

Denazification Today

One of the wisest decisions taken by the victorious Allies in 1945 was to occupy Germany and Japan for long enough to destroy by force those aspects of their culture that had made those countries dangerous. In Europe the process was known as **denazification**. Among the measures taken were some that would have been immoral and unconstitutional if they had been enforced in any of the countries in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. These included:

- Infringements of freedom of speech, expression and peaceful assembly, such as forbidding political parties espousing Nazi ideology, the uttering of Nazi slogans, and the display of Nazi symbols.
- Retrospective jurisdiction (as in the Nuremberg trials, where people were punished, and even executed, for actions such as crimes against humanity, that were perfectly lawful at the time when they were committed).
- The imposition of new constitutions.
- The reform of the Shinto religion, including the suppression of certain interpretations of it.
- What would today be called 'collective punishments' – for instance, forcing entire populations to visit concentration camps in order to witness what had been done in their names, and forcing groups of people against whom no crime had been proven to undergo education in human rights and democratic values.

The justification of these measures was the same as the justification for fighting the war: self-defence. The justification for inflicting them unequally on different nations was that different nations posed different threats. As the political cultures of those countries improved, the measures were gradually relaxed. Japan was granted sovereignty in 1952 and Germany in 1954/5. However, even after sovereignty, some of the measures remained in place, and a few are still in place today. For instance, Germany and Austria have laws against Holocaust denial and other 'hate speech'. This is a good thing, for the political cultures of those countries still contain significant traces of the features that, within living memory,

came close to destroying civilisation. Suppressing those features by

force is still right and still necessary.

Therefore we rejoice that **David Irving in Austria** and **Ernest Zuendel in Germany** face jail for Holocaust denial. Denying the Holocaust is, in those countries, inseparable from their violently dangerous political traditions. In advanced countries such as Britain, the United States, or Canada, there are no comparable traditions. So in such countries, we oppose 'hate speech' laws other than for speech that threatens or incites violence.

Wed, 11/23/2005 - 05:26 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permalink](#)

David Irving

Davis Irving is British, but is being tried for things he said in Austria. What if he had said the same things in Britain and they had been taped and transported to Austria? Surely they could have the same effect, but would have to be legal, right?

by GS on Wed, 11/23/2005 - 16:56 | [reply](#)

Holocaust denial=promotion of violence?

A society which accepts that human beings are fallible does not jail people for believing the wrong facts.

I would be willing to debate the World whether it is justified to outlaw hate speech, anti-semitism, nazi-parties, approval of the holocaust, etc. in Germany. **The World** has a point there, though I'd probably still disagree for various reasons.

But to equate holocaust denial with anti-semitism, hate speech or some other such vice per se is, I submit, a grave mistake. Though statistically many holocaust deniers are anti-semites, there is no logical link between the two. It is perfectly possible for a decent non-anti-semetic none-hateful non-violent civilized person to believe the gas chambers did not exist. Indeed, there are many such people, though they probably form a minority among holocaust deniers. I think they are *wrong*, but those who disbelieve the holocaust in good faith are not *bad*.

The question of whether or not the holocaust happened is a historical and scientific question and it is paramount that these issues be debated freely. Closing debate only promotes holocaust denial, because when debate is closed there are no opportunities for criticizing holocaust denial. And any mechanism which does away with open debate and criticism of bad theories will severely slow down the growth of human knowledge.

There is no difference in principle between outlawing creationist theory, pseudo-science, paranormal theories and holocaust denial. Holocaust denial should be allowed for the same reason all those other views should be allowed: criticizing established theories is a sine qua non for progress, science and civilisation. Can you imagine what would happen if it were a general rule that criticism of theories everybody knows to be true were outlawed? Scientific progress

would come to a grinding halt. The earth would still be the center of the universe.

I would also like to repeat here what I **commented before**:

I agree with the World that it's not helpful that the Belmont Club links to a Holocaust-denying website. However, I disagree with the last reader that it's bad to sympathize with people who are mistaken. Any person in favor of scientific freedom and a free and open exchange of ideas should sympathize with Holocaust deniers, especially those who are persecuted and jailed in countries such as Germany and Austria, and the fact that Amnesty International does not defend those people is a scandal. Remember Voltaire's dictum: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." Also remember that criticism and open debate of mainstream ideas is vital for the progress of science, even if that also means you'll see bad quality criticism from time to time. So although I do not believe the Holocaust deniers are right, I do sympathize with those of them who are well meaning and not motivated by anti-semitism.

See also my other comments on that page. Sending people to jail because they approve of the holocaust is something I would not approve of but I don't think it's outrageous to do so. But I *do* think it is outrageous that people are sent to jail because they hold *incorrect historical views*. If that were right then all of us should go to jail, because all of us are sure to have been mistaken at some point about some historical or scientific fact.

Henry Sturman

by **Henry Sturman** on Wed, 11/23/2005 - 17:36 | [reply](#)

Good post. The sausage-eat

Good post.

The sausage-eating Hun always needs a bit of censorship. Thank God we're so much better than them!

by a reader on Wed, 11/23/2005 - 17:44 | [reply](#)

holocaust denial

Henry,

In your mind, is there a "logical link" between believing the protocols of the elders of zion and anti-semitism? Could one be purely factually mistaken about those?

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Wed, 11/23/2005 - 20:34 | [reply](#)

Eugene Volokh has a thoughtfu

Eugene Volokh has a thoughtful post on this subject. I tend to agree with him.

http://volokh.com/archives/archive_2005_11_13-2005_11_19.shtml#1132249807

by a reader on Wed, 11/23/2005 - 21:45 | [reply](#)

Re: Eugene Volokh has a thoughtful post

Eugene Volokh does not address the issue addressed here. Instead, he addresses the issue of whether "the government" should or should not "ban advocacy of a historical position". By assuming that there is a single yes/no answer to this, right for all governments at all times, he unwittingly falls into extreme utopianism. None of his arguments that such banning "does more harm than good" even apply in the real-life situation, where Holocaust denial is legal in the United States but not in certain European countries. And conversely, if his line of reasoning were valid, it would have ruled out the original denazification project as well.

by [Editor](#) on Wed, 11/23/2005 - 22:20 | [reply](#)

Surprises

I am often surprised by the World, reading a topic and then finding it is not really about what I thought it was about.

While the scourge of Holocaust deniers is a worthy subject at any time, I am much more interested in why and how post WW II Germany and Japan were changed by Allied occupation. They were positively changed, and drastically so, by occupation, and both countries have much to be proud of today. Certainly occupation was accepted by most citizens as a worthy consequence of formerly barbaric regimes, and a necessary moral imperative was strictly applied. Drastic measures were used, but for the citizens of both countries they were a welcome alternative to the death, dire deprivations and destruction of their former imperial administrations.

The point is what did we learn from these long and successful occupations. What are the lessons about post war occupations, are there any? I think so, and the most important one is to be a worthy conquerer, leave the conquered in a position to move forward to a better autonomous destiny. That, for lack of a better word, is the true "denazification". That is the true moral course.

by a reader on Thu, 11/24/2005 - 02:46 | [reply](#)

Re: holocaust denial

In your mind, is there a "logical link" between believing the protocols of the elders of zion and anti-semitism? Could one be purely factually mistaken about those?

I can't answer this question, because I don't know anything about the protocols of the elders of zion. But I would argue that the World is wrong in the following way. The world basically believes as I do that there should be freedom of speech for historical debates. Only they wish to make exceptions in very special circumstances, because we don't live in a utopian world. In the case of Germany they suggest making holocaust denial legal would do more harm than good.

First, I would challenge whether this type of utilitarianism is a good thing. I think, for various reasons I won't go into now, often principles are more important than a utilitarian balance of good versus bad consequences. That said there are extreme situations where I would agree to forgo libertarian principles for utilitarian reasons, but this is not extreme enough for me.

Second, I would challenge the theory that making holocaust denial legal in Germany does more harm than good. The theory is that making holocaust denial illegal is part of an important denazification process. There are two things wrong with this argument. First, Germany is no longer more nazi than any other country, including the US. So if holocaust denial should be illegal in Germany it should be in the US and the UK as well. Second, since as I've explained holocaust denial is not inherently anti-semitic, making it illegal in no way helps to denazify. Therefore making it illegal does absolutely no good in this regard.

A major irony is that if denazification is the goal then making holocaust denial illegal is actually a move in the opposite direction. Making the belief in certain facts illegal is in itself a nazi-method and by its own example teaches and promotes a certain aspect of nazi-ideology (i.e. the aspect of nazi-ideology which is opposed to free scientific inquiry).

Henry Sturman

by [Henry Sturman](#) on Thu, 11/24/2005 - 10:46 | [reply](#)

Is anti-zionism or hatred of

Is anti-zionism or hatred of Israel inherently anti-semitic?

Is *anything* inherently anti-semitic?

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/>

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Thu, 11/24/2005 - 20:06 | [reply](#)

Re: Is anti-zionism or hatred of

Is anti-zionism or hatred of Israel inherently anti-semitic?

*Is *anything* inherently anti-semitic?*

First, let me note for clarity that I think these questions have

nothing to do with the issue being discussed here. However, that said, I'd be happy to reply.

First anti-zionism. That's easy. Anti-zionism is not anti-semitic if we define zionism with its original meaning: the proposal, starting in the 19th century, that Jews move to Palestine to remake a Jewish homeland there. There have been many people and many Jews who were or are against this idea. Mostly their argument was that it would create too much conflict with the Arabs. Many Jews have therefore argued that either Jews give up on the idea of Jewish homeland (well, they will typically support Israel now that it's there but claim it would have been better not to create it) or that they find another place (such as somewhere in Africa).

Personally I am neither for nor against zionism. I respect both those Jews who want to live in Palestine and those who do not. And I find it particularly ironic that many of the Arabs who've benefited so much from the progress and wealth the Jews developed and who've suffered so much from their own corrupt leaders, would be so opposed to Israel.

On the other hand today anti-zionisms is often taken to mean being against the right of Jews living in Palestine and for their expulsion or at least for the idea they should live under an Arab run state (where no doubt they'd be vigorously oppressed). I do think that view usually goes close together with anti-semitism: it's hard to imagine someone wanting all Jews to leave Palestine who is not an anti-semite.

Next: is hatred of Israel inherently anti-semitic? Well, that's more difficult. I don't think its **inherently** anti-semitic but it does come close. For the only way it can be non-anti-semitic is for someone to have nothing against the Jews but only hate the Jewish state. And that seems unlikely. Except for an anarchist who simply hates the Israeli state because he hates all states. But there is no rational cause to hate the Israeli state in particular, because the Israeli state is a Western style rule of law state, more civilized than most other states in the world. So then that leaves only two options. Either such a person is not anti-semitic but simply mistakenly hates Israel because he has an incorrect view of the Israeli-Arab conflict (Murray Rothbard is a good example of such a person; he actually believed all Arab-Israeli wars were wars of aggression *by Israel*). Or, what is more likely, the person is anti-semitic. In any case I do think the link between hating Israel and anti-semitism is much stronger than that between holocaust denial and anti-semitism.

P.S. I am an anarchist and therefore hate all states, but Israel and Switzerland are the two states in the world I hate least because from the way they historically arose they come closest to the ideal of a state as a voluntary organisation.

Henry Sturman

by **Henry Sturman** on Thu, 11/24/2005 - 23:49 | [reply](#)

Huh?

I just wanted to add my support for Henry Sturman's position (as expressed thusfar) and my bewilderment at **The World's** position.

Perhaps **The World** would like to catalog which other basic liberties (in the US and Britain) they would rejoice in seeing denied to people who happen to find themselves in places with different political traditions.

Gil

by **Gil** on Fri, 11/25/2005 - 00:58 | [reply](#)

Was denazification an injustice?

Gil: for example, under present circumstances, no one other than a few governments should be allowed to possess the element plutonium.

Gil and Henry: was the denazification programme of 1945-55 an injustice? Should the Allies have refrained from any of the actions listed above?

by **Editor** on Fri, 11/25/2005 - 01:43 | [reply](#)

What do you think is a good r

What do you think is a good reason to believe someone is anti-semitic?

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Fri, 11/25/2005 - 04:10 | [reply](#)

I agree that immidiately afte

I agree that immidiately after the WWII, government action in enforcing denazification was the correct policy in order to neutrilize the widescale Nazi brainwashing among those who had personally lived under that system and were its main propaganda target, as well as some of the root ideas that manfisted themselves in teh form of Nazims.

But extending it to our days doesn't seem to be a wise course.

It is a bit analogous to the great depression. The need also arose then for government action during the time of crisis to overcome the depression and it was the right thing to do as long as it was temporary and directed specifically towards overcoming that particular problem, but since it has continued to be applied as the right thing to do to prevent similar catastrophies for all times it has generated all the usual negative effects of government interference where it is not needed. To be sure another depression as prevented but this has created huge inflations instead. It might be streching the analogy too far but perhaps something similar can be detected in this case, where Nazism has been reduced to a cartoonish evil in

the popular culture and would hardly re-emerge while antisemitism has grown in new and superficially "opposite" fronts among the leftist, the so-called anti-colonialist and pro-Palestinian sections of the society. The continuation of governmental meddling in denazification has perhaps proven to be "too effective" once Israel and the Jews are now branded as the new Nazis in the new fashion of antisemitism.

Just as in its economic counterpart, lack of trust in the power of free market—in this case the free market of ideas—has led a well-intentioned move to produce opposite results because of government interference.

It might surprise you to know how effective such Holocaust denial legal convictions have been in the hands of anti-Zionist and antisemites these days presenting them as evidence for their looney conspiracy theories.

by AIS on Fri, 11/25/2005 - 06:34 | [reply](#)

Denazification

I don't know the details of all of the denazification program well enough to say whether each of the measures was justified.

But, I'm willing to agree that in the immediate aftermath of WWII the cultures (and many of the people) of Germany and Japan were so screwed up and violent that it justified harsh treatment to allow better cultures to take hold.

However, to permanently entrench a prohibition on the expression of certain ideas seems unjustified, and counter-productive.

As AIS indicated, to prohibit the criticism of official doctrine leads many to question whether the doctrine is true and capable of being defended against criticism in open debate. It invites all sorts of underground, un rebutted, theories to spread.

And, while I agree that Germany had severe cultural problems before the war (and still has many), I think that there has been dramatic progress. There are now overwhelmingly different people there who deeply regret what happened. To suggest that expressing Holocaust-denying theories to Germans is in the same category as handing plutonium to Iranian leaders seems to make a similar mistake as the anti-Semitic theories that we deplore.

Gil

by **Gil** on Fri, 11/25/2005 - 08:04 | [reply](#)

Gil, What gave you the idea

Gil,

What gave you the idea we wish to have *permanent* denazification laws?

-- Elliot Temple

Re: Was denazification an injustice?

Gil and Henry: was the denazification programme of 1945-55 an injustice? Should the Allies have refrained from any of the actions listed above?

First let me note that the denazification programme was very different from making holocaust denial illegal for two reasons: (1) the denazification programme was right after the war when there still was an important nazi culture and (2) the denazification programme was aimed at denazification while I've argued that whether or not the holocaust happened is a historical question which by itself has nothing to do with nazism. Therefore I have much more sympathy for the World's position in favour of the denazification programme than for their position on holocaust denial.

I can understand that denazification is important to prevent future wars and that sometimes it's better to use a relatively small amount of aggression to combat a greater aggression. Just as in wars we accept (or should accept) some innocent civilian casualties to fight a greater evil, so too maybe sometimes freedom of speech should be restricted to prevent a greater evil. Maybe that was the case after the second world war for the denazification programme, but I have my doubts.

I would think having lost the war and with new democratic regimes put into place, Germans and Japanese would have had enough reason to denazify and I would doubt that the denazification programme made any significant difference. Futhermore I would doubt whether one can really change people's ideas by forbidding certain parties, sympbols or ideas or by forcible reeducating them by touring them around concentration camps. As far as I know the reeducation in communist China and Cambodia wasn't all that effective either.

And I think doing things such as infringing on freedom of speech sends the wrong message. It sends the message that initiation of force is good. So I'd tend to be against those kinds of things, though I do understand a case can be made for them.

As for the imposition of new constitutions, there's nothing wrong with that per se. I would judge a constitution on how much pro-liberty it is, and it makes sense that the Allies would replace a Nazi political system with a more civilized constitution.

As for the retrospective jurisdiction of Nuremberg, I can't argue with that either because as a libertarian I don't care much for legalities of state. I care about justice and if Nuremberg provided justice then I'm for it.

As an aside I do not accept there are such things as 'war crimes' or

'crimes against humanity'. I think all crimes are crimes against individuals. And we don't need any fancy confusing wording like that because war criminals can be tried for normal crimes based on normal laws such as laws against (multiple) murder, etc.

In particular I have a problem with the concept of a 'war crime' because that concept reduces rather than improves options to prosecute crimes during a war. Basically the whole idea of 'war crimes' is that things which are normally crimes are *not* crimes during war.

Normally, for example, murdering innocent people is murder, but after a war soldiers fighting a war of conquest and aggression are typically not prosecuted. So in war soldiers are free to commit crimes, except if those crimes happen to fall under the category of 'war crimes'. So the whole purpose of the word 'war crimes' is to limit responsibility for crimes committed during war. If all crimes were just as illegal during war as during peace, then we would have no need for the concept of 'war crimes' because we would simply prosecute criminal warriors for normal crimes.

So in practice that means that I think all Germans who fought voluntarily in the criminal organization called the Nazi army should have been prosecuted for, among other things, the civilians and allied soldiers they killed. As for the Germans who were drafted, that's another story. And of course I do not mean that Allied soldiers should be prosecuted for murder because they may have killed German soldiers or accidentally killed innocent people. They were fighting on the right side, on the side against oppression and mass murder, and so they were doing the right thing.

Henry Sturman

by [Henry Sturman](#) on Fri, 11/25/2005 - 17:22 | [reply](#)

Permanent?

Elliot,

What gave me the idea of the wish for "permanent" denazification laws was the rejoicing at their enforcement sixty years after the end of the war.

Obviously, I don't know (or even think) that **The World** wants them to literally be permanent, but this much time seems much closer to permanence than makes sense to me.

It seems that **The World** thinks it's still right because of the existence of "significant traces" of bad features. I wonder how anyone will know when those traces are no longer significant if their expression is forced out-of-sight.

Gil

by [Gil](#) on Fri, 11/25/2005 - 21:50 | [reply](#)

Is There A Threat Today?

Joerg Haider, an Austrian politician, Nazi sympathiser and anti-semite of today says:

When asked to comment on his parents' wartime activities, Haider remarked: "In retrospect one is always wiser. As a descendant, one should not be so arrogant as to say, 'I would have known better.'"

The wartime activities in question are their membership in and work for Nazi organisations.

In other words, Joerg hasn't learned better. He hasn't adopted new and different values. He would be a Nazi if circumstances permitted.

He is just one person. But people voted for him. To say the threat is gone, one must believe the people voting for this man are cured. Why is that a reasonable position?

-- Elliot Temple
<http://www.curi.us/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Sat, 11/26/2005 - 04:20 | [reply](#)

Threats

There will always be a threat, in every democracy, that people will elect bad politicians with bad ideas.

The more power politicians have to interfere with our lives, the more damage this can cause. So, I favor removing a great deal of that power.

But, which will make us safer: insulating ourselves from bad ideas via criminalization of their expression, or publicly combatting them with better ideas?

In America, many people have elected **David Duke** to office, and tried to elect **Pat Buchanan** (whose expressed positions and sentiments seem to me to be more similar to Haider's than Duke's do) President. Is this an argument for outlawing disfavored historical theories here?

Gil

by **Gil** on Sat, 11/26/2005 - 08:16 | [reply](#)

Henry Sturman said: Though

Henry Sturman said:

Though statistically many holocaust deniers are anti-semites, there is no logical link between the two. It is perfectly possible for a decent non-anti-semitic non-hateful non-violent civilized person to believe the gas chambers did not exist.

There *is* a logical relationship between denying the holocaust and

anti-semitism: the former is a necessary condition of the latter. Additionally, a necessary condition usually serves as an indication of a causal relationship too: If someone believes that holocaust did happen (by which it is also implied it was a bad thing), there is good reason to conclude he cannot be an anti-semite (or at least consistently so). It may not be the only cause but it can be a contributing one.

Thinking about the question, "How does someone become an anti-semite?" can clarify my point.

by Babak on Mon, 11/28/2005 - 08:44 | [reply](#)

Why do you need to deny the H

Why do you need to deny the Holocaust to be an anti-Semite? Surely you might think it was a good thing and that it didn't go far enough.

by a reader on Wed, 11/30/2005 - 13:23 | [reply](#)

Yes, you are right. I was usi

Yes, you are right. I was using a stronger condition than simply "denying the existence of gas chambers": that the gas chambers did not exist, or if they factually did they were bad. This would exclude certain anti-semites (e.g. Nazis and neo-Nazis), but leaves the major portion of them, who are deemed to be ordinary people and are the subject of the debate here, who I believe would deny holocaust only in this stronger sense.

by Babak on Thu, 12/01/2005 - 02:50 | [reply](#)

Nazi support was not created by Nazi propaganda

I would think having lost the war and with new democratic regimes put into place, Germans and Japanese would have had enough reason to denazify and I would doubt that the denazification programme made any significant difference.

Don't you remember they tried that in 1918 in Germany? They lost the war, they had a democratic regime, but they did not denazify as you would think. They über-nazified.

by a reader on Thu, 12/01/2005 - 13:56 | [reply](#)

What can societies change into?

Denazification may appear to be only stale history, but it helps us better understand how Iran, one of the few remaining countries of any heft that still publicly calls for the destruction of Israel and for the acquisition of nuclear weapons, may change.

Denazification was carried out specifically by removing those

involved from positions of influence and by disbanding or rendering impotent the associated organizations. Although legions of Allied forces initially jump-started reform, in a remarkably short period of time, historically speaking, German citizens were back in control. Although our Middle Eastern nation-building experience is still limited, it appears so far that the pace and nature of reform such as occurred in Germany will be difficult to achieve without politically untenable decisions to spend a far larger share of national blood and treasure. There doesn't appear to be much chance of a shooting war with Iran, so the West's political will won't be tested. Nevertheless, comparing the experience of Germany with our limited results, highlights the key role played by local characteristics.

China is an interesting case, broadly similar in age to Iran. Perhaps Iran can develop an Islamic society with "modern" characteristics, or some other such transitional form. What can Iran change into? The obstacles to modernity may well be less than we see in Afghanistan and Iraq, but it seems implausible that they will be as easily swept away as in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. There will be no cadre of modern Europeans to take over. This should be kept in mind as we implement our basic strategy of maximizing military, economic, political and social pressure on Iran to fundamentally change.

by [Michael Bacon](#) on Fri, 12/02/2005 - 02:09 | [reply](#)

Holocaust Denial is Fraudulent

I find the argument that Holocaust Denial ought to only be illegal in some countries and not others problematic; as someone else said, Holocaust Denial today can easily cross national boundaries. Should it be illegal to order copies of Mein Kampf from Amazon.com in Germany? Should it be illegal for Austrians to browse neo-Nazi web sites that are hosted in countries where Holocaust Denial is not illegal?

De-Nazification is justified because Nazism is a criminal conspiracy to commit mass-murder. Germany had no "tradition" of genocide against Jews before Hitler, even though it did have a tradition of anti-Semitism (what country didn't?); nevertheless, it would have been justified to ban the Nazi Party in the Weimar Republic, just as it would have been justified to ban the Communist Party. All that is needed to prove conspiracy is evidence of agreement to commit a crime and a concrete act in furtherance of that agreement.

Similarly, Holocaust Denial is a form of fraud, and fraud is not included within the scope of freedom of speech. The necessary elements of fraud include intent, misrepresentation, reliance upon that misrepresentation by others, etc., and not all of these elements are included in every instance in which someone questions whether the Holocaust happened or criticizes some aspect of it. But with the likes of David Irving, a pathological liar who lies about things other

than just the Holocaust (like in his book about the bombing of

Dresden), all of the elements are present.

Irving fits the classic definition of a Holocaust Denier: One who denies that the Nazis tried to exterminate all the Jews, but wishes they had.

by Tim Starr on Thu, 12/08/2005 - 20:39 | [reply](#)

Dangerous German Tradition?

Tim,

Could the Holocaust have happened in Britain, with appropriate evil leader and co-conspirators?

-- Elliot Temple
<http://www.curi.us/>

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Thu, 12/08/2005 - 21:57 | [reply](#)

A British Holocaust?

Elliot asks whether the Holocaust could have happened in Britain. My reply would be to ask: which Holocaust, and when? Could the Jews have been exterminated in Britain at the same time they were exterminated in German-occupied Europe? I don't think so, both because private gun ownership was still legal in Britain at that time (Hence Orwell's line about making sure that the rifle on the wall of the workingman's cottage stays there), and because British democracy was fairly well-established by that time.

However, if you ask the Afrikaners about the 30K or so Boers who died in British concentration camps during the Boer War, or the Irish about the Famine, I think you'll get a somewhat different answer. These incidents can be distinguished from the Holocaust insofar as they were not the result of policies that were explicitly intended to kill off all of the Boers or Irish, as the Holocaust was expressly intended to kill off all the Jews under Nazi control. Also, their death toll was lower, at least for the Boer War. (I'm not up on the figures for the Irish Famine.)

Still, although it is to Britain's credit that its political system allowed for the abolition of the Corn Laws to relieve the Irish Famine and for the freedom of protest that allowed for the improvement of conditions in the Kitchener's concentration camps in South Africa, Britain also deserves the blame for the policies which let those horrors occur in the first place.

There are earlier incidents of ethnic cleansing in British history, such as the expulsion of the Acadians from Canada, the Highland Clearances, etc., but they took place before Britain was a democracy. The suppression of the Mau-Mau took place after Britain was a democracy, but I'm not convinced of the democidal nature of that counter-insurgency (I haven't read the two recent books about it making the case that it was democidal).

Some might argue that the British perpetrated a literal Holocaust in

the aerial bombing of Germany during WWII, but I reject that argument. I believe that the aerial bombing of Germany was justified (including Dresden), although it was far too indiscriminate for technological reasons.

Tim Starr
Fight For Liberty!
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fightforliberty/>

by Tim Starr on Mon, 12/19/2005 - 23:19 | [reply](#)

traditions

Germany did not have a tradition of genocide of Jews in particular, but it did have different traditions than Britain -- and it still does -- and they make genocide of Jews possible in Germany but not Britain.

-- Elliot Temple
<http://www.curi.us/>

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Tue, 12/20/2005 - 08:25 | [reply](#)

Genocidal Traditions

What British traditions make genocide of Jews impossible there today? There are three necessary elements for genocide: government, racial hatred, and the disarmament of the intended victims. Britain has at least two of those elements, government and victim disarmament. Does it truly lack the third? Perhaps when it comes to hatred of the Jewish "race," the answer is yes, but it's not difficult for me to imagine "racial" hatred against other groups being acted upon in genocidal fashion in Britain - perhaps against the Protestants or Catholics in Northern Ireland, perhaps against British Muslims as a backlash after an Islamo-Fascist terrorist attack in London, etc.

However, is racial hatred any less prevalent in Britain today than Austria or Germany? I don't know how to answer that, as I don't know how to measure racial hatred.

Tim Starr
Fight For Liberty!
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fightforliberty/>

by Tim Starr on Fri, 12/30/2005 - 01:49 | [reply](#)

Temporary curtailment

Would such laws be better if they included a sunset clause of say 50 years?

by a reader on Sat, 05/19/2007 - 17:03 | [reply](#)

Re: Temporary curtailment

A reader asked:

Would such laws be better if they included a sunset clause of say 50 years?

That sounds like a good idea. Not so much because governments can't be trusted, but because it would make clear what the purpose of the measure was. Which might make it work better.

by **Editor** on Sat, 05/19/2007 - 18:05 | [reply](#)
