

No Apology

Her Majesty the Queen is **visiting Dresden** to host a concert to pay for the rebuilding of Dresden cathedral, which was levelled during a bombing raid in World War 2 that killed at least 25,000 German civilians. The German newspaper *Bild* has asked if the Queen will apologise for this. Neither the Queen nor any other representative of Britain should ever apologise for what happened to Dresden. During World War Two, **Dresden** was a railhead and the site of factories making military equipment. British bombers could not bomb accurately because they flew at night to avoid being shot down by anti-aircraft fire and because they didn't have smart bombs. So they levelled the whole city killing thousands of innocents. Hitler and his fellow Nazis and their collaborators bear the sole responsibility for those deaths; not Britain and not Churchill. German people today are free to make outrageous demands *because* Britain bombed their cities. They are free because the Allies destroyed the Nazis by force – something that the German people failed in their moral responsibility to do long before. They should never forget that.

Sun, 10/31/2004 - 13:59 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permalink](#)

"they"?

Aren't you using the word "they" in the last two sentences in at least three different ways? "They", meaning German people today, "they", meaning German people in WW2 times who had the opportunity to depose the Nazis, and "they" meaning all German people in WW2 times, including completely innocent ones. Isn't the point that some of the last group were killed for crimes they did not commit?

by a reader on Sun, 10/31/2004 - 14:51 | [reply](#)

to whom

Ok a reader, good point.

Who, then, is the Queen supposed to Apologize too? She can't go back in time to speak directly to the second (or third?) They. And why on earth would the FIRST They ask her to Apologize (to Them)?

For what? The first They by now consists largely of folks born after

these events even occurred. What has England (or any subgroup of England) done to the first They which requires apology? Sent the Beatles to Hamburg?

Another interesting question to ponder: why would the Queen of England, Elizabeth, apologize for this at all? She was not the sovereign of England at the time in the first place. And CMIIW but the sovereign at the time did not have power anyway. And (I think) Churchill is dead.

So who in the heck is supposed to "Apologize" to whom? The whole thing becomes just a bizarre non sequitur now that you've helpfully forced me to sort out all the different Theys involved.

Should I ask the Queen to apologize to me for the burning of the White House in the War of 1812? Do let me know,

--Blix

by a reader on Sun, 10/31/2004 - 18:28 | [reply](#)

Collective guilt?

"something that the German people failed in their moral responsibility to do long before"

by a reader on Mon, 11/01/2004 - 03:29 | [reply](#)

More collective guilt

"The German newspaper Bild has asked if the Queen will apologise for this"

by a reader on Mon, 11/01/2004 - 03:37 | [reply](#)

Terrorist means and ends

There were thousands of civilians killed at Dresden. You claim that it was an industrial site that was strategic in the war. I don't doubt it. But as an American, I know what we did to those two Japanese cities. There was an industrial and strategic aspect. And there was a terrorist aspect. To this time I do not know if the terrorism was justified under the circumstances. But I do know that, whether it was justified or not, there are hypothetical circumstances where terrorism, as a method of war, could be and would be justified. That is why I have never characterised the current war as a "war against terrorism". You can never divorce terrorism as a means from its ends. The terrorism of the Islamist can never be interpreted without reference to its ends. If the ends were noble, it would be a harder case to judge. Knowing what the ends are, I see the terrorist method of warfare as an indication of the terrorist method of government. But knowing nothing about the ends and the situation, I could never come to such a conclusion.

-Nick

legenda.blogspot.com

Re: Collective guilt

A reader described this comment "something that the German people failed in their moral responsibility to do long before" as ascribing collective guilt.

Over 30% of Germans voted for a ticket with Hitler's name on it in many successive elections. Every one of these people bears some of the responsibility for subsequent events. Furthermore, many of the people who didn't care enough to go out and change the minds of those who voted for Hitler bear some of the responsibility. There can't have been many people in Germany who didn't know what Hitler was up to, he said it repeatedly and loudly in public and wrote about his plans for conquest and genocide in Mein Kampf. So many of them were in fact partly responsible for Hitler's rise to power despite knowing what he stood for.

And to prevent misinterpretation, it wasn't that the people who got bombed deserved to die. Rather, the Allies had been put in a position where there was no other viable option.

As for the claim that describing the Bild as German is collectivist, well, it is published in Germany and written in Germany and is published in the German language.

by [Alan Forrester](#) on Mon, 11/01/2004 - 16:56 | [reply](#)

2 things

1. Actually Alan I read the second "collective guilt" comment as a retort to the first one. The Bild, after all, has ascribed collective guilt to the people of England, including Queen Elizabeth, for acts which - even leaving aside the issue of whether those acts were justified - not all of them (and, not Elizabeth) had anything to do with. Even to the point of asking Elizabeth (who again had nothing to do with it) to "apologize" for those acts. That's collective guilt *too*.

I thought it was a clever retort, but let me know (reader) if I misinterpreted.

2. To Nick, much of your comment is mooted if one stipulates that actions by a uniformed military in wartime are by definition not "terrorism". (They may be many things - war crimes, etc. - just not "terrorism".) I know that not all (perhaps not [The World](#) for example) subscribe to this definition of "terrorism". I do (following Armed Liberal at Winds of Change who had a good post a while back explaining why the distinction is interesting, and which convinced me).

You like millions of others who've made the same exact point for 3 years are right of course that this is not a "war against terrorism"

per se. It's a war against a certain enemy which primarily uses

terrorism and "war on terror" is just a convenient (and politically acceptable) shorthand. So what? I can never understand why people think that the observation that it's not a LITERAL "war on terror" is supposed to be so earth shattering or scintillating. Is what we *call it* really, in the end, so important? I've never thought so but YMMV I guess.

--Blix

by a reader on Mon, 11/01/2004 - 21:58 | [reply](#)

reply to Blix

Yes you're right, that's what I meant. But I see now that Alan Forrester's interpretation was a natural one to make. Sorry, I should have been clear rather than clever.

by a reader on Mon, 11/01/2004 - 23:01 | [reply](#)

If this is true:

something that the German people failed in their moral responsibility to do long before. They should never forget that. Then this is true: The British people failed in their moral responsibility to repeal the Corn laws that led to the starvation of thousands (if not millions) of Irish. They should never forget that.

P.S. Over the historical span of the British Empire how many millions of innocent lives were snuffed out by the British?

by a reader on Tue, 11/02/2004 - 02:37 | [reply](#)

Re: If this is true:

A reader wrote:

something that the German people failed in their moral responsibility to do long before. They should never forget that.

Then this is true: The British people failed in their moral responsibility to repeal the Corn laws that led to the starvation of thousands (if not millions) of Irish. They should never forget that.

The Corn Laws did lead to the deaths of millions of Irish people and the British should never forget that. However, there is a difference between making a mistake that leads to millions dying and choosing to destroy millions of lives as a matter of deliberate policy or supporting someone who favours such policies.

P.S. Over the historical span of the British Empire how many millions of innocent lives were snuffed out by the British?

Again, those people were not killed as a matter of a deliberate

policy of genocide, although many were killed for bad reasons, like sheer greed. However, we could also equally ask how many lives were saved and how much freedom was spread by the Empire. Would India be a democratic, free society today if the British had not trained many Indians in the workings of democracy? How many people would still be in chains if the British Empire had not decided to try to eliminate slavery? It isn't really something anyone should want to go back to, but the Empire wasn't all bad either in intention or in practise. The Nazis were all bad.

by **Alan Forrester** on Tue, 11/02/2004 - 15:53 | [reply](#)

And besides

and besides, AFAIK there's no Brit newspaper asking like the President of India, or Ireland, to apologize for this or that historical uprising or other violence against Brits.

Assuming the analogy holds in the first place, that would be the analogous thing.

by a reader on Tue, 11/02/2004 - 16:21 | [reply](#)

Heh

"The Nazis were all bad."

Alan, I don't know if you're up to date on Californian slang, but that phrase is hilarious.

Before you wonder, no, in this context 'bad' does not mean 'good'.

"The Nazis were all bad" is true in slang or in literal interpretation.

by a reader on Wed, 11/03/2004 - 20:00 | [reply](#)

say what you mean

instead of teasing Alan, could you just tell us what you mean?

-- Elliot Temple

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

by **Elliot Temple** on Wed, 11/03/2004 - 23:42 | [reply](#)

Apology

Apologise for What? It was the Nazis stupid fault that we were involved in the war anyway. In my belief we had to bomb the fascists out of the civilians in order to crush the resistance. The German Prime Minister is himself a swastika wearer and how dare he ask our Queen to apologise! Its unbelievable. We should still be dropping bombs nowadays for what they did. The amount of Jews killed in the concentration camps around 5 Million and they want an

apology for 25,000 Hitler supporters. What a pile of *#!\$ in my

opinion.

by Harley on Thu, 12/02/2004 - 22:57 | [reply](#)

We disagree

We disagree with several points in the above comment.

Chancellor Schroder was born in 1944 and is in no sense a 'swastika wearer'. Resistance in Germany after the war was suppressed by making it clear that those who resisted would be killed and those who did not resist would (in the Western sectors at least) have their rights respected: it had nothing to do with casualties inflicted during the war. The 25,000 or more killed in Dresden were not all 'Hitler supporters', which is why anyone, such as ourselves, who supports the raid that killed them has to argue, as we did, that it was a moral necessity *despite* many of those deaths, not because of them. And of course violence against Germans today would be totally unjustified.

by [Editor](#) on Fri, 12/03/2004 - 03:01 | [reply](#)

yeah!

Apologise for What? It was the Nazis stupid fault that we were involved in the war anyway.

I know he didn't mean it, but I agree with this. All the deaths on both sides are the Nazis fault and responsibility, not ours. (Except the ones that should be blamed on Japan, USSR, or whoever else)

-- Elliot Temple

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

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Fri, 12/03/2004 - 18:44 | [reply](#)

Sorry

Thank You For supporting me Elliot. I'm sorry though for going so overboard. I guess i was just incensed about the situation. Normally it was just words from my Grandad who served in the 6th Airborne in WW2. He was there from D-Day to the end of the war. He was a Captain and a commander of one of the companies. He told me that he saw alot of distressing things, and lost many good friends to a War started by the Germans. I hope you now understand why I said what i did, and i'm sorry to anyone who found this unnecessary.

by Harley on Fri, 12/03/2004 - 20:44 | [reply](#)

Sarcasm

I think the Editor thought you were being sarcastic. Actually, so did I. But I think it's truer as meaning it seriously, than as meaning the opposite.

-- Elliot Temple

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

by **Elliot Temple** on Fri, 12/03/2004 - 22:13 | [reply](#)

No!

I agree with the Editor, and disagree with Harley and Elliot about the claim that all the German deaths were the fault of the Nazis.

The Nazis bear a lot of responsibility, but that doesn't mean that there could be no unjustified killings while battling them, or that perpetrators bear none of the responsibility.

We may disagree about which killings were, in fact, unjustified, but I think we should agree that it's possible for members of the right side to be at fault for bad things that they do while engaged in a good cause.

And, since there were so many armed people and so many killings, and since we do not know the details about all of them, it seems unreasonable to assert that the Nazis were responsible for *all* of them.

Gil

by **Gil** on Sat, 12/04/2004 - 03:39 | [reply](#)

yes!

Gil,

Yeah, good guys can wage war wrongly, but... you can't expect the military to be perfect, has so many ppl, as you say. therefore, forcing us to use it at all, makes the bad side-effects the nazis fault.

we designed our military reasonably. what more could be asked of us?

-- Elliot Temple

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

by **Elliot Temple** on Sat, 12/04/2004 - 05:54 | [reply](#)

Huh?

I'm not suggesting that it's wrong to have a military because not every member behaves perfectly.

I'm just saying that being a part of a good institution that often performs its justified tasks well and nobly, doesn't absolve one of responsibility for his actions.

If there's a murderer in the military and he commits murder during a just war, *he* is responsible for that murder; not the bad guys who caused the war (except for a tiny part of it).

Every situation that a wrong-doer is in is "caused" to some extent

by other people beyond his control. That doesn't mean that those others are responsible for his actions because if not for them he wouldn't have been there.

Does it?

Gil

by **Gil** on Sat, 12/04/2004 - 06:48 | [reply](#)

how about this:

When the Germans deploy an army with some murderers in it, we blame the murderers, and their leaders (for deploying them). When Britain does, we blame the murderers, and the *German* leaders (for making us deploy them).

-- Elliot Temple

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

by **Elliot Temple** on Sat, 12/04/2004 - 16:07 | [reply](#)

OK

That's better.

But, if while battling Germany's military Britain's leaders order unjustified killing, we blame Britain's leaders for that.

We can blame Germany's leaders for putting Britain's leaders into a situation where none of their choices were pleasant. But, we can blame Britain's leaders for making bad choices when better choices were available. We can say that they are responsible for the difference between their morally worse choices and their morally better choices. Or, something like that.

Gil

by **Gil** on Sat, 12/04/2004 - 23:35 | [reply](#)

agreed (nt)

-- Elliot Temple

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

by **Elliot Temple** on Sun, 12/05/2004 - 06:01 | [reply](#)

A free and democratic India?

Alan: You're assuming that people in India were unfree and undemocratic before the British got there. People didn't exactly live in desperate squalor before the British came to save them from themselves. Although the people may have not have had 'freedom' and 'democracy' as we think of them today, they were generally

content in their political systems. India along only became unfree

and undemocratic, with people in chains, with the arrival of British colonizers. Really, I can't see how many good things British or any other colonialism spread.

by Tomas on Mon, 04/18/2005 - 01:22 | [reply](#)

British Empire

Tomas wrote:

You're assuming that people in India were unfree and undemocratic before the British got there. People didn't exactly live in desperate squalor before the British came to save them from themselves. Although the people may have not have had 'freedom' and 'democracy' as we think of them today, they were generally content in their political systems. India along only became unfree and undemocratic, with people in chains, with the arrival of British colonizers.

Yeah, nobody was in chains, except all the slaves of course. And the British **banned** slavery in India in 1860. As I said, the British Empire did some good things and some bad things, here's an **interesting article** for you to read.

by [Alan Forrester](#) on Tue, 04/19/2005 - 01:38 | [reply](#)