

We Are Chancelloress! One Angie does not collapse the male bastion - but she has opened the gate

By Alice Schwarzer

translated by *gender forum*

1 A strange atmosphere was in the air during the weeks before and after the election. For a long time, no election campaign had agitated people that much. This extreme polarisation certainly was not caused by the two big parties: for the one candidate was the incumbent SPD-chancellor, who in office had distinguished himself as "comrade of the bosses"; the other candidate was a christian democrat, who had almost exclusively courted economic leaders in her election campaign. So, something else must have been behind the voters' surprising return to an outmoded polarised thinking - for reality is more flexible.

2 This also became obvious in the coalition talks, during which both parties hastily jettisoned positions which had been declared inalienable during the campaign, and in which the male negotiators get along splendidly. Thus, even before the first meeting, the Westphalian participant gave his Bavarian colleague a birthday present: a CD "with the best football broadcasts." And after the second top-level talk, Stoiber chatted with journalists about what they - "Müntefering and I" - aspire to together. And? Oh yes, there was still someone else. "And particularly Frau Merkel." She is part of it now. But she remains the particular. The stranger. In her case, the double stranger: a woman and an "Ossi."

3 Thirty years after women had rattled again at the male fortress, one of them saw the key and simply took it. And now she opens the door to the fortress. Legally entitled, and entirely on her own.

4 Merkel didn't seem to be aware of the outrageous nature of her endeavour until after the election. This precisely allowed her to start moving - and to benumb the preservers of the status quo. This one is harmless. She isn't one of those. We know how to handle her.

5 Thus, Angela Merkel of all people became a Trojan horse that didn't gallop into the bastion, but show-jumped across the course. Only during the blood-thirsty election night things began to dawn on her: when the loser tried to brush off the winner, and when, a few days later, her own men began to dismount their chancelloress even before she moved into the chancellor's office (remember the fight for the chancellor's policy-making power).

6 Many a female voter realised too late that the fuss wasn't about political issues but about the sex of the candidate. The good old feeling of "women-are-strong-together" has vanished a long time ago. Similar to all emancipation movements, women - after their first

series of success and backlashes - also had to face drastic differences in their own rank and file, aggravated by the traditional female (self-) contempt and rivalry.

7 Still another issue are the daughters of emancipation. Those who wonderfully have grown up with and take for granted the claim to equality - even if, they are at the same time split over existing inequality and the threat to be loved less. Those who are too naïve or too proud to realise that sex remains a factor - even if all of us wished it was otherwise. Those who seemingly have to begin from scratch - once again.

8 Merkel was not elected by women, women profess in a triumphant voice. And if this were the case - would that be a reason to rejoice? In any case, it is wrong. What is correct is that Merkel got only one percent fewer votes by women in comparison to Stoiber in the 2002 election. According to the polls, she gave away the possible gender bonus of up to ten percent for a female candidate because of her straightforwardly genderless election campaign. This is another reason why she could not compensate for the expected loss of male votes: In 2005, five percent fewer men voted for Merkel than for Stoiber in 2002!

9 Nonetheless: Merkel lost fewer women voters than Schröder. In comparison to 2002, the SPD lost three percent male, but six percent female votes. Thus, Schröder lost six times as many women's votes as Merkel! Consequently, German women voted against a macho in 2005 - but not for a woman.

10 For modern women voters do not want to be reduced to their sex. This is understandable. Non-conservative female voters did not want to elect a CDU-candidate "just" because she is a woman. This is supposed to be old-fashioned. This shoe didn't fit the generation of high heelers. In an article in the *Spiegel*, a gender critic, born in 1957, even declared the fact that I had dared to broach the issue of gender in the election campaign to be "the classic position of the 1970s." In 1971, at the beginning of women's emancipation, this gender critic was 14 years old. Hence, I would like to remind us all:

11 An insight is not old-fashioned just because it is a good thirty years old. On the contrary, this logic would make the denial of the gender-specific differences a modern issue. A conflict of interest - not of yesterday but of yesteryear. This was precisely the argument of leftist men and women in the sixties whose sole concern was the class issue - or more up to date - the social question.

12 In the 1970s, women reacted against this assumption, since they were tired of comrades who wanted to free the entire world but continued to exploit their own wives. We feminists proved that gender does indeed play a role in the ascription of roles, the exertion of power and the distribution of the world's resources.

13 In the West, all these ideas have been publicly discussed for decades. Women found political expressions for issues that had hitherto been belittled as "private affairs." "The private is the political" became a slogan which led - despite all machismo and sister fights - to a revolution in people's heads.

14 The case was totally different in the GDR. For forty years, people were told that the solution of the class question would automatically solve the gender question. Emancipation was decreed from above. Undoubtedly, this political past contributed to the first German chancelloress' double-edged innocence on her way to the chancellor's office. But whatever might have been the case. Now she has moved in.

15 Today, only about every fourth German man believes that "men are better politicians than women" (and only every sixth woman). Even among women, a culture of friendship, mentoring and networking slowly but steadily developed. Yet a chancelloress will only prevail if she is a real Trojan horse filled with fellow consorts: conscious women and humane men. For one Angie does not collapse the male bastion. But she has opened the gate.

First published in EMMA / Nr. 6 November/December 2005 ("Wir sind Kanzlerin!")