

American Wartime Propaganda Film “Why We Fight” (1942)

Abstract

Directed by Frank Capra, a series of films titled “Why We Fight” was produced to explain the causes of the war and motivate American soldiers when the United States entered the war in 1941. The series was later shown to civilian audiences at movie theaters across the U.S. In the clips from the installment titled “Prelude to War” selected here, the audience first hears of all the nations brought under submission of the German military. Frightening images of London during the Blitz, and the Blitzkrieg-style advance across the continent are included. The audience is also offered the American government’s understanding of the regime: the cult of the Führer is well represented, as is the totalitarian nature of the dictatorship. Germans are described as wanting regimentation in their lives and revenge for their defeat in the First World War. Attacks on Jews are introduced in the context of an attack on religion more broadly, with the persecution of Catholics and Protestants taking precedence. The racism of Nazi ideology is not discussed.

Source

Source: *Why We Fight: Prelude to War*, 1942. Documentary, b/w, dir. Frank Capra. Released by the Office of War Information. Internet Archive.

<https://archive.org/details/gov.archives.arc.36067>

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