

# German Virtue proves to be its own Reward!

*The following article was recently written by an American historian in relation to the drama currently unfolding in Europe concerning the Euro crisis and the future of the Euro Zone currency union. In it Victor Davis Hanson questions just who really won the "War to end all wars," which ensued almost 100 years ago, given Germany's present, undeniable economic predominance and hegemony on the European continent.*

## **The Hundred Years' German War**

**Written By: Victor Davis Hanson**

**The rise of a German Europe began in 1914, failed twice, and has now ended in the victory of German power almost a century later. The Europe that Kaiser Wilhelm lost in 1918, and that Adolf Hitler destroyed in 1945, has at last been won by German Chancellor Angela Merkel without firing a shot.**

**Or so it seems from European newspapers, which now refer bitterly to a "Fourth Reich" and arrogant new Nazi "Gauleiters" who dictate terms to their European subordinates. Popular cartoons depict Germans with stiff-arm salutes and swastikas, establishing new rules of behavior for supposedly inferior peoples.**

**Millions of terrified Italians, Spaniards, Greeks, Portuguese and other Europeans are pouring their savings into German banks at the rate of \$15 billion a month. A thumbs-up or thumbs-down from the euro-rich Merkel now determines whether European countries will limp ahead with new German-backed loans or default and see their standard of living regress to that of a half-century ago.**

**A worried neighbor, France, in schizophrenic fashion, as so often in the past, alternately lashes out at Britain for abandoning it and fawns on Germany to appease it. The worries in 1989 of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and French President François Mitterrand over German unification — that neither a new European Union nor an old NATO could quite rein in German power — proved true.**

**How did the grand dream of a "new Europe" end just 20 years later in a German protectorate — especially given the not-so-subtle aim of the European Union to diffuse German ambitions through a continent-wide super-state?**

**Not by arms. Britain fights in wars all over the globe, from Libya to Iraq. France has the bomb. But Germany mostly stays within its borders — without a nuke, a single aircraft carrier or a military base abroad.**

**Not by handouts. Germany poured almost \$2 trillion of its own money into rebuilding an East Germany ruined by communism — without help from others. To drive through southern Europe is to see new freeways, bridges, rail lines, stadiums and airports financed by German banks or subsidized by the German government.**

**Not by population size. Somehow, 120 million Greeks, Italians, Spaniards and Portuguese are begging some 80 million Germans to bail them out.**

**And not because of good fortune. Just 65 years ago, [Berlin was flattened](#), [Hamburg incinerated](#) and [Munich a shell](#) — in ways even Athens, Madrid, Lisbon and Rome were not.**

**In truth, German character — so admired and feared in some 500 years of European literature and history — led to the present Germanization of Europe. These days we recoil at terms like "national character" that seem tainted by the nightmares of the past. But no other politically correct exegesis offers better reasons why a booming Detroit of 1945 today looks like it was bombed, and a bombed-out Berlin of 1945 now is booming.**

Germans on average worked harder and smarter than their European neighbors — investing rather than consuming, saving rather than spending, and going to bed when others to the south were going to dinner. Recipients of their largesse bitterly complain that German banks lent them money to buy German products in a sort of 21st-century commercial serfdom. True enough, but that still begs the question why Berlin, and not Rome or Madrid, was able to pull off such lucrative mercantilism.

Where does all this lead? Right now to some great unknowns that terrify most of Europe. Will German industriousness and talent eventually translate into military dominance and cultural chauvinism — as it has in the past? How, exactly, can an unraveling EU, or NATO, now “led from behind” by a disengaged United States, persuade Germany not to translate its overwhelming economic clout into political and military advantage?

Can poor European adolescents really obey their rich German parents? Berlin in essence has now scolded southern Europeans that if they still expect sophisticated medical care, high-tech appurtenances and plentiful consumer goods — the adornments of a rich American and northern Europe lifestyle — then they have to start behaving in the manner of Germans, who produce such things and subsidize them for others.

In other words, an Athenian may still have his ultra-modern airport and subway, a Spaniard may still get a hip replacement, or a Roman may still enjoy his new Mercedes. But not if they still insist on daily siestas, dinner at 9 p.m., retirement in their early 50s, cheating on taxes, and a de facto 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. workday.

Behind all the EU’s 11th-hour gobbledygook, Germany’s new European order is clear: If you wish to live like a German, then you must work and save like a German. Take it or leave it.

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But, German arrogance could lead to its own isolation production, as well as Europe’s self destruction!

Some years ago, in *Salt of the Earth*, Pope Benedict XVI, then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, made these observations:

*“I think that the virtues of the Germans and their vulnerabilities are very closely connected. On the one hand, we are a people who value discipline, achievement, work, and punctuality, and so we really do get things done, a people who today are once again the strongest economic power in Europe and have the most stable currency. But that leads easily to a certain overrating of oneself and to a one-sided mentality that values only such*



*we’ve produced by ourselves and thereby allows many other dimensions to atrophy. It can also lead to a certain arrogance toward other nations, so that people say that only what is German is really any good, the others are all ‘sloppy.’ This temptation to self-righteousness, to an evaluation of things in terms of productivity, is doubtless a part of recent German history, and we have to set ourselves against it.”*

Mike Haas, GAPA Editor

