

OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION
BUREAU OF MOTION PICTURES
HOLLYWOOD OFFICE

NOTE: The following information is being sent to you as a supplement to the War Information Manual. Its purpose is to give further amplification to the Government's war program, and to provide material for short subjects and feature pictures. If more detailed information on the subject is desired, it will be furnished to you, on request, by the Office of War Information. Should you wish to use this material in your short subject or feature program, kindly communicate with this Office in order to avoid unnecessary duplication.

"THEY" GOT THE BLAME

THE PROBLEM: WHO IS THE ENEMY?

The democratic principle, the doctrine of the Four Freedoms, our very survival as a nation, are today imperiled by Axis armies and Axis ideology. It is part of the strategy of the Axis to confuse us ... to divide us internally ... to set one group against another ... to foster the persecution of minorities by the majority.

Axis propagandists within America are telling us that our real enemy is not the Axis but the Catholics, the labor unions, the Jews, the capitalists, the foreign-born, the Negroes. It is the strategy of the scapegoat, and it is as old as history.

THE SMOKESCREEN OF PERSECUTION

Men of Evil, from the earliest days of recorded history, have

deflected public wrath from their own misdeeds by the simple, cruel expedient of focusing the indignation of their subjects or intended victims against a helpless minority. By raising a smokescreen of suspicion and hatred toward a bogus enemy, toward a fictitious "evil influence", they have clouded the public mind sufficiently to gain their own evil ends, to amass dictatorial power or vast economic influence.

The crime has been perpetrated so often that the historical record provides us with one unmistakable storm warning when human rights are in danger - a campaign against minorities. Persecution of any one group is the danger signal. If allowed to continue, it is only a question of time until the rights and liberties of everyone are lost.

ORIGIN OF THE SCAPEGOAT

The idea of the scapegoat grew out of the primitive superstitions belief that all ills and misfortunes were the work of dark powers. It was thought that ailments, troubles, or even personal guilt could be transferred to something tangible and driven away. Thus it was the custom among primitive peoples to select an animal or human victim to which their sins would be transferred and ultimately destroyed by sacrifice.

Human scapegoats were generally chosen by lot, without any idea of persecution attached. But this custom easily lent itself to abuse, for the practice offered a constant temptation to make scapegoats of unpopular persons or groups, of rivals or personal enemies of the chieftains.

Rulers soon found it to their advantage to arouse popular prejudices against innocent minorities who, for one reason or another, seemed different from the rank and file of the community. By such means it was easy to distract the attention of the public from the real shortcomings of the group in power, or to cause the masses to forget their own miseries.

SCAPEGOATS IN HISTORY

In the early days of the Roman Empire, Christians served as scapegoats. They were in the minority; they were generally poor; their religious customs and beliefs were "different". It was a simple matter to blame the Christians for every misfortune, since they were relatively few in number and could not defend themselves. Consequently they were imprisoned, tortured, and on occasions massacred in large numbers.

Ironically, groups that have suffered terrible persecution frequently, upon gaining power, become persecutors. Thus as the Christian Church rose to power in the Middle Ages, it launched on a reign of terror against non-conformists who were labeled "heretics". Protestants suffered at the hands of Catholics, Catholics at the hands of Protestants, depending on which was in the ascendancy.

In America, the New England colonists fled from persecution, only to punish or send into exile all those who did not conform to their own conception of freedom of worship. In the 19th century, Irish Catholic immigrants were singled out for abuse, were made scapegoats for the economic tribulations of the period. They were in the minority;

hence they were used by political and financial demagogues to further their own ends. After the Civil War the Negro suffered a similar fate.

Of all the minority groups in history, the Jews have probably suffered longest and most bitterly. Colonies of Jews, originally farmers, were driven from their homeland and forced to settle wherever they were given temporary sanctuary. Denied the right to own land, they became merchants, traders, and bankers, because money was easy to transport and conceal in times of persecution. They were always small in numbers and completely defenseless, since in most cases they were forbidden even the scant legal protection of citizenship. Like the Christians of an earlier day they were blamed for every misfortune from plague to poverty. For a time their burden was eased with the spread of enlightenment following the French Revolution. But whenever a crisis arose, reactionary groups led forth the old scapegoat. In Russia and Central Europe, tyrants invariably concealed their own crimes behind organized persecution of the Jews.

NAZI SCAPEGOATS

Post-war Germany was chaotic, a land of misery and despair. The people, seeking a way out, seeking a panacea for their troubles, were divided into numerous bitterly-squabbling factions. The situation was ideal for the rise of Hitler and the National Socialist Party. The program they sold the masses was a Rebirth of Germany. Their real program was Divide and Conquer.

Hitler and the Nazis won support of the foremost political

party, the Social Democrats, by parading the scapegoat of Communism. They won the support of the unthinking, impoverished masses by bringing forth the scapegoat of the Jews, labeling them Communists or usurious bankers as it served his purpose. They set the Protestant Church against the Catholic Church (again a minority) and smashed both. The people awoke to find the Nazis in complete power, to find their liberties suppressed, to find themselves launched on a frenzied, atavistic struggle for world conquest.

The Nazi Divide and Conquer pattern now assumed world-wide proportions. German agents and native Fascists in every country, including America, began an organized campaign against minorities, against Jews and Catholics, against labor and capital, against minority races and the foreign-born. Divide from within and Conquer from without, the Nazi method of attack, the device of tyrants since the beginning of recorded history.

THE BULWARK OF FREEDOM

The history of the world and the history of America is proof that we are not immune to the demoralizing strategy of the scapegoat. We have minorities, hundreds of them, and there are those in America who would serve their own ends by raising a bogus enemy to distract us from the real enemy.

But Americans have an inherent respect for the dignity of the individual, for his right to live and speak and worship according to the dictates of his own conscience. Americans know who the enemy

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is and what he stands for. They cannot be sold a phony bill of goods,
because Americans aren't suckers.