

Ignorance

All sides in politics continually attribute their opponents' real or alleged errors to such factors as stupidity, corruption, misguided loyalty, naivety, prejudice, sentimentality and sheer malevolence.

It is possible, though, that simple *factual ignorance* is in reality a more significant cause of political error – at least, in the West – than any of those. We have previously **conjectured** that many opponents of the liberation of Iraq are literally unaware of the case in favour. We do not mean unaware of the merits of the case, but simply unaware of its content.

Now we read of a revealing **incident** in which the new Foreign Minister of France has displayed astounding ignorance of the basic events of the Second World War:

during the visit of French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy to the new Holocaust museum in Jerusalem's Yad Vashem on September 8, he asked – while perusing maps of European sites where Jewish communities had been destroyed – whether British Jews were not also murdered. Needless to say, Douste-Blazy's question was met by his hosts with amazement. "But Monsieur le minister," *Le Canard* quoted the ensuing conversation, "England was never conquered by the Nazis during World War II."

The minister apparently was not content with this answer, which, according to the magazine, was given by the museum curator, and persisted, asking: "Yes, but were there no Jews who were deported from England?"

How can a person who is *that* unaware of the role played by Britain in the war be qualified to meditate and pontificate on the perfidiousness of the Anglo-Saxon character (which is, after all, fifty percent of a French Foreign Minister's job), or to make nuanced estimates of **how shitty the Jews are** (which is most of the remaining fifty percent)?

There is something very positive about ignorance, though. Perhaps we are allowing hope to triumph over good sense here, but the more of the bad opinions in the world are due to factual ignorance rather than any of the other causes above, the more the world is actually better than it looks. How one might go about remedying

this ignorance, though, is less clear. Anything that succeeds at that should also succeed at diminishing our own ignorance. Our best shot so far has been to start a blog...

Update: As a matter of fact, some British Jews **were deported** – from the Channel Islands, the only part of Britain to be invaded by the Germans.

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Factual Ignorance?

I think its thinking ignorance. The facts are available, or their close approximation, if anyone is willing to look, check, and think. Thinking ignorance is the bane of the western world, and the rest of the world for that matter too. Like factual ignorance it is correctible if the owner of the ignorance is willing.

by a reader on Thu, 09/22/2005 - 14:09 | [reply](#)

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One of my favorite examples of ignorance underpinning bad policy is the idea that the Great Depression was caused by "the failure of unfettered free markets". Invite your friends to list the nations that had anything remotely resembling free markets in the 1920s and 1930s.

by [Rafe](#) on Wed, 09/28/2005 - 10:21 | [reply](#)