

The Sinking of RMS Lusitania

What contributed to the American entry into World War I

After the Federal Reserve System became established on the 23rd of December, 1913, the stage was set for a war; one of such gigantic proportions that it became known as the First World War. It is a fact that warfare is the biggest debt generator. It generates so much debt that it is usually unfeasible for taxes alone to furnish all the expenditure required. In such a scenario, war bonds are printed to inflate the money supply. With the reinstatement of a central bank came a guaranteed bulk buyer for the U.S. federal government in the form of the newly created Federal Reserve System.

The money trust quickly pounced on the huge profit making potential that such a war presented them with. But they would have to wait until 1917 before the United States would take part in the war, alongside allied forces in their struggle against Germany. The British government initially faced opposition from President Wilson, for a lack of support, in the knowledge that public opinion in America did not favour engagement. It took for a boat to be sunk by a German submarine, and, the loss of 128 U.S. citizens to swing things around. That boat was RMS Lusitania.

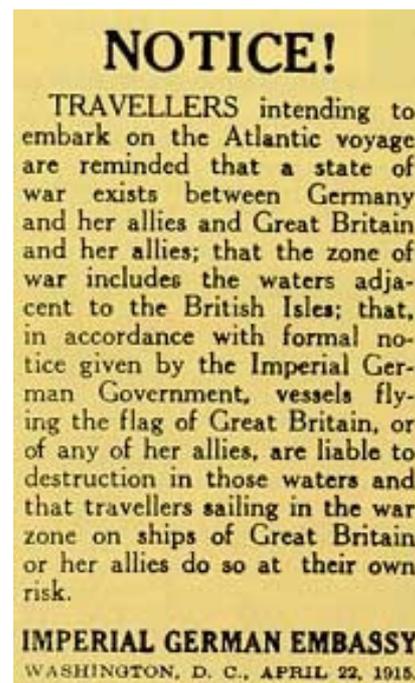
On her last voyage, she departed from New York on the 1st of May, 1915, for a trans-Atlantic trip destined for Liverpool, only to be torpedoed by a German U-boat off the coast of Ireland on the 7th of May. Her sinking was marred in controversy; with some even alluding to a British-led complot insofar that the British establishment may have premeditated the tragedy in order to sway public opinion and get America involved in the war effort.

It should be noted that the German embassy in Washington issued this warning on the 22nd of April, 1915:

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 given by the Imperial German Government, vessels flying the flag of Great Britain, or any of her allies, are liable to destruction in those waters and that travellers sailing in the war zone on the ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk.

IMPERIAL GERMAN EMBASSY
Washington, D.C. April 22, 1915



Another thing which should not go unmentioned is that the Lusitania was laden with war munitions, out of which its cargo contained an estimated 4,200,000 rounds of rifle cartridges, 1250 empty shell cases, and 18 cases of non-explosive fuses, all of which were listed in her manifest, meaning that Germany would have had prior knowledge of this shipment. 1959 passengers and crew members were on board the Lusitania and put at risk. The fact that the ship had been carrying shells and cartridges was not made known to the passengers at the time.

To investigate what transpired, an official inquiry was set up and presided by Wreck Commissioner Lord Mersey. A total of 36 witnesses were called in to give evidence, with Lord Mersey querying why not more survivors came forward to give testimony. Statements were collected from all the crew members aboard the Lusitania who could be there to tell the tale. Quartermaster Johnson described afterwards that pressure had been placed upon him to be loyal to the company he worked for, the Cunard Line, and that it had been suggested to him that the case would be better served if two torpedoes struck the Lusitania, rather than the one he originally told during an earlier inquest in Kinsale on the 8th of May. Giving evidence to the tribunal in London, he wasn't asked any questions about torpedoes. Other witnesses who claimed that just one torpedo had been involved were barred permission to testify. Captain Turner, who commanded the Lusitania, said during the investigation, in contrast to his statement at the inquest, that two torpedoes had struck the ship, not one. In an interview in 1933, Turner reverted to his original statement that there had been only one torpedo.

Part of the proceedings turned on the question of evasive tactics against submarines. It was put to Captain Turner that he had failed to comply with Admiralty instructions to travel at high speed, maintain a zigzag course and keep away from shore. Other issues raised were the speed variants of RMS Lusitania before she was sunk. The Lusitania had slowed to 15 knots at one point because of fog, but otherwise maintained 18 knots passing Ireland. 18 knots was comfortably faster than the German submarine, which could only manage around 9.5 knots when submerged. The Lusitania was capable of achieving a maximum speed of 21 knots at full capacity. Given the dangers that these waters presented, with Germany imposing an exclusion zone all around Great Britain and Ireland, this did cast doubt on the efficiency of the ship's commandeering.

Two days after the close of the inquiry, Lord Mersey waived his fees for the case and formally resigned. His last words on the subject were:

"The Lusitania case was a damned, dirty business!"
~ Lord Mersey

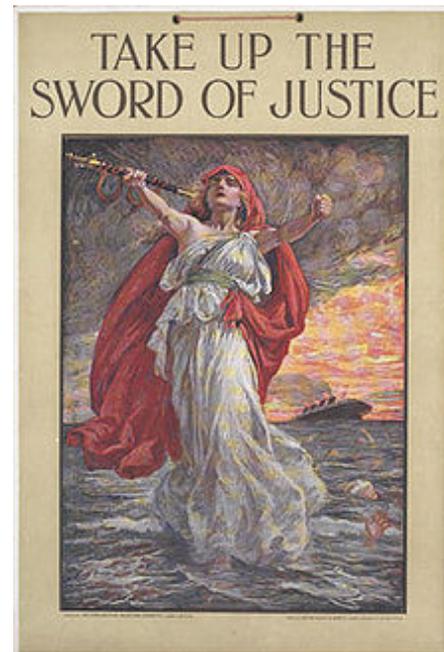
The full report was never made available to the public. A copy was thought to have existed amongst Lord Mersey's private papers after his death, but has since proved untraceable.

In the aftermath of the sinking, the British government quickly seized the opportunity to exploit the calls for repercussions to the maximum extent possible. It had begun a concerted propaganda campaign, with pro-war American allies, by drawing a parallel between the sinking of RMS Lusitania and the cause for engagement, which it argued was noble and vital for the good of the world order. The American people sought dire revenge for what they considered an act of war, and an affront to the United States.

Walther Schwieger, the U-boat commander responsible for sinking the Lusitania, was condemned in the allied press as a war criminal.

Of the 139 U.S. citizens aboard RMS Lusitania, 128—a staggering 92 per cent—were killed, and there was considerable outrage, too, in Britain, just as well as in America. The weekly magazine *The Nation* called the affair: “*a deed for which a Hun would blush, a Turk be ashamed, and a Barbary pirate apologize...*” and the British felt that the Americans had to declare war on Germany. However, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson refused to over-react. In an address to naturalized citizens on the 10th of May, 1915, at Convention Hall, Philadelphia, Wilson said:

“There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight. There is such a thing as a nation being so right that it does not need to convince others by force that it is right.” ~ Woodrow Wilson



The British took notice that they would have their work cut out with this president. It was in the interests of the British to keep passions inflamed. So, a fabricated story was circulated that in some regions of Germany, schoolchildren were granted a holiday in celebration of the sinking of the Lusitania. This propaganda story was so effective that James Watson Gerard, the U.S. Ambassador to Germany, recounted in his memoirs, published in 1918 entitled *Face to Face with Kaiserism*, of his time spent in Germany.

The Americans did end up joining the war years later. The British would get their way but the sinking of the Lusitania remained marred in controversy, both for the irrational decisions leading up to the tragedy and the aftermath of it. The only real winners were the money trust who stood to make substantial profits out of financing the war. Just a few decades later, history repeated itself again during the Second World War, and that time, it was an attack on Pearl Harbor which triggered American engagement wherein the Union Banking Corporation (UBC) traded with Nazi Germany. Prescott Sheldon Bush, the father of George Herbert Walker Bush (41st President of the United States) and the grand-father of George Walker Bush (43rd President of the United States), had a hand in financing the enemy as well as its infrastructure, companies like IG Farben which produced the Zyklon B gas utilized to murder millions of Jews, among others.