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OPINION

German Chancellor Merz Insulted Javier Milei. He Needs to Apologize.



Rainer Zitelmann

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German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has publicly accused Javier Milei of ruining his country and “trampling people underfoot.” The leading German historian Rainer Zitelmann has now called on Merz to apologize to Milei.

Dear Chancellor Merz,

I used to be one of your fans. You can check. I was a long-standing member of the Facebook group “Friedrich Merz must become Germany’s Chancellor.” I even enjoyed your book, *mehr Kapitalismus wagen* (*Daring More Capitalism*), back in 2008.

However, I must admit that I began to have my doubts when – even though you were clearly in the right – you kept apologizing and modifying your positions in response to criticism from left-wing parties and the media. And then came a statement that I would not have thought possible. Following a – somewhat belated – suggestion from the then-leader of the FDP, Christian Lindner, to “dare to be more like Milei,” you said on German television: *“To be honest, I was completely dismayed that Christian Lindner made this comparison. What is currently happening in Argentina – I don’t follow it every day – but what this president is doing there is ruining the country, he is trampling people underfoot, and to take that as an example for Germany, I have to say I was somewhat speechless, and that doesn’t happen all that often for me.”*

Milei has curbed inflation and poverty

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To the facts: 100 years ago, Argentina was one of the richest countries in the world, comparable to the United States today. Argentina did not become poor as a result of Milei's libertarian agenda, but because of the failed policies of socialists, Peronists, and statists. The country was in decline for decades. Since 1945, there has hardly been a year – with the exception of a brief respite during the 1990s – in which the country has not suffered double-digit inflation. All of the surveys conducted prior to Milei's election consistently identified inflation as the Argentine population's main concern. Upon taking office, Milei inherited an inflation rate of 25.5 percent per month (not per year!); today, inflation is down to 1.5 percent per month.

Yes, poverty rose temporarily, as I had expected before Milei's election victory. But it has since fallen well below the level it was at when Milei took office. From 41.7 percent, poverty initially rose to almost 55 percent and is now at 31.7 percent, ten percentage points below the level at the time of Milei's inauguration and the lowest level since 2018.

Interestingly, the left leaning media provided extensive coverage of the initial rise in poverty, yet they have been conspicuously silent regarding its recent fall. The speed at which poverty declined was even faster than I, a self-confessed Milei fan, could have hoped. This is because, when politicians implement comprehensive market reforms designed to dismantle entrenched economic structures, it often results in a short-term reduction in

gross domestic product, coupled with increases in poverty and unemployment rates. This was the case, for example, with Maggie Thatcher's market economy reforms in the UK in the early 1980s and Leszek Balcerowicz's capitalist "shock therapy" in Poland in the early 1990s. As you know, Poland has now been one of the fastest growing countries in Europe and the world for several decades – the foundations were laid by Balcerowicz's capitalist shock therapy.

Balcerowicz and Milei are both economists and brothers in spirit, guided by the teachings of Friedrich August von Hayek and Ludwig von Mises.

Has Argentina overcome all of its problems? Of course not. I still expect many difficulties and setbacks. The promised "dollarization" has yet to happen. But Milei has achieved a great deal in such a short time – you would have every right to be proud if you could manage a similar feat after one or two years as Chancellor of Germany.

Chancellor Merz, when was the last time you visited Argentina? Have you ever been to Argentina? I was in Argentina in 2022, 2023, and 2024, and saw the misery – and the hope – of the many poor people who were counting on Milei. I spoke to politicians from Milei's movement, think tanks, economists, and young people. Milei has not disappointed his voters. According to polls, he is the most popular president in Latin America. He has an approval rating of 53.5 percent. Mr. Merz, you still have some way to go before you get close to matching that.

Unlike you, Milei announced before the elections exactly what he was going to do afterward. I would like to see us "dare to be more like Milei" in Germany too, because that is what we so urgently need. Your predecessor, Angela Merkel, and the EU Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, whom you enthusiastically supported in the European election campaign, have led Germany and Europe (first the energy industry and then the automotive industry) increasingly down the road toward a planned

economy. And this is precisely the reason for the economic mess we now find ourselves in.

What we need is what the Friedrich Merz of 2008 wrote: “*Daring more capitalism,*” which is tantamount to “daring to be more like Milei.”

Rainer Zitelmann is the author of the book *The Power of Capitalism*, whose readers include Javier Milei <https://the-power-of-capitalism.com/>