

The Sinking of the *Lusitania*

Shortly after the outset of WWI, the British were desperate to get America to join the Allies. And the facts suggest that they let a passenger liner be sunk to obtain that end.

by Kurt Hyde

Robert Welch, founder of The John Birch Society, described World War I as a senseless European war in which there was no reason for any of the nations or the peoples involved to be fighting each other. Welch also noted, “The outbreak of hostilities in the summer of 1914, with the rapid alignment of countries on the opposing sides, certainly appeared to take most of the world by surprise as it should.”

With entangling alliances all over the world, nations as far from Europe as Japan were involved in the war within days. One great nation, the United States of America, adhering to George Washington’s advice to avoid entangling foreign alliances, wisely kept out of it.

There was an additional obstacle to getting the United States into the war. The U.S. Constitution did not allow the president or any other small group of persons to declare war. The power to declare war required an act of Congress. Convincing the American people they should go to war required an event that would make them angry at some foreign enemy. The sinking of the RMS *Lusitania* on May 7,

1915, aided by the unnecessary delays in getting rescue vessels to the survivors, led to about 1,200 deaths, including more than 120 Americans. That event supplied a major part of the psychological change needed to get the American people sufficiently angry to go to war.

Britain Blockades Germany

While the British were losing The Great War on land, it was quite a different story at sea. Britain, with a little help from Japan, established supremacy in the Pacific. Britain declared the North Sea to be a military area and imposed a naval blockade of Germany that included food destined for civilians. The starvation of German civilians as a consequence of the British blockade is considered by many to have been the most effective weapon used by either side during the war. One description of the effects of this blockade is posted online at the National World War I Museum’s website:

By 1916, the results of the Allied naval blockade were being deeply felt in Germany. Poor weather conditions that year also contributed to a 70% drop in domestic food produc-

tion. Wheat was augmented with sawdust during breadmaking and eventually exhausted potato supplies gave way to the “Turnip Winter of 1916.” Among Germans, turnips were considered livestock feed and the prospect of relying on them for subsistence was abhorrent.

The abhorrence of eating turnips was just a steppingstone on the road to the starvation and malnutrition that followed. In December of 1918, Germany’s National Health Office estimated the death toll in Germany from the blockade at 763,000 persons, dying of starvation or other diseases that were aided by malnutrition. These statistics do not include the estimated 150,000 Germans who died in the influenza pandemic of 1918. Germany wanted to break the British blockade.

U-Boats and Q-Boats

The German technological answer to the British naval superiority was the *Unterseeboot*, which literally means “undersea boat.” These submarines were best known by the term *U-boat*. U-boats initially fought against both heavily armed war-

ships and cargo ships, but soon they were used predominantly to sink enemy cargo ships. U-boats, the British were surprised to learn, had enough range to be a factor in the waters around the British Isles.

The British learned early in the war that they had underestimated the capabilities of the German U-boats, and Britain needed an answer to them. One of the early answers was the Q-boat. These were merchant ships retrofitted with hidden armaments, or specially designed military ships with panels hiding the armaments making them appear to be merchant vessels. They got the nickname Q-boats (or Q-ships) because their homeport was in Queenstown, Ireland. Q-boats would cruise in areas of known U-boat activity appearing to be easy prey, luring the German U-boats to try to sink them with deck guns, instead of expensive torpedoes. U-boats were vulnerable when they surfaced. This is when the Q-boat crew would quickly remove the panels that concealed the armaments and open fire on the U-boat. U-boats were not designed to sustain battle damage; their stealth was their defense.

One problem with the British Q-boats was that their very existence was a violation of one of the rules of war, the Cruiser Rules, because it blurred the distinction between a warship and a noncombatant merchant vessel. Once it became known that the British had violated the Cruiser Rules by deploying warships disguised as noncombatant merchant ships, Germany was no longer legally bound by the Cruiser Rules to treat merchant ships as unarmed noncombatants.

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The Cruiser Rules

At first, German U-boats were obedient to the Cruiser Rules of naval warfare. Unarmed passenger ships were not to be sunk. Unarmed cargo ships of belligerent nations could be sunk or towed away as a prize of war once the crew was allowed to radio a distress call for rescue and abandon ship. The passengers and crew were considered to be in safety in their lifeboats if they were near land or on a neutral vessel. Armed warships or merchant vessels that were a threat to the U-boat could be sunk without warning.

A U-boat, being unable to tow a large cargo ship any appreciable distance, would, under the Cruiser Rules, surface by the side of a cargo ship of a belligerent nation and announce to the crew that their ship had been captured. The captain of the captured ship would be ordered to come aboard the U-boat bringing the ship's papers. Once the crew made a distress call and abandoned ship, the Germans would take possession of the ship as a prize of war. The U-boat crew then had the right under rules of war to sink it.

The February 1, 1915 issue of the *New York Times* had a front-page article in which British civilian sailors from unarmed merchant vessels explained in de-

tail their experiences of being captured by German U-boats under the Cruiser Rules. The SS *Linda Blanche* was sunk by U-31 on January 30, 1915. One of the crewmen related what happened once the U-boat surfaced, announced they had been captured, examined the papers, and determined it was an unarmed merchant ship:

The mate [who] was in charge of the boat that passed between the Linda Blanche, and the submarine, said the German officers were jolly chaps and quite young, too. They could speak English well, and they gave the crew half a box of cigars and some cigarettes. One Welshman got a muffler, another a pair of strong suede gloves, and the cabin boy, a little chap of 15, who was made much of because he was in tears, got a cap and a pair of mittens from the submarine crew. He laughed when he got back to land, and was comparatively happy when he went off to his Welsh home by train.

The quartermaster of the SS *Ben Cruachan*, which was sunk by the U-21 on that same day in a manner similar to that of the SS *Linda Blanche*, explained how they were treated by the German submariners:



Dastardly act: U-boat U-27 (above left) met Q-boat HMS *Baralong* (above right) on August 19, 1915 after the U-27 captured the British ship *Nicosian*. The *Baralong*, pretending to be a U.S. merchant vessel coming to rescue the *Nicosian*'s crew, suddenly replaced the U.S. flag with a British flag and uncovered her artillery. The *Baralong* then opened fire on the U-27, sinking it and killing the German U-boat crew. The British tried to keep the incident secret, but the eight American crew members on the *Nicosian* protested to the U.S. State Department.

It was about 10:00 o'clock when the submarine was sighted and we should have been in Liverpool at 2 o'clock. When we were held up the crew got into two large lifeboats and two small boats. The report that our ship was torpedoed is not correct. They blew her up by a bomb which was carried aboard and placed at the stern end. There was a long fuse which ran over the side of the ship and reached almost down to the level of the water. When everybody had got off one of the submarine crew applied a light to it.

The quartermaster added:

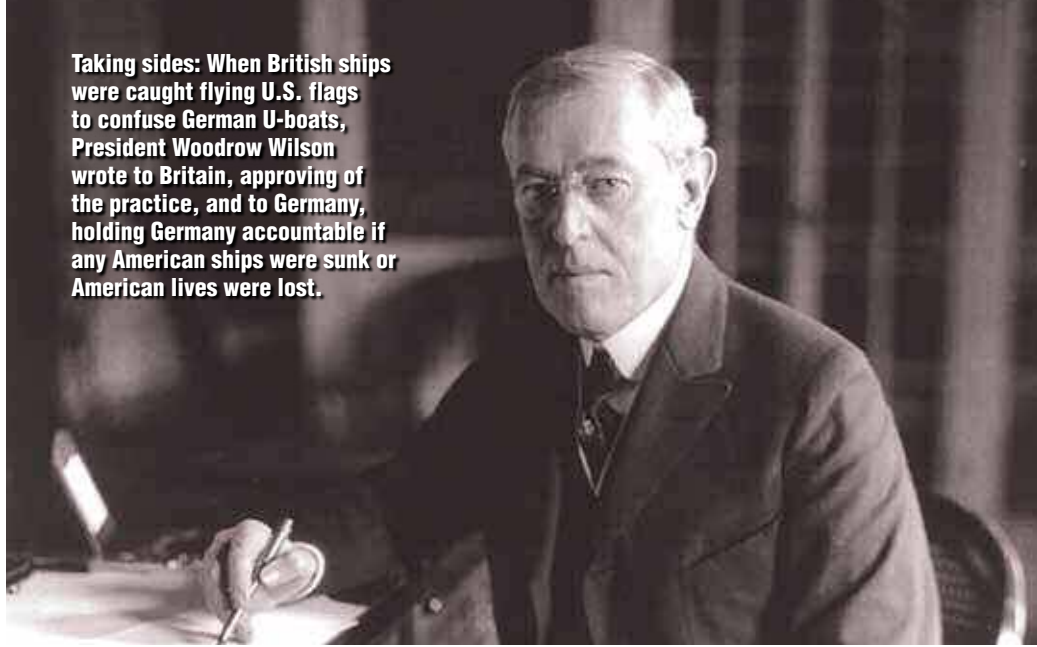
The Germans were very decent to us. They told us where we could find a trawler fleet. The chief officer of the submarine shook hands with our skipper and said "I am very sorry, Captain, but war is war." When our skipper got off the submarine into the lifeboat the German crew stood at salute and the chief officer shouted, "I hope you will all get picked up before bad weather comes on."

German U-boats obeyed the Cruiser Rules not just as a code of honor, although there was considerable honor amongst the soldiers, sailors, and airmen who served on both sides in World War I. There were also some pragmatic reasons. U-boats had a limited number of torpedoes, torpedoes were expensive, and depending on the size, design, and hull strength of a ship, it frequently required more than one WWI-era torpedo to sink it. U-boat commanders usually preferred to use well-placed demolition charges to sink the ships they captured. Also, humane treatment of the noncombatant crewmembers of captured vessels encouraged future cooperation by crewmembers during subsequent captures.

Britain Caught Violating the Cruiser Rules

When the U-21 captured the *Ben Cruachan*, the German submarine crew made a startling discovery: official orders to ships' captains to disobey the Cruiser Rules. Author Colin Simpson in his book *Lusitania* described it:

Taking sides: When British ships were caught flying U.S. flags to confuse German U-boats, President Woodrow Wilson wrote to Britain, approving of the practice, and to Germany, holding Germany accountable if any American ships were sunk or American lives were lost.



On board her first victim, the 3000-ton *Ben Cruachan* of the Ben Line of Edinburg, she captured a complete set of Churchill's inflammatory orders, including the instructions to ram and to fly a neutral flag.

Within days Kaiser Wilhelm II traveled to the naval station at Wilhelmshaven. On February 4, the German Admiralty issued a war zone decree. The next day's *New York Times* printed much of it on the front page:

The waters around Great Britain and Ireland, including the whole English Channel, are declared a war zone from and after Feb. 18, 1915.

Every enemy merchant ship found in this war zone will be destroyed, even if it is impossible to avert dangers which threaten the crew and passengers.

Also, neutral ships in the war zone are in danger, as in consequence of the misuse of neutral flags, ordered by the British Government on Jan. 31, and in view of the hazards of naval warfare, it cannot always be avoided that attacks meant for enemy ships endanger neutral ships.

Germany's ill-advised war zone reaction to catching the British red-handed was one of the biggest blunders of World War I. Germany should have used this in psychological warfare. They had the evidence they needed to influence neutral nations

to take action against Britain. They could have pointed out the endangerment of 15-year-old cabin boys by ordering non-combatant merchant vessels to attempt to ram U-boats, thereby revoking their status as noncombatants. Instead, the German leaders chose a military reaction that backfired in two ways: It alienated the very people they were trying to influence, and the emotional headlines of war got the front page news while articles of substance, if reported all, were frequently pushed to the back pages.

Within days of the heightened awareness of England's bizarre foreign policy, the British ship *Lusitania* was observed sailing under an American flag. The incident was reported to the *New York Times* by three American citizens who were on board and requested their names not be published. The February 7 front-page article contained *Lusitania* Captain David Dow's explanation that he changed flags because he had received a warning that U-boats were in the area. Captain Dow defended his actions by saying part of the ship's cargo was mail of neutral nations and some of the passengers were citizens of neutral nations.

Missouri Senator William Stone was incensed by the incident. As the *New York Times* reported on February 9, unfortunately on page 2:

Senator Stone of Missouri, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, was a caller at the White House today. He expressed the opinion that

the hoisting of the Stars and Stripes by the Captain of the *Lusitania* was an improper use of the American flag. He added the belief that it would not be difficult to put through Congress a resolution of protest against this incident, but said he thought the matter was one that ought to be handled exclusively at this time by the executive branch of the Government.

On February 10, under public pressure, President Wilson sent notes to both the British and German governments. His note to the German government is known as the Strict Accountability note. If any German naval commander, assuming a ship flying a U.S. flag is not an American ship, sinks an American ship or takes the life of an American, the German government will be held strictly accountable.

Wilson's note to the British government soft-pedaled their use of the U.S. flag, essentially giving the British a tacit go-ahead to continue doing it. His note included such phrases as, "reserving for future considerations the legality and propriety of the deceptive use of the flag" and "the occasional use of the flag of a neutral or an enemy ... seems to this Government a very different thing from an explicit sanction by a belligerent Government for its merchant ships generally to fly the flag of a neutral power." It had plenty of double-talk, but no mention of accountability.

Many historians refer frequently to Wilson's Strict Accountability note to Germany while ignoring his parallel memo to England giving the British permission to use the U.S. flag as a cover. Any attempt to understand this incident while studying only one of these memos without the other is using only half of the truth.

The Germans, realizing their response of unrestricted naval warfare wasn't gaining friends or influencing people, offered to withdraw it in exchange for a concession that the British declaration of the North Sea as a military area be modified to allow food destined for civilians into German ports. The British were not interested in ending the hunger blockade.

The *Lusitania's* Last Voyage

Prior to the *Lusitania's* departure from New York on May 1, 1915 — her last voyage — the German government is-

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sued official warnings and even paid for advertisements warning prospective passengers that the waters around the British Isles were a war zone. However, Charles Sumner, agent for the Cunard Line, was quoted in a page 3 article in the *New York Times* published that same day:

"There are now no German cruisers in the Atlantic, and the 'danger zone' does not begin until we reach the British Channel and the Irish Sea. Then one may say there is a general system of convoying British ships. The British Navy is responsible for all British ships, and especially for Cunarders."

"Your speed, too, is a safeguard, is it not?" it was suggested.

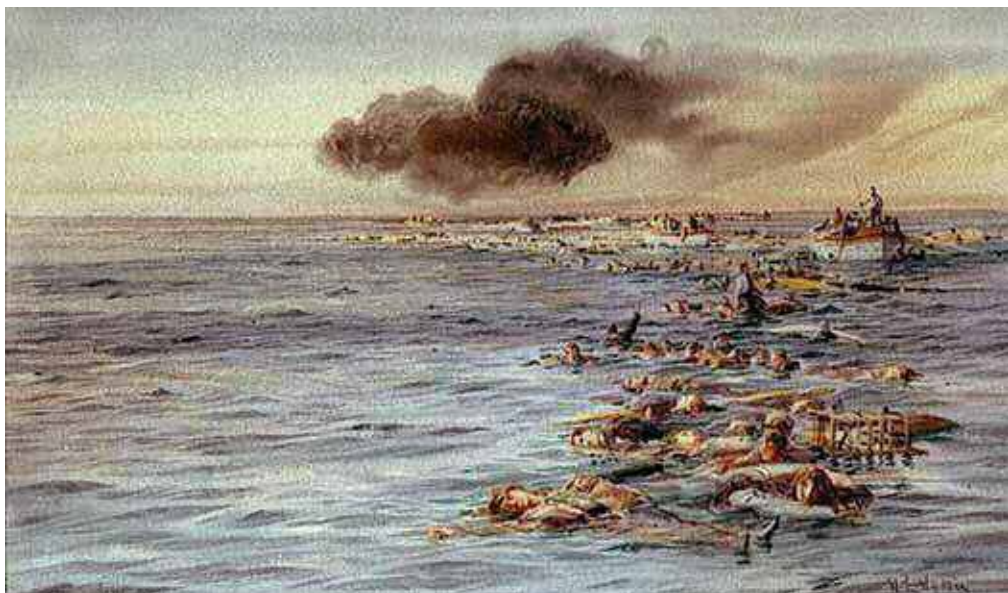
"Yes; as for submarines, I have no fear of them whatever."

On May 5, as the *Lusitania* neared British waters, the bottom fell out of Sumner's assurance that the *Lusitania* would have a naval escort. The cancellation of the convoy ship *Juno* was described by Colin Simpson:

Shortly after noon on 5 May the Admiralty signaled the *Juno* to abandon her escort mission and return to Queenstown. She was to travel south-east overnight so as to clear the Fastnet by some 50 miles and under cover of darkness. The *Lusitania* was not informed that she was now alone, and closing every minute to the U-20.

The German U-boat U-20 was active in the busy shipping routes that ran between Ireland and England. The U-20 met the British ship *Candidate* on Thursday, May 6 in Saint George's Channel. Kapitänleutnant Walther Schwieger, although not required to observe the Cruiser Rules, did so in this case. Simpson recorded the sequence of events:

After two grenades had been thrown, the *Candidate* hove to and the crew were allowed to abandon ship. There were no casualties, and the U-20's boarding party climbed aboard at



Lives recklessly lost: The casualties of the *Lusitania* could have been much lower. American F.J. Gauntlett not only survived the harrowing sinking but alertly noticed that British navy ships anchored in the harbor did not help with rescue efforts.

8.20 a.m. They stayed an hour and then drawing off a quarter of a mile put a torpedo into her, but the ship refused to sink. Schwieger closed up and a dozen rounds from his deck gun into the waterline sent the *Candidate* to the bottom at 11.25 a.m. The crew were picked up safely by a naval patrol boat which concentrated on its mission and did not attack the submarine. Schwieger allowed the patrol boat to depart unmolested.

Once again, an incredible story of honor by the men in uniform on both sides, as the British Navy patrol boat rescued the crew of the *Candidate* without attacking the U-boat and the U-boat did not fire on the patrol boat while it was rescuing unarmed noncombatants.

About an hour and a half later, the U-20 met the *Centurion* not far from where it sank the *Candidate*. For some reason, perhaps suspecting the *Centurion* might be a Q-boat, Schwieger torpedoed without warning. Once again, a lone torpedo did not sink the ship. Once the crew of the *Centurion* abandoned the ship with no loss of life, Schwieger took aim and fired a second torpedo. About an hour and 20 minutes later the *Centurion* sank.

On Friday morning Edward Mandell House, President Wilson's alter ego, was preparing for an audience with King George V, a meeting that hinted of finalizing a plan to sacrifice the *Lusitania* in order to draw the United States into the

war. As Simpson described it, House met first with Sir Edward Grey, who asked him, "What will America do if the Germans sink an ocean liner with American passengers on board?" House replied, "I believe that a flame of indignation would sweep the United States and that by itself would be sufficient to carry us into the war." King George V, when he met with House later that day, was more specific, asking, "Colonel, what will America do if the Germans sink the *Lusitania*?" Apparently House spent the whole day and into the evening with the British elites, as James Perloff reported in "False Flag at Sea — *Lusitania*":

At evening, a splendid dinner was given honoring House; numerous British dignitaries attended, including Grey, and — at House's request — Lord Mersey, the Wreck Commissioner who would later oversee the inquiry regarding the *Lusitania*. During this dinner the news arrived of the great ship's sinking. House announced to the assembled guests that America would enter the war within the month.

While House hobnobbed with the British elite, the *Lusitania* proceeded, unaware that the *Juno*, her appointed escort, had been recalled. When the U-20 encountered the unescorted *Lusitania*, the U-boat fired one torpedo at the *Lusitania*. The explosion from the torpedo penetrated the hull and did some damage. But the damage

done by the torpedo was nothing when compared to the second blast. It was a massive explosion from within the *Lusitania*. The *Lusitania* sank 18 minutes later.

Credible sources disagree on the exact numbers of passengers, crewmembers, and fatalities on board the *Lusitania*, but there were about 1,960 total souls on board including passengers, crew, and three stowaways who were discovered after setting sail. The death toll was about 1,200. There were about 160 Americans on board, of whom more than 120 died.

American Public Reaction to the Sinking

Most Americans, thinking the *Lusitania* was sunk by a torpedo, were understandably angry at the Germans. But some Americans had serious doubts. Unfortunately such news reports were generally relegated to the less-read pages. The *New York Times* for May 8, in an article that was buried on page 6, had interviews with officers from the U.S. Navy in Washington, D.C.:

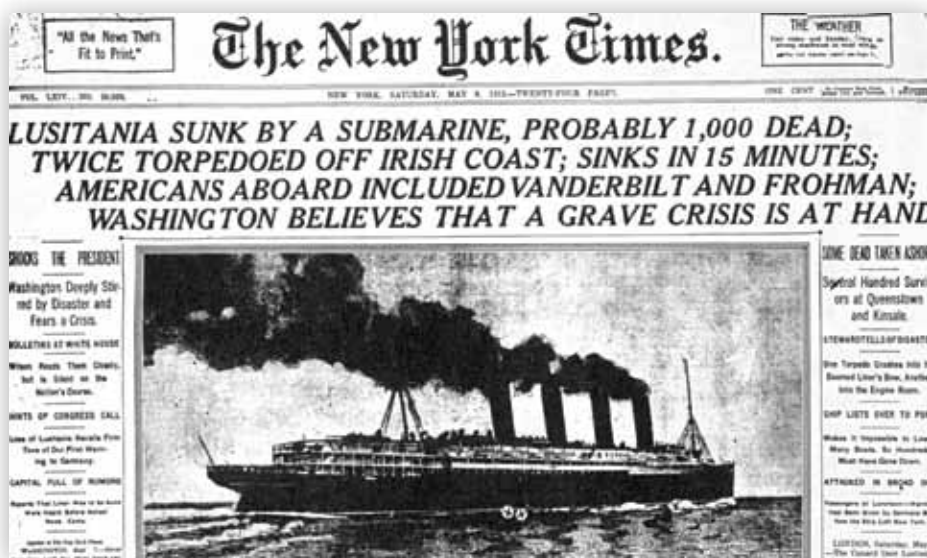
Naval officers here agree the *Lusitania* must have been struck by more than one torpedo, if as reported, she remained afloat only thirty minutes after the first explosion. The ship was so constructed, they say, that except under extraordinary condition a single torpedo could not sink her.

The article stated further:

It was pointed out, however, that inside explosions following the attack might have aided in the work of destruction, as the ship is understood to have carried a large amount of war material for the Allies, including ammunition. Such explosions might have ripped open several compartments and so weakened others that they gave way under the pressure of inrushing water.

James Perloff, in "False Flag at Sea — *Lu-*

Front-page folly: A cover story in the *New York Times* on May 8, 1915 blames the *Lusitania* sinking on torpedoes, while an article on page 6 indicates U.S. Navy officers expressed doubts about the official story.



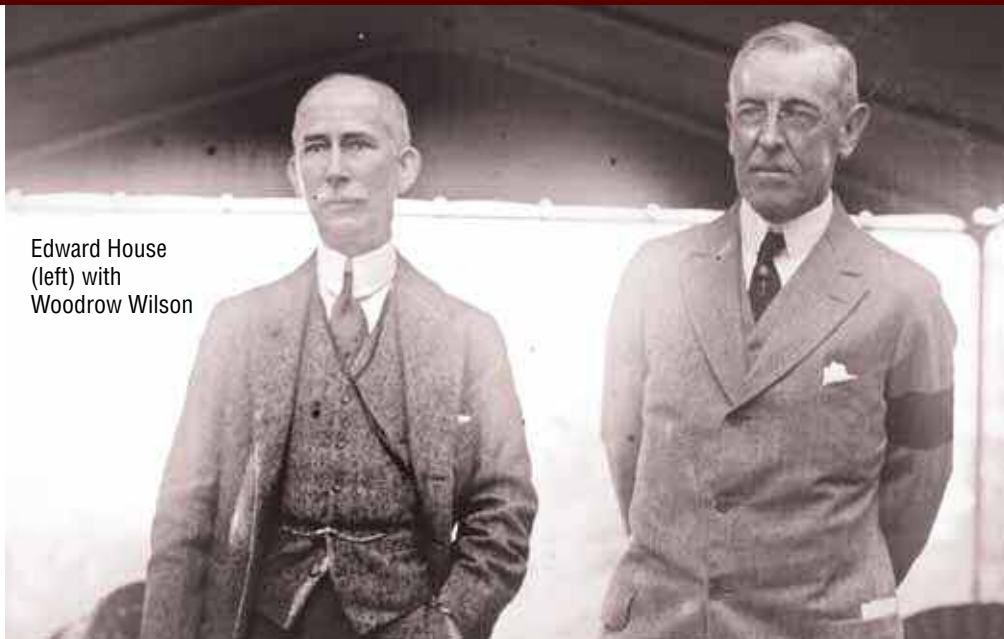
sitania,” lists among the items illegally on board guncotton, a high explosive used by the British when manufacturing military mines. According to Perloff:

In the U.S. Justice Department’s archives is an affidavit signed by Dr. E. W. Ritter von Rettegh, a chemist employed by Captain Guy Gaunt, the British naval attaché in Washington. Ritter von Rettegh stated that Gaunt called him to his office on April 26, 1915, and asked what the effect would be of sea water coming into contact with guncotton. The chemist explained that there were two types of guncotton — trinitro cellulose, which seawater would not affect, and pyroxyline, which sea water could cause to suddenly explode, as a result of chemical changes that he explained in technical detail.

The following day, Gaunt visited the Du Pont munitions plant in Cristfield, New Jersey, and Du Pont thereupon shipped tons of pyroxyline, packaged in burlap, to the Cunard wharf in New York City, where it was loaded onto the *Lusitania*. It quite evidently accounts for the item on the ship’s manifest of 3,813 40-pound containers of “cheese,” which were shipped along with 696 containers of “butter.” That these packages were not butter and cheese is clear: they were not shipped in refrigerated compartments; their destination was listed as the Royal Navy’s Weapons Testing Establishment; and no one filed an insurance claim for the lost “butter and cheese.”

Of course, the collector of customs, Dudley Field Malone, who was appointed by President Wilson, didn’t question the lack of refrigeration for the dairy products. When reports appeared in the press suspecting the internal explosions were the real cause of the *Lusitania*’s sinking, President Wilson ordered Robert Lansing to find out if there was any contraband on board. Colin Simpson related the happenings:

Lansing had a detailed report in writing from Malone by noon, which stated that “practically all her cargo



Edward House (left) with Woodrow Wilson

was contraband of some kind” and listed great quantities of munitions. Nevertheless, Lansing and Wilson were the first to realize that if it became public that over 100 American lives had been lost because of the Administration’s lax interpretation of neutrality, it would be most unlikely for them to survive the inevitable political holocaust.

Suspicious were also raised by the lack of rescue assistance by the British Navy. When the *Lusitania* transmitted its SOS signal, Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Coke dispatched every ship he had at his disposal including the cruiser *Juno*, the ship that had been ordered to abandon its convoy responsibilities. But soon after, in a bizarre turn of events, the *Juno* was ordered back to port by Admiral Lord Fisher without rescuing any passengers. Simpson gives this account:

Admiral Oliver received the signal shortly before 3 p.m. and at once took it to Fisher, who seemed to take the news calmly. It was not until Oliver mentioned that the *Juno* was on her way and would doubtless wireless a full report that Fisher seemed

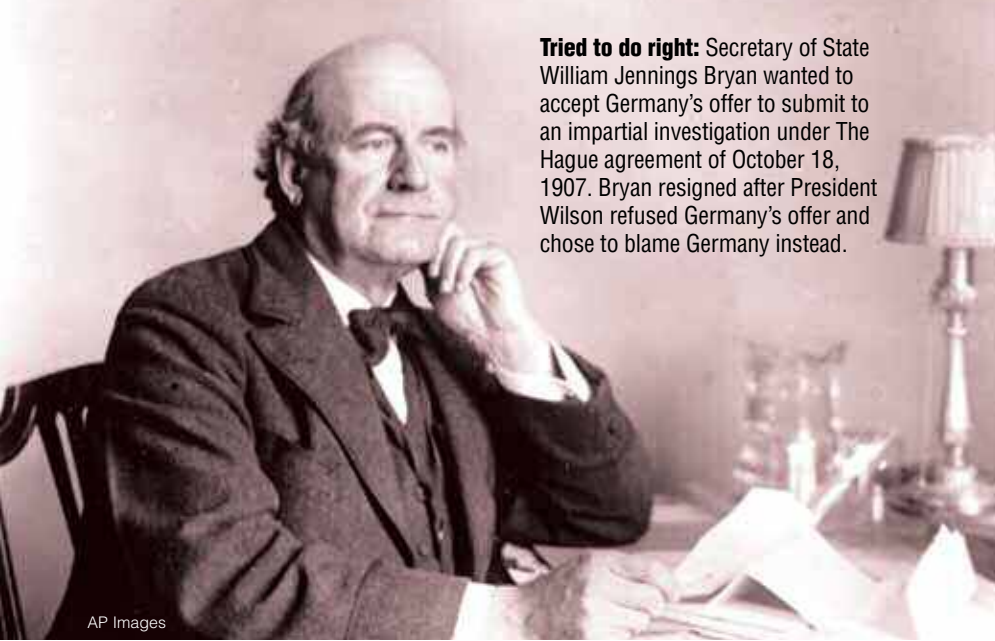
to react. He ordered the *Juno* to be recalled at once.... The *Juno* was in sight of the survivors in the water when she received the recall signal and turned back to Queenstown; as a result almost two hours elapsed before the first rescue ships started picking up survivors.

Within days of the sinking, American businessman C. R. Meissner, who was convinced the *Lusitania* was sunk by explosive cargo rather than by the torpedo, organized a petition drive to get Congress to place an embargo on shipping arms and ammunition out of the country. In a May 12 *New York Times* article, buried on page 5, he related his activities:

C. R. Meissner, of the importing firm of G. E. Meissner & Bros., 31 Union Square, who is frankly pro-German and justifies the sinking of the *Lusitania*, is conducting a personal endless chain campaign by petition to have President Wilson call an extra session of Congress so that an embargo can be placed upon the shipping abroad of arms and ammunition.

Through the circularization of business houses, public bodies, the

King George V, when he met with House later that day, was more specific, asking, “Colonel, what will America do if the Germans sink the *Lusitania*?”



AP Images

Tried to do right: Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan wanted to accept Germany's offer to submit to an impartial investigation under The Hague agreement of October 18, 1907. Bryan resigned after President Wilson refused Germany's offer and chose to blame Germany instead.

churches and citizens in general, Mr. Meissner has obtained about 15,000 signatures.

Meissner's obviously German name and his occupation in the import business show a strong possibility that he had economic reasons for his activism. He, like many other Americans, was angry at the British for lost business caused by the British blockade. Farmers and ranchers, being in the business of producing food to feed hungry people, were understandably not on board with the hunger blockade either. Despite the strong possibility of impure motives by some of the people involved, it shows there was a significant minority within the United States that did not want to be part of World War I and, if we were to take a side in the war, some would be on the side of Germany.

There were opponents of the war on Capitol Hill, as well. Senator Robert La Follete of Wisconsin argued it was a violation of the intent of the Passenger Act of 1882 for a ship coming into or departing from a U.S. port to have both passengers and explosive cargo on board. Congressman Charles Lindbergh, Sr. (the father of the famed aviator) was opposed to the war, as well.

The United States wasn't about to be in the war within the month as Edward Mandell House had predicted on the evening of the *Lusitania's* sinking. One of the men close to President Wilson was Robert Lansing, who urged caution, as Simpson noted:

Lansing had his political ear closer to the ground than the others, and knew that armed intervention by the United States would never be carried through Congress. He counseled an immediate break in diplomatic relations with Germany but suggested that the U.S. be confined to the role of Allied supplier and creditor until the opportune political and financial moment, which he saw as some time shortly after the Presidential election of 1916.

German Government Requests Official Investigation

Amid numerous official notes and responses between the governments involved, the German government on May 29 transmitted an official note to the U.S. government that attempted to have an official international investigation of the *Lusitania's* sinking. The German note repeated previous assertions that the *Lusitania* had explosives illegally on board, had cannons on board, and was using American citizens as protection.

This note also included a formal offer by the German government to have the *Lusitania* incident investigated by "an international call on the International Commission of Inquiry, as provided by Article III. of The Hague agreement of Oct. 18, 1907." Article 3 of that agreement said:

A belligerent party which violates the provisions of the said Regulations

shall, if the case demands, be liable to pay compensation. It shall be responsible for all acts committed by persons forming part of its armed forces.

Germany was willing, if found wrong, to be held responsible for the sinking and pay compensation. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan was willing to accept the German offer, but President Wilson refused.

An investigation under Article 3 of The Hague agreement in a neutral country could have asked why the British Navy withdrew its convoy ship, the *Juno*, and then ordered it back to port without rescuing survivors. It could have asked about the butter and cheese. It could have questioned dockworkers to identify the dairy that supplied the dairy products that didn't need refrigeration. It could have asked whether or not the *Lusitania* had been retrofitted with artillery at Queenstown, making it a Q-boat.

Anirate American Demands Answers

On June 3, one of the surviving American passengers from the *Lusitania*, F. J. Gauntlett, once back on American soil and free from British censorship, wasted no time in contacting the newspapers, expressing his displeasure with the British Admiralty. A *New York Times* article that should have had a front-page headline, but was on page two of the June 4 issue, explained:

F. J. Gauntlett, a Director of the Newport News Drydock and Shipbuilding Company, who was a passenger on the *Lusitania* when she was torpedoed, returned to New York yesterday on the American liner *Philadelphia*, bringing the body of Arthur L. Hopkins, the President of his company, who was a victim of the disaster. Mr. Gauntlett appeared to be very bitter against the British Admiralty because destroyers were not sent to the rescue of the drowning passengers.

"When I was landed in Queens-town after the sinking of the *Lusitania*," said Mr. Gauntlett, "I was very much surprised to find several torpedo boat destroyers inside the harbor which were under the orders of a superannuated naval officer. I went to this officer asked him why the de-

stroyers had not gone out after getting the S O S call from the *Lusitania*, and he replied that he was under Admiralty orders not to risk the boats.”

The British Navy was supposedly afraid to rescue the survivors of the *Lusitania* because of a lone German submarine. Gaunlett didn’t buy that flimsy excuse. Being a director of a shipbuilding company, he knew a torpedo boat destroyer when he saw one and knew they didn’t run from U-boats. Gauntlett, obviously a man who retained his senses during a crisis and had a keen eye for observing details despite the traumatic experience, also stated definitely that only one torpedo hit the *Lusitania*.

Edward Mandell House Returns to the United States

On June 5 Edward Mandell House boarded the U.S. liner *St. Paul* and returned to the United States. It’s worthy of note that he followed German advice and sailed on a U.S. ship. Also, even though it wasn’t necessary to escort an American liner

from Liverpool to Fastnet, the British Navy supplied two torpedo boat destroyers for House’s ship. F. M. Passow, the captain of the *St. Paul*, confirmed this to the *New York Times* when the *St. Paul* arrived in New York on June 13, and it was on the front page the next day. Captain Passow added that the British ship *Orduna*, which departed Liverpool three hours earlier, had no naval escort.

William Jennings Bryan Resigns as Secretary of State

On June 8 William Jennings Bryan resigned his position as secretary of state because he disagreed with President Wilson’s proposed note to Germany holding Germany solely responsible for the loss of American lives aboard the *Lusitania* and Wilson’s refusal to investigate German allegations before taking action.

Robert Welch said of William Jennings Bryan, “He was a completely honorable and intellectually honest, patriotic American, possessed of great oratorical capability, who seldom knew what he was talking about.” This time Bryan knew

what he was talking about, and he was right to refuse to concur with Wilson on the note to Germany. But by resigning his position as secretary of state he removed himself from a position where he might have been able to keep us out of World War I. Robert Lansing was appointed as Bryan’s successor. President Wilson ran for reelection on the slogan “He Kept Us Out of War” and then promptly got us into that war after winning reelection. We could have and should have stayed completely out of World War I.

Germany committed her share of wrongs in World War I, including her invasion of Belgium and use of chemical weapons. But Germany wasn’t the only country that acted like Barbarian Huns at times during the war. As William Jennings Bryan said, “The killing of innocent women and children cannot be justified, whether the killing is by drowning or starving.” ■

Acknowledgements: Lusitania by Colin Simpson, “False Flag at Sea — Lusitania” by James Perloff, and Architects of Conspiracy by William P. Hoar