



A Greek Tragedy

As reported by the New York Times Tuesday, Greece, the widely recognized cradle of self-government, is teetering on the precipice of self-destruction and it is crying out to one-time economic powerhouse Germany for help. For its part, the Germans are reluctant to throw a lifeline to a nation drowning in eddies of its own perpetual profligacy. Germany is flailing a bit itself in the sea of fiscal distress and is worried that Greece might use any rope it is thrown to drag Germany down with it to the depths of irreversible economic despair. The whole episode is a frightening foreboding of the future of America, unless we learn from the mistakes of others and preemptively protect ourselves from the preparatory plans being laid by our own elected representatives.



These narrow straits through which Greece (and other European nations) are having to pass are forcing the leaders of that country (and by extension, the whole of the continent) to make painful sacrifices and jettison many of the social welfare programs that are threatening otherwise to scupper the ship of state and maroon its citizens on the European Union's already overcrowded beach of disillusionment.

There are many to blame for the Greek situation. An examination of the causes and the culpable is complicated and the untangling of the skein of mismanagement and outright institutional abandonment of fiduciary responsibility is a task for economic experts. The aim of this report is to use as a warning the story of the impending Greek demise and the frightful wailing of those bracing for the collision of hollow socialist utopian rhetoric with the solid shale of economic and sociological realities.

One very instructive aspect of the sad tale of Greece as related by the *Times* article is the list of irrefutable facets of human nature that were purposefully ignored or disregarded by zealous proponents of the European Union and the continent-wide adoption of a single currency. There are frankly disconcerting admissions in the piece that one is hopeful will awaken the American electorate and serve for them as an admonition of the inescapable mutually assured destruction that awaits them if they permit their government to lash their economic future to that of lesser "democracies" with whom they share a landmass.

First, there is the concession that, "The fiscal crisis [in Greece] is forcing taxpayers and voters across Europe to confront the fact that their fortunes are tied together more closely than their politicians confessed in the late 1990s, in the rush to create the common currency over public objections."

Americans should see these words and heed them as if written in large, red letters on the walls of its own storehouses of wealth. The politicians, policy makers, and shrouded socialists tirelessly flogging the benefits of uniting the nations under one protective umbrella of social and fiscal mutualism will not repent of their knowing deception even as the economic might of our once exemplary republic is



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devoured by one after the other parasitical geographical neighbor. Will we, as Americans, one day in the near future read reports in the *New York Times* about how we are wondering why our treasure is being raided to rescue the Mexican economy? Will it be lamely lamented that our own leaders misled us and defiantly cultivated the seedbed of this evisceration “over public objections?”

The next comment made in connection with this tale is the realization that “solidarity, at least in the eyes of most voters, still stops at the border.” Is this shocking? A nation’s people share history, sanguinity, and soil, all of which engender a commonality of experience and a sense of “e pluribus unum” that will exclude others. This familial bond does not preclude others similarly situated to experience an equally exclusive union, but it is by nature insular and produces expressions of loyalty not easily translated into other tongues.

It sounds simple, but judging from the European experience, it is difficult for presidents and prime ministers to understand: You may remove physical borders, but you cannot legislate loyalty. No matter how quickly the gates separating nations may be unhinged, the boundaries of patriotism and brotherhood that surround the heart and mind are indestructible and will forever lay outside the power of governmental gerrymanderers. Josef Joffe, the publisher of the Hamburg-based weekly *Die Ziet* is quoted by the *Times* as saying, “Europe has become a huge welfare state for everybody, for states as well as individuals.” Is Mr. Joffe surprised? For years, his own publication has praised the extension of publicly funded “benefits” to an ever-growing pool of recipients. There is a sort of perverse logic that explains the micro to macro exportation of the welfare state to the welfare super-state. When European Union officials proclaim that a German is a Frenchman is a Greek, then how can he deny the payment of “entitlements” to someone based solely on nationality? The sentiment is succinctly expressed in a remark to another German periodical, *Die Welt*, made by an exasperated member of the German government, “I can’t explain to an [unemployment] recipient that he won’t get another cent, but some Greek gets to retire at 63,” said a noticeably and understandably frustrated Michael Fuchs.

That is to say, if a German receives a monthly stipend from Berlin, then according to the solipsism sustaining the modern socialist experiment, Athens cannot refuse the self-same support to its citizens. It is now too late for Germans to shake their fists in defiance of the whirlwind when it was their own leaders who gleefully sowed the sweeping winds of union.

Finally, it comes down to the euro, the coin of the realm in the European federation. This particular currency has been burning holes in the pockets of an overly generous Greek government for years now. It is surprising, however, to read the post-mortem lamentations of so many Europeans (read: Germans) regarding this magical coin that was the much-touted talisman of transnational prosperity. “No one wanted the euro, but the euro came anyway,” said Patrik Klomfas, as quoted in the *New York Times*. Mr. Klomfas’s memory of events doesn’t concert with official history. By all approved accounts, the euro would quell the nauseating fluctuation of local currency and infuse the parts with such vitality as to give very definition to the goal of gestalt – the whole of Europe being financially greater than the sum of its provincial parts. A visit to Lisbon, Dublin, Madrid, and Athens will betray that bucolic landscape and reveal nations groaning under the crush of debt, inflation, and social benefit schemes that can no longer be supported.

How, then, may the United States of America profit from the real-life Greek tragedy being performed across the ocean? First, we must heed the chorus of warning voices crying out to us as if from beyond the grave. Wisdom demands that we prevent our own elected officials from shoe-horning our sacred republic into the pinching boot of a North American Union. We must resist the call for a single



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hemispheric currency. We must recur to those chosen to lead us for immediate and unrepentant repeal of all treaties and agreements wherein we have laid our sovereignty on the altar of regionalism. Finally, read the article in the *New York Times*. While reading, substitute “North America” for “Europe,” “Mexico” for “Greece,” and “the United States” for “Germany,” and what emerges is a cautionary tale for America. What has become a woeful Greek tragedy may yet inspire a joyful American success story.

Photo of shirt referring to Greece’s financial crisis in an Athens shop: AP Images



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