

Woodrow Wilson:

Your Excellency's note, in discussing the loss of American lives resulting from the sinking of the steamship *Lusitania*, adverts at some length to certain information which the Imperial German Government has received with regard to the character and outfit of that vessel, and your Excellency expresses the fear that this information may not have been brought to the attention of the Government of the United States.

It is stated in the note that the *Lusitania* was undoubtedly equipped with masked guns, supplied with trained gunners and special ammunition, transporting troops from Canada, carrying a cargo not permitted under the laws of the United States to a vessel also carrying passengers, and serving, in virtual effect, as an auxiliary to the naval forces of Great Britain.

It was its duty to see to it that the *Lusitania* was not armed for offensive action, that she was not serving as a transport, that she did not carry a cargo prohibited by the statutes of the United States, and that, if in fact she was a naval vessel of Great Britain, she should not receive clearance as a merchantman; and it performed that duty and enforced its statutes with scrupulous vigilance through its regularly constituted officials.

It is able, therefore, to assure the Imperial German Government that it has been misinformed. Whatever may be the contentions of the Imperial German Government regarding the carriage of contraband of war on board the *Lusitania* or regarding the explosion of that material by the torpedo, it need only be said that in the view of this Government these contentions are irrelevant to the question of the legality of the methods used by the German naval authorities in sinking the vessel.

Whatever be the other facts regarding the *Lusitania*, the principal fact is that a great steamer, primarily and chiefly a conveyance for passengers, and carrying more than a thousand souls who had no part or lot in the conduct of the war, was torpedoed and sunk without so much as a challenge or a warning, and that men, women, and children were sent to their death in circumstances unparalleled in modern warfare. Only her actual resistance to capture or refusal to stop when ordered to do so for the purpose of visit could have afforded the commander of the submarine any justification for so much as putting the lives of those on board the ship in jeopardy.

The Government of the United States therefore deems it reasonable to expect that the Imperial German Government will adopt the measures necessary to put these principles into practice in respect of the safeguarding of American lives and ships, and asks for assurances that this will be done.

Pro-Britain Arguments

The points against Germany were more obvious than those against Britain.

First of all, the British and all the neutral countries hated Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare. Germany claimed that their blockade was in response to Britain's blockade of capturing their own ships. But no one gets killed in a blockade like Britain's, and people, including innocent civilians die in unrestricted submarine warfare.

Second, the British could have blamed Walther Schwieger, who destroyed many neutral, passenger and hospital ships, and some without warning. If Schwieger didn't mean to sink the luxury liner, he should have been able to see that it was a passenger ship, and save his torpedo.