

# Over There

## Celebrating the One Hundredth Anniversary of First Army

“First in Deed”

### The American Road to war 1914-1917

Last week's newsletter discussed First Army's creation and initial participation in World War One. This week we briefly describe the events that led up to the United States' entry into World War One.

When hostilities broke out in Europe in August 1914 American public opinion regarded the war as Europe's problem and, accordingly, adhered to a policy of neutrality. The American people, however, held strong opinions about the warring powers, themselves. A strong anti-English sentiment existed among Irish-American immigrants while recent German-American and Scandinavian-American immigrants sided with Imperialist Germany.<sup>1</sup> Despite these sentiments, American religious leaders and women's groups advocated to keep the United States neutral<sup>2</sup> and Democratic politicians, including President Woodrow Wilson, based their political platforms on calls for neutrality. “He kept us out of the war,” Wilson's 1916 campaign slogan, inferred that a Republican victory would mean US involvement in the conflict and likely served as a deciding factor in carrying most of the Western US in the election.<sup>3</sup>

Over time, reports of German atrocities in Belgium, including the execution of civilians and the partial destruction of Brussels, filtered their way to the U.S. and began to slowly shift public opinion. The American attitude toward Germany received a further violent jolt after the May 7, 1915, sinking of the R.M.S. Lusitania and the loss of 1,198 civilians, including 128 Americans. The sinking of the Lusitania occurred after the German Imperial Embassy warned U.S. citizens against boarding vessels to Britain following Germany's declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare in the Atlantic Ocean (left).<sup>4</sup> President Wilson issued a strong warning to Germany that it would face “strict accountability” if it sank any neutral U.S. passenger ships.<sup>5</sup> Imperial Germany, in an effort to keep the U.S. out of the war, relented and abandoned open submarine warfare against commercial vessels. The attack, however, spurred an escalating preparedness movement, forcing Americans to pay closer attention to the war in Europe. War-proponents, among them former president Theodore Roosevelt and General Leonard Wood, argued for an immediate build-up of naval and land forces for defensive purposes, assuming (on an unspoken basis) America's eventual entry into the war.

While the government remained unaligned, the country's banking industry issued massive loans to Britain and France which, in turn, subsidized purchases of munitions and raw materials from American industries.

Wilson's hand, however, would soon be forced. Following his successful re-election on a peace platform, in January 1917 the British intercepted a telegram sent by German deputy foreign minister Alfred Zimmermann to the German embassies in Washington, D.C. and Mexico City. Zimmerman's message outlined plans for an alliance between Germany and Mexico against the United States, promising that Mexico would retrieve its territories in the southwestern U.S., which would become known as the “Zimmerman Note.” Its eventual public release fueled interventionist cries for America to enter the war. The original coded and British de-coded versions can be viewed on page 2. (Continue on page 2)

OCEAN STEAMSHIPS.

## 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.  
Orduna, - - Tues. May 18, 10 A.M.  
Tuscania, - - Fri., May 21, 5 P.M.  
LUSITANIA, Sat., May 29, 10 A.M.  
Transylvania, Fri., June 4, 5 P.M.

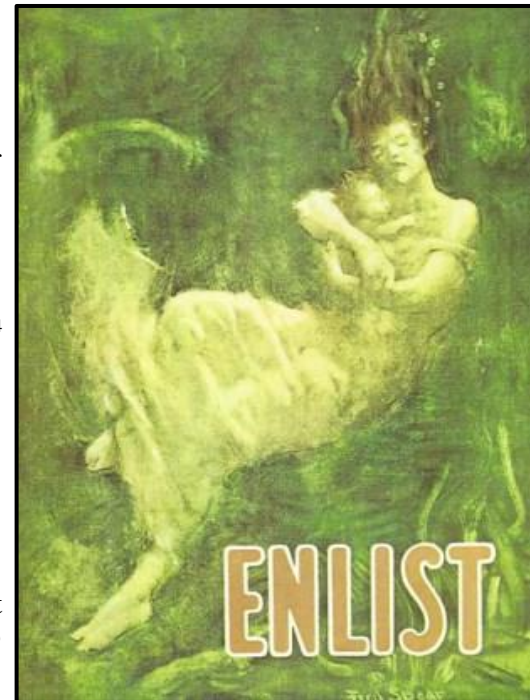
Gibraltar-Genoa-Naples-Piraeus  
S.S. Carpathia, Thur., May 13, Noon

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**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 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 22, 1915



1. Barnes, Harry Elmer. *The Genesis of the World War*. (1925) pg. 590-591
2. Citation needed
3. Cooper, John Milton, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson* (2009) pg. 341-342, 352
4. Lusitania warning. (1915, May 1). *The New York Times*.
5. Duffy, Michael (2009). “U.S. ‘Strict Accountability’ Warning to Germany 10 February 1915”



## The American Road to war 1914-1917, cont.

As Imperial Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare around the British Isles, seven more American ships were sunk in February and March as part of a campaign that resulted in the loss of 500 Allied ships in just sixty days. On February 3, the United States severed diplomatic ties with Germany after one such attack on the American grain ship Housatonic. On the Eastern Front, Russia's capitulation from the Entente in March further challenged Great Britain and France who themselves faced mounting public pressure over the perpetual war costs in blood and treasure. Asserting that "the world must be made safe for democracy," on April 2, 1917, President Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war against Germany. Four days later, Congress affirmed Wilson's request and formally declared war, paving the way for America's entry into its first foreign war and the eventual creation of its first numbered Army.

### Military Humor from WWI

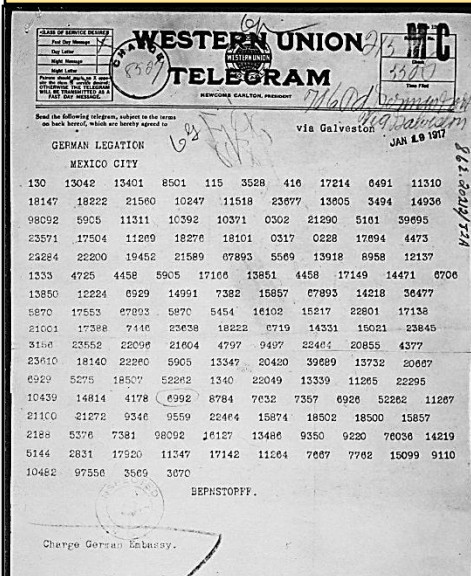


#### THINGS THAT MATTER

COL Fritz-Shrapnel receives the following message from General Headquarters (GHQ).

"Please let us know, as soon as possible, the number of tins of raspberry jam issued to you last Friday"

### "Zimmerman Note"



TELEGRAM RECEIVED.  
JAN 19 1917  
FROM 2nd from London # 5747.  
"We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, invite Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace." Signed, ZIMMERMANN.

In January 1917 German foreign minister Alfred Zimmermann sent a secret diplomatic communication to the German embassies in Washington D.C. and Mexico City proposing a military alliance between Germany and Mexico in the event that the United States entered World War I on the side of the Allies known as the "Zimmerman Note." The original coded telegram is to the above left. The intercepted message was decoded by British intelligence and delivered to President Woodrow Wilson (Above right). President Wilson then released the message to the media on February, 28 1917. Since the public had been told (untruthfully) that the telegram had been stolen in a deciphered form in Mexico, the message was widely believed at first to be an elaborate forgery perpetrated by British intelligence. Any doubts as to the authenticity of the telegram were removed, however, by Arthur Zimmermann himself at a press conference on March, 3 1917, he told an American journalist, "I cannot deny it. It is true."

## 11<sup>th</sup> Month, 11<sup>th</sup> Day, 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Book review

In the book "11<sup>th</sup> Month, 11<sup>th</sup> Day, 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Armistice Day, 1918 World War I and Its Violent Climax" author Joesph Persico recounts the final minutes of WWI and poses an enduring question: did these deaths have to occur? In this well written book the author uses personal narratives of Soldiers on the ground involved in the last day of fighting. Perisco equates the death toll of last day of the war to the average daily toll during the war both of which numbered approximately 2,700 Allied and German soldiers and difference between the two. The major difference was that the Soldiers that perished on the last day of the war did so with knowledge of the imminent armistice. Persico gives a wide range of explanations given by both French Commander Marshal Foch and General Pershing, one of which was their opposition to terminating the war and let their existing offensives continue. Both commanders felt that there would be unfinished business to attend to if the German Army was not wholly defeated. Persico's inclusion of personal narratives of the Soldiers on the ground makes the book an enjoyable and easy reading book. **Eleventh Month, Eleventh Day, Eleventh Hour: Armistice Day, 1918 World War I and Its Violent Climax. Joseph Persico 458 Pages**