

Germany Flexes Its Muscles

by Earl L. Henn (1934-1997)

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"Germany is making itself unloved around Europe again." So began an article in *The Economist* entitled "The Urge to Shove" (January 6-12, 1996). This statement reflects the attitude of former chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who has expressed his concern about how Germany has recently been treating other countries in both Eastern and Western Europe.

Until recently, observers generally agreed that France led the way in pushing Europe into a political union while they regarded Germany as the leader in economic matters dealing with European unification. However, German chancellor Helmut Kohl is not being the least bit shy about advocating the admission of former communist Eastern European nations into the European Union (EU). In a recent meeting of EU leaders in Madrid, Spain, Chancellor Kohl made it clear that he is going to push for the quick admission of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic at the March inter-governmental conference on European integration.

Among former communist countries, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia have expressed interest in joining the EU. Many had hoped that the EU would consider the application of all these countries jointly and admit them all together. Though the Madrid meeting dashed all hope of that happening, the EU did set a timetable for negotiations to begin at the end of 1997. Germany led the way in suggesting that Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic be singled out for quick admission. Ostensibly, they chose these countries for quick admission because their economies are far more modernized and integrated into Western European markets than any of the others.

Many suspect, however, that the *real* reason Germany has singled out these countries for special treatment is that they form a security buffer separating Germany from Russia and lands under Russian influence. These countries also have the potential to provide promising markets where German business will certainly dominate. Chancellor Kohl clearly feels he now has the political muscle to push the conference in the direction he wants it to go.

A Change in Attitude

A reason for this change in German policy and approach involves a change in their overall attitude toward political involvement in foreign countries. Since World War II ended, pacifist instincts have played a major role in directing the country's policies. Germany's "guilt complex" for having caused the war and the holocaust has weighed heavily on the minds of many Germans. They feared that, if Germany pursued an aggressive and forceful foreign policy, other nations would interpret it as a desire to dominate Europe again. Thus, Germany usually maintained a "hands-off" policy in disputes between other nations.

However, that has now changed. A December vote in the Bundestag on sending 4,000 troops to the Balkans to help keep the peace in war-torn Croatia was supported by people of different political stripes in Germany. Even half of the Greens, who in the past opposed military action of any kind,

endorsed the action. The average German accepted the move without any overt protest or opposition. This striking reversal of traditional German postwar attitudes has gone essentially unnoticed by most of the rest of the world.

Besides their recent pushiness politically, the Germans have also become more aggressive and abrasive on the economic front. By the year 2002, the EU hopes to create a common, unifying currency (called the "Euro"). Recently Germany's finance minister, Theo Waigel, has lectured other European countries on their obligations to join a currency union. Herr Waigel, characterized by some as a determined Bavarian, warned other EU countries that they would suffer "heavy financial punishment" if they failed to meet their obligations. He even threatened them with expulsion from the EU if they failed to toe the line!

German tactics in pushing Europe toward political and economic integration have become increasingly foreboding to their neighbors. When analysts mention the many difficulties associated with forming the EU, the Germans inevitably answer that unification is necessary to prevent war among the European states. Wolfgang Schauble, the leader of Chancellor Kohl's forces in the Bundestag, warned recently, "Without European unification, the war in the Balkans will not be the last war in Europe." In a speech in Brussels on February 2, Chancellor Kohl echoed the same warning, stating that if Europe did not unite, the continent would again be plunged into war.

France's *Le Monde* quoted an unidentified German government official as saying that Germans will soon be talking of Hitler as the French talk of Napoleon. Such statements, coming from the country primarily responsible for plunging Europe into two world wars in this century, understandably cause deep concern in the other nations of Europe. However, this kind of tough talk demonstrates the political and economic muscle of modern Germany. The renewed Germany is not afraid to push its weight around to get its own way. It also demonstrates that Germany is now the driving force behind the move to unite Europe.

Even in its relations with the United States, Germany is no longer afraid to take an intractable stance. For instance, the U.S. is trying to curb the proliferation of materials such as high-enriched uranium that could be used to build nuclear weapons. Yet at a little publicized meeting in Bavaria during the second week in January, German leaders flatly refused to accede to U.S. demands to remodel a controversial nuclear research reactor to use low-enriched uranium. American officials said that Germany's insistence on using high-enriched uranium placed Germany in the same category as China and Libya, which continue to defy America's policy.

German Power Prophesied

For over sixty years, the church of God has predicted that a revived Roman Empire will emerge in the last days in the form of a German-led united Europe. Long before the fall of the Berlin wall, while Soviet communism still held most of Eastern Europe in its iron grip with no apparent indication of letting go, God's church proclaimed that some of those Eastern European nations would be a part of this European colossus. Now we see some of these prophecies slowly but inexorably coming to pass before our eyes!

We can trace ancient Israel to the people of the United States, Great Britain and the nations of northwestern Europe. God states in His Word that He will use Assyria—modern Germany—like a rod to punish modern Israel for its sins:

Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. (Isaiah 10:5-6)

In the book of Revelation, God reveals a prophetic "beast" with seven heads and ten horns that plays a major role in end-time prophecy (Revelation 13). God shows that this beast symbolizes a kingdom that repeatedly rises and falls over time (Revelation 17:9-13). The seven heads represent seven resurrections of this kingdom. The ten horns are ten separate nations that combine in the last resurrection of this kingdom to form a single entity that fights Jesus Christ at His second coming (Revelation 17:14). The prophet Daniel also spoke of this same kingdom when he described the ten toes of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2:41-42).

The only world-ruling kingdom that matches this description is the Roman Empire, which has been revived six times in history. As we observe the nations in Europe forging a union, we are witnessing the seventh and final revival of this kingdom. This union, headed by Germany, will be used to punish God's people Israel in these last days just before Christ's second coming.

But there is good news! Shortly after the formation of this Beast power, God's Kingdom will be brought to earth and overthrow all the kingdoms of this world! Everlasting peace will finally descend on this war-torn world. Notice the words of the prophet Daniel:

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. (Daniel 2:44)

May God speed that day!