

LUSITANIA EPISODE

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By

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1936

Submitted to the Department of History
Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College
In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

1937

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Dedicated
to
MISS FRANCES JONES
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author wishes to express his sincere appreciation and thanks to his major professor, Dr. Glenn B. Hawkins, upon whose suggestion this work was undertaken, and with whose help and guidance the same was carried to completion.

He also wishes to thank Miss Wright and Miss Campbell of the Oklahoma A. and M. library for their help in securing documents, without which this work could not have been completed.

PREFACE

The author has made an attempt in this work to set forth in detail and trace the development of the relations between the United States and the leading European powers from January 1, 1915, to May 29, 1915. He has also endeavored to give an unbiased opinion of the factors which lead America to become pro-Ally, and to present the facts leading up to the sinking of the Lusitania in the light of all the available information. A great deal of attention has been given in the first part of the work in showing how the underlying causes of the United States entanglement were being laid without the average American being conscious of it.

A large portion of the thesis is devoted entirely to the last voyage and the sinking of the Lusitania. With the details of the disaster in mind, the writer has made a sincere effort to set forth the true facts in regard to the causes and effects of the sinking. In doing this it has been necessary to search carefully through the diplomatic correspondence to be found in the Foreign Relation Supplements of the United States for 1914, 1915, 1916. The Life and Letters of Walter Hines Page, of Colonel House, and of William Jennings Bryan were used frequently. A number of books by outstanding authorities on the submarine activities during the early part of the war were used for contiguous information. The leading magazines and journals have been read for facts concerning the sinking of the Lusitania.

Most of the sources and materials used in preparation of this thesis have been found in the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College Library.

Oklahoma A. and M. College

Stillwater, Oklahoma

May 3, 1937.

James W. Taylor

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CHAPTER I

NEUTRALITY BECOMES DIFFICULT

On December 29, 1914, Ambassador Gerard was in Berlin, writing a letter to Colonel House that "prospects of peace seem very dim." At the same time the possibility that the United States might be drawn into the conflict was a matter of pure prophecy, and those who may have anticipated American participation in the war were very few. Even, at this early date, our English friends were becoming impatient with our continued neutrality. We might be able to see that the German military regime was in direct conflict with some of the principles of democracy, but it does not seem reasonable that the Allies could have expected us to become involved in such savage cruelty. Unquestionably this attitude was generally accepted throughout the United States. Yet at that moment we were in the midst of an evolutionary process which had established the chief causes of our entanglement and war was more than a matter of speculation.

In his address to Congress on December 8, 1914, President Wilson spoke of the war as one "with which we have nothing to do.....We shall not alter our attitude because some amongst us are nervous and excited."¹ By the beginning of the new year he had begun a modification of this view, because it was his

¹Woodrow Wilson, Wilson's State Papers And Addresses, New York, 1918, pp. 78,79.

duty to find a satisfactory solution. Theoretically, there were a number of solutions from which to choose, such as impartial intervention to force a peace, intervention on the side of Germany, strict and effective neutrality, and intervention in alliance with the Entente. The course finally adopted was an attempt to follow them all. This made it very difficult to succeed with any. Unfortunately the longer we waited the fewer the paths and the smaller the field within which our diplomats could act. Within a very short time we were finding that our indecision had made it impossible to carry out our intended policies. Well was this expressed when Colonel House said, "last autumn....was the time," when we should have acted if we desired to remain at peace. Soon our statesmen found themselves struggling with forces, which they were unable to control. And under their leadership and guidance we were to become the victim of circumstances rather than the master of our destiny.²

Such conditions were apparently not foreseen at the beginning of the new year. Even the nearness of the industrial centers of the New England States to the war left little impression upon the New Year Eve celebrants. Despite the war and blockade money flowed freely in hotels and restaurants. For example, New York City celebrated New Year Eve by drinking real champagne and singing war songs; journalists proclaimed it "Broadway's Largest Crowd."

²Walter Millis, Road To War, New York, 1935, p. 123.

These brief moments of emotional expression were possibly due to wishful thinking. During January, 1915, according to a later survey, industries actually showed no sign of increasing prosperity.³ Bank checks drawn during the first quarter of 1915 were ten percent smaller than the similar period in 1914. Prices for all commodities were exceedingly low, with the exception of wheat, which was at startling highs. Then, what was to be our reward, for being at peace in a warring world? Apparently no material good was forthcoming for so perfect an example of pacifism. The fact that the war had cost the United States \$382,000,000 in decreased exports up to December 1, 1914,⁴ seems to have worried the publishers of the New York Times very little. This newspaper conveyed the idea that our stored up forces of production would soon penetrate the world's markets to an extent we had seldom dreamed, and that what other nations are striving to obtain through force, we shall obtain by extending our benevolence.⁵

Such lofty ideas had not been intended to soften the shock which was sure to come to the British on the publication of so strenuous an American protest against British trade restrictions. When the average Britisher read these grievances in his newspapers he did not accept them with favor or unconcern. To the public of both nations, it came as the first important official action in regard to the European war.

³Alexander Dana Noyes, The War Period of American Finance, New York, 1926, p. 114.

⁴"The European War," New York Times Current History Magazine, New York, 1915, II, 1016, hereafter referred to as N.Y. Times Curr. Hist.

⁵Millis, Road To War, p. 124.

The significance lies in the fact that it was not directed to Germany but to the Allies!

In a letter of January 12, our Ambassador (Page) to Great Britain wrote the President that the majority of the people of England never makes a "distinction between communication that comes from the State Department and communications the newspapers say come with your (Wilson) approval. At the same time, he made it known that he was grieved by the "shirt-sleeve" tone of the State Department.⁶

Some of the statesmen and even the British press could not quite understand why the invasion of Belgium had not affected our national interests while the suppression of our trade had called numerous protests. Spring Rice, the British Ambassador to the United States, was so enraged by this same feeling that he was quite certain that all America was fast becoming pro-German; thereby, he created "an attitude of partiality in the present war and of hostility to Great Britain."⁷

The British and Germans alike were free to buy munitions in the United States; the difference was that Britain could take them home and Germany could not. Since Germany could not get munitions, she believed it would be only fair that

⁶Burton J. Hendricks, The Life and Letters of Walter Hines Page, New York, 1926, III, 219.

⁷Foreign Relations of the United States, 1915 Supplement, pp. 777-779. Hereafter referred to as For. Rel., Suppl.

the Allies should be prevented from buying by our Government. The German-Americans presently made an appeal to Congress to "lay an embargo upon all contraband of war [saving and excepting foodstuffs alone], and thereby withdraw from the contending powers all aid and assistance of this Republic." With this demand, the German-Americans were able to get a Senator, who had a large constituency of their racial sympathizers to make the complaints. Senator Stone of Missouri, on January 8, addressed a long letter to Secretary of State Bryan, enumerating in twenty points the ways in which it was charged that the Administration had shown partiality for the Entente.⁸ To this communication the State Department Secretary soon replied:

If Germany and Austria-Hungary cannot import contraband from this country it is not....the duty of the United States to close its markets to the Allies.

The markets of this country are open upon equal terms to all the world, to every nation, belligerent or neutral.⁹

That answer was very conclusive, but it settled nothing.

There were still good indications that Congress might pass the arms embargo resolution.

Miss Jane Addams and some of her companions were laboring with officials of the European Governments to secure peace. Miss Addams called on Foreign Minister Grey in London, Minister Jagow in Berlin, and other foreign ministers in various belligerent nations. Colonel House said Miss Addams

⁸Mark Sullivan, Our Times, New York, 1933, V, 93.

⁹Ibid., p. 13.

had "accumulated a wonderful lot of misinformation," that the foreign ministers with whom she had talked "were not quite candid with her," and that she "had a totally wrong impression."

The information secured from the ministers was given to Mme. Rosika Schwimmer who visited Wilson to solicit him for peace, which, she asserted, the belligerents would welcome. Wilson was interested, but noncommittal.

Undaunted by her polite rebuff a journey to Detroit was made with the hope of obtaining an interview with Henry Ford. It was the psychological moment; he was eager for her persuasions. Ford approved heartily of the mediation plan and promised not only to support it, but to go to Europe himself and take part in it. In a few days he went to New York City and chartered the Scandinavian liner, Oscar II.

Mr. Ford invited several friendly Governors, Senators and various college groups to accompany him on this peace tour. Unfortunately for Mr. Ford, the newspapers were living up to their reputation when they made this attempt at peace an occasion for ridicule. So much ill feeling was in this way engendered that few individuals cared to participate in such a futile enterprise.

In the absence of his chosen few he secured a great number of people who were in sympathy with his plan, but who were less influential. The peace delegates made their tour to the different nations with no success. The rebuff administered to these foreign mediators was so severe that other peace movements in

the country lost their force of conviction.¹⁰

During all this period ex-President Roosevelt, who was aging and jealous, had become very unsympathetic to President Wilson's traditional policy of neutrality. Mr. Roosevelt not only disagreed with Wilson, but he went so far as to disregard the established policies of Washington, Jefferson, and Monroe, and announced a policy as drastic as that to which Wilson was long afterwards to become attached. His (Roosevelt) flaming manifesto, "Utopia or Hell," appeared on January 4, in the Independent:

The only alternative to war, that is to hell, is the adoption of some plan substantially like that which I have advocated.....It is possible that after this war had come to an end the European contestants will be sufficiently sobered to be willing to consider some such proposal.....What I propose is a working and realizable Utopia. My proposal is that the efficient civilized nations--should join in a world league for the peace of righteousness. That means that they shall by solemn covenant agree as to their respective rights, which shall not be questioned; that they shall agree that all other questions arising between them shall be submitted to a court of arbitration. And that they shall also agree--to act with the combined military strength of all of them against any recalcitrant nation.¹¹

After the war (1919), when President Wilson produced a similar proposal, even using some of the same words with the hope of getting his Article sanctioned, "the vital and essential part of the whole system," Mr. Roosevelt was no longer alive. But little had the latter dreamed or foreseen

¹⁰Sullivan, op. cit., p. 162 ff.

¹¹Theodore Roosevelt, "Utopia or Hell": Independent, New York, 1915, LXXXI.

his enemy adopting his ideas in playing the leading role in such a solemn undertaking.

Perhaps this Roosevelt internationalistic spirit assisted in confirming Wilson in his own neutrality plan. At least a strong intimation was indicated in his President Jackson Day address at Indianapolis, on January 8, when he said he preferred that our thoughts should not too often cross the ocean, and besought the citizens of the United States to "keep their moral powder dry....."¹²

If the President succeeded in keeping his own moral powder dry, his most intimate friend, Colonel House, did not. Colonel House had already sensed the military deadlock between the belligerents, and he was longing for a peaceful solution to settle the terrible struggle. Having been rebuffed on three former peace overtures his fourth was now attempted. He was convinced that the Central Powers were ready for peace on terms which would be favorable for the British to accept, if only Sir Edward Grey could be induced to put pressure on France and Russia. Furthermore, he indicated that "if Germany should make a peace offer (at this time) which was not sympathetically received by the Entente, neutral sentiment would veer against them."

In a brief pre-dinner conversation with the president on January 12, Colonel House was given permission to give his

¹²Wilson, op. cit., pp. 80-94.

fourth plan a trial. To do this it was decided that he should go to Europe on January 30. They were apparently convinced that "it was time to deal directly with the principals." After dinner, much to the disappointment of Colonel House, the President instead of resuming the vital pre-dinner subject, read aloud to the family from a book of current fiction. House said, "I was surprised that he preferred to do this rather than discuss the matters of importance." Evidently the President was confident of his unofficial ambassador's ability to do the work.¹³

When the Colonel approached Cecil Spring Rice on the following day he found him in a "sulky mood." Sir Cecil indicated that the "Allies would not receive the good office of the President cordially," but the Colonel got him in a better mood by telling him that the United States intended to throw its "moral strength in behalf of a permanent settlement." Sir Cecil told the Colonel he had "hit the nail on the head," and insisted that the matter be explained to the Russian and French Ambassadors. It was agreed that all four of the officials should meet at Phillips's (a coffee house frequented by statesmen) at four o'clock.

At the scheduled time the invited guest arrived. With considerable forethought the setting was planned, but much to the chagrin of our peace agent, Jusserand and Bakhmetieff

¹³ Charles Seymour, The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, Boston and New York, 1926, I, 350.

(the French and Russian Ambassadors) accepted with many conditions the idea. Later, he was able to bring them around to see "that it would be worth while to find how utterly unreliable and treacherous the Germans were by imposing their false pretense to the world." They could now see the likelihood of a negative or unsatisfactory answer from the Central Powers, which if their reasoning was correct would definitely align the United States with them. Under these conditions both Ambassadors were anxious for the Colonel to visit Paris and Petrograd after a visit in London. Thus, the Colonel's mission had been adroitly transformed, even before it began, from an intervention in behalf of peace into an intervention on the side of the Allies. Still the President with all these new developments in mind was willing for the Colonel to go. When it was time for him to leave, President Wilson showed his loyalty by going to the station to see him off, and his affection by tearful eyes and last words of farewell.¹⁴ On January 30, Colonel House sailed from New York upon the Lusitania.

While Colonel House departed to work for peace, other forces were working in the opposite direction. Already the Morgan Company's representative to London had been favorably received by the British Ministers who expressed their thanks for the fine consideration the British purchasers had received

¹⁴Seymour, op. cit., pp. 51,58.

in America. Next to J. P. Morgan, the American business man who was best known in England, was Charles M. Schwab of the Bethlehem Steel Company now "vacationing" in England. Ere long we find Lord Kitchener (British Secretary of War) and Mr. Schwab cloistered in the British War Office. At the end of several days of conference, Kitchener informed Schwab that he had a fear that German interests might purchase the Bethlehem Steel Company. Schwab immediately offered to sign an agreement that the Bethlehem Company would not be sold to any one so long as it had any British contracts under way.¹⁵

Some of the first fruits of Mr. Schwab's activities in Pennsylvania were already available. The White Star Liner Orduna sailed on January 16, from New York carrying 155 peaceable passengers and two fourteen-inch guns lashed in full view upon her main deck.¹⁶

Moreover, if the munition supplies were just beginning to develop, other commodities had been pouring into the Entente countries in ever increasing volume. From this time on, the trade to Germany rapidly declined. The Senators, representing the cotton interests of the south, began to make vigorous protests. The Ship Bill, which was backed by Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo, made one attempt to strike at the center of the whole difficulty. This bill provided for the purchase and operation of a fleet of merchant vessels

¹⁵John Moody, "The Masters Of Capital": The American Chronicles, New Haven, 1919, XLI, 167-168.

¹⁶Millis, op. cit., p. 129.

by the United States Government.¹⁷ Had the transaction, provided by the bill, been made, our trade relationship with Germany would have been strengthened. The interned German liners, however, were almost the only ships available for purchase, which fact unfortunately, the Republicans made a political issue in the ensuing campaign, and set themselves to talk the Democratic ship bill to death.¹⁸

Through the concealed efforts of the German Embassy, private citizens made two attempts to break the blockade. The German ship Dacia was transferred from the Hamburg-American Line to a bona fide American citizen, who later under the American flag and registry, dispatched it with a cotton cargo to Germany. On January 5, the State Department received a memorandum from the British Embassy pointing out that "His Majesty's Government must reserve its rights as to the recognition of the validity of the transfer....." The British allowed the Dacia to be captured by the French, who were still on good terms with the United States.¹⁹

To test the Allied contention that food was not being denied the civilian population of Germany, the Wilhelmina of the W. L. Green Commission Company of the United States was consigned to the firm's own representative, an American citizen, in Hamburg. The ship's cargo "consisted entirely of foodstuff." The manager in Europe had "instructions to sell

¹⁷Congressional Record, 63 Congress, 2nd. Session, LI part 16, p. 16256.

¹⁸Millis, op. cit., p. 130.

¹⁹For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., p. 774.

the cargo solely to the civilian population of Hamburg."²⁰ Despite these conditions the ship was brought to the Prize Court of England for investigation. Although the Government of the United States would have a strong position if it had contested the matter, it refrained from intervening, as did the German Government.

Since the United States was content to sit idly and permit all her trade rights to go by default, it was left up to the Germans to act for themselves. The significant question with which the German authorities were confronted was whether they should, or should not, declare a submarine war against British commerce.

From Berlin the American Ambassador (Gerard) reported that he had been in conference with Zimmermann, the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, who expressed himself as being unconcerned with reference to possible trouble with the United States. He believed, that even though complications should develop, matters would not be worse for Germany than the existing state of affairs. In case of trouble, he believed, that "the many thousands of trained Germans in America would join the Irish and start a revolution."²¹ The Germans were conscious that the submarine might mean a break with America. Although Mr. Wilson had acquiesced when the British declared the North Sea a "war zone," Germany was not

²⁰ Although the Wilhelmina's cargo was seized, the British paid for it in the end, *ibid.*, p. 105.

²¹ Seymour, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

at all certain that he would act similarly if they should declare a blockade. After a conference between the German Emperor and his Naval Staff during the latter part of January 1915, Von Tirpitz (Naval Chief) was anxious to initiate the blockade. The Kaiser dared not risk such a blockade until he could get a better perspective of the real situation. Many of his sailors were quite confident of the results they could obtain by the unrestricted use of the submarine. On January 20, just two days after this naval conference, Mr. Gerard reported to Colonel House that Germany would "soon undoubtedly try to blockade England with submarines."²²

The policy of the British, in attempting to starve Germany, had not, been as effective, as that nation had hoped. The Germans were troubled by the fear, however, that as time passed the Allied action would become intensified.

The Germans were still not definitely sure that their method of retaliation would warrant the risks it would involve. Could their small fleet of submarines (numbering at this time only twenty-four in all) cripple British commerce? England was boasting that she had never before enjoyed such security and freedom of the seas in time of war. Simultaneously, she was alarmed to hear that a German submarine was loose in the Irish Seas and had sunk three British

²²Ibid., p. 346.

steamers in a single day. On the same day, January 30, two other steamers were torpedoed in the Channel not far from Havre.²³ All of these were torpedoed without warning which was a flagrant violation of international law.

Five days later, the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral von Pohl, had worked out a plan and a proclamation was issued by the German Emperor. It declared, the waters surrounding Great Britain and Ireland to be included in a zone of war, in which all enemy merchant vessels would be subject to destruction through mistaken identity.²⁴ In regard to this latter and more dangerous clause, Great Britain had already set somewhat of a precedent by warning neutral merchantmen against the risk from the Allied patrols unless they conformed to the "strict" rule laid down by the British Admiralty.²⁵

On the following day the newspapers of the United States came off the press with blazing headlines: "Germany proclaims a War Zone." Just at that moment when American resentment against British control policy might have produced actual results, Germany had created a situation in which all thought of trade controversy was covered up and lost.

There were some people in the United States who expressed themselves in striking terms on the receipt of this news. Considering it objectively, they could have seen that it "indicated the depths of desperation to which the Central

²³N.Y. Times Curr. Hist., III, p. vi.

²⁴For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., p. 94.

²⁵Ibid., p. 94.

Powers had been reduced." The majority, however, held on to the view that the thing was too absurd to merit any consideration. Even the British representatives of the shipping companies in America were content to regard it as a big bluff. From Liverpool came a telegram telling when the Lusitania (which was bearing Colonel House) would arrive.²⁶ The naval authorities of England seemed confident that the fast liner would not be in any danger.

In the meantime, we find Colonel House in the middle of the newly created submarine war zone. He made note of the following:

Our voyage has about come to a close.....This afternoon, as we approached the Irish coast, the American flag was raised.....Captain Dow had been greatly alarmed the night before.....He expected to be torpedoed and that was the reason for raising the American flag..... I was not an eye-witness to it and have been able to say that I only knew it from hearsay.

The alarm of the Captain for the safety of his boat caused him to map out a complete programme for the saving of passengers, the launching of lifeboats, etc., etc. He told Beresford if the boilers were not struck by the torpedoes, the boat could remain afloat for at least an hour, and in that time he would endeavor to save the passengers.²⁷

Although the Colonel purposefully failed to observe the raising of the flag, others did and there were big stories in the American newspapers about it. These stories lent weight to the German contention that they could not guarantee the safety of neutral ships in the war zone because the Allies were mis-using neutral flags.

²⁶Millis, op. cit., p. 135.

²⁷Seymour, op. cit., p. 361.

Again the State Department was less biased and more logical than the pro-Ally press; unfortunately all the Department saw was a chance to express its sentiments. The Secretary of State dispatched a stiff note to Germany on February 10:

If the commanders of German vessels of war should act upon the presumption that the flag of the United States was not being used in good faith and should destroy on the high seas an American vessel or the lives of American citizens, it would be difficult for the Government of the United States to view the act in any other light than as an indefensible violation of neutral rights.²⁸

The English held to the argument that the Germans were led to adopt their policy of naval warfare by our passive compliance, but we let them know that we had not acquiesced by dispatching a note on the same day to Great Britain, protesting to the misuse of our flag. It was different from the German note, in that it did not state that we would hold them "to a strict accountability for such acts of the naval authorities." Later, we were to regret this phrase.

Our diplomatic strokes had been in keeping with the rules of the game of international relations, for both sides had been dealt equal blows. Soon the February 18 deadline was to come and go, with nothing unusual to happen, except that Great Britain was presently to exploit the occasion to her own advantage.

²⁸For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., p. 99; N.Y. Times Curr. Hist., II, 2.

The British now used every method at their command to denounce to the neutral the barbarity of the submarine campaign. Secretly, they regarded it as a bit of good fortune, because they were well aware that the Germans had too few submarines to cause serious damage to their commerce. Another English view was expressed by Mr. Winston Churchill, "we were sure that [the submarine war] would offend and perhaps embroil the United States; and that in any case our position for enforcing the blockade would be greatly strengthened. We looked forward to a sensible abatement of the pressure which the American Government was putting on us."²⁹ In answer to our vigorous protests in December against British trade restrictions we received a long drawn-out discussion on February 12, in which nothing was conceded.³⁰ They now doubled their efforts to starve the German civilians into submission. On March 1, our Secretary of State received two Notes Verbales from Ambassadors Spring Rice and Jusserand in which they openly prohibited further neutral trade either to or from the German Empire.³¹

Now that Germany had announced her submarine blockade, the Allies were able to announce their off-shore blockade of Germany which up to this time had been illegal. Contrary to the contraband rules, exports from Germany were prohibited.

²⁹ Millis, op. cit., p. 137.

³⁰ For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., pp. 324-334.

³¹ For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., p. 127.

The Allies admitted that the new decree was a violation of international law, but they justified it as legitimate reprisal against Germany's violation in the declaration of the submarine war zone. Our protests were unavailing and from this time on the United States had to give up its rights of trade with the Central Powers.

The situation had now reached a stage which demanded the broadest of statesmanship. If Secretary Bryan, who seems to have held a more objective view, could have been given the favored chances instead of House, things might have evolved differently. However, these peculiar conditions were very unfamiliar even to Mr. Bryan, and besides he did not command a great deal of respect from the legislators and governing officials. In Secretary Tumulty's book, Woodrow Wilson As I Know Him, the position of the President can be found: "Turning to me, the President said:.....England is fighting our fight and you may well understand that I shall not, in the present state of the world's affairs, place obstacles in her way.....Let those who clamour for radical action against England understand this!"³² Furthermore, the affairs of the Department of State were being unofficially conducted by Colonel House over the head of the Secretary, and many matters which virtually concerned his department were not communicated to Mr. Bryan.³³ As a result of such unofficial

³²Mr. & Mrs. William Jennings Bryan, Bryan's Memoirs, Chicago, 1925, pp. 403-404.

³³"Grey's Memoirs" quoted, Ibid., pp. 404-405.

action, the delicate machinery of the State Department was thrown out of balance, and the work of the Secretary made increasingly difficult.

On February 11, Mr. Gerard was busy cabling his latest peace proposal:

It is my conviction....that if a reasonable peace proposition were offered Germany very many men of influence would be inclined to use their efforts to induce Germany to accept the proposition.....If peace does not come immediately a new and protracted phase of the war will commence.....There is no chance of a success if much cabling is done and you formally instruct our Ambassadors to take the matter up for that would leave room for the interpretation that the intimation originated from Germany and not from your [Bryan] instructions to me to use my discretion in a matter concerning which I and not Germany made a suggestion to you.....

.....It will be fatal to hesitate or wait a moment; success is dependent on immediate action.³⁴

In viewing the military situation Mr. Gerard was quite confident that the German Armies had a decided advantage. At the same time he was of the opinion that if it was peace which the reasonable men of Washington wanted, they could only get it by putting equal pressure on both sides. Unless they were willing to do this, they should not act at all. In reply to Mr. Gerard, Secretary Bryan cabled him that his message was "most welcome.....The President requests that you will get into communication with House. The President has fully instructed and commissioned him (House) to act in all these matters....and requests you will act only upon his advice."³⁵

³⁴For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., pp. 9-10.

³⁵For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., p. 108.

Mr. Gerard had already written Colonel House, that if a "reasonable peace was proposed now [a matter of days, even hours] it would be accepted." On March 1, (16 days later) Mr. House replied in a letter to Gerard that the "British were slow-moving people," and besides "they cannot act alone...." in the matter. Colonel House feeling somewhat despondent announced that "it was hopeless," and the whole affair came to an abrupt end.³⁶

As one might expect, Colonel House took care to come into contact with every one who might give the slightest insight into his mission of peace. His many conversations concerning his mission did not affect his deep sympathy for the statesmen of Downing Street. As Sir Edward Grey observed, it had been unnecessary "to spend much time putting our case to him." From the beginning the English were "in no doubt.... that he held the Germans' militarism responsible for the war."³⁷ With such assurances the problem of retaining our sympathy became a relatively simple game for the British statesmen.

It was at this stage that the peace negotiator received invitations from Zimmermann and Gerard to come to Berlin, stating that it was still possible for peace to be obtained. Mr. House could not decide for himself, so he went to Sir

³⁶ Seymour, op. cit., pp. 376-377.

³⁷ "Grey's Memoirs" quoted, ibid., p. 393; Millis, op. cit., pp. 139-140.

Edward Grey and showed him these communications, and on the same day had a conference with Prime Minister Asquith. They both rejected the terms that Berlin had proposed and said until they agreed to the "evacuation of invaded territory and guarantees for permanent peace," they would continue the war. While in this frame of mind they advised the Colonel that it would be useless for him to go to Berlin at that time.³⁸

In answer to Mr. House's letter, in which his objections against going to Berlin were expressed, President Wilson sent a sharp cable:

If an impression were to be created in Berlin that you were to come only when the British Government thought it an opportune time to come, you might be regarded when you reach there as their spokesman rather than mine.³⁹

The cable, however, did not change the Colonel's opinion, for just three days later (February 25) he informed the President that "Germany will use you in the event it suits her purposes to do so" and if he (Colonel House) should go to Germany then they "will cease to consider you [the President of the United States] as a medium" for peace.

Mr. Gerard, whom the Colonel is later to characterize as "different from some of our representatives, inasmuch as his point of view is wholly American," is still seeking for some sort of workable compromise of the trade and submarine questions which were so threatening to American peace.

³⁸Seymour, op. cit., p. 378.

³⁹Millis, op. cit., p. 141

Once again, he cabled his expectations:

You can force England to permit foodstuffs and raw materials to enter Germany, in which case the proposed blockade will be withdrawn and in all probability I can arrange that no further reference will be made to the question of export of arms and ammunition. If you cannot arrange with England, then I can arrange a convoy of American war vessels....under our guarantee to carry no contraband.⁴⁰

The State Department advised Ambassador Page to inform the British Ministers of the position of the United States Government in regard to the stopping of food intended for non-combatants. "That a policy which seeks to keep food.... from the civil population of a whole nation, will create a very unfavorable impression.....It will certainly create.... a strong revulsion of feeling in this country."⁴¹ Mr. Page hastened to inform the State Department that he was sorry "to report that I do not see a ray of hope for any agreement between Germany and England whereby England will permit food to enter Germany under any condition."⁴² The State Department, seeing that it was useless to wait on Page, dispatched immediately to Germany and Great Britain its own suggestions of a compromise.

In brief, Great Britain was to agree not to interfere with foodstuffs consigned to the civil population of Germany which was to be distributed by an American agency designated

⁴⁰For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., p. 116.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 107.

⁴²Ibid., p. 118.

by the United States Government. Germany was to agree that these agencies were to have entire control without interference from their Government, and that each was required to refrain from the indiscriminate planting of mines and the use of neutral flags for the purposes of disguise. Neither side was to allow submarines to attack merchant vessels except for the purpose of visit and search.⁴³

The results of these suggestions were other than favorable. Germany demanded that unless raw materials were included on the same basis as foodstuffs, she would not accept. Great Britain was not interested in submitting herself to a compromise which thus far had been a great advantage to her. On March 1, the day of the German reply, the Entente declared their illegal blockade. Fifteen days later, Grey presented to Page an Order in Council which rejected the whole compromise plan,⁴⁴ and once again the opportunity to take matters into our own hands and demand some regulations of the war at sea was lost.

On March 2, Colonel House received a letter from Zimmermann saying that Germany would consider a permanent peace, if Great Britain could be induced to forfeit her claims to a monopoly on the high seas.⁴⁵ These new issues presented to the Colonel opportunities to go to Germany. Now that

⁴³For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., pp. 119-120.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 127-128-129-130, 140-141-142-143.

⁴⁵Seymour, op. cit., p. 391.

the British had firmly established their blockade, they had no reasons to fear the Colonel's action, and Sir Edward advised House that the time had come when he should proceed to Germany. Before resuming his travels, the Colonel commented in his notes, that the main difficulty in England had been due to the lack of a "Palmerston or Catham" who is capable of "dominating the situation," and that he expected to find the conditions even more uncertain in Germany.

On his way to Berlin, it was convenient to spend a few hours in Paris, where conditions were very unfavorable for peace. Proceeding to Berlin on March 20, Mr. House found Zimmermann sympathetic and of a very noble character. The first evening the Colonel had opportunity to talk with Dr. Rathenau, a great figure in commercial Germany, who urged him not to cease in his efforts to secure peace. Many obstacles, however, soon confronted him. Colonel House had observed that all the belligerents would probably welcome peace negotiations, but none of them "are able safely to make a beginning."⁴⁶

The day after Colonel House arrived in Berlin, the Orduna of the Cunard Line left New York for Newcastle, England, with two fifteen-inch guns made by the Bethlehem Steel Works. The same day the Adriatic, another White Star liner, steamed from the same port "with one hundred and fifty

⁴⁶Seymour, op. cit., p. 495.

armored cars for the Allied battle lines and three hundred passengers."⁴⁷ Just how much of the Allies' munitions were being obtained in America cannot be ascertained, but Mr. House, in Berlin, said in a letter to Wilson, "it seems that every German, that is being killed or wounded, is being killed or wounded by an American rifle, bullet, or shell." The Statesmen of Berlin were telling Colonel House that the quickest way to obtain peace would be for the United States to embargo munitions exports, but the Colonel was so interested in selling the Germans his plan for the "Freedom of the Seas" that he did not have time for anything else. His ideas about the "Freedom of the Seas" were well received, but the Germans ruined all chances of success by advertising the idea as their own. When the average Briton found out that the plan was something made in Germany, they determined not to consider it until the last British soldier had dropped dead.⁴⁸ At the beginning of his peace efforts in Germany, the Colonel had been "at a loss as to what to do next," and after a week of conferences he wrote the President, "I leave sadly disappointed."

The day before, March 26, the liner Arabic escaped from a submarine into Liverpool, after two torpedoes had missed their mark. Two days later the British African liner Falaba was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine in St. George's

⁴⁷For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., p. 784; Millis, op. cit., p. 145.

⁴⁸Seymour, op. cit., p. 411.

Channel. She carried a crew of 90, some 150 passengers and 13 tons of ammunition. Among the 111 people lost, was Mr. Leon Thrasher, an American citizen.⁴⁹

The pro-Ally newspapers of the Northeast came off the press filled with cries of outrage from their astounded editors. Did they have sufficient reasons to be so disturbed? It seems not, since the Germans had given complete warning that they would use their only effective means (the submarine) at their command against a blockade which the Allies had ordered adopted to starve Germany into submission.

Meanwhile, the ship filibuster in Congress had prevented the arms embargo proposal from being brought to a vote. Otherwise, it probably would have passed. Its failure and every other act of the Americans, which might have put the Allies to a disadvantage, was evidence enough that whatever the Germans might get would have to come by their own exertions. The Germans acted in accordance by redoubling the activities of their propaganda bureau. Such tactics brought a great deal of unjust criticism from the pro-Ally press. Something, however, with which the press should have been more concerned at this time was that "nearly three-quarters of the dispatches written by the American correspondents in Central Europe were perishing under the shears of the British censors." It was only logical for the Germans to try to make up for the deficiency.⁵⁰

⁴⁹N.Y. Times Curr. Hist., III, pp. 400, 433-434; Millis, op. cit., p. 146.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 147.

With the coming of spring, there came an increased demand from the belligerents for the produce of the American farms and factories. As the proud sons of Europe marched to their sure fate, the United States was correspondingly headed to the largest business boom in its national history. The orders for munitions during March had exceeded any other order which had yet been placed in the United States. The panic scare was over and money flowed freely.⁵¹ Those looking for a chance to become financially fixed took advantage of the increasing business opportunities.

With a change in seasons, there was a corresponding change in the European military departments. They were filled with hopes that their renewed efforts would bring smashing victory. The last flame of love and peace had been extinguished by hate, fear, and a strong desire for military success. While passing through Italy Colonel House was informed by Thomas Nelson Page, American Ambassador there, that he believed Italy would eventually enter the war on the side of the Allies when she could see the conflict nearing an end.

A few days later Colonel House was reporting from Paris to Secretary Bryan that peace was desired, "but nobody is willing to concede enough to get it." Now that his visit to France had been without results, so far as peace was concerned, he left Paris for London on April 28. Again in

⁵¹ Millis, op. cit., p. 151; Noyes, op. cit., p. 115.

England, he was to get consolation in renewing his intimacy with British friends and by creating new contacts.⁵²

The Colonel was disappointed to find out that his "Freedom of the Seas" idea had collapsed, because the average Briton thought it was a German proposal. Thus, Colonel House, was forced again to accept the idea that it would take American action to enforce peace on Germany.

The failure of the "Freedom of the Seas" plan did not make more vivid to the people of the United States the realities of submarine war. The German Ambassador, Johann Bernstorff, however, was convinced that the Americans underestimated the real dangers of the situation, and began to act of his own accord. His suggestions induced the German Administration to draw up a warning to be issued to the press in the form of a shipping notice. This warning was prepared on April 22 "...travellers sailing in the war zone on ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk."⁵³ It was intended to appear on Saturday April 24, but Count Bernstorff was not sure that he should have it published yet; so it was withheld until he could receive further notice from Berlin.⁵⁴

It would seem that after the death of Mr. Thrasher in the Falaba incident the Americans should have seen that the situation was very grave. I suppose some were aware of the

⁵² Millis, op. cit., p. 152.

⁵³ N. Y. Times Curr. Hist., III, 413.

⁵⁴ Millis, op. cit., p. 153; Oswald Garrison Villard, "The True Story of the Lusitania": American Mercury, XXXV, 43.

lurking danger, at least the Secretary of State showed that he was in his letter of April 23, to President Wilson:

If we oppose the use of submarines against merchantmen we will lay down a law for ourselves as well as for Germany. If we admit the right of the submarine to attack merchantmen but condemn their peculiar act or class of acts as inhuman, we will be embarrassed by the fact that we have not protested against Great Britain's defense of the right to prevent foods reaching non-combatant enemies.....

I fear that denunciation of one and silence as to the other will be construed by some as partiality.....

I venture to suggest an alternative, an appeal to the nations at war to consider terms of peace. We cannot justify waiting until both sides, or even one side, asks for mediation. As a neutral we cannot have in mind the wishes of one side more than the wishes of the other side.⁵⁵

These alternatives must have seemed impracticable even to Mr. Bryan, for he was quite aware of the note in which President Wilson had declared that the United States would hold the Germans to a "strict accountability."

Late April found the President completely occupied with international affairs, vitally concerned as to what course he should take in the Falaba matter. On April 28, in the grey waters of the North Sea, a German airplane threw three bombs in open daylight at the American tanker Cushing, owned by the Standard Oil Company. None of the bombs caused serious damage. The following day the British steamer Mobile was sunk by a German submarine off the north coast of Scotland. On the 30th, the Lilydale, another British steamer, was the

⁵⁵ Bryan's Memoirs, op. cit., pp. 396-397.

victim of a German torpedo in the North Sea. The same day a third collier and a merchantman were sunk off the southeast corner of Ireland, just where the great steamer route from the United States to Liverpool, passes by.⁵⁶

⁵⁶N. Y. Times Curr. Hist., III, 434,600,602;
Millis op. cit., p. 154.

CHAPTER II
THE LUSITANIA TORPEDOED

On April 30, another U-boat was leaving the submarine base at Wilhelmshaven, Germany, to take up the perilous journey around Scotland to the Western Ocean. The route, although exceedingly dangerous, was safer than the more direct mine-infested British Channel. This U-boat was conned by Senior Lieutenant Schwieger--a well educated young man who possessed some degree of "poise" and "urbane courtesy," and was afterwards remembered by those who knew him for his "gaiety, pointed wit," and "kindness toward the officers and men under him." Under the direction of Commander Schwieger, the U-20 was guided through the bleak waters of the North Seas with orders to torpedo any boat encountered in the zone of the submarine blockade, and finally to patrol and enforce the blockade in the waters off the southwest coast of Ireland. There is no evidence that specific orders were given to torpedo any particular ship.¹

On the same day Mr. Bernstorff, German Embassy to the United States, received a telegram from Berlin inquiring whether the notice had been published, and if not, directing him to have it published immediately. Without further delay,

¹Lowell Jackson Thomas, Raiders of The Deep, pp. 94-95; Walter Millis, Road To War, New York, 1935, p. 155.

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he sent it to the newspapers to be inserted as a paid advertisement near the announcement of the Cunard Line. Had the telegram been delayed a dozen hours, the passengers of the Lusitania would have sailed in ignorance of the note, which was intended to apply to all passenger traffic between the United States and Great Britain.² The following is the exact wording of the advertisement as it appeared in the leading New York newspapers:

NOTICE!

TRAVELLERS intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that, in accordance with formal notice the flag of Great Britain, or of any of her allies, are liable to destruction in those waters and that travellers sailing in the war zone on ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk.

IMPERIAL GERMAN EMBASSY

Washington, D. C., April 22, 1915.³

Directly above this extraordinary advertisement appeared the brief and simple announcement of the sailing of the Lusitania the following morning:

CUNARD
Established 1840
Europe via Liverpool
LUSITANIA
Fastest and Largest Steamer:
Now in Atlantic Service
Sails....⁴

² Oswald Garrison Villard "The True Story of the Lusitania," American Mercury, XXXV, 43.

³ Literary Digest, L, 1198; Mark Sullivan, Our Times, V, 109.

⁴ Of all the merchant ships which flew the British flag,

The following day, Saturday, May 1, a throng of the passengers' friends crowded the dock to give them a good sendoff. There was nothing unusual about the sailing of the Lusitania. The crowds waved and shouted cheerful good-byes to the 1257 passengers as the puffing tugs manoeuvred her into midstream. A great number of the passengers read Count Bernstorff's notice that morning which excited some attention, but not a single passenger considered cancelling his or her sailing. It was not because they would have been forced to wait a long period for a neutral ship, since the New York of the American Line was scheduled to sail only two hours after the departure of the Lusitania for the same port, Liverpool. Furthermore, it had room for 300 more passengers.⁵

the Cunarder Lusitania was the indisputable Queen; she was the pride of the British nation, and all points considered, was a great masterpiece. At Lloyd's of London, well-known Insurance Company, she was classed 100 A-1, with 30,395 gross tonnage, 88 feet of longitudinal bulkheads on both sides, as the first four-propellered turbine steamship, and at the time of launching was the largest ship afloat. Her accommodations and carrying capacity was about three thousand persons (passengers and crew). She carried twenty-two open and twenty-six collapsible life-boats with a capacity for 2,605 in all. In addition to the 3,187 life-belts, she carried twenty life-buoys. Her owners were proud that she had been called the "floating hotel," and even more so because she had wrested the ocean speed record from the German ship "Kaiser Wilhelm II." Her best speed was twenty-six and a third knots--and was the first ship to make an average better than twenty-five knots for a twenty-four hour period. Sullivan, *op. cit.*, p. 108; *Literary Digest*, LVIII, 64-65.

⁵Thomas A. Bailey, "The Sinking of the Lusitania," *American Historical Review*, XLI, 68.

They preferred the Lusitania, because it afforded a little more luxury and would save them a few hours of time. Most of the passengers who were troubled enough to ask about the submarine risk when they purchased their tickets, had been assured that they need not fear, for the Lusitania would be convoyed by British destroyers through the danger zone.

The Great Cunarder, with a few less than two thousand individuals in all on board, steamed down the bay and disappeared upon the waters of the Atlantic. That same day the British ship, Edale, was sunk by a German submarine off Scilly Isle. Two other ships were attacked, one of which was an American oil steamer, the Gulflight. Of these casualties the passengers of the Lusitania were unaware. Another danger unknown to them was the departure the day before of the submarine U-20 from the German submarine base, Wilhelmshaven. They were not concerned since they felt their lives were in the safe keeping of the British navy.

While Captain Turner held the Lusitania on the usual route, the passengers were content to engage in their favorite pastimes and enjoy the calm and warmth of the beautiful spring weather. By this time the U-20 was rounding the northernmost tip of Scotland, but so far her voyage was comparatively uneventful. On May 3, the British steamer, Minterne, was

sunk by a German torpedo and on May 4, it was reported that ten British trawlers had been sunk within the last forty-eight hours.⁶ Already the Lusitania had reached the half-way mark, and if the conditions remained favorable for the rest of the voyage, she would arrive in Liverpool before her scheduled time. Thus, events were rapidly shaping themselves to lead soon to the tragic calamity.

From Washington President Wilson telegraphed Colonel House to get his advice about the Gulflight. In a brief cable on May 5, the Colonel replied, "I believe that a sharp note indicating your determination to demand full reparation, would be sufficient in this instance. I am afraid a more serious breach may at any time occur...."⁷

The U-20 had already arrived in the auspicious waters off the Irish coast. The same day (the sixth day out) Commander Schwieger made the first bag of his trip when he destroyed a small British schooner off the southwest coast of Ireland. On May 6, although unsuccessful in an attack upon a 14,000 ton Cunard liner, he succeeded in sinking two British freight steamers on the Liverpool course.⁸ As long as the British liners continued to follow this beaten path which ran all along the southern coast of Ireland, the submarine found it an excellent region for its purposes because the

⁶"The European War": New York Times Current History Magazine, IV, 809.

⁷Charles Seymour, Intimate Papers of Colonel House, New York, 1926, I, 432.

⁸N.Y. Curr. Hist., loc. cit.

ships were hemmed in by the land on the north which lessened their chances of escape.

Captain Turner of the Lusitania had ordered that the lifeboats be uncovered and swung out, since they were now approaching the perilous war zone. It was an established formality by this time but it furnished the passengers with a brief thrill to experience the faint dangers of war.

During the early part of the night of May 6, the Lusitania received two wireless messages from the naval station at Queenstown, Ireland. The first at 7:30 read, "Submarines active off the south coast of Ireland." One hour later a general warning was received, "Avoid headlands. Pass harbors at full speed. Steer mid-channel course. Submarines off Fastnet."⁹ It would not have been difficult to have left the Irish coast, but Captain Turner preferred the shorter route since it did not involve so much uncertainty in navigation. Furthermore, (the Captain must have thought) it was a general warning, with little significance.

The next morning (May 7) was very foggy which made it exceedingly difficult for the Lusitania to determine its exact location. The crew was correct in believing that they were somewhere off Fastnet, the region the Admiralty had warned them to avoid. Because of the density of the

⁹"Mayer Case": Literary Digest, LVIII, 66.

fog, Captain Turner reduced his speed to fifteen knots,¹⁰ (which was) about the same speed that a submarine was able to make on the surface. Not more than ninety miles away was the U-20 manned by Captain Schwieger; also impeded by the dense fog which made his activities very dangerous as well as unfruitful. The Captain decided, primarily because of a shortage of oil and torpedoes, to discontinue his trip to Liverpool and begin his homeward voyage around western Ireland.¹¹

As the morning passed the fog rose and disappeared to leave a bright sunny day. The Lusitania increased her speed to eighteen knots. Another message was received from the Admiralty at 11:25 A. M. "Submarines active in southern part of Irish Channel. Last heard of twenty miles south of Coingbeg. Make certain Lusitania gets this."¹²

It was unfortunate that this message left the Lusitania in ignorance of the sinkings that had been taking place in the region through which she was soon to pass. The message did not even state the place the submarines had been last seen. At 12:40 there came a final warning, "Submarines five miles

¹⁰ Captain Turner had reduced his speed the night before from 21 to 18 knots. He gave as a reason, that he did not want to beat the tide over the bar at Liverpool. Walter Millis, Road To War, pp. 158-159; N. Y. Times Curr. Hist., III, 417.

¹¹ Commander Schwieger had only two torpedoes left and they were "not so good." "Schwieger's log": N. Y. Times Curr. Hist., XII, 348; Thomas, op. cit., p. 95.

¹² "Mayer Case"; op. cit., p. 66.

south of Cape Clear, proceeding west when last sighted at 10:00 A. M."¹³

In London that morning Colonel House was being shown through the Kew Gardens by Sir Edward Grey. The beauty and loveliness of the famous gardens did not keep the horror and tragedy of the war long from their minds, and presently they mentioned it again. "We spoke of the probability of an ocean liner being sunk, and I told him if this were done a flame of indignation would sweep across America which would in itself probably carry us into the war," Colonel House wrote later.¹⁴ Soon the stroll ended and an hour later Mr. House was with the King. The King and the Colonel "fell to talking, strangely enough, of the probability of Germany sinking a transatlantic liner." King George said, "Suppose they should sink the Lusitania with American passengers on board?"¹⁵

By this time the passengers of the Lusitania were beginning to go down to their noon lunch. At 12:40 Captain Turner decided to change his course toward the headlands in order to get his exact position.¹⁶ This change was a direct violation of the general instructions he had received to

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Seymour, op. cit., p. 432.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Captain Turner could have checked his position without coming into land to get his fix by a four point bearing. It showed lack of confidence in his own astronomical navigation, Villard, op. cit., p. 49.

"avoid headlands" and "steer mid-channel." The expected patrols and convoys were not to be seen, and precaution was taken by stationing five extra lookouts. They scanned the seas for submarines, but saw none.

It was not long until they were sighted. Only a few miles away the men in the low conning tower of the U-20 were able to make out two masts and four funnels "of a steamer with course vertical" to them.¹⁷

The chances of the U-20 making a successful encounter were slight. Soon, however, Commander Schwieger saw that the liner must turn in order to avoid the land projection. At 1:40 Captain Turner, after getting his exact location, ordered the course again changed to starboard. At the periscope of the U-20, Lieutenant Schwieger saw that his guess had been correct, "It made it possible for us to approach for a shot," he later noted in his log. He ordered full speed on the motors and headed the submarine in a northerly direction in order to reach the right position.¹⁸

The Lusitania was held upon her course for an unusually long time in order that one of her junior officers could get a "four point bearing" on the Old Head of Kinsale.¹⁹ A most dangerous proceeding this was in the submarine infested

¹⁷Facsimile and exact translation of Commander Schwieger's official log is given in the N.Y. Times Curr. Hist., loc. cit.

¹⁸N.Y. Times Curr. Hist., XII, 348-349.

¹⁹"Mayer Case", op. cit., p. 66.

waters. Furthermore, Captain Turner had been told that one of the most effective means of preventing a submarine from getting in position for an attack was to zigzag.²⁰ Unfortunately, he labored under the impression "that it was only when you saw a submarine that you should zigzag."²¹ It is not difficult to see that a ship would not have time to zigzag after a submarine was observed in its vicinity. From the time of sighting the Lusitania, Lieutenant Schwieger's eye never left the lens of the periscope and the torpedo crew waited anxiously to execute the command when he gave the order. The U-20 had now reached a position just seven hundred meters off the starboard bow, and as the Lusitania began to cross the hair-lines of Captain Schwieger's periscope he issued orders to fire.

Leslie N. Morton, an extra lookout on the starboard side of the forecastle head of the Lusitania, suddenly saw something streaking through the water which caused him to yell into his megaphone "torpedoes coming on the starboard side." The people on the bridge had just time to see the track when the torpedo struck between the first and second stacks and exploded with terrific force. It was followed after a brief interval by a second explosion which made a very different sound and as Captain Turner later testified it "may have possibly been internal."²² Captain Schwieger observed the

²⁰Villard, op. cit., p. 49.

²¹Ibid.

²²Millis, op. cit., p. 164.

violence of the explosion and recorded it in his log:

Shot hits starboard side right behind bridge. An unusually heavy detonation follows with a very strong explosion cloud. (High in air over first smokestack.) Added to the explosion of the torpedo there must have been a second explosion. (Boiler or coal or powder.) The superstructure over the point struck and the high bridge are rent asunder, fire breaks out and smoke envelops the high bridge.²³

The great majority of the passengers showed no signs of hysteria. They believed that they would have plenty of time to abandon the ship. From the bridge Captain Turner gave orders to lower the boats which had been swung out the day before. Aside from the swinging out of boats, no other preparation had been made for abandoning the ship. The passengers had not even been assigned to boats, lifebelts were not distributed about the deck, and those who had gained the deck had to go below again to get them. Women and children had already begun to get into the boats on the port side, but the heavy list and the speed of the ship prevented them from being lowered immediately. There was hope that the ship would soon right itself, making it possible for the boats to be lowered with safety, but the list became even greater which made it practically impossible for the boats to be lowered on the port side. Only two of the eleven boats ever reached the water safely, and they were damaged so badly that they soon filled with water and sank.

²³"Schwieger Log", N.Y. Times Curr. Hist., loc. cit.

It was now evident that the Lusitania was sinking with fearful rapidity. The crew was working in dead earnest with the starboard boats, and with results little better than their companions were achieving on the port side.²⁴ Oliver P. Barnard, an Englishman, who was mounted on the flying deck watched the launching of lifeboats:

I could see them making an awful mess of getting the boats out. They were cutting and hacking at them. The first boat floated away empty. The next three were smashed.....

Ogden H. Hammond, of New York:

The man at the bow of the life boat let the rope slip through his hands, while the man at the stern paid it out too slowly. The situation was terrible. We were dropping perpendicularly when I caught the rope and tried to stop the boat from falling. My hands were torn to shreds, but the boat fell and all in it were thrown into the water--a dense struggling mass.....²⁵

Less than one-half mile away there was still an invisible witness to the tragedy. Captain Schwieger noted in his log what he saw in the lens of his periscope. "She has the appearance of being about to capsize. Great confusion on board, boats being cleared and part being lowered to water. They must have lost their heads."²⁶ Even Schwieger had not believed that one shot would suffice to kill the ship, and he was apparently waiting until the boat was vacated before he finished her with his one remaining

²⁴ "Mayer Case", Literary Digest, p. 70.

²⁵ Sullivan, op. cit., V, 117-118.

²⁶ "Schwieger Lot", Curr. Hist., loc. cit.

torpedo. But at 2:25 P. M. he recorded: "It seems that the vessel will be afloat only a short time." It was more than he cared to see; he gave orders to submerge and go to sea. "I could not have fired a second torpedo into this throng of humanity attempting to save themselves."²⁷ Commander Schwieger had supposed that the Lusitania had sent out calls which would bring naval patrols to the scene at once to rescue the passengers.

Within the incredibly brief space of eighteen minutes after the firing of the torpedo the Lusitania was on the bottom in 312 feet of water.²⁸ Although the Lusitania was only eleven or twelve miles from land when she sank, only one small vessel saw the incident, and by the time it arrived on the scene it was too late to save those in the water. It picked up 110, however, who were in lifeboats and on life rafts. In Queenstown, just twenty-seven miles away,²⁹ there was a whole fleet of British destroyers, but the Admiralty had issued orders forbidding British naval vessels from going to the rescue of torpedoed ships. These orders were issued after the cruisers Aboukir, Cressy, and Hogue were torpedoed in rapid succession in September, 1914.³⁰

Before long the names of the rescued began to arrive--
761 in all. Of the total 1957 aboard, 1196 were lost. Of

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸John D. Craig, "How We'll get the Lusitania Gold:" American Magazine, April 1937, pp. 42-43.

²⁹Schwieger Log", Curr. Hist., loc. cit.

³⁰Villard, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

this number 785 had been helpless non-combatant passengers of whom 124 were neutral Americans. This was not the first time that passenger ships had been similarly sunk, but it was the first time that a large group of Americans had perished at the hands of the Germans. The thing which made it all the more sensational as news was that such famous Americans as Alfred G. Vanderbilt, Charles Frohman, Justice M. Foreman, Elbert Hubbard, and Herbert S. Stone, the publisher and son of the Head of the Associated Press, were among those lost. The fame and reputation of the Lusitania itself added greatly to the tragedy.

CHAPTER III
THE LUSITANIA CASE

The United States was the only powerful neutral country involved in the appalling disaster. As one suffering heavy losses we began to make strenuous protest to the German Government for its open breach of international law. The established rules of international law did not permit bona fide merchantmen to be attacked without being warned, while a man-of-war could be attacked on sight. Yet, what possible jurisdiction could there be for the breaking of this ancient law of civilization? Knowing these rules why did Captain Schwieger not adhere to them?

If Captain Schwieger of the U-20 had acted on his natural impulse and according to international law, he would have given the passengers and crew of the Lusitania a warning and an opportunity to abandon the ship before he fired on it. On the other hand, he had been given general and specific instructions by the German officials to attack all ships without revealing his presence.¹ Captain Schwieger, furthermore, was well aware² that to have done otherwise would have meant the exposure of his frail craft to the dangers of

¹Thomas A. Bailey, "The Sinking of the Lusitania":
American Historical Review, XL, 53.

²Ibid. p. 55.

being rammed by the swift British liner. Although he had no definite knowledge of the absence or presence of arms on this particular ship, he had been reliably informed by the German authorities that a large number of the British merchantmen were armed,³ and to have warned this one would have placed the U-20 in a very dangerous position. It was obvious that if warning were given, the swift liner would outdistance the slow-moving submarine and its cargo of contraband goods would reach its destination. Under these conditions, Captain Schwieger had but one alternative from a military point of view--to take advantage of his excellent opportunity to destroy the enemies' munitions.

Apparently the Germans had been adhering to this unwritten law of the seas up to the time of the sinking of the Lusitania. Shortly following the incident, however, the German foreign office maintained that the Lusitania was a British man-of-war and as such was subject to destruction without warning. This charge seems questionable and should be investigated.

It was conclusively known that the Lusitania and her sister, the Muretania, had been built with money which was borrowed from the British Government at a very low rate of interest. The Cunard Company was holding these vessels in

³Bailey, op. cit., p. 57.

readiness for war service in lieu of a very generous annual subsidy.⁴ It was also known that both these liners were built with emplacements for twelve six-inch firing guns, and, in case there was a need for battle cruisers, they could be conveniently converted into war crafts.⁵ During the early days of the war both of these ships had been taken over by the British Admiralty, but the Lusitania was soon returned because of her heavy consumption of coal (for the same reason she was only using 18 of her 24 boilers on her last voyage). This brief detention by the naval authorities did not affect her status as a merchantman of the Cunard lines.

All these minor points do not alter the fact that the Lusitania, on her last voyage, was not incorporated in the armed forces of a belligerent, and therefore, was not to be classed as a warship. Supposedly, she was engaged in the transportation of passengers, freight, and mail. As Secretary Lansing (filling the vacancy left by Bryan) suggested: it is only reasonable that, if the Lusitania had been engaged in unlawful service, she would not have been cleared by the New York investigating officials.⁶

Was the Lusitania equipped with guns which prepared her for offensive purposes? The German foreign office insisted that she was so equipped, but if the German authorities had

⁴Bailey, op. cit., p. 57.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Lansing to Gerard (telegram), For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., p. 437.

known that the Lusitania was offensively armed, it is difficult to understand why they did not make an effort to secure her detention.

In the German note of defense to the United States on May 28, it was asserted that the Lusitania, when she left the New York harbor, had guns on board which were mounted under deck and masked.⁷ On the other hand, the "neutrality squad," who investigated the ship the week prior to its sailing, was unable to find armaments of any sort.⁸ Since the locations of the emplacements were known, the squad had been instructed to make sure that guns were not mounted. According to report, the positions, where the emplacements were alleged to be, were covered over with flooring, making it obvious that guns could not be mounted. This investigation seems to bear out the German contention that the emplacements were covered over by the deck, but we have no information at present to prove that the Lusitania did have mounted guns. (This point may be settled in the near future since excavation of the Lusitania hull is now under way.⁹) If there were mounted guns on the Lusitania, they were concealed so well that none of the 119 witnesses, who later

⁷For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., p. 420.

⁸Dudley Field Malone, "The Cargo of the Lusitania; An official Statement": Nation, CXVI, 15-16.

⁹John D. Craig, "How We'll get the Lusitania Gold": American Magazine, April, 1937, pp. 42-43.

testified in the Mersey and Mayer investigations,¹⁰ observed any signs of armaments. Present evidence points to the complete absence of armament from the Lusitania.

Another phase of this same problem was the arming of merchantmen for defensive purposes only. Several times during the early months of the war, British liners had entered American ports equipped with guns which the British claimed were solely for the purpose of defense. Prior to 1915, we held that it was permissible for belligerent merchantmen to leave American ports, if it could be demonstrated that their weapons were designed for only defensive purposes. This law had been dependent on the fact that such guns could not be used effectively against war ships, but were sufficient to protect themselves against generally inferior armament of piratical ships and privateers.¹¹ As pirates no longer roamed the seas and privateering was now abolished, the Department of State in January, 1916, reversed its policy, due to the changed conditions made by the submarine.¹² If it had been conclusively known that the

¹⁰The British Wreck Commission, headed by Lord Mersey, held a secret inquiry between June 15, and 18, 1915, in England. In 1918 Judge Mayer of the United States District Court of Southern New York passed upon the suits filed against the Cunard line.

¹¹For. Rel., 1914 Suppl., pp. 593-594.

¹²Ibid., 1916, pp. 146-147.

Lusitania was equipped with six-inch guns, the United States would not have sanctioned her destruction without warning, because at that time we still held to the old interpretation of the law.

On February 10, 1915, the British Admiralty issued instructions to the Owners and Masters of British Ships with reference to the operations of German submarines against British shipping:

Procedure if an enemy submarine is sighted. No British merchant vessel should ever tamely surrender to a submarine, but should do her utmost to escape.....

If a submarine comes up suddenly close ahead of you with obvious hostile intention, steer straight for her at your utmost speed, altering course as necessary to keep her ahead.....

Oilers and other fast ships can considerably reduce the chances of a successful torpedo attack by zigzagging, that is to say, altering course at short and irregular intervals.....

Should it become apparent to the master of the ship that the submarine is rapidly gaining on him....it will generally be best to turn bow to the enemy before he gets too close, and make straight at him. This will compel him to risk being rammed or dive.....¹³

Under such instructions the enemy would not be given a chance in many instances to give a warning as was prescribed by international law. Furthermore, of what benefit was a warning to the passengers if the Masters were not to take heed. As Captain Turner had been given a copy of these instructions, he must have known their significance.¹⁴ It has been pointed out in the preceding chapter, that the

¹³The above statements were taken from photographic copies, For. Rel. 1915 Suppl., pp. 653-654.

¹⁴Bailey, op. cit., p. 60.

Germans soon learned of the secret orders by securing copies from captured vessels.

On February 15, the German foreign office informed the Department of State that the British were offering a huge sum of money for the destruction of the first submarine.¹⁵ Shortly after this secret was made known to the Department of State by the Germans, the British ship Masters began to take advantage of their opportunities to ram submarines. Several of Germany's U-boats were to succumb in this very way--the famous U-20, which had a long list of sinkings attributed to its activities, was one of the most famous victims.¹⁶

The British held that it was necessary to issue the secret orders because of the German practice of sinking ships without warning. It is well to remember, however, that these instructions were issued three days before the German blockade went into effect on February 18, and prior to that date there had been no deliberate attacks by German U-boats upon English merchantmen. After the Germans became aware of the secret orders, they held that in view of such instructions it was nothing less than suicide to adhere to the international law in their submarine policy. Furthermore, it was their contention that ships operating under

¹⁵For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., pp. 104-105; Von Jagow to Gerard, July 8, 1915, ibid., p. 420.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 442-443.

such orders were warships subject to destruction without warnings.¹⁷ While on the other hand, merchantmen had the privilege of resisting attack, the international law holds that in so doing, a ship assumes the status of a man-of-war. If the U-20 had given warning before firing on the Lusitania, and Captain Turner (who had a copy of the secret orders) had attempted to follow them without success, it would have been lawful for the submarine to destroy his vessel with everyone on board. Whether the Lusitania was or was not a man-of-war, we must certainly admit that there was considerable weight in the German contention that she was not "undefended territory."¹⁸ As our own Ambassador to Germany, James W. Gerard (House characterizes his views as being "wholly American") in a telegram to the State Department stated that as long as British merchantmen continued to sail "with orders to ram submarines" and remained armed, they could not "be put in the category of altogether peaceful merchantmen."¹⁹

During the years that have elapsed since the sinking of the Lusitania there have been two contentions as to the number of torpedoes that were fired. There were two explosions for all the survivors and even Schwieger heard them. Was the last explosion due to the firing of a second torpedo, or to an internal explosion? Those who hold the

¹⁷Von Jagow to Gerard, July 8, 1915, ibid., p. 420.

¹⁸German reply to the Lusitania Note, For. Rel. 1915 Suppl., p. 420.

¹⁹Gerard to Lansing, July 5, 1915, ibid., p. 461.

former view base their beliefs on the testimony of a few of the passengers who claimed they saw the trail of a second torpedo. The second and more logical explanation is that the second explosion was an internal one. This latter view is given further emphasis by the publication of Schwieger official log which recorded the firing of only one torpedo. The Germans immediately asserted that the second explosion was evidence that the Lusitania had a cargo of ammunition aboard.²⁰ This contention and the erroneous testimonies probably caused the British Wreck Commissioners to report that there were two torpedoes released. Since Schwieger wrote his log at sea he could not have had the motive of concealing a second torpedo, for the issue did not arise until Germany tried to justify the crime. Even Captain Turner later admitted that the second explosion possibly could have been internal because it had a very different sound from the first.²¹ Dudley Field Malone, who was collector of the port of New York and the official who carried on the investigation of the Lusitania's cargo, speaks only of one torpedo in his official report.²² This evidence points strongly, if not overwhelmingly, to the firing of only one torpedo.

The German foreign office was correct in its assertion,

²⁰The Three German Lusitania Notes, *ibid.*, pp. 389-420-465.

²¹*Cf. ante.*, reference 22, p. 36.

²²Dudley Field Malone, "The Cargo of the Lusitania: An Official Statement": *Nation*, CXVI, 15-16.

however, that the Lusitania was carrying a considerable quantity of munitions. Thomas A. Bailey who was privileged to examine a photostatic reproduction of the original manifest in Washington, D. C. says that, "in monetary value approximately one-half of the cargo of the Lusitania was composed of materials being shipped for the use of the Allied forces."²³ Some of the items listed on this manifest were 18 fuse-cases, and 125 shrapnel-cases, 4,200 cases of safety cartridges, 189 cases of infantry equipment, and other materials such as copper and brass.²⁴ Mr. Malone reported that the fuse-cases and shrapnel-cases consisted merely of empty shells without any powder charge.²⁵ When the German foreign office became aware of these cartridges, she pointed out that the laws of the United States forbid the transportation of explosives on passenger ships. Therefore, the Cunard company was violating a United States statute when it allowed neutral passengers to travel on this ship. Whether these munitions were capable of being exploded is a question on which there is not full agreement. Mr. Malone in a letter to the Nation in 1923 wrote:

Back in President Taft's Administration ordinance experts of the Government had ruled that such small-arms ammunition could not be exploded by fire or concussion and, therefore, could be carried safely on passenger ships. But a theory has been frequently

²³It was requested of Mr. Bailey to not state where this document is found, Bailey, op. cit., p. 61.

²⁴Bailey, loc. cit.; "Mayer Case" Literary Digest, LVIII, 65.

²⁵Ibid.; Bailey, loc. cit.

advanced that the torpedo striking the Lusitania and making contact with this particular consignment of cartridges might have generated enough heat, together with the shock simultaneously to explode all this black powder, even though the powder was protected by the metal coverings of the individual cartridges. As to the probable accuracy of this theory, I know nothing.²⁶

In this same letter Mr. Malone admitted the possibility that other explosives could have been on board of which he was not aware. He said, "It would have been impossible to discover absolutely whether there were explosives on the Lusitania or on other ships unless such explosives were enumerated on the manifests of the ships or unless some suspicious circumstance attracted the attention of the men of the Neutrality Squad."²⁷ This judgment was based upon the impracticability of opening the tremendous amount of closed cases. It would have required a great "army of men to open and verify the contents of goods in closed cases, replace the goods, and reseal the cases." The delay this procedure would necessitate in shipping, the expense to the Government, and the damage to goods were sufficient reasons to prohibit this method of investigation. When we consider that the White Star liner, which was equipped with 850 feet of watertight bulkheads, supposedly rendering her unsinkable, went beneath the waves in the brief space of

²⁶Malone, loc. cit.

²⁷Malone, loc. cit.

eighteen minutes after being torpedoed, we are not so prone to doubt the exploding munition theory. On the other hand, Captain Schwieger had observed that in torpedoing much smaller ships one torpedo did not suffice to sink them, and after the firing of a second shot they sank very slowly. Even though the exploding munition theory is very strong the possibility of an explosion from the boilers or from coal-aust must not be disregarded.

In the Lusitania note of May 29, the German foreign office also claimed that the Lusitania on her last voyage, as well as on former occasions, had Canadian troops on board. As a transport in the service of an enemy, Germany believed she was acting in self defense in destroying the ship without warning.²⁸ It is not feasible that the Canadian authorities would have resorted to such a clumsy way of transporting their troops. Such a body of men even without uniforms could not have escaped the attention of the port officials or the officers on the Lusitania.²⁹ In reply to the German note, Secretary Lansing invited the Imperial German Government to present any convincing evidence which it possessed that the officials of the Government of the United States had been negligent in performing its duties.³⁰

²⁸For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., p. 420.

²⁹The Lusitania officers testified in the Mersey Investigation that the steamer was transporting no troops, Bailey, op. cit., p. 63.

³⁰For. Rel. 1915 Suppl., p. 437.

Even though many years have elapsed since the sinking of the Lusitania, certain myths are still held in regard to the disaster. For example, Frederick Palmer in his three-volume biography of Newton D. Baker, revives in these words the sinking of the great Cunarder: "That the sinking had been premeditated was proved by the warning of April 29, from the German foreign office to Americans, not to sail on the Lusitania."³¹ Had Mr. Palmer read that note carefully, he would have found no reference to the Lusitania in it.³² Further observation would have shown that the note was received on April 22, 1915, by the German Embassy in Washington. Possibly he did not read the excellent translation of Captain Schwieger's log which appeared in the May, 1920, issue of New York Times Current History. If he had reasoned more, he would have known that it was next to an impossibility for an U-boat to pick up the course of any given ship on any particular voyage, since the rate of speed was entirely dependent upon the weather and the course was changed at the discretion of the Master of the ship. If Mr. Palmer's premeditation theory is correct, why did the German submarines not get the Olympia, the Muretania and many others? Nevertheless, Mr. Palmer was not alone in his belief, for multitudes still believe that the sinking was

³¹Frederick Palmer, "Newton D. Baker": Nation, CXXXIV, 117.

³²Cf. ante., p. 29.

pre-arranged, and that Captain Schwieger was stationed at the exact spot awaiting the hour of the Lusitania arrival.

More than that, the warning which appeared in the New York newspapers on May 1, was not the first warning that had been given by the German foreign office. On February 4, 1915, the German Government had announced that from February 18, 1915, onward all enemy ships in the war zone would be sunk, and in many instances the passengers and crew could not possibly be protected. A second warning came quite indirectly, yet convincingly, when the Germans demonstrated their seriousness of purpose by sinking approximately ninety merchantmen during the eleven weeks between February 18 and May 8, 1915. Twenty-two of this number were destroyed while the Lusitania was on her last voyage.³³

Finally Schwieger diary and orders, which we have already considered, reveal that the meeting of the two vessels was purely fortuitous. Lowell Thomas, who gives us Schwieger's story as narrated to a friend (Commander Max Valentiner), records the fact that Captain Schwieger did not recognize the Lusitania before he fired on her, and then only when he invited the pilot to have a look at close range, who after a brief moment yelled, "My God, it's the Lusitania!"³⁴

³³Bailey, loc. cit.

³⁴Lowell Thomas, Raiders Of The Deep, p. 97.

When the U-20 returned to Germany, Captain Schwieger was given a great reception by his friends and other individuals who had no connection with the government. He was surprised, however, that the German Emperor was not favorably impressed with his act, for instead of promoting Schwieger, the Kaiser reprimanded him. Many of Schwieger's associates resented this, for he, like the other naval officers, had received orders to sink any vessel of any enemy nation in the submarine zone. Certainly if those, who aver that the deed was arranged in advance, are right, the Kaiser would have praised instead of offering reproach.

Count von Bernstorff had a personal reason for resenting the premeditation theory. He had given Herbert Stone and Landon Bates, Jr., who were bound for Germany, letters of introduction. Mr. Villard in the American Mercury recorded that the Count said to him, "If I were capable of giving letters to those two young men, knowing that they were going to their deaths....I ought to be taken out of this embassy and hung to the nearest lamp post."³⁵ Later Herbert Stone's father, Melville Stone, (with all the resources of the Associated Press to back him) made a thorough investigation and absolved Count Bernstorff of any guilt of his son's death.³⁶ In the light of such

³⁵ Oswald Garrison Villard, "The True Story of the Lusitania": American Mercury, XXXV, 46.

³⁶ Ibid.

facts, the idea that the Germans sent the U-20 to the Irish Seas to await the coming of the Lusitania is simply absurd. Today we only recall these ideas to show how violently emotional the average person was at the time.

Although Captain Turner's disregard for orders and lack of precaution in handling the Lusitania were discussed to some extent in the preceding chapter, it is necessary to reconsider this question in the light of other factors. During the Lord Mersey's investigation, Captain Turner revealed that he had been instructed by wireless messages sent out by the British Admiralty to avoid headlands and steer mid-channel, to zigzag, and to proceed at high speed. In every instance the Captain admitted that he had disregarded these instructions. When torpedoed he was on the usual route not more than twelve miles off the Old Head of Kinsale. He explained that it was necessary to come in close to land in order that he might get his exact position before proceeding into St. George's Channel. The Captain's anxiety to get his location by a shore bearing, when he admitted that he could have checked his position by cross-bearing, without coming into the land, shows a lack of confidence in his own astronomical navigation. Captain Turner had reduced his speed from twenty-one to eighteen

knots in order that he would not have to be loafing around the Liverpool bar where there was danger of being exposed to submarine attacks.³⁷ It was brought out in the Mersey hearing that he could have obtained the same results by going at full speed on the mid-channel course. One of the grim aspects of the catastrophe was that up to this time in the war at sea no ships had been torpedoed which ran at a speed of twenty-one knots or better.³⁸ Near the end of the hearing Captain Turner confessed that he had mis-interpreted the Admiralty orders to zigzag, as he was of the impression that it was only necessary to zigzag after sighting a submarine.³⁹ This was certainly a fatal mistake.

In the same British tribunal such naval officers as Admiral Sir F. S. Inglefield, Lieutenant-Commander H. J. Hearn, Captain John Spedding, and Captain David Davies, who were associated with Lord Mersey in the inquiry, held that the responsibility for the deed should not be placed on Captain Turner. Lord Mersey recognized, however, that Captain Turner had failed to carry out the orders of the Admiralty, but he did not believe that the instructions were intended to keep the Captain from exercising his superior judgment in difficult situations which might often

³⁷The European War", New York Times Current History, III, 417.

³⁸Villard, loc. cit.

³⁹Bailey, op. cit., p. 69; Walter Millis, Road To War, p. 163; Cf. ante., p. 44.

arise in the navigation of his ship. Also, Lord Mersey maintained that Captain Turner's omission to follow advice could not be attributed to incompetence or negligence, since he was skilled and experienced in the art of sailing. He, likewise, shared the same belief as the naval officers who were associated with him in the inquiry, and went so far as to lay the whole blame of the catastrophe on those who plotted and committed the crime.⁴⁰

It was not advice, however, which Captain Turner disobeyed, but specific instructions from the British Admiralty. The British Government withheld the publication of the proceedings of the secret inquiry in order that the Germans might not get the Admiralty's orders as to the behavior of ships when submarines were near. This was not the only motive the English Government had in mind since they knew that the Germans were in possession of the secret orders prior to the sinking of the Lusitania. It was a perfectly legitimate reason, however, for withholding publication. This served Captain Turner exceedingly well, since the proceedings were not made public until long after the people had ceased to be interested. Of course, it is well to remember that these decisions might have been somewhat modified

⁴⁰Cf. ante., p. 44.; Bailey, loc. cit.

if the Lord Mersey inquiry had been carried on in a judicial manner (held publicly rather than privately).⁴¹ Nevertheless, the Marsey report, which exonerated the Cunard company and Captain Turner of negligence, was not favorably received by a number of the American survivors. Neither were they consoled three years later when Judge Mayer of the United States District Court of Southern New York passed upon sixty-seven consolidated damage suits brought against the Cunard line, and failed to reverse a single decision that was handed down by the Mersey tribunal. Judge Mayer said that the "fault....must be laid upon those who are responsible for the sinking of the vessel, in the legal as well as moral sense. It is, therefore, not the Cunard Line, petitioner, which must be held liable for the loss of life and property. The cause of the sinking of the Lusitania was the illegal act of the Imperial German Government."⁴²

Following the disaster several of the American survivors stated that they had been willing to go on the Lusitania instead of an American ship, because they were sure the Germans would sink an American as soon as a British ship. Although on February 20, 1915, Mr. Gerard had sent a cablegram to the Secretary of State which stated that

⁴¹Villard, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

⁴²"Judge Mayer Court Decision," Literary Digest, V, 71.

Admiral von Tirpitz had asked him for photographs, silhouettes, and further details about American steamers in order that Germany could safeguard their passage through the war zone.⁴³ The German Admiralty was probably prompted to do this because the British liners (even the Lusitania) had frequently flown the American flag while passing through the submarine war zone to avoid destruction.⁴⁴ Mr. Gerard complied with the Admiralty request, furnishing the time of departure and arrival in Liverpool, and a silhouette of the American steamers, St. Paul, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and the New York. The latter of these ships sailed just two hours after the Lusitania departed for the same port, Liverpool.⁴⁵

There were some people who supported Secretary Bryan when he argued that the question was not one of technical rights, but "whether.... [an American citizen] ought not, out of consideration for his country if not for his own safety, avoid danger when avoidance is possible."⁴⁶ Ambassador Gerard was one of the many public men who was of the same opinion as Mr. Bryan. He stated that "when Americans have reasonable opportunity to cross the ocean [safely]

⁴³Gerard to Bryan, For. Rel. 1915 Suppl., p. 121.

⁴⁴Since international law had long sanctioned the display of false colors by enemy merchantmen seeking to elude the enemy, Germany could not use this as an excuse for sinking belligerent merchantmen, ibid., pp. 100-101, 114, 117-118, 606.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 121; Cf. ante., reference 5, p. 32.

⁴⁶William J. Bryan, Memoirs, p. 405

why should we enter the war because some American wants to cross on a ship where he can have a private bathroom....."⁴⁷ Secretary Bryan thought that our Government should go as far as possible in preventing citizens from travelling on belligerent ships laden with munitions. President Wilson contended, however, that under the established law the citizens of the United States were guaranteed protection on such ships, and he insisted on full observance of that law. The Germans quickly called our attention to the inconsistency of this point. "They refer to the fact that [in 1913 and 1914] Americans were told by the American Government that they remained in Mexico at their own risk." The German foreign office could not understand why the United States Government should protect the cargoes of munitions by the presence of American passengers in British liners who could travel on American vessels with safety and without complications.⁴⁸ They were not able to see the reason that caused the State Department to suddenly reverse its policy, unless it could be that the Americans held an intense aversion for the German nation.

Under the same conditions most people would have acted as did the American citizens who took passage on the Lusitania, because they had no chance to possess the inside

⁴⁷Gerard to Lansing, For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., p. 461.

⁴⁸Gerard to Bryan, ibid., p. 402.

information and foresight that Secretary Bryan, Mr. Gerard, and a few others held. As far as our responsibility for the American loss is concerned, even these few did not exert much effort to make the public see that the responsibility should not be placed on the misinformed passengers, but on the government which failed to make available the facts which it possessed.

It was widely felt in America, as well as in England, that the British authorities were guilty of criminal negligence for allowing the tragedy to occur. The public of both nations felt that the Secretary of the Admiralty should have had convoys out to protect the liner, in spite of his policy of providing none. Even the Morning Post (London) expressed the belief that it was not an impossibility to convoy special merchantmen "because it is well known that many liner routes are protected by fast cruisers and destroyers....", and the Admiralty could have made an exception in the case of the Lusitania.⁴⁹ Certainly he would have been justified if such action had been taken. To add emphasis to this argument, it is well to point out that Winston Churchill, under heavy questioning, admitted before the House of Commons that the Admiralty had sent out

⁴⁹ The London "Morning Post" is quoted in the Outlook, CX, 112.

convoys on two different occasions to protect British freighters loaded with American horses.⁵⁰

Whether or not the Cunard Company or the Admiralty can be held responsible, the fact remains that Captain Turner jeopardized his ship unnecessarily and contributed to the disaster--unintentionally, of course. On a bright and sunny day the Lusitania was steaming at reduced speed, following the beaten course near headlands which were known to be submarine infested. She did not have escorts, she was not zigzagging, and was not in mid-channel. The German foreign office view was that Americans could not expect to be protected as long as they made themselves living shields for cargoes of munitions.⁵¹ They went so far as to charge the British Government with making no attempt to protect the Lusitania because of the belief that her destruction would bring the United States into the war against Germany. This view was held by the Kaiser, and was generally accepted throughout Germany.⁵² It is interesting to note that the editorials in the London Times, the day following the sinking of the Lusitania, devoted plenty of space to the discussion of what the United States' reaction would be to the disaster, and very little space to the expression of regret

⁵⁰Bailey, op. cit., p. 70.

⁵¹Von Jagow to Gerard, May 28, July 8, 1915, For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., pp. 420, 465.

⁵²Gerard to Lansing, May 6, 1916, For. Rel., 1916 Suppl., p. 260.

for the loss of lives.⁵³ So far, however, there has been no definite evidence presented that would prove the theory.

In view of the foregoing facts, it becomes much easier to see why the German foreign office contended that it acted "in just self defense" when it attempted "to protect the lives of its soldiers by destroying ammunition destined for the enemy with means of war at its command."⁵⁴ Great Britain thought that the peculiar situation justified adopting exceptional "measures in order to prevent commodities of any kind from reaching or leaving Germany....." Although it seemed to her sufficient reason for the acceptance of such a measure, she was not willing to see Germany take the same privilege in her submarine war. England was certain that no interpretation or modification of international law should ever allow the torpedoing of passenger liners without warning because it was a violation of a sacred right of humanity.

International lawyers have been divided on the question regarding the legality of the incident of May 7, 1915. Some hold that if the question of reprisal is left out, and assume that the Lusitania was not a man-of-war, her sinking was a clear violation of international law. Others claim that her destruction was justified reprisal for the Allies

⁵³Villard, op. cit., p. 51.

⁵⁴For. Rel., 1915 Suppl., p. 420.

attempt to starve out Germany; their sympathy or lack of sympathy for the Central Powers and their nationality determining to which theory they adhere. Count Bernstorff in an official note to Lansing (February 4, 1916) admitted, however, that "retaliation must not aim at other than enemy subjects," and agreed to make reparation for loss of American citizens on the Lusitania by "payment of a suitable indemnity."⁵⁵

Thus far, the chapter has dealt with the actual facts of the disaster. Looking at the situation from the diplomatic side we find that up to the time of the incident, Germany had found the neutral world resigned, and somewhat complacent in the fact of invasion of their neutral rights by the British Government. It was only reasonable for Germany to expect this same lack of interest to prevail should she break an international rule by putting her submarine blockade into effect. Of course, the Germans' flaw in reasoning was due to their inability to recognize that nations would tolerate the breaking of many of their property rights, but no nation at this stage of civilization would stand idly by and see its citizens murdered without taking steps to check the policy which caused their death.

⁵⁵ Bernstorff to Lansing, For. Rel., 1916 Suppl. p. 157.

We know today that some of the thinking men of Germany were conscious of the results of the unrestricted use of the submarine. These men unfortunately were not the ones who determined the policy that was followed. The initiation of the unrestrained submarine operation is one of the great incidents of the war. No more significance was given to the invasion of Belgium. Both decisions were products of similar ideas and led to similar results. The French fortifications left Germany only one avenue of attack which would promise swift victory, and she took it. Invasion of Belgium by the Germans meant the sure entrance of Great Britain into the war on the side of the Allies. The superior naval force of Great Britain left Germany only one weapon on the seas--the submarine. The unrestricted use of this weapon brought many of the neutral nations into the war against her at a moment when a favorable peace was not beyond her reach.⁵⁶

The German Submarine policy, like the invasion of Belgium, failed to achieve its main purpose. After this policy had been expressed in the Lusitania Massacre of May 7, there was little possibility that the United States would come to grave disagreement with Great Britain for her restriction of American trade with Germany. The dispute between the Allies and the United States was excluded by the

⁵⁶ Frank H. Simond, History of World War, New York, 1920, II, 85.

more vital disagreement with Germany. From this time on, Germany became more and more involved, while the Allies felt a slacking of American protests. Soon the whole question was German-American, and the United States began insisting (regardless of what the price might be) that Germany must abandon a policy which endangered American lives and property. Great Britain was certain that the Lusitania catastrophe would bring the United States into the war, and were very much disappointed because we did not enter the struggle immediately. One thing remains to be said. The incident was a Godsend to the Allies, since it meant the complete collapse of the German propaganda campaign in the United States, gave the American preparedness move a great boost, and while it was not the direct cause of American entrance into the war, it added a strong impetus to the abnormal state of mind which prepared her for the fatal decision.

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