



The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung presents:

Germany Update
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I. State Elections: CDU triumphs in Hesse and Lower-Saxony

On February 2, the CDU won both the state election in Hesse and in Lower-Saxony by overwhelming margins. The SPD suffered double-digit losses, while the FDP and the Green Party were able to improve their results. In Hesse, *Ministerpraesident* (governor) **Roland Koch** not only repeated his victory from four years ago, but even gained an absolute majority for the CDU. In Lower-Saxony, chancellor **Gerhard Schroeder's** (SPD) home state, CDU candidate **Christian Wulff** defeated incumbent *Ministerpraesident* **Sigmar Gabriel** (SPD). For the first time in twelve years, Lower-Saxony will be governed by a CDU-FDP coalition again.

The **results in Hesse**: CDU 48.8% (+5.4% in comparison to the election in 1999), SPD 29.1% (-10.3), Greens 10.1% (+2.9), FDP 7.9% (+2.8), other parties 4.1% (+0.5). The **results in Lower-Saxony**: CDU 48.3% (+12.4% in comparison to the election in 1998), SPD 33.4% (-14.5), Greens 7.6% (+0.6), FDP 8.1% (+3.2), other parties 1.7% (+0.2).

Prior to their taking place, **Mr. Koch** had labeled the elections "a plebiscite against Red-Green in Berlin." Indeed, most commentators explained the devastating defeat of the SPD with the poor shape of the Schroeder administration in the months after the national election last September. In the face of rampant unemployment and mounting budget deficits, **Schroeder** and his supporters seem to lack the ideas and will power for true reform. Accordingly, the chancellor took responsibility for the outcome of the state elections. "These are the most bitter defeats of my life," Schroeder said. Nonetheless, he is intent on holding his course, albeit in closer cooperation with the CDU/CSU. CDU chairman **Angela Merkel** pointed out that Schroeder has no choice but to seek common ground with the opposition, since on this "historic day for the Union" the CDU/CSU was able to further increase their majority in the *Bundesrat*, the chamber of the states where much of national legislation has to pass. Tax reform, health care, reform of the social system, and the new law on immigration were the most urgent topics that require swift and thorough action, Mrs. Merkel said.

While the basic power distribution in the *Bundesrat* remains the same, the change of government in Lower-Saxony lets CDU/CSU and FDP take over the majority in the *Bundesversammlung* (federal convention). The only function of the *Bundesversammlung* is to elect the German president. Thus, the CDU/CSU candidate will have the best chances to succeed **Johannes Rau** (SPD) when the votes are counted in May 2004. "Out of respect for the office of the presidency" as CDU secretary general **Laurenz Meyer** put it, there has been no public speculation about prospective successors yet.

II. Conflict with Iraq: Debate at the Security Conference in Munich

This year's International Security Conference in Munich (February 7-9) focussed on the looming war in Iraq and the transatlantic debate over the issue. Given the conference's location and the developments of the last few months, the shaky German-American relationship was of particular interest to the participants, which included US-Secretary of Defense **Donald Rumsfeld**, Senator **John McCain**, German foreign minister **Joschka Fischer**, German minister of defense **Peter Struck**, CDU-chairman **Angela Merkel**, and many other experts on foreign policy and international security. With regard to the German stance on the war in Iraq, conference organizer **Horst Teltschik** referred to the event as a "convention of altered positions."

Indeed, both the speeches of **Joschka Fischer** and **Angela Merkel** differed from their earlier statements. First, the foreign minister chose to respond to secretary Rumsfeld's explanation of why a war with Iraq might become inevitable, with the following remark: "Excuse me, but I am not convinced." In Fischer's view, the inspectors ought to be given more time, and as long as

such means as the inspections are not fully exhausted, it is too early to go to war. This remark, hinting at the fact that in a certain situation going to war might be conceivable as a last resort, subtly contradicted chancellor Schroeder's harsh rejection of any military action against Iraq whatsoever. In the weeks to come, this amended position was to manifest itself in the joint declaration of the EU, as well as in Germany's, France's, and Belgium's decision to end their disgraceful blocking of NATO over the question of military assistance to allied Turkey in case of war. This change of course prompted the leading CDU-expert on foreign policy, **Wolfgang Schauble**, to quip: "Finally the administration is stumbling over their promises. But at least they're falling in the right direction."

When CDU-chairman **Angela Merkel** took center stage, she outlined the position of Germany's most powerful opposition party. In contrast to the stubborn and uncooperative Schroeder diplomacy, Mrs. Merkel declared the CDU's firm alliance with the United States. Referring to UN resolution 1441, she scolded Schroeder for ruling out military action against Iraq as well as German participation in such. Schroeder's policy of a "German Way" undermined the authority of the UN and violated German interests. In addition, she called for increased military spending in Germany and across the EU. This was the precondition for a EU that could be taken seriously again by the US, a Europe that could share responsibilities as well as risks. However, such an improved European security policy should not stand completely independent, but could only exist in close cooperation with the US. It was the first time a leading CDU politician took such a clear opposition to **Schroeder** on this issue, expressly approving a threat of war in order to intimidate **Saddam Hussein** into compliance with the UN resolution.

Mrs. Merkel reiterated the CDU's new course during her visit to the US in late February, where she met with **Vice-President Cheney** and many other prominent members of the American foreign policy establishment. Complementing the trip, Mrs. Merkel published an op-ed in the *Washington Post*, in which she confirmed that a reliable friendship with the US was in the German interest and that peace could only be ensured by threatening Iraq. In Germany, Mrs. Merkel drew a lot of fire for the article itself, and especially for its title, "Schroeder doesn't speak for all Germans." Critics contended that such a statement was inappropriate, coming a few days after millions of people in Berlin and elsewhere demonstrated against a war in Iraq and the Bush administration's policies. Spokespeople for the Red-Green administration claimed that it was disloyal and in bad taste for an opposition leader to criticize her government abroad. Angela Merkel countered that at a time when the German and American leaders hardly talk, even over the phone, such a friendly visit was an important "service to our country."

III. Administration Under Strain: Green Party Dismantles Chairmen

At their party convention in Hanover on December 8, the Greens toppled their chairmen **Claudia Roth** and **Fritz Kuhn**, thus contributing to the image of a Schroeder administration in disarray. The delegates refused to amend a Green Party regulation which prohibits members of parliament from acting as party officials. Both **Kuhn** and **Roth** became members of the *Bundestag* (federal parliament) in the election in September. Ironically, the two chairmen are widely seen as successful leaders and huge contributors to the good result of the Greens in that election. Indeed, a vast number of delegates wanted them to remain in office: with a result of 457:240, the two-third majority necessary for the amendment was barely achieved, with just eight votes tipping the vote.

The outcome is an embarrassment for the party elite, including foreign minister **Joschka Fischer**. He as well as other leading Green politicians strongly encouraged the delegates to finally abolish the "crippling" regulation and allow **Roth** and **Kuhn** to continue their work. When the party surprisingly did not follow suit, the organizers had no back-up plan, and a dispiriting search for alternative chairmen began—with many prominent Greens refusing to take over the underpaid, stressful, and difficult job of leading the party in Fisher's shadow. Finally, **Angelika Beer** and **Reinhard Buetikofer** were found and elected in a hurry. Both politicians are regarded as lacking the strategic abilities of Fritz Kuhn and the engaging popularity of Claudia Roth. They are "literally second choice," says member of parliament **Winfried Hemann**. Mrs. Beer, an expert on defense and a former member of parliament, is returning from retirement (she withdrew from politics when her party did not nominate her again for the last election). Mr. Buetikofer was also set to leave politics as soon as his term as secretary of the Green Party had ended.

Traditionally, the Green Party has always had two chairmen - one male, one female - representing both wings of the party. In this case, **Beer** is more of a representative of the pragmatist left, while **Buetikofer** is more of a *Realpolitiker*. With regard to the divisive party regulation, it will be voted on in May, when the assembled party member are expected to deliver the required majority to eliminate it once and for all. The argument over the separation of membership in parliament and party office dates back to the founding days of the party in the early 1980s.

IV. Bundestag Committees: CDU/CSU Working Group on European Affairs

In the last edition of this newsletter, we listed the CDU/CSU members (the so-called "working groups") of the new parliamentary committees on foreign relations, defense, and economy and employment. In this issue, we are pleased to add the working group of the committee on the affairs of the European Union.

Chairman of the Committee:

Matthias **Wissmann**

Veronika Maria **Bellmann**

Kurt-Dieter **Grill**

Olav **Gutting**

Peter **Hintze**

Gunther **Kirchbaum**

Patricia **Lips**

Dr. Gerd **Mueller**

Dr. Georg **Nuesslein**

Albert **Rupprecht**

Thomas **Silberhorn**

Michael **Stuebgen**

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