

Resurgence of Germany remarkable after Second World War

If Germany can do, so can India

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A recent visit to Germany reinforced my conviction that it is one of the most advanced countries in Europe or even the entire western world.

The infrastructure is top-class, the autobahns are state-of-the-art and spread over the length and breadth of Germany. The railways are one of the best, connecting all parts of Germany and Europe in seamless transition. East Germany, which was at one time considered a poor cousin is now brought up to date and is matching West Germany, not only in infrastructure but also in prosperity.

Whenever we talk to a German, you can feel a sense of pride in his nationality. They are all hard working and well educated. It makes us wonder that is this the country which, at one time, not only lost the Second World War, was totally devastated and demolished but gradually has rebuilt itself brick by brick to come to the level of a top industrial nation. India can learn many lessons from this journey.

In the first stage of II World War, the Germans overran Austria, France, Belgium and had invaded Russia and were simultaneously heading towards the UK. They were also able to capture a few countries in Africa, like Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Egypt. However, they were stopped in this attempt by the British and the Americans as they launched a massive Allies attack at Normandy and defeated the Germans. Germany, therefore, had to pay a heavy price for this misadventure. In fact, these very



Germans after the Second World War were hated by all. Part of the defeated Germany was under British, part with Americans and a part with Russians. While the British and Americans allowed their territories to develop themselves and helped them to reconstruct their country, East Germany, under the influence of a strong Russian government, continued to stifle.

Germans defeat at the hands of the allied forces changed everything. The country was reduced to rubble except for the coal mines and the smelting plants. They had to survive on dole from Americans. However, the first and the second generation had the will to fight and to reconstruct themselves from literally nothing. They had a very good education system and a set of good workers on the shop floor. The workers at the shop floor were encouraged to improve their skills and give ideas for improvement in the process and technology. This enabled them to rise to the level of graduate engineers with their foot firmly on the ground. Germany thus became a strong manufacturing nation, mostly export-oriented which also required them to be most competitive. Since everything was in private hands, anyone who was willing to work hard and take the initiative was allowed to rise in the management structure. It also allowed the companies to improvise and become strong and efficient manufacturing hubs for the capital goods industry.

The most important achievement of present-day Germany is pride in its technology and products. Quality and engineering skills are top-class. Their

products continue to run for many many years without any requirement of expensive maintenance and spares. Wherever in the world nations today are trying to rebuild their industry, the capital equipment from Germany has played a very important part. Their initial cost may be slightly higher, but the life-cycle cost, considering that they works for many years without major repairs, is always the lowest.

While India is trying to take a quantum leap and do what Germany did many years ago, it could learn a few lessons. First of all, there should be greater stress on quality of products with the use of latest automatic machines. The production process should be equally backed by R&D either at unit level or university level so that there is improvement in raw materials and the process goes on, on a continuous basis. Education has to be upgraded so that wholesome education is provided, not only in classrooms but part of it on the shop floor. Workers on the shop floor have to be encouraged and rewarded to bring about improvements. And last of all, people should take pride in their company and country. The journey in this direction is not easy and lot of hard work, dedication and determination is required to reach the goal of 'Make in India'. If Germany could do it, so can India. ■

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