

Spanish politics and scapegoats

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What is a scapegoat? Goat (cabra you will know) and scape, perhaps. A scape (bohordo) is a flower stalk (tallo de flor). When scape and goat come together the meaning is quite different.

A “scapegoat” (chivo expiatorio) is a mortal who is blamed for the wrongdoings (maldades) of others, often for reasons of expediency (conveniencia/oportunidad). This is often seen in the world of politics. Politicians sometimes shift the blame (to other mortals) for mistakes and errors so that the politicians do not seem corrupt or incompetent.

Now, some history: the word goes back many moons. A scapegoat is one of two kids (cabritos) and in Leviticus (Levítico) one goat was sacrificed (not a scapegoat, nor to be blamed) and the other living scapegoat was released taking with it all its sins (pecados).

Some examples of its use:

- The spying (espionaje) scandal is Mr. Sanchez’s fault, so he should take responsibility for it and not scapegoat (y no culpa) the head (el jefe) of the secret service organisation.
- Mr. Sanchez, the Spanish Prime Minister, needed a scapegoat (necesitó a un chivo expiatorio) “to save his skin”. To save someone’s skin (salvar el pellejo) is an expression which means avoiding something dangerous or unpleasant without a care for anybody else.
- The top dog (= boss/jefe) of the Spanish secret service organisation was the scapegoat for the government’s law-breaking (violaciones de la ley).

So, have you ever been a scapegoat?