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The Dark History of the European Union

EU leaders would prefer you to forget it, but this history reveals the Union's true danger to the world.

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Look up the European Union in any textbook and it will say that its origins stem from the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951.

That is correct but limited. The roots of the European Union are far deeper.

The EU's true origins include centuries-old history that connects the dreams of kaisers, the ambitions of Adolf Hitler, and a vision for Europe that refuses to die.

The history also explains everything you need to know about the EU today.

One of the biggest questions about modern Europe is *why does Germany dominate?* They have come close to conquering the Continent. Even Germany's *Der Spiegel* wrote, in 2015, that "the word 'reich,' or empire, may not be entirely out of place" when describing modern Germany. It concluded that "an empire is in play, at least in the economic realm."

It may sound crass, but Hitler or Kaiser Wilhelm, if they could see the position Germany is in today, would be thrilled. But how did Germany manage it?

Germany leads this European empire because it knows how empires are built. It recently had to build its own empire. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, in 1814, there was not a nation called Germany. There were 39 German-speaking states. Prussia, one of the largest and most powerful of these states, forged these competing regions into the German Empire—the Second Reich. This method of empire-building set a pattern that Germany tried to follow in both world wars. It is a pattern that has been followed by the European Union. This history proves that the EU is no mere trading agreement. It is a path to a new German empire.

A History of Empire Building

Prussia copied its empire-building from one of the world's most famous conquerors, Napoleon Bonaparte. But this strategy was not a military one; it was economic.

During the late 18th century, the Holy Roman Empire, located mostly in Germany, consisted of 1,800 customs areas. Transporting goods from the Prussian city of Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) to Cologne in western Germany meant stopping for inspections and tariffs 18 times. This was a massive barrier to trade.

Napoleon smashed this empire and set up a sort of puppet state in the west German states called the Confederation of the Rhine. This confederation reduced tariff barriers within its territory.

After Napoleon fell, many German states tried to form their own customs unions. In 1834, these merged into the Zollverein, a single customs union that included Prussia. It helped Prussia kill two birds with one stone: It unified German states under

its leadership and boosted its economy.

The Zollverein harmonized tariffs and it standardized currency based on Prussia's currency. This made trade across Germany easier, allowed railways to flourish, and unified Germany in an important, everyday, practical way.

The Zollverein did not complete the task of uniting Germany. It took Otto von Bismarck and his masterfully planned wars with outside powers to do that. He finally unified all German-speaking states, besides Austria, by provoking France to invade in 1870. The German states were forced to unite to fight off the French. But the Prussians never forgot the role of the Zollverein in unifying Germany under Prussia.

The Prussian king became the German emperor. The Prussian chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, became the German chancellor. The Prussian capital, Berlin, became the German capital, even though it had not been one of Germany's historic centers of power. In general, the Prussian ruling class became the German ruling class.

Already, this history—an effort to create a larger state using an economic union—should sound familiar.

Convincing other people to come under your political control is hard. Convincing them to join your economic union is easier. Brand it as a "customs union" or a "tariff reduction zone," and it sounds much less threatening than "empire." You can promise prosperity and, in Germany's case, you can deliver it. *But it also paves the road to political dominance* Seven years after the Zollverein formed, German economist Friedrich List wrote, "Economic unity and political unity are twins: One cannot be born without the other following."

It's a recipe for empire. Get the divided territories trading freely with each other, block out your rivals, throw in some external threats, and soon you can have a united bloc—under your dominion.

The First Attempt at a European Union

As soon as this newly united Germany tried to take over Europe, it used the recipe again. "We must create *a central European economic association* through common customs treaties, to include France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Austria-Hungary, Poland and perhaps Italy, Sweden and Norway. This association will not have any common constitutional supreme authority, and all its members will be formally equal ..." (emphasis added throughout).

This quote is not from a modern EU summit. It is from 1914, when German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg laid out his goals for World War I.

They wanted to create a kind of European Union. Before the war, Kaiser Wilhelm II himself called for a European economic union—which could become a "United States of Europe against America."

Historian Niall Ferguson wrote that if Germany had won World War I, Europe would "have been transformed into something not wholly unlike the European Union we know today."

Germany's war planners believed that if they could force Europe to depend on Germany economically, they would dominate the Continent for generations.

The idea of unifying Europe through an economic union was common among German nationalist academics at the time. For example, in 1890, influential German academic Gustav von Schmoller called for "a central European customs federation" as the only way to save "Europe's higher, ancient culture" from competition from the United States, Russia and other world powers. This idea became known as *Mitteleuropa*. Politicians, academics and industrialists regularly held conferences on the subject.

German historian Fritz Fischer documented Germany's path to war in his seminal work *Germany's Aims in the First World War*. He wrote that, prior to the war, Germans had grand aims to defeat Russia, push back the Slavs (whom they saw as racially inferior), and expand the German empire in Central Europe. Once war broke out in August 1914, Germany had to turn those broad ambitions into detailed war aims. Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg did this the month after the war began. His plans were known as the September Program. Creating *Mitteleuropa*—a long-standing goal encouraged by the German government—now became official policy.

But here is the rest of the quote from Bethmann-Hollweg's September Program: "[A]ll its members will be formally equal *but, in practice, will be under German leadership and must stabilize Germany's economic dominance over Mitteleuropa.*"

Beyond Central Europe, German leaders believed Scandinavia, Italy and the Balkans would join *Mitteleuropa* under some form of associate membership.

The map of their proposed economic union is very similar to what the EU looks like today.

They were trying to create a new Zollverein, this time covering all of Central Europe. They had already proved that the largest and most powerful unit within an economic bloc would dominate. Prussia had dominated Germany. Now Germany could dominate Europe.

Another Attempt—by Hitler

That attempt at a European Union died, like so many soldiers on Flanders Fields. But soon another attempt began.

As Germany was rising to power once again in the late 1930s and early 1940s, prominent Nazis spoke of a “European family of nations,” or a “European community,” which would experience “rapidly increasing prosperity once national economic barriers are removed.” The term *Großraumwirtschaft* (large economic area) became a common theme of Nazi propaganda. In 1936, Adolf Hitler told the Reichstag, “The European people represent a family in this world. ... It is not very intelligent to imagine that in such a cramped house like that of Europe, a community of people can maintain different legal systems and different concepts of law for very long.”

The Nazis’ vision of the future was actually not a glorified German nation-state but something bigger.

In the summer of 1940, top Nazi Hermann Göring began assembling plans for the “large-scale economic unification of Europe.” The Nazi official steering these plans was former “public enlightenment and propaganda” state secretary Walther Funk, who had become economics minister and president of the German central bank. (He was later tried for war crimes and labeled “the banker of gold teeth” for confiscating gold of all types from Jewish Holocaust victims and melting it down for bullion.) Funk developed Göring’s plan, calling it the “European Economic Community” and outlining its characteristics in a series of papers in 1941. Not even two decades later, in 1957, the *eec* became the name of what is now the EU.

“That blueprint bore a quite startling resemblance to the *eeec* of the Treaty of Rome, as modified by the Single European Act and the Treaty of Maastricht, foreshadowing the agricultural, industrial and regional policies and trans-European networks advocated by the more fervent Eurocrats,” former EU civil servant Bernard Connolly writes in his 1995 book *The Rotten Heart of Europe*.

The Nazis also called for a “European currency system” that would operate with fixed exchange rates among certain currencies—until a single currency could be gradually introduced. This is exactly what has happened in the EU.

In 1942, government ministers and leading industrialists attended a conference titled “The European Economic Community.” The same year the German Foreign Ministry created a “Europe committee.” By the next year, they had drafted formal plans for a European confederation. German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop called for it to be set up as soon as the Reich had secured a significant military victory.

That victory never came. And so Nazi plans for an *eeec* never materialized.

The fact that the Nazis planned to form a union of European nations is well established. This summary just scratches the surface. In his book *The Tainted Source—the Undemocratic Origins of the European Idea*, John Laughland exposes the economic planners, fascist intellectuals and senior politicians who planned this union.

The Nazis, just like earlier generations of German leaders, saw the merits of using economics to help create an empire. In 1940, German Ambassador to France Otto Abetz wrote to Hitler recommending that Germany “usurp the European idea” to try to control Europe in the same way that Hitler had “usurped the idea of peace” before the war. Laughland notes in his book that “a supranational organization could increase—rather than mitigate—the power of its most powerful member.”

A Nazi European Union?

Does this mean that the current European Union is a Nazi plot whose founding fathers are all closet Nazis? No. Many were sincere in their beliefs. Many were motivated by the idea that creating a European Union was the best way to stop another European war. They saw that an economic union was the way to build a superstate in Europe. But they also believed that a superstate would bring peace and contain Germany.

When the modern EU began, Germany was defeated and divided. France believed it would be the most powerful nation, and hence the leader, in a European bloc. So European unification pushed forward.

This project, however, did attract some ex-Nazis because it was so similar to their own idea. After the war, the infamous Oswald Mosley, leader of the British Union of Fascists, became an ardent pro-European. Reich Credit Co. head Dr. Bernhard Benning, who spoke at the 1942 Nazi *eeconference* on the “European Currency Question,” went on to become a senior figure in the Bundesbank.

The fact that many Nazis went “underground,” remaining in their government or business positions, is now well documented (see our article [“Cleansing the German Conscience?”](#)). Many of these individuals continued to support a European Union.

Other EU figures had sympathies toward the Nazis before the war, such as Paul-Henri Spaak, one of the EU’s founding fathers. As a member of the Belgian Workers’ Party before the war, he praised “some of Hitler’s magnificent achievements.” In 1937, he said that “the hour of Belgian national socialism has come.” He urged Belgium to remain neutral rather than join France in a war with Germany.

Some French nationalists hoped that France could now play the role of Prussia in a European superstate. But France’s European leadership role did not last. While the French economy stagnated, Germany reunited, reindustrialized and became

the world's top exporter.

After losing both world wars, the Germans today, remarkably, find themselves having *achieved* their war aims. The situation, as it stands, is stunningly similar to what Germany planned in World War i and ii. Germany is the most populous and powerful nation in Europe, and the Continent is bound to it through an increasingly tighter economic and political union.

Earlier Roots

There is another important reason the Prussians, Nazis and founders of the EU produced such similar proposals. They shared a dream. They went about it in very different ways, but they wanted to resurrect a European empire—a *new Roman Empire*.

Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini portrayed himself as a new Caesar, ruling a new Roman Empire. Hitler based his infamous führer salute on the Roman one.

He also reached back to Charlemagne, the Frankish leader who was crowned Roman emperor by Pope Leo iii in a.d. 800. He tried to revive the Roman Empire in Western Europe, uniting all Europe under one power.

Hitler built his famous Eagle's Nest next to the mountain where, according to legend, Charlemagne is sleeping and will someday rise again. He revered the "crown of Charlemagne," the symbol of his empire-building.

Napoleon had the same vision, and so did the founders of the European Union. Otto von Habsburg, one of the EU's founding fathers, said, "We do possess a European symbol which belongs to all nations equally. This is the crown of the Holy Roman Empire, which embodies the tradition of Charlemagne." When French and German leaders met to hammer out the details of a common currency, they did so in Aachen, Germany, Charlemagne's capital. They visited Charlemagne's throne and held a special service in the cathedral where he was buried.

This vision drove the economic plans of both the Nazis and the EU's founding fathers. "[T]he old medieval dream of a universal empire has never quite left the Germans' fantasy," Laughland writes. "This is why modern euro-federalists evoke Charlemagne: The Holy Roman Empire was the very archetype of universal monarchy" (op cit).

The EU's founding fathers were very different from the Nazis. But they both shared the same dream, which is why their plans are so similar.

European Union in Bible Prophecy

The Bible also describes a vision of a European empire that is repeatedly resurrected. Revelation 17 describes a "beast," a biblical symbol for a powerful empire. This beast, it says, would be led by "seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come" (verse 10). This means that these kings rule consecutively. At the time this prophecy was revealed, five were gone, one was on the scene, and one more was to come.

The start of Revelation 17 makes clear this beast is led by a woman, which is the biblical symbol for a church.

This prophecy perfectly matches the history of Europe. Europe has seen a succession of empires, all sharing the same vision and all led by a church. Hitler led the sixth of these. The seventh will rise out of the European Union.

This is why this history is critical. These empires in Europe are all connected. By learning about the ones that have come before, we can learn about the empire that is coming next.

The Bible also makes clear that economics plays a huge role in the union. When the seventh empire finally falls, "the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her" because they "were made rich by her" (Revelation 18:11, 15).

The Old Testament often refers to this empire as "Tyre." This was the greatest trading center of the Middle East at the time that these Bible prophecies were written. Some of the prophecies about Tyre have not yet been fulfilled, because they refer not to this ancient city—but to a *future* economic empire.

Isaiah 23 describes this modern Tyre forming a "mart of nations" with powers in the East: China and Japan (referred to by their ancient names of *Chittim* and *Tarshish*). God calls this modern Tyre "a merchant of the people for many isles" and describes it as doing business with merchants around the world (Ezekiel 27).

But it is not all economics. The Zollverein was not the only factor in uniting Germany. Nationalism was another key force. The Germans felt that even though they were divided into different kingdoms, they were still one people and should form one nation.

Europe lacks the motivation to unify. This is why economic union has only taken it so far. But the Bible informs us of the institution that will provide the sense of common purpose and identity to Europe, performing the role that German nationalism played in the 19th century: It will be the Catholic Church, pictured by the *woman* in Revelation 17.

In fact, the Catholic Church has helped power all of the past six resurrections of the European dream. This is why the Holy

Roman Empire is called “holy.”

And just as Germany needed a crisis to lock in its national union, so too will Europe use a crisis to lock in its empire.

When Prussia united Germany, it changed the world. Suddenly, it had a power that could outcompete Britain economically. It was militarily superior to every nation in Europe. It used its power, it destabilized the world, and it ultimately instigated two world wars.

This history shows that today’s Europe shares the same goal of ultimate unity. This achievement would destabilize the world far more severely than Prussia did. It would create a major competitor to the United States, and to Russia and China.

The Bible confirms this forecast. It prophesies that this will be both an economic and military superpower. And it adds one more crucial detail—one that is truly inspiring when you understand it.

Prophecy shows that this will be the *last* of these empires to rise in Europe. The Holy Roman Empire has risen repeatedly because God has allowed it to. But He has said that the seventh resurrection will be the last. After this economic, political, military and religious European power rises one last time, it will be destroyed—forever. Europe’s history has unfolded according to a specific plan outlined in your Bible. And God makes clear that this plan has a definite, hope-filled ending—one that is nearly here. He will lead Europe into the prosperity and peace that has eluded it so far. ■