likely that Lothar himself knew Merkel’s father personally, as both had been prominent in Eastern German Church politics for years.

Lothar de Maiziere’s father Clemens [was](#) the Eastern German Church’s lawyer, where [he worked closely](#) together with Merkel’s father to split the Eastern German Church off from its Western German counterpart. As said, [this](#) was a policy desired by the Eastern German regime. Clemens de Maiziere was a shrewd Stasi-[operator](#) who apparently even [betrayed](#) his own family. After the war, Clemens had swiftly converted from Nazism to Communism as he had once belonged to Adolf Hitler’s “Sturmabteilung”, with membership number 3952867. Just to give a bit of background on politics in Communist Eastern Germany.

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As mentioned, Merkel's father may well only have cooperated with the regime to prevent worse and for the good of his family. He may not even have been aware that Clemens de Maizière was a Stasi man. If that would be the case, how tragic it must have been when his daughter's boss and Clemens' son, Lothar de Maizière, was [accused of having been](#) a Stasi operator in [December](#) 1990, resulting in his resignation as Eastern German Prime Minister. Lothar de Maizière would have worked for the Stasi since 1981, the year after his father Clemens, a [long-time](#) Stasi asset, had passed away, as he also [took over](#) his father's role of the Eastern German Church's lawyer. Before he went into active politics, Lothar de Maizière, [was](#) the vice president of the synod of the Association of Protestant Churches in the GDR. How likely is it that he would not have known Merkel's father?

**In a nutshell:** Merkel may well have gotten her second job because the Democratic Awakening had been in a pre-election alliance with the Eastern German CDU and **because she did such an [impressive job dealing with journalists when the Democratic Awakening was in crisis](#)**. But apart from that, there is something very intriguing about the direct and indirect connections between her father and her first two political bosses.

**Did Merkel use her father's Church policy connections to get her first two jobs in politics, twice working for people who had to resign over Stasi allegations?** Did her father know or suspect they were? Did Merkel herself know or suspect? Questions abound. According to one critical [biography](#) of Merkel, right after the wall had fallen, she actually started to [emancipate](#) herself from her father who was "deeply enmeshed into the system of German Democratic Republic". One example is how she did not join the social democrats, like her mother, but the Democratic Awakening, which had an alliance with Helmut Kohl's conservatives.

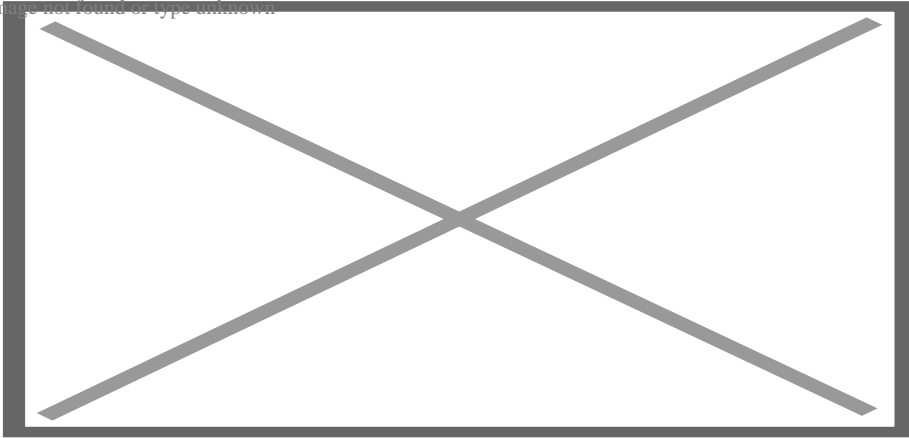
**Shouldn't this have been investigated more deeply?** Lothar de Mazière is still alive. Despite all the [indications](#), he maintains he wasn't secret Stasi agent "Czernie". Then, it [was](#) De Maizière's government which ordered the destruction of Stasi computer tapes. The West-German government [had](#) been warned even before the elections in March 1990 about possible Stasi connections of the CDU lead candidate in Eastern Germany but because of his membership of the CDU, this [may](#) not have been thoroughly researched, according to Stasi-expert and Die Welt-journalist [Uwe Müller](#).

Both [Schnur](#) and [Lothar de Mazière](#) emerged as leaders of the Eastern German opposition movement before having to step down because of Stasi accusations. Both brought Angela Merkel to the fore. There are the Stasi archives, the many people who were involved in the Democratic Awakening and Eastern Germany's CDU, people within Eastern Germany's Church community. Doesn't this deserve more investigation?

**Maybe the only thing that can be concluded here will be that Merkel was lucky enough to be able to use her father's dodgy political connections to launch her career.** To be fair, without wanting to claim that no proper evidence can be presented to counter that claim: everything points in that direction. Isn't that something interesting?

**This is almost 30 years later. But has there been a proper debate in Germany over the role of the Stasi and its network during and after the unification of Germany?** Even if the regime's network would have only played a very minimal, almost accidental role in kickstarting Angela Merkel's career: shouldn't this be out in the open?

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**It's commonly accepted that in the "East Block" countries that abandoned Communism, there was a lot of continuity also after 1990.** Not only are there Putin and his KGB buddies who are ruling Russia. The frustration that many who were high up in Communist Poland haven't seen their careers squashed is at the heart of Poland's rule of law reforms – or at least the Polish government uses this public concern as the excuse to crack down on a justice system. **One in four Eastern Germans was a member of the Stasi, which has been [described](#) as "worse than the Gestapo" by Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal,** The Christian democratic, [liberal](#) and social democratic "[bloc parties](#)" of Eastern Germany– which must have been infested with Stasi influences – were absorbed into Western Germany's political system. **Is it really surprising that the old elites managed to help each other in the politically turbulent period when Germany was unified?**