

**The Sinking of the Lusitania - Official German Response by Foreign Minister  
Gottlieb von Jagow, 28 May 1915**

Berlin, May 28, 1915

The Imperial Government has subjected the statements of the Government of the United States to a careful examination and has the lively wish on its part also to contribute in a convincing and friendly manner to clear up any misunderstandings which may have entered into the relations of the two Governments through the events mentioned by the American Government.

If neutral vessels have come to grief through the German submarine war during the past few months by mistake, it is a question of isolated and exceptional cases which are traceable to the misuse of flags by the British Government in connection with carelessness or suspicious actions on the part of the captains of the vessels.

With regard to the loss of life when the British passenger steamer *Lusitania* was sunk, the German Government has already expressed its deep regret to the neutral Governments concerned that nationals of those countries lost their lives on that occasion.

It is known to the Imperial Government from reliable information furnished by its officials and neutral passengers that for some time practically all the more valuable English merchant vessels have been provided with guns, ammunition and other weapons, and reinforced with a crew specially practiced in manning guns. According to reports at hand here, the *Lusitania* when she left New York undoubtedly had guns on board which were mounted under decks and masked.

Lastly, the Imperial Government must specially point out that on her last trip the *Lusitania*, as on earlier occasions, had Canadian troops and munitions on board, including no less than 5,400 cases of ammunition destined for the destruction of brave German soldiers who are fulfilling with self-sacrifice and devotion their duty in the service of the Fatherland.

The German Government believes that it acts in just self-defense when it seeks to protect the lives of its soldiers by destroying ammunition destined for the enemy with the means of war at its command.

According to the express report of the submarine commander concerned, which is further confirmed by all other reports, there can be no doubt that the rapid sinking of the *Lusitania* was primarily due to the explosion of the cargo of ammunition caused by the torpedo. Otherwise, in all human probability, the passengers would have been saved.

### **Pro-German Arguments**

Generally, the Americans believed that the Germans were violating the rights of humanity with its torpedoing without warning of the *Lusitania*, but the Germans had their reasons. Many Germans claimed that the British deliberately exposed the *Lusitania* and tried to get it sunk to embroil the Americans, and get them to join the war on their side. In 1916, the American ambassador to Germany interviewed the Kaiser (ruler of Germany) and found that he believed the ship was going slowly in dangerous waters so that it could be easily destroyed.

Captain Turner violated 5 top-secret Admiralty instructions, including zig-zagging, travelling near the middle of the (Irish) channel and avoiding headlands (such as the Old Head of Kinsale, 10 km away). Turner claimed that zig-zagging was a waste of time and thought that the Irish Channel was much narrower and therefore travelled closer to land. And why didn't the British Admiralty warn Turner of the sinking of the *Centurion* and *Candidate*?

Then the Germans claimed that the *Lusitania* was carrying Canadian troops. There were 360 Canadians on board on that fateful voyage. None of them were soldiers, although at least one of them was *planning* to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. But since he was not yet a soldier, he was still an innocent civilian.

The Germans also tried to justify the sinking by saying that the British were using their "illegal" blockade of stopping and confiscating ships carrying cargo to Germany in order to starve the German citizens, and this nation-wide suffering was worse than the suffering of the victims of the *Lusitania* disaster.