

# Naval Warfare & The Sinking of the Lusitania



*Blockades, U-Boats, and International Provocations  
Drawing the United States into WWI*

# Europe at War

## *The Allies Blockade the Central Powers*

- ❖ The British declared war on Germany in August 1914 after German troops invaded Belgium.
- ❖ Utilizing the world's most powerful Navy, the British declared the entire North Sea area a war zone in November 1914, signaling that any ship to enter those waters would be destroyed, especially any ships that might be carrying war munitions or contraband (which included food).
- ❖ The Germans objected to the nature of the blockade, which had an expanded definition of "war materiel" and items that would support the war effort, and by early 1915 the Germans were starting to feel the effects of restricted trade.
- ❖ The blockade against the Central Powers had major implications over the course of the war. As the European war continued, Germany and Austria-Hungary began rationing food (1,000 calories/day). By 1918 more severe rationing programs led to mass malnutrition and starvation and upwards of 900,000 German and Austrian civilian deaths.



THE  
**BALTIMORE  
SABOTAGE CELL**

GERMAN AGENTS, AMERICAN TRAITORS, AND  
THE U-BOAT *DEUTSCHLAND* DURING WORLD WAR I



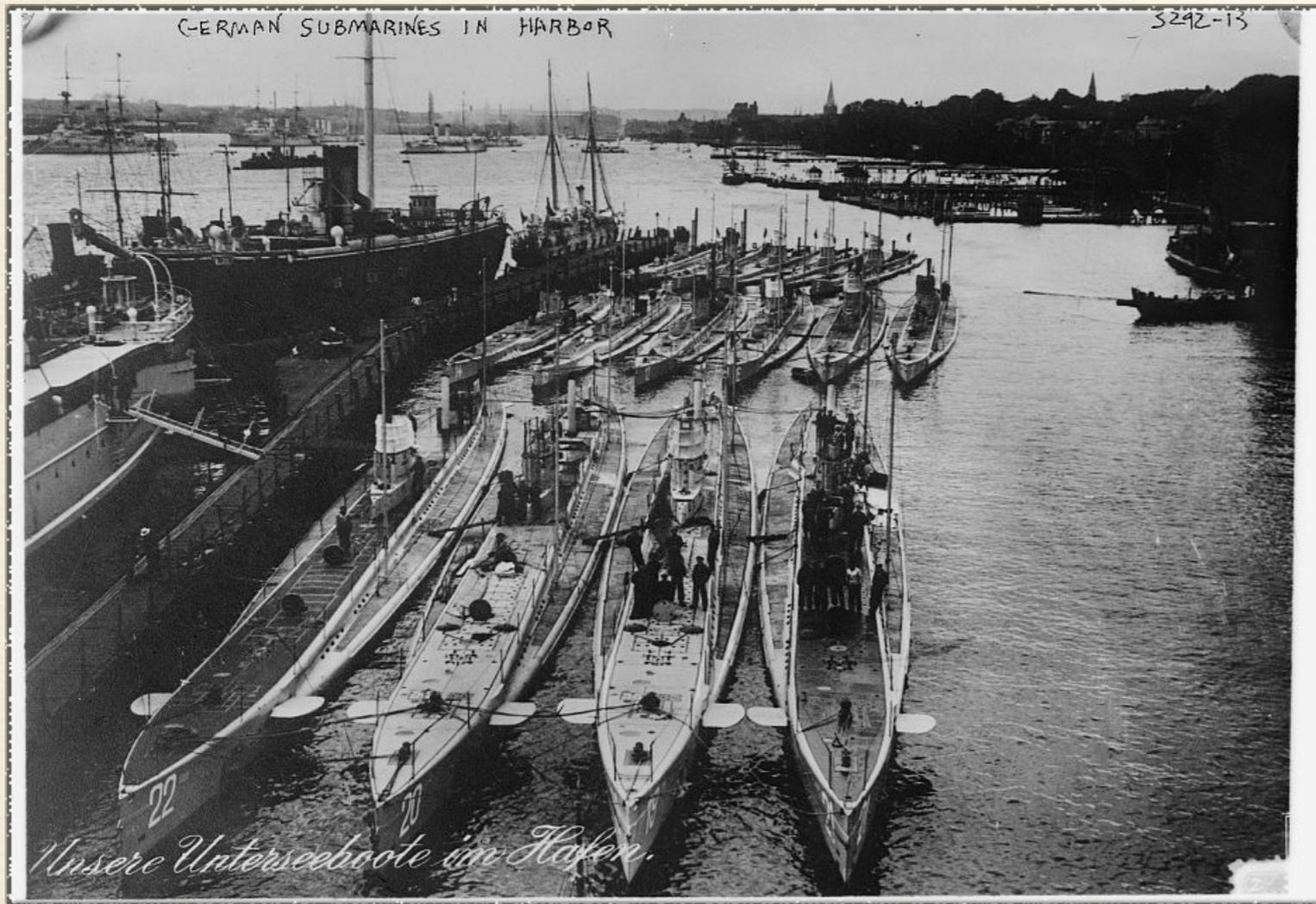
# Europe at War

*A Discussion on Trading Blockades and Naval Warfare During WWI*

*Run Time: 1 Hour*     Video

# Submarine Warfare

*A New and Significant Use of Force Arises During WWI*



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- ❖ German naval forces did not match the strength of the British Navy.
- ❖ To prevent other countries from trading with Britain, Germany employed submarine warfare tactics.
- ❖ U-Boats (short for the German word Untersee-boots meaning submarine) were primitive vessels that could submerge beneath the water and send torpedoes into any boats traveling in open water.



# German U-Boats

*Silent Footage of German Submarines Sinking Merchant Vessels During WWI*

*Run Time: 30 Minutes*     [Video](#)

# Submarine Warfare

*A New and Significant Use of Force in War*



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Interactive Map: U-Boat Attacks in World War I 

# Backdrop to the Lusitania Sinking

*Germany Issues a Warning About Civilian Sea Travel During War*

## GERMANY WARNS AGAINST TRAVEL IN ALLIES' SHIPS

Tells U. S. Public All Such Vessels Are Likely To Be Destroyed.

PASSENGERS RISK THEIR OWN LIVES

Washington Holds Notice Does Not Relieve Kaiser from Responsibility.

[From The Tribune Bureau.]

Washington, April 30.—In advertisements placed in the most prominent newspapers of the United States, with a view to reaching every American reader possible, the German Embassy will give notice to-morrow that all who travel on ships flying the flags of Great Britain and her allies in the war zone, do so at their own risk. This notice to the public, which follows the formal notice of the war zone given by Germany to the State Department some time ago, reads as follows:

NOTICE!

## The German Warning and Lusitania's Defiance

After the Lusitania sailed last Saturday it was announced that a number of the better known persons, booked to sail on her, had received telegrams warning them against sailing, as the ship was to be blown up. Officially, the Imperial German Embassy in Washington sent an advertisement to the New York papers warning all intending to board that persons sailing on ships of Great Britain and her Allies did so at their own risk.

Neither the telegrams nor the notice from the embassy had much, if any, effect on the passengers who had booked. At the offices of the Western Union Telegraph Company yesterday it was said that no effort had been made to find out if its lines had been used for the transmission of threatening telegrams, or that any investigation would be made if it were shown the company had transmitted or delivered such messages.

"We have no interest in messages other than to deliver them so long as the language complies with the laws of decency," said General Manager Selvester. "We do not know that such messages went over our lines, though it is my recollection that the report of these messages being received was denied."

"I can see where if it be shown that the ship was sunk through an internal explosion, the identity of the persons sending messages predicting that result might be of importance."

Previous calls from persons connected with the theatre, as Charles Frohman, the manager, and Charles Klein and status Miles Forman were among the passengers. The presence of Lady Allan and her daughters caused many inquiries from Canada, especially Montreal. Beyond the reports received at the offices, however, the clerks, who were kept busy answering the telegrams, could give no information.

Charles P. Sumner, the company's general manager, declined last night to put out any statement, saying that he had no more than the dispatches, and until more definite news was learned he preferred not to discuss the sinking. Many New Yorkers who had sailed inspired queries from their friends and relatives in this city, and among the first was Dock Commissioner R. A. C. Smith. Just as he left the office the text of the first message—that which had told of the sinking—which was originally communicated by the Cunard line to the newspapers, was given out, but the first announcement had been in the form of a bulletin.

The text of the cable message received here was:

"Lusitania, according to unconfirmed report, has been torpedoed by submarine at 2 p. m., Friday, ten miles south of Kinsale, and sunk 2:30. No way yet as to safety of passengers and crew."

Excepting the Brethertons, the first message which mentioned the safety of particular passengers came about 10 o'clock last night, when word was received that General H. B. Lasseter,



**CUNARD**  
EUROPE VIA LIVERPOOL  
**LUSITANIA**  
Fastest and Largest Steamer now in Atlantic Service Sails  
SATURDAY, MAY 1, 10 A.M.  
Transylvania, . . . Fri., May 7, 5 P.M.  
Ordona, . . . Tues., May 18, 10 A.M.  
Tuscunia, . . . Fri., May 21, 5 P.M.  
LUSITANIA, Sat., May 29, 10 A.M.  
Transylvania, . . . Fri., June 4, 5 P.M.  
Gibraltar - Genoa - Naples - Port S.S. Carpatha, Thur., May 13, NOON  
ROUND THE WORLD TOURS  
Through bookings on all principal ports of the World.  
COMPANY OFFICE, 21-25 STATE ST., N.Y.

**NOTICE!**  
TRAVELLERS intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany 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 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 29, 1915.

Lean, and two Henderson rafts, sufficient for from forty to fifty passengers each.

Following the receipt of the second cable message from Liverpool, which told of the Lusitania's distress calls and added that all available craft near Old Head were rushing to her assistance, a flock of anxious men came into the office.

They included Miles H. Secchi, who inquired for his wife and for Mr. and Mrs. Booth Jones and their children, Percival, five, and Ailsa, thirteen. He was followed by Samuel Robert, who sought information about George A.

❖ In April 1915, the German embassy placed an advertisement in a New York newspaper warning:

❖ *“Travelers 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 travelers sailing in the war zone on ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk. From the Imperial German Embassy”*

# Collateral Damage

## *The Royal Mail Ship Lusitania*

- ❖ The RMS Lusitania was a passenger liner setting sail from New York City to Liverpool, England, on May 1, 1915.
- ❖ The cargo ship carried 1,959 passengers and crew.
- ❖ Britain began arming merchant ships thus the Germans considered the Lusitania to be fair game as they suspected it may be carrying munitions.
- ❖ As it approached its destination of Liverpool on May 7, 1915, it encountered a German U-Boat and was hit by a torpedo.



Cunard Line  
S.S. Lusitania.  
- Leaving New York, May 1st.

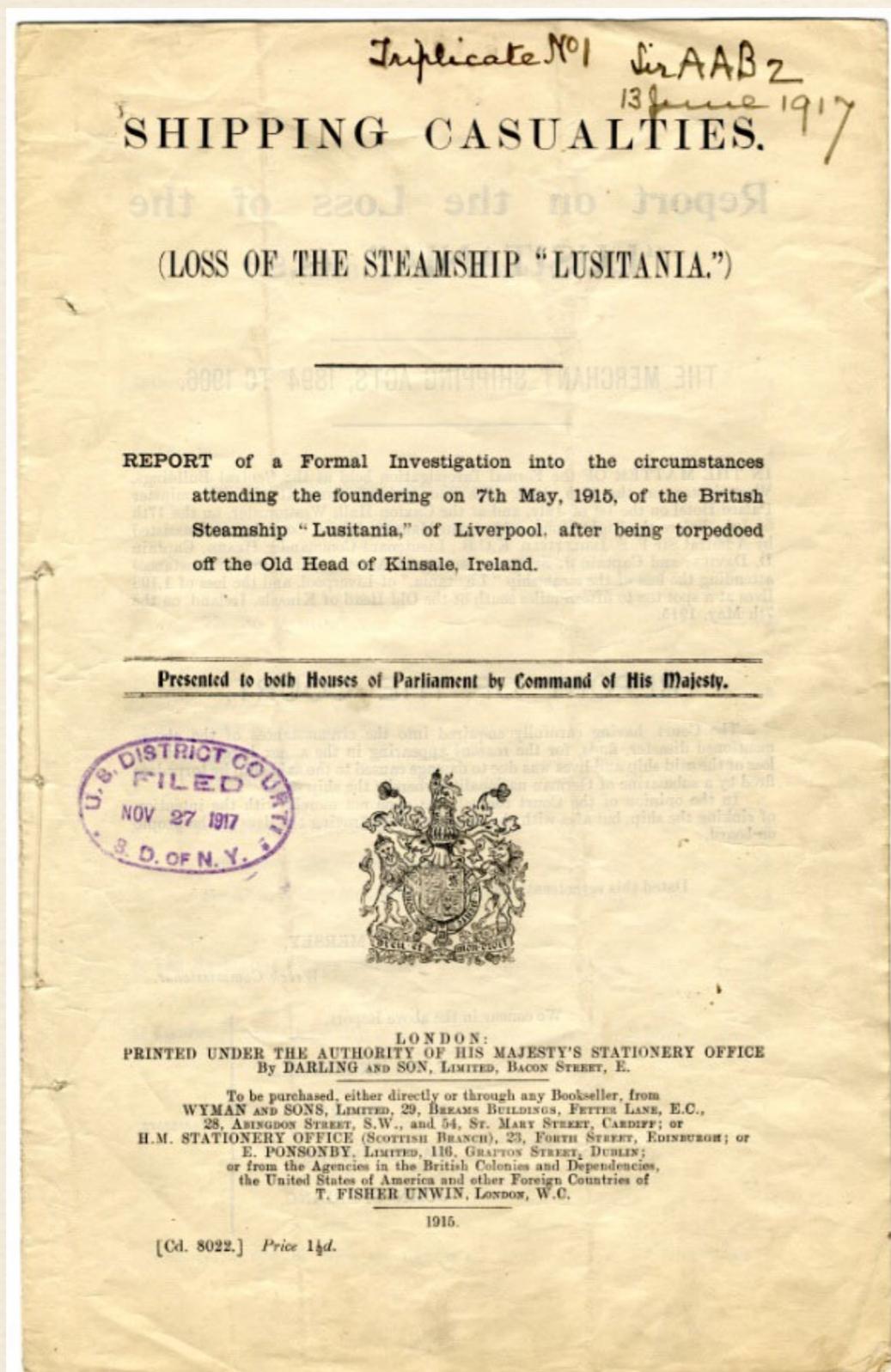
Last Voyage

*Silent Footage of the RMS Lusitania Leaving New York City on May 1, 1915*

*Run Time: 5 Minutes*

[Video](#)

# Civilian Casualties

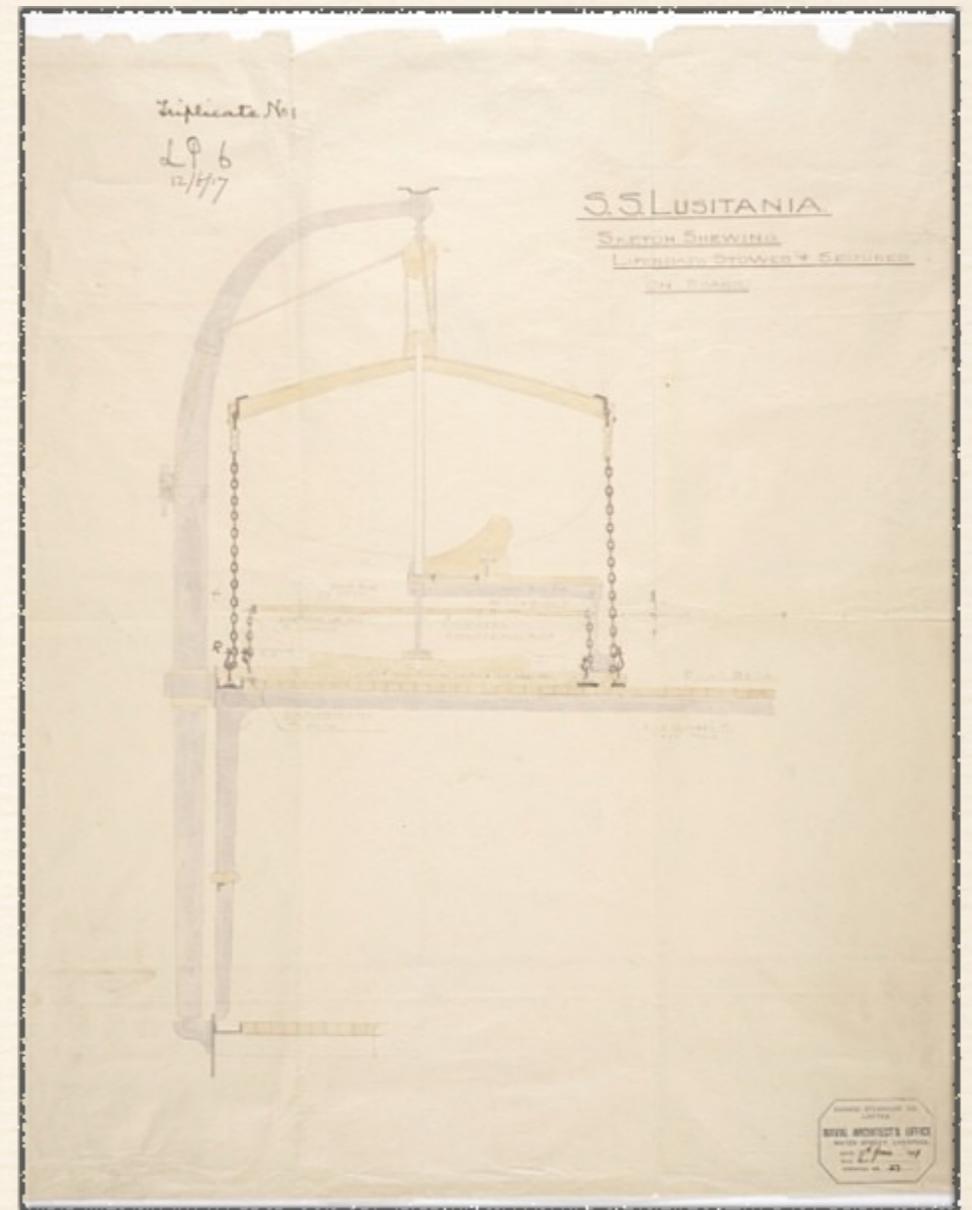


National Archives

- ❖ The use of submarines led to a merciless form of warfare that increased the sinking of merchant and civilian ships such as the Lusitania.
- ❖ When it came to capturing merchant ships during wartime, ships that traveled on the surface were required to adhere to specific rules set by international treaties.
- ❖ Any merchant ship that was stopped and discovered to be holding contraband cargo could be captured, boarded, and escorted to a designated harbor.
- ❖ Enemy merchant ships could also be sunk if the crew was allowed an opportunity to use lifeboats.
- ❖ At this time, Germany was practicing unrestricted submarine warfare.

# An Affront to Maritime Custom

- ❖ The Lusitania was not granted this courtesy.
- ❖ After the torpedo hit, the 1,959 passengers and crew scrambled to the lifeboats with survival taking precedence over custom and law as those aboard discovered that many lifeboats were impossible to launch resulting in mass casualties.



# The American Aspect

*Massive Media Coverage of the Attack on Innocent Civilians Leads to Pro-British versus Anti-German Sentiment*



- ❖ The Lusitania exploded from the direct hit, throwing 1,959 innocent passengers into the freezing Atlantic Ocean to drown as the ship sunk in only eighteen minutes.
- ❖ There were 1,198 civilian casualties including women and children. Among the fatalities were 128 American civilians.
- ❖ While the United States had been neutral in the war up until this point President Wilson issued a stern condemnation for the sinking of the Lusitania.



# A Test of Neutrality

*An Implicit Connection to the Allies*

## Washington Times

### HOME EDITION

EVENING, FEBRUARY 5, 1915.

PRICE ONE CENT.

**GERMANS TAKE  
CAPTIVE 6,000  
RUSS IN NEW  
WARSAW DRIVE**

**Czar's Forces Counter-Attacking With Great Fury to Halt Further Advances by Mackensen's Army.**

**Muscovites Attempt to Renew Offensive Near Tilsit in East Prussia—Berlin Claims Repulses of French.**

BERLIN (via wireless to Sayville), Feb. 5.—Six thousand Russian prisoners have been taken by Gen. Von Mackensen's army in its new drive on Warsaw, it was officially announced here this afternoon. This report includes only prisoners taken in the last four days' fighting. Among the captives are twenty-six officers.

To halt further advances by Mackensen's army, the Russians are counter-attacking with great fury. Their efforts to retake positions east of Bolimow recently occupied by the Germans have broken under heavy artillery fire.

**Russ Resume Offensive.**  
In East Prussia, near Tilsit, there are indications that the Russians are attempting to resume the offensive. The Germans have repulsed "strong Russian attacks" along the Niemen river.

Present fighting in Flanders and France is regarded as unimportant by the war office. The French made an isolated attack against the German positions northwest of Perthes, but were repulsed. Elsewhere artillery duels are

### Germany's Defi Answered

Germany's announcement of the proposed establishment of a "paper blockade" about Great Britain and Ireland has met with prompt action by England and the United States.

Strenuous protest will be made by the United States through Ambassador Gerard at Berlin. The issue was discussed at length at the meeting of the Cabinet today, and it is understood that prompt action will follow.

England has answered the defl in characteristic fashion. At a special meeting of admiralty officials it is understood that it was decided to order the flotilla of destroyers back from the North Sea to sweep the seas clean of the submarine menace.

### U. S. PREPARES TO PROTEST BLOCKADE OF BRITISH COAST

State Department Understood To Be Working on Representations Now To Be Sent to Berlin.

President Calls Meeting of Cabinet, and Matter Is Threshed Out—Germany Desperate, Is Belief of Many

Vigorous protests will be forwarded by this Government to Berlin against the action of Germany in establishing a "paper blockade" around the coasts of England, Scotland and France, and a portion of Holland. These representations, it is understood, are now being prepared in the State Department and soon will be sent to Ambassador Gerard at Berlin.

It is the contention of many officials that the German decree violates every principle of international law, set up and fought for by this country in behalf of the rights of neutral commerce, by threatening destruction to every neutral ship which fails to observe the blockade. The belief grows apparently in the minds of many officials that Germany, made desperate, is trying to drag the United States into the war.

**Drop In Wheat Expected.**  
It is expected that one of the first effects of the decree will be to cause

### America Faces Gravest Peril of War As Result Of Germany's Blockade

**Declaration Making Waters Surrounding the British Islands, North of France, and Holland a War Zone Causes Perplexing Foreign Complication—Act an Experiment.**

By JUDSON C. WELLIVER.

Never since the present war began has the danger of foreign complications involving the United States been so serious as it is now, following the German admiralty's declaration that the waters surrounding the British Islands, the north of France, and neutral Holland, will after February 18 constitute a "zone of war."

The owner or commander of an American ship sailing from New York to Rotterdam, for instance—both being ports of neutral powers—will seek in vain for exact information as to what constitutes a zone of war.

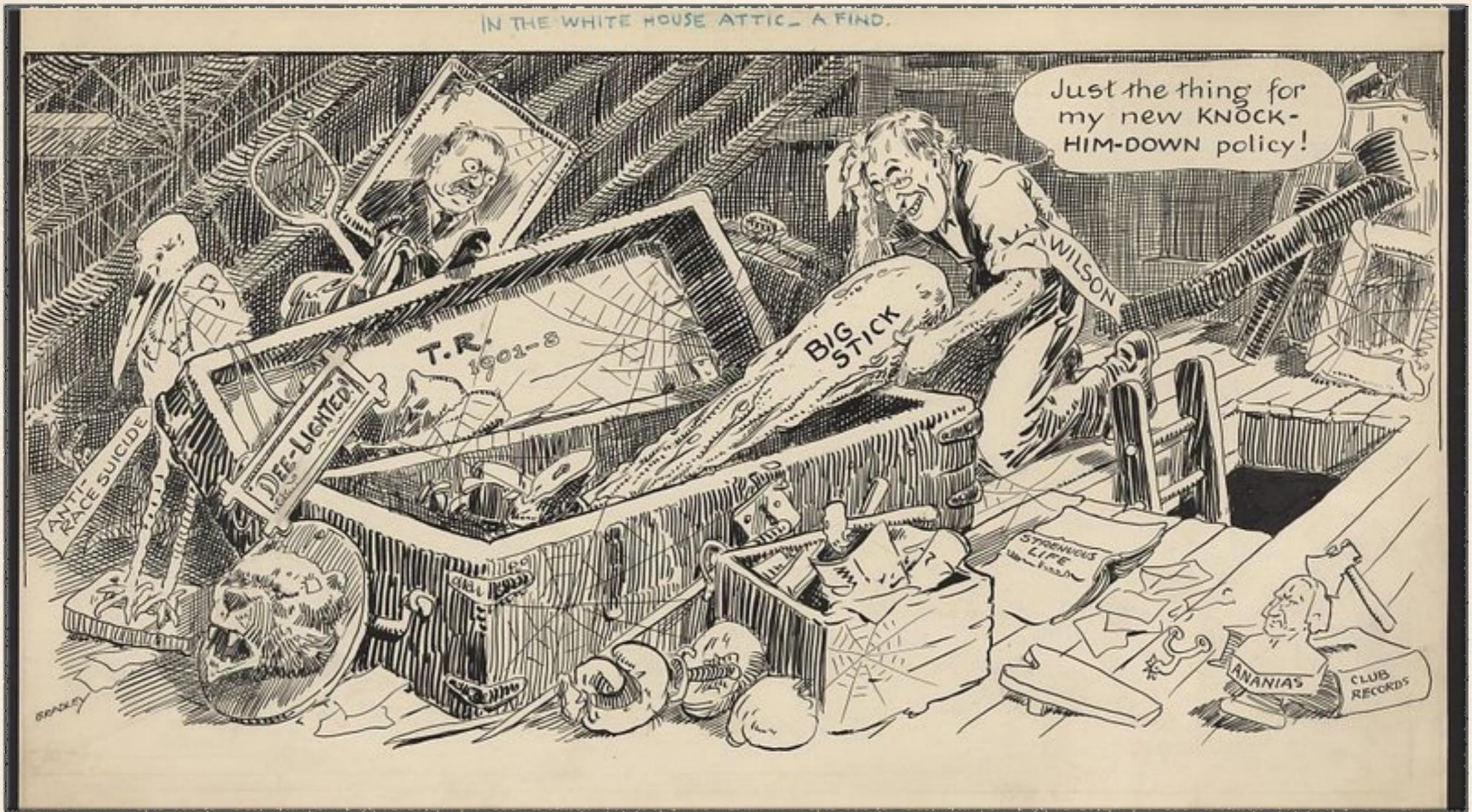
If it were a question of transacting commerce by land the question would not be so difficult. The zone of war in land campaigning is a definitely understood affair. Anybody who enters it does so at his peril. He may be hit by a bullet, or regarded as a spy. But such an institution as a zone of war on the seas, which three miles from land are esteemed the property of no nation, is unknown.

**NOT SAME AS BLOCKADE.**

A zone of war cannot be equivalent to a blockade, for two reasons. One is that if Germany had meant to declare a blockade, she would have said so. There was no need to invent a new

❖ President Wilson demanded an apology from the Germans for the sinking of the Lusitania and assurances that there would not be similar incidents in the future.

❖ Not wanting the United States to enter on the side of the Allies, the Germans complied with Wilson's requests in September 1915 by agreeing not to attack passenger ships. The United States was able to stay out of the war for another two years.



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# A Stern Condemnation

*From the May 18, 1916, edition of the Chicago Daily News, a satirical portrayal of President Woodrow Wilson getting tough with his foreign policy toward Germany. While most of Europe was involved in war, the United States had long tried to maintain a policy of neutrality.*



# A Fatal Voyage

*The Historical Significance of the RMS Lusitania's Transatlantic Voyage*

*Run Time: 7 Minutes*     [Video](#)

# A Prophetic Caution

*An Urging to Maintain Neutrality*

*“It is not likely that either side will win so complete a victory as to be able to dictate terms, and if either side does win such a victory it will probably mean preparation for another war. It would seem better to look for a more rational basis for peace.”*

*—William Jennings Bryan  
Secretary of State to President Woodrow Wilson*

# Extension Activity: The Military Lens

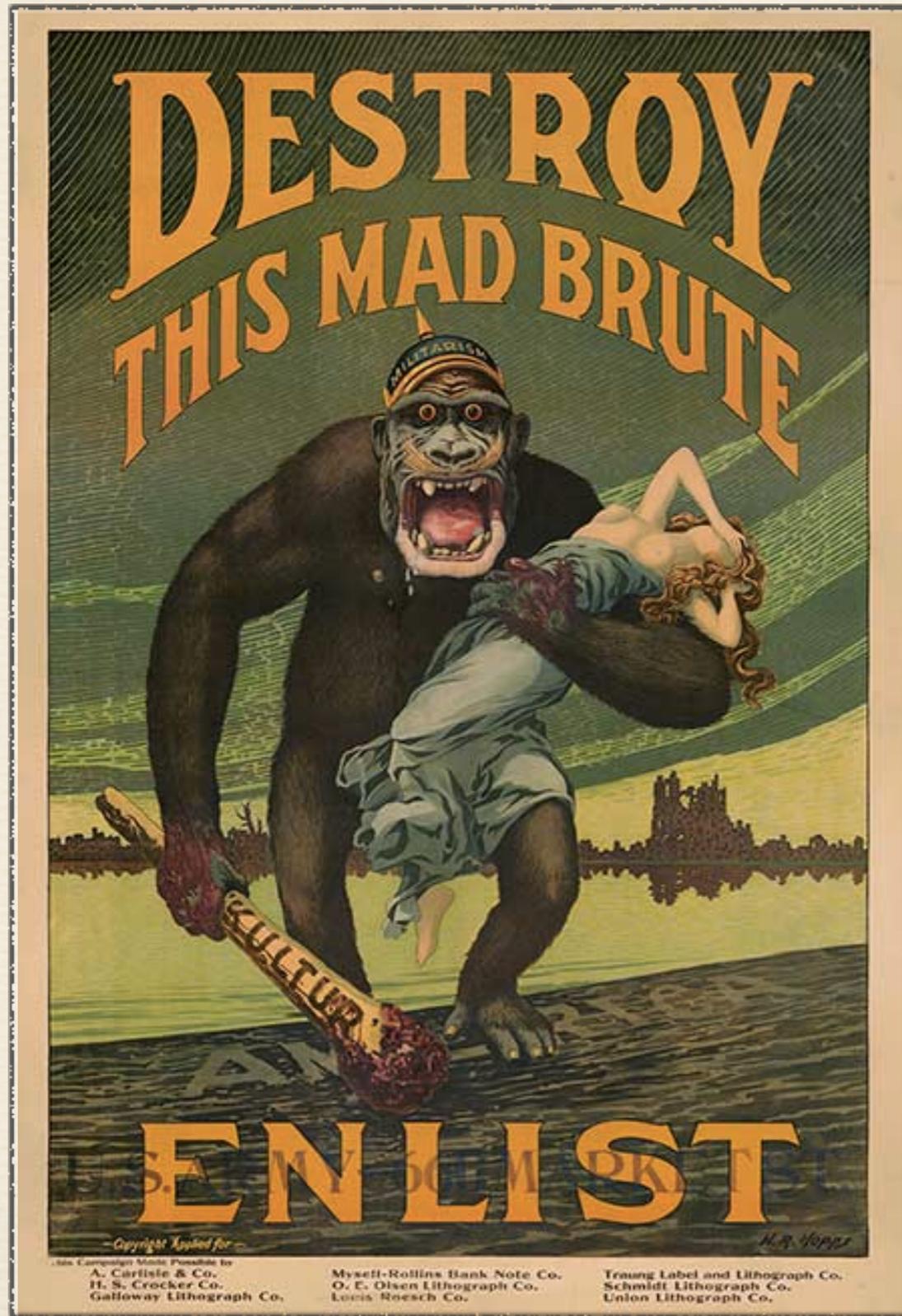
Music and Media Propaganda as Recruitment Tools

# The Draft

## *Conscription, Enlistment & Conscientious Objectors in the U.S. Military*

- ❖ In previous conflicts such as the Civil War, the United States had utilized conscription. World War I, however, marked the first time the nation's military raised its army primarily through a draft.
- ❖ To balance federal power with state autonomy, local civilian draft boards administered the selective service system. A national campaign utilizing posters, printed materials, films, and music helped the government convey the legal requirement for men to register with the selective service or to enlist.
- ❖ It was a struggle for officials to forge a unified fighting force from a segregated military consisting mostly of native-born whites, American Indians, and African Americans, along with large numbers of immigrants.
- ❖ The draft raised questions about patriotism and the obligations of citizenship, especially the duty to serve.
- ❖ The U.S. War Department created the status of "conscientious objector" for Americans who viewed military service as a violation of their religious, ethical, or political beliefs.

# Enlistment



# Patriotic Duty

*Uncle Sam asks: "What are YOU doing for Preparedness?"*

- ❖ The Committee on Public Information was created as an independent government agency to influence public opinion supporting U.S. participation in World War I.
- ❖ Enlistment posters were intended to rouse American audiences against the German militarism threat to American liberty.
- ❖ Specific imagery was used to appeal to local populations by using regional language and distributed in targeted geographic regions to prompt immigrants to join the military.
- ❖ President Wilson and his advisers believed the war was an opportunity to reconstruct America domestically to better benefit average Americans while also reshaping international relations into a durable peace.





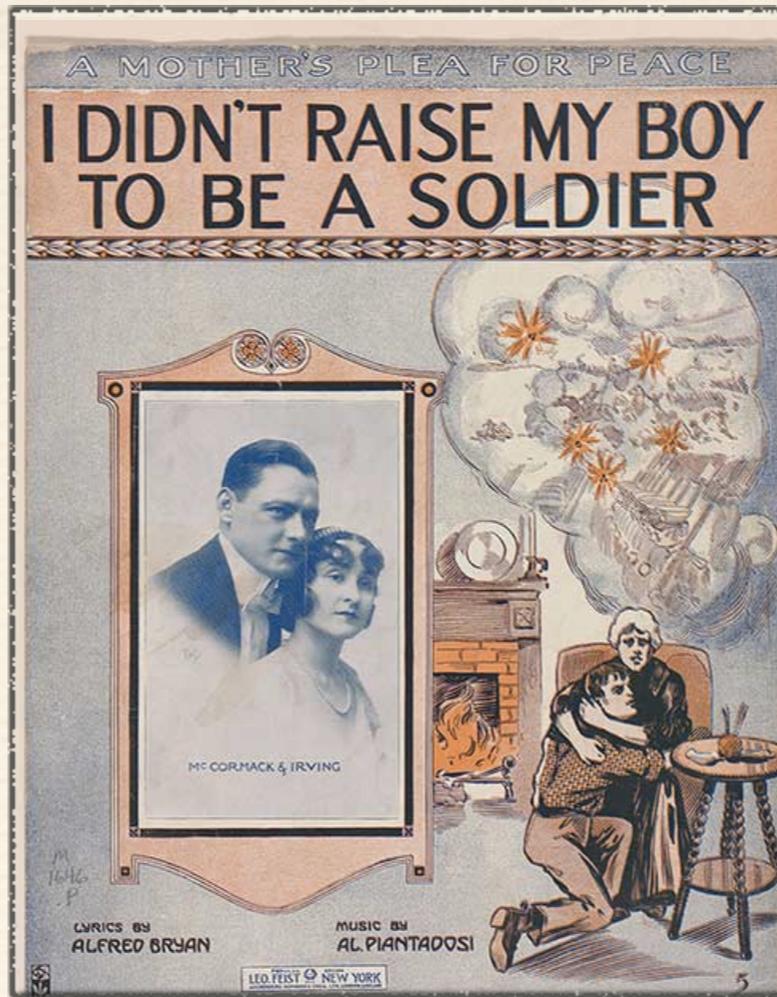
# Growing an Army

*Silent footage showing the enlistment, training, and equipping of soldiers during WWI*

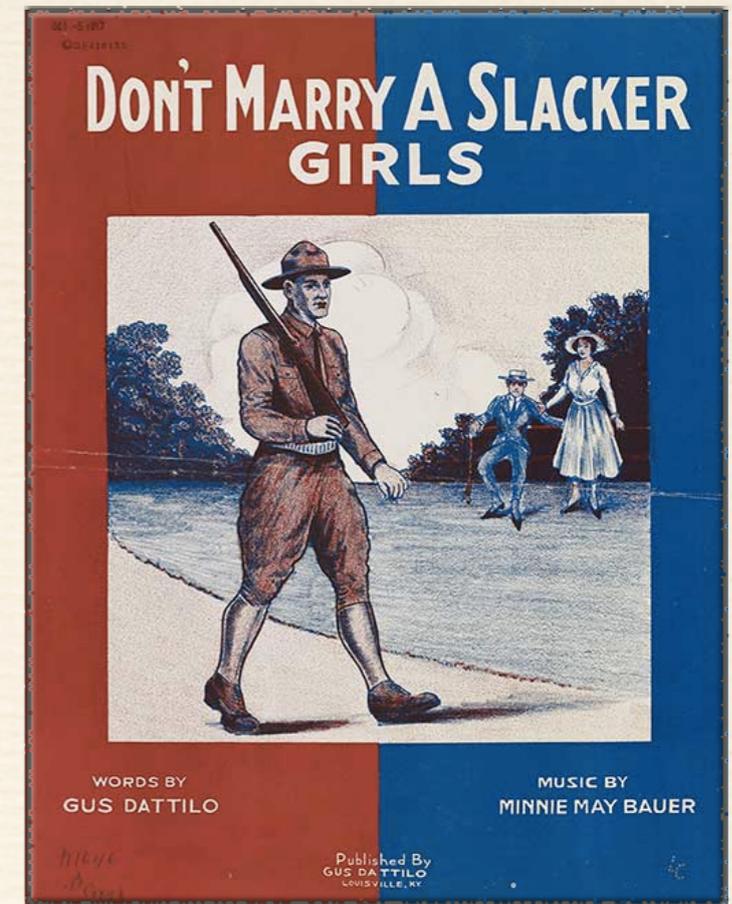
*Run Time: 11 Minutes*     [Video](#)



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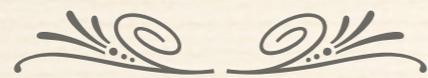
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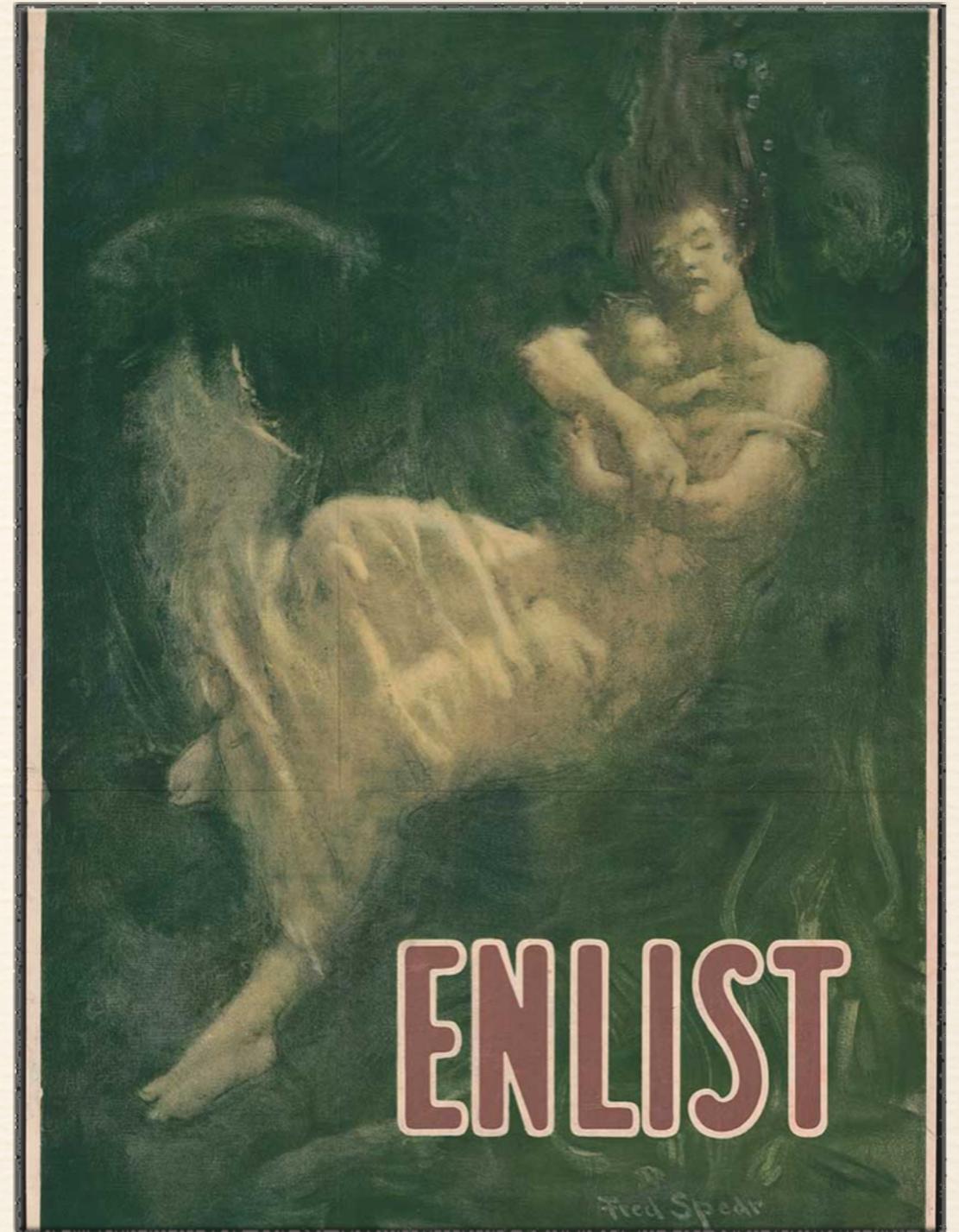
# Raising an Army

The sinking of the Lusitania was used as a stirring military recruitment tool

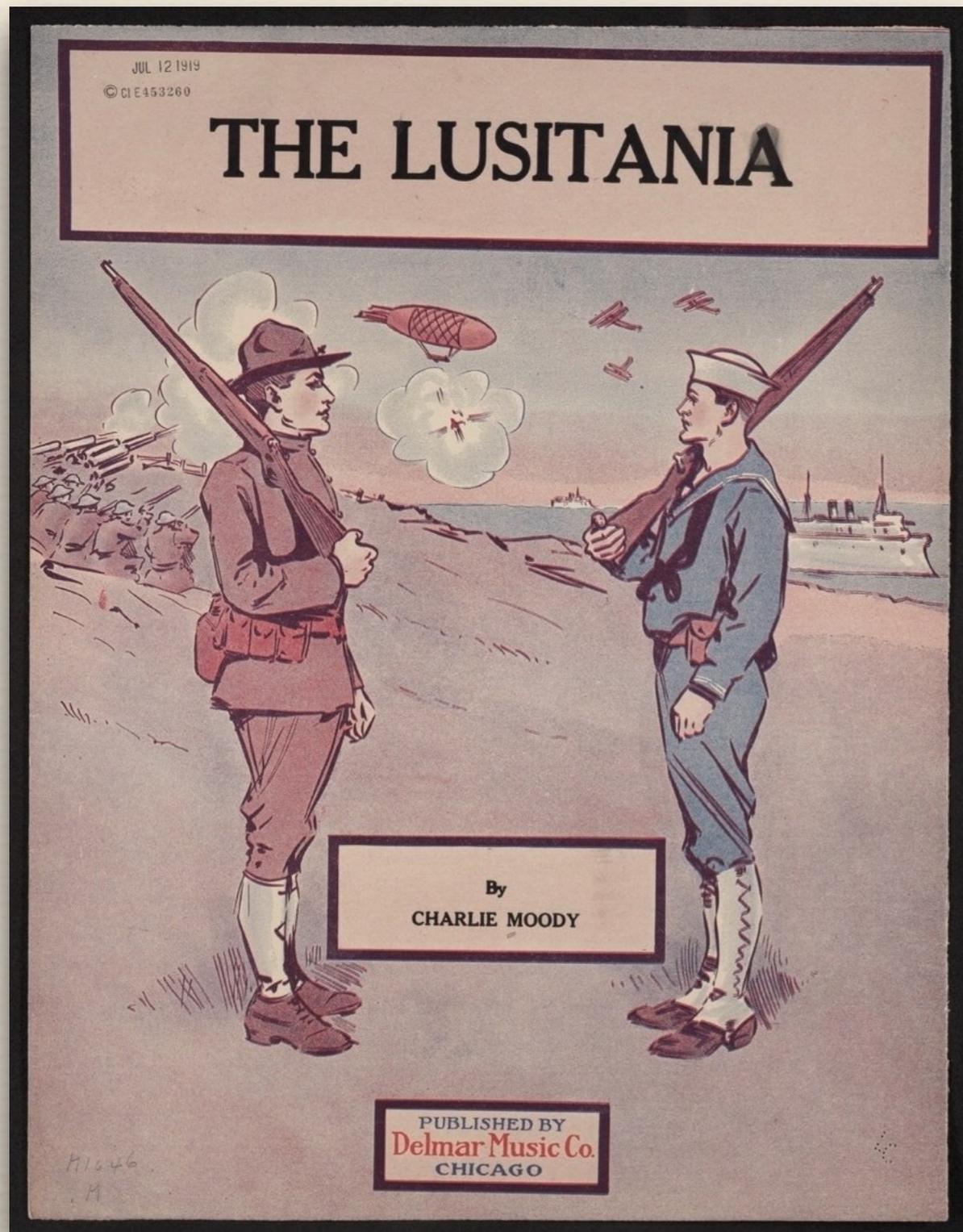


*The haunting image of a mother and infant sinking into the sea is based on news accounts from the time of the recovered dead:*

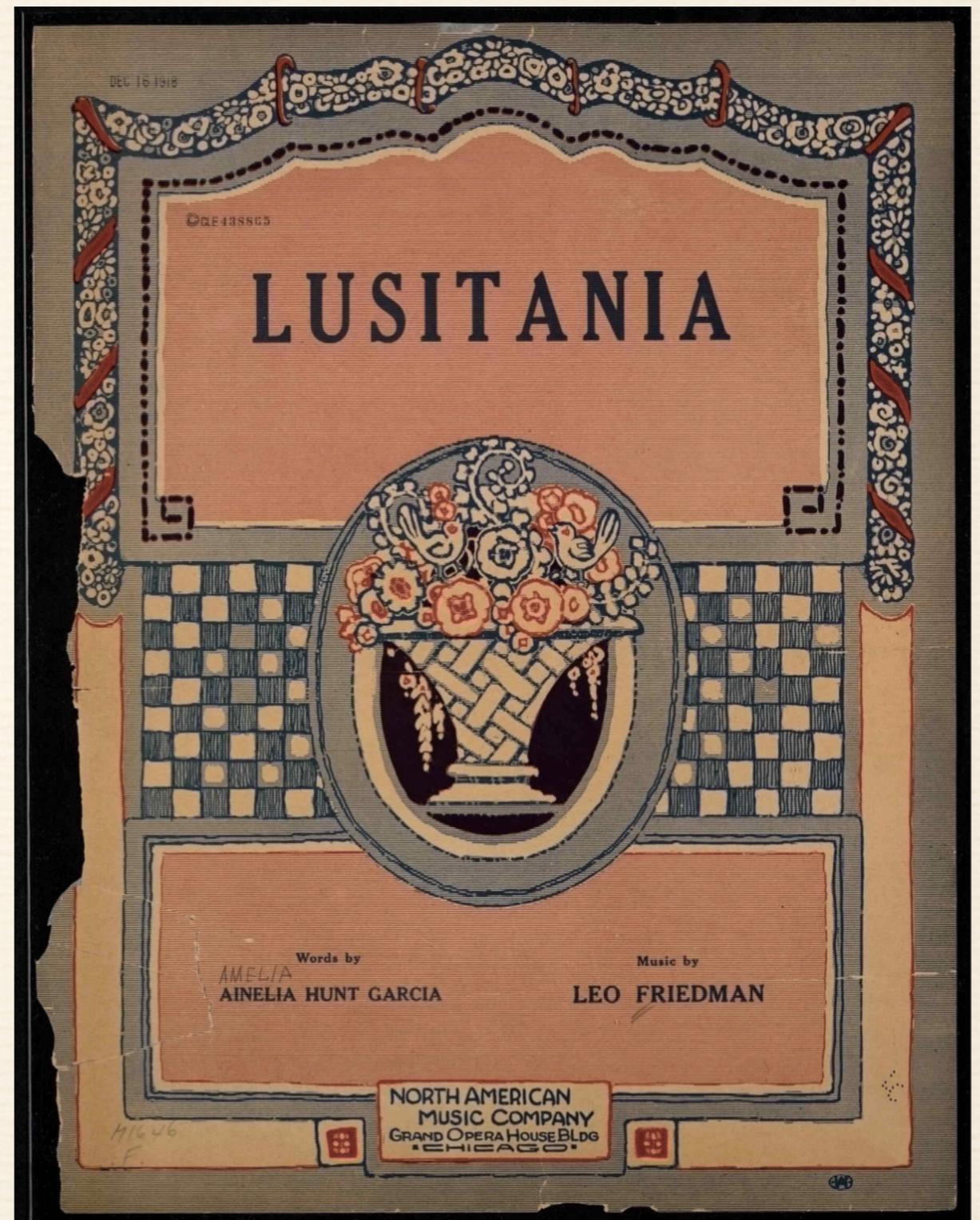
*“Most of the bodies there are women.... At the Cunard Wharf lies a mother still clasping in her arms the body of her 3-month-old baby.”*



# Powerful Propaganda



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# Powerful Propaganda

*Music as a Motivator and form of Protest*

THE LUSITANIA

CHARLIE MOODY

Intro. Slowly

*mf*

Voice

Andante

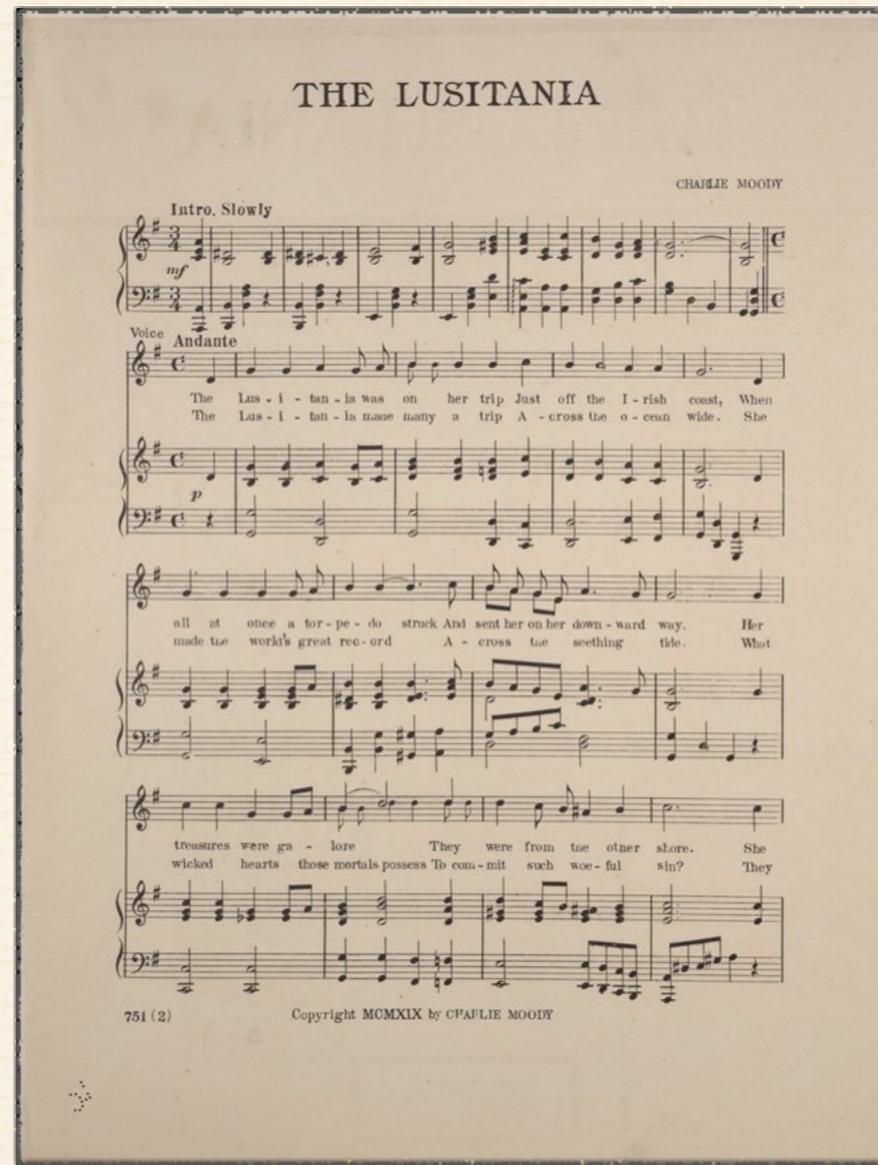
The Lus - i - tan - ia was on her trip Just off the I - rish coast, When  
The Lus - i - tan - ia made many a trip A - cross the o - cean wide. She

*p*

all at once a tor - pe - do struck And sent her on her down - ward way. Her  
made the world's great rec - ord A - cross the seething tide. What

treasures were ga - lore They were from the other shore. She  
wicked hearts those mortals possess To con - mit such woe - ful sin? They

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World War I Era Sheet Music 

World War I Era Sheet Music 

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