

Ickes Criticizes Acceptance of Hitler's Medals

Asks Ford and Lindbergh to Explain in Attack on Nazis Before Zionists

CLEVELAND, Dec. 18. (UP).—Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, tonight told a Zionist Society dinner that Germany's persecution of Jews had carried that nation back to a "period of history when man was unlettered, benighted and bestial." Ickes took occasion to criticize sharply the acceptance of decorations of the German Nazi government by Americans, and referred specifically to Henry Ford and Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh.

"How can they pretend that in accepting the shabby baubles of a dictator they are honoring the great people whom the dictator has victimized and degraded?" Mr. Ickes asked. "Perhaps Henry Ford and Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh will be willing to answer those questions which, I am sure, have occurred to millions of other free-born Americans."

Referring to comparisons of the European dictatorships with the Middle Ages, Ickes said this was "an insult to the Middle Ages. To seek a true comparison," he said, "it is necessary to go back to that period of history when man was unlettered, benighted and bestial." He said that in the Middle Ages "man was groping toward the light, even if dimly seen, of a better day."

Ickes told the Zionist society of Cleveland that the problem of Jewish persecution was one for "democracies" because, he said, Jews never will be safe unless democracy is safe. He said that "in certain areas" Jews are now regarded as "political eunuchs and social outcasts, to be dragged down like mad dogs."

"They may no longer serve, with their ability and their skill, their fellow citizens, regardless of race or creed. They may no longer participate in the normal life of the people of which they have become an integral part. Their welfare is disregarded; their safety is imperiled; they are treated as criminals and, crowning humiliation of all, they are about to be segregated in ghettos, as lepers of old, though still living, were in effect buried alive."

He said that modern dictators were forced to "manufacture" dangers to strengthen their hold on their peoples, and that "the material is at hand in proportions sufficient for the purpose. This material," he said, "is the Jew. It is almost inconceivable that this could have been done, but the results prove that even in the year of 1938 a civilized man and his primitive ancestors are brothers under the skin."

In discussing acceptance of decorations of the German government by Americans, the Cabinet member said he had wondered "how any American, who calls himself Christian or who pretends to be in the enlightened principles that constitute the warp and woof of our American life, can accept a decoration at the hand of a brutal dictator, who with that same hand is robbing and torturing thousands of fellow human beings."

He took a passing shot, in his criticism of racial, religious and economic intolerance, at a "chairman of a Congressional investigating committee," whom observers believed to be Representative Martin Dies, chairman of the House un-American committee. "I am as opposed to the intolerance that is fomented as a justification for robbing and suppressing Jews abroad," he said, "as I am to the cunning and spiteful intolerance of the chairman of a Congressional investigating committee who by some mischance finds himself clothed with a little brief authority in the wanton exercise of which he violates every rule of decency and fair play."

Ickes said Americans must demand just and equal treatment for Jews, and added that he personally wished America's gates might be thrown open "to the political refugees of any country."

Ickes made no definite proposal for modifying the immigration laws to solve the refugee problem, but explained that he believed the immigration laws should be observed until a method was found of modifying them.

In a sarcastic attack on the "totalitarian" states, Ickes remarked that "certain sections of Europe today have made it possible for ethnologists and anthropologists to study primitive man without having to sift kitchen middens or attempt to reconstruct a primitive social order on the basis of a human jawbone. The inquisitions of Spain might do a job of diabolical cruelty on the bodies of Jews who came within their power, but they lacked the thoroughness, the ingenuity and the super-cruelty of their prototypes in modern totalitarian countries."

Ford Is Not Available

DETROIT, Dec. 18. (AP).—Henry Ford was not available tonight and none of his associates would comment on an assertion by Secretary Ickes at Cleveland that any American accepting a decoration from a dictator "automatically foresees his American birthright."

The automotive industrialist received the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle last July 30, his seventy-fifth birthday. He made no comment at the time except to express his thanks, but in a statement authorized by him on November 30 Ford said:

"My acceptance of a medal from the German people does not, as some people seem to think, involve any sympathy on my part with Nazism. Those who have known me for many years realize that anything that breeds hate is repulsive to me."