

1

00:00:00,938 --> 00:00:08,938

On May 1st, 1915, the Lusitania left New York for her week-long crossing to Liverpool, England.

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00:00:10,938 --> 00:00:14,938

Friends waved goodbyes on what they thought would be a routine voyage.

3

00:00:15,938 --> 00:00:17,938

But it wasn't.

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00:00:18,938 --> 00:00:23,937

The journey ended in the tragic death of more than 1,000 Americans.

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00:00:25,937 --> 00:00:29,937

Was the sinking of the Lusitania an unprovoked act of war?

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00:00:30,937 --> 00:00:33,937

Why did the unsinkable ship go down so quickly?

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00:00:38,937 --> 00:00:43,937

Public opinion ran high as the blame was laid squarely on Germany.

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00:00:46,937 --> 00:00:49,937

But was the German Navy solely responsible?

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00:01:01,937 --> 00:01:06,936

High society gathered at New York's dockside to bid farewell to the Lusitania.

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00:01:09,936 --> 00:01:15,936

Passengers paid little regard to company leaflets, warning them of German U-boats in the Atlantic.

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00:01:24,936 --> 00:01:28,936

Crowds waved goodbye to 1,959 people.

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00:01:31,936 --> 00:01:34,936

Among the passengers was the millionaire Alfred Vanderbilt.

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00:01:41,936 --> 00:01:46,936

The Lusitania was the largest, the fastest and the most luxurious ship of her time.

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00:01:48,936 --> 00:01:54,935

With a top speed of nearly 26 knots, she had recaptured the blue ribbon from her German rivals.

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00:01:54,935 --> 00:01:59,935

Now, ostensibly to save fuel, one of her four turbines had been shut down.

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00:02:01,935 --> 00:02:08,935

It caused a reduction of speed that would put her at a fatal disadvantage if she was forced to out sail a hostile German ship.

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00:02:11,935 --> 00:02:13,935

It did not seem to matter.

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00:02:13,935 --> 00:02:15,935

The United States was neutral.

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00:02:15,935 --> 00:02:18,935

It was unthinkable for the Lusitania to be attacked.

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00:02:19,935 --> 00:02:24,935

Passengers relaxed in the splendor of the lavishly furnished state rooms.

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00:02:32,934 --> 00:02:35,934

The weather on the journey across was splendid.

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00:02:35,934 --> 00:02:41,934

German U-boats had a limited range and for the first six days, no danger threatened.

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00:02:42,934 --> 00:02:47,934

As her route took around the coast of southern Ireland, however, the Lusitania entered the war zone.

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00:02:49,934 --> 00:02:52,934

Normally, the Royal Navy escorted any ship carrying cargo.

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00:02:54,934 --> 00:02:58,934

Even cargo of mules earlier had warranted three destroyers and an armed cruiser.

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00:03:00,934 --> 00:03:05,934

Yet the Lusitania, with its VIP passengers, was sailing the course alone.

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00:03:06,934 --> 00:03:08,934

There had been warnings.

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00:03:08,934 --> 00:03:14,934

An advertisement of the Lusitania's sailing times was accompanied by a notice from the German Embassy advising passengers that they traveled at their own risk.

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00:03:17,933 --> 00:03:22,933

German U-boats freely roamed the high seas and scored some spectacular successes.

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00:03:25,933 --> 00:03:28,933

The German U-boats were able to sail the Lusitania by themselves.

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00:03:29,933 --> 00:03:34,933

German U-boats freely roamed the high seas and scored some spectacular successes.

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00:03:42,933 --> 00:03:49,933

Moreover, a single German U-boat was known to be active in the war zone, which was part of the Lusitania's path.

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00:03:51,933 --> 00:03:56,933

It was commanded by a captain, Schreiger, who had once attacked the hospital ship without warning.

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00:03:59,932 --> 00:04:08,932

During the 30 hours before the Lusitania's arrival, he had sunk three vessels off the Irish coast, two of them substantial merchant ships.

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00:04:09,932 --> 00:04:13,932

To sink them, he had to use up all but one of his torpedoes.

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00:04:19,932 --> 00:04:27,932

As he awaited the Lusitania, he surfaced to regenerate his batteries and his crew relaxed in the warm spring sunshine.

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00:04:29,932 --> 00:04:35,932

He had no real hope of sinking the rate liner, but equally, he was in no great danger.

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00:04:36,932 --> 00:04:40,932

No armed ships from the British Navy were around to harass him.

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00:04:42,931 --> 00:04:47,931

Off the old head of Kinsale, he again submerged, waiting beneath the calm waters.

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00:04:50,931 --> 00:04:53,931

An hour later, the Lusitania was sighted.

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00:04:53,931 --> 00:04:58,931

The fateful meeting was about to take place.

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00:05:24,931 --> 00:05:30,930

For survivor Mrs. Avis Foley, a 12-year-old girl who had been travelling alone to school in England,

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00:05:31,930 --> 00:05:34,930

disaster struck with unexpected suddenness.

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00:05:35,930 --> 00:05:41,930

We were enjoying a delicious lunch, which was simply marvelous. The meals were all marvelous on the boat,

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00:05:41,930 --> 00:05:47,930

when suddenly the whole boat was shaken by a tremendous blow.

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00:05:48,930 --> 00:05:53,930

Some people say there were two torpedoes, but my recollection is that there was only one.

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00:05:56,930 --> 00:06:01,930

I must have been at the wheel almost half an hour, and I heard the look-out from its shelf.

48

00:06:02,930 --> 00:06:06,930

This is torpedoes, and I was like, I'm going to get out of here.

49

00:06:06,930 --> 00:06:10,929

I was almost half an hour, and I heard the look-out from its shelf.

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00:06:11,929 --> 00:06:14,929

This is torpedoes coming on the starboard bowser.

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00:06:15,929 --> 00:06:19,929

Well, it no sooner said starboard bowser than that was it.

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00:06:21,929 --> 00:06:26,929

And it must have hit a very close behind the bridge,

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00:06:27,929 --> 00:06:33,929

because we couldn't see one another for quite a while, for cold dust and one thing and another.

54

00:06:33,929 --> 00:06:39,929

And everybody thought he was going straight over, and the water started to come over the starboard wing at the bridge,

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00:06:40,929 --> 00:06:45,929

and the captain said, say to himself, that he was listening over to the starboard side pretty steeply.

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00:06:46,929 --> 00:06:52,928

And I was going to get in this boat here, like standing by it,

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00:06:53,928 --> 00:06:57,928

when the fellow got excited and he was lowering his side down,

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00:06:58,928 --> 00:07:02,928

and the other fellow either couldn't release the ropes like, tangled,

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00:07:03,928 --> 00:07:06,928

and I saw all the people emptied into the water.

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00:07:07,928 --> 00:07:11,928

This fellow got panicking and lowered down, and emptied the people into the water.

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00:07:12,928 --> 00:07:15,928

That was the next boat, the one I got in, number 13.

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00:07:17,928 --> 00:07:20,928

The Lusitania was thought to be unsinkable.

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00:07:21,928 --> 00:07:23,928

She went down, however, with appalling swiftness.

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00:07:24,928 --> 00:07:28,928

18 minutes in some accounts, 21 minutes in others.

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00:07:29,928 --> 00:07:34,928

For many families, there was not time to find relatives.

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00:07:35,928 --> 00:07:38,927

I don't know how long I was in the water on the wreckage,

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00:07:39,927 --> 00:07:47,927

but when I came to, there was a crowd around me, and they were pumping water from me.

68

00:07:48,927 --> 00:07:53,927

And next thing, they give me a cup of tea and put a blanket around me.

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00:07:53,927 --> 00:07:57,927

When I went along this dock road, they were making mortars.

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00:07:58,927 --> 00:08:04,927

Didn't they? Each shop with their white sheets on and bodies lying on the shop floors.

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00:08:05,927 --> 00:08:09,927

Then from there, I went round, thinking I could see my father,

72

00:08:10,927 --> 00:08:12,927

and then to the under-road where I lived.

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00:08:13,927 --> 00:08:19,926

When I got on, it seems my mother was down at lunch, with a baby.

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00:08:19,926 --> 00:08:23,926

The shock of the tragedy was felt on both sides of the Atlantic.

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00:08:25,926 --> 00:08:29,926

One thousand two hundred and one men, women and children died.

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00:08:30,926 --> 00:08:34,926

For several days, crowds lingered at the railway station in Liverpool,

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00:08:35,926 --> 00:08:40,926

where survivors were brought, hoping against all odds that a familiar face would be found.

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00:08:41,926 --> 00:08:44,926

The shock of the tragedy was felt on both sides of the Atlantic.

79

00:08:44,926 --> 00:08:51,926

In Ireland, mass graves were dug for victims whose bodies had been washed ashore and could not be identified.

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00:08:53,926 --> 00:08:58,926

The inquest accused the Germans of committing willful murder.

81

00:08:59,926 --> 00:09:04,925

The search for the victims of the murder was found in the woods.

82

00:09:05,925 --> 00:09:09,925

The search for the victims of the murder was found in the woods.

83

00:09:09,925 --> 00:09:13,925

The inquest accused the Germans of committing willful murder.

84

00:09:17,925 --> 00:09:22,925

No awkward questions were asked about why the Lusitania had sunk so quickly,

85

00:09:23,925 --> 00:09:26,925

or why only seven hundred people had been saved.

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00:09:27,925 --> 00:09:31,925

The English newspapers concentrated the blame entirely upon the Germans.

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00:09:32,925 --> 00:09:37,925

Public opinion in Britain and the United States fueled reasons for involvement in World War I.

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00:09:39,925 --> 00:09:44,925

Headlines proclaimed the Germans abandoned their right to be called civilized.

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00:09:48,924 --> 00:09:54,924

Violent mobs demonstrated against the Germans and broke up shops owned by German nationals.

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00:09:58,924 --> 00:10:01,924

Gradually, questions began to appear.

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00:10:02,924 --> 00:10:06,924

Why was the Lusitania left apparently unescorted through dangerous waters?

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00:10:07,924 --> 00:10:10,924

Why did she sink so quickly?

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00:10:13,924 --> 00:10:19,924

After the sinking of the Lusitania, local boats worked non-stop bringing survivors and bodies to Queenstown,

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00:10:20,924 --> 00:10:23,924

where high street shops were turned into improvised mortuaries.

95

00:10:24,924 --> 00:10:27,924

The dark yard has been long deserted by the British Navy.

96

00:10:28,924 --> 00:10:32,923

The old courthouse, where the coroner condemned the Germans, still stands.

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00:10:33,923 --> 00:10:37,923

Close by is a monument to the victims of the German attack.

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00:10:39,923 --> 00:10:47,923

But the greatest reminder of all, the Lusitania, lies south of Queenstown, three hundred and fifteen feet down.

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00:10:49,923 --> 00:10:52,923

After she was sunk, further questions were asked.

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00:10:53,923 --> 00:10:59,923

Why was there no escort? How could such an enormous vessel as the Lusitania be sunk by a single torpedo?

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00:11:00,923 --> 00:11:06,923

Later in the war, a sister ship was struck by no less than twelve torpedoes and still managed to sail to port.

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00:11:09,923 --> 00:11:15,922

For nearly fifty years, the mystery of why the Lusitania sank so quickly lay hidden on the seabed.

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00:11:16,922 --> 00:11:22,922

Then, a team of divers, led by the American John Light, penetrated the murky waters.

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00:11:23,922 --> 00:11:26,922

They brought back photographic evidence of what happened.

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00:11:27,922 --> 00:11:31,922

In 1960, I first came here to dive on the Lusitania.

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00:11:32,922 --> 00:11:36,922

Between 1960 and 1962, I made thirty-seven dives to her personally.

107

00:11:37,922 --> 00:11:41,922

And with the divers that were with me, we made a hundred and ninety-seven dives.

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00:11:41,922 --> 00:11:44,922

The divers found the vessel split in half.

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00:11:45,922 --> 00:11:51,922

John Light made a further discovery, which reveals much about the secret cargo aboard the Lusitania.

110

00:11:52,922 --> 00:12:01,921

The Lusitania was a very long-distance, but it was a very long-distance, and it was very difficult to find the right way to get it.

111

00:12:01,921 --> 00:12:03,921

The divers found the vessel split in half.

112

00:12:04,921 --> 00:12:10,921

John Light made a further discovery, which reveals much about the secret cargo aboard the Lusitania.

113

00:12:11,921 --> 00:12:22,921

She does have, however, another split, which is caused by an internal explosion that starts on this side of the ship, just underneath the bridge,

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00:12:23,921 --> 00:12:28,921

and goes down on an angle forward, and as it goes down, it opens out.

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00:12:28,921 --> 00:12:32,921

And the bottom of the ship is pretty well blasted away.

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00:12:33,921 --> 00:12:41,920

Now we can conclude from this that this is an extension of the explosion that occurred by the torpedo hitting the other side of the ship.

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00:12:42,920 --> 00:12:45,920

The bow itself is twisted, and it's twisted nearly off.

118

00:12:46,920 --> 00:12:54,920

But your plates buckle outwards, and there can be no doubt that an internal explosion is what caused her to sink.

119

00:12:58,920 --> 00:13:03,920

What could have caused such a gigantic explosion? Colin Simpson.

120

00:13:04,920 --> 00:13:12,920

The reason why the Lusitania's sunk, when she was hit by one torpedo, is no longer a mystery.

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00:13:13,920 --> 00:13:19,920

The Lusitania was being used to carry contraband from North America to England.

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00:13:20,920 --> 00:13:25,919

There is no doubt from the ship's manifest that it was a cargo of explosives.

123

00:13:26,919 --> 00:13:34,919

She was loaded with shells, with shell fuses, with a type of gun-cotton called paraloxine, and it was all hidden up in the forward hulls.

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00:13:35,919 --> 00:13:43,919

Before she was allowed to leave New York, under American neutrality laws, she had to submit a manifest, that's a list of what she was carrying, to the harbor authorities.

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00:13:44,919 --> 00:13:50,919

She submitted a forgery, and the American authorities, full knowing it was a forgery, accepted it.

126

00:13:51,919 --> 00:13:55,919

But a truer manifest was also made, and it was locked away.

127

00:13:56,919 --> 00:14:02,919

When the torpedo hit, it hit the exact hole, it was called the oolop hole, where the gun-cotton was stowed.

128

00:14:03,919 --> 00:14:09,918

The torpedo just made a lot of noise, and the gun-cotton blew her bottom out. She sank in 21 minutes.

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00:14:10,918 --> 00:14:16,918

U.S. knowledge of the explosives on board is revealed by a confidential White House memorandum.

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00:14:17,918 --> 00:14:25,918

President Wilson asked Deputy Secretary Robert Lansing, were any contraband munitions aboard the Lusitania when torpedoed?

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00:14:26,918 --> 00:14:31,918

Lansing replied, practically all her cargo was contraband of some kind.

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00:14:32,918 --> 00:14:44,918

The British Admiralty ordered authorities in Ireland ensure that bodies selected for inquest have not been killed or mutilated by means which we do not wish made public.

133

00:14:47,918 --> 00:14:56,917

So there was a monumental Anglo-American cover-up. It was at the highest level involving Winston Churchill on the English side,

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00:14:56,917 --> 00:15:01,917

and Franklin D. Roosevelt, then Secretary of State for the Navy on the American side.

135

00:15:02,917 --> 00:15:07,917

There was little doubt, the American Secretary of State and his deputy both knew the true story.

136

00:15:08,917 --> 00:15:12,917

The cover-up had to survive two separate inquiries.

137

00:15:13,917 --> 00:15:20,917

One in New York, both judges were ordered to suppress certain evidence and keep secret certain papers.

138

00:15:21,917 --> 00:15:28,917

The suppressed documents reveal that Captain William Turner, master of the Lusitania, was to be made the scapegoat.

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00:15:29,917 --> 00:15:32,917

From the British Admiralty came the message,

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00:15:33,916 --> 00:15:41,916

I am directed to inform you that it is considered politically expedient that Captain Turner be most prominently blamed for the disaster.

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00:15:42,916 --> 00:15:46,916

Winston Churchill, first Lord of the Admiralty, agreed.

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00:15:47,916 --> 00:15:53,916

He said, I consider the Admiralty case against the captain should be pressed by a skillful counsel.

143

00:15:54,916 --> 00:16:00,916

From Lord Fisher, Captain Turner of the Lusitania is a scoundrel and has been bribed.

144

00:16:01,916 --> 00:16:08,916

The master of the Lusitania acted directly contrary to the written general instructions received from Queenstown

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00:16:08,916 --> 00:16:11,916

during the hours immediately preceding the attack.

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00:16:12,916 --> 00:16:19,915

On the facts at present disclosed, the master appears to have displayed an almost inconceivable negligence

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00:16:20,915 --> 00:16:26,915

and one is forced to conclude that he is either utterly incompetent or has been caught out by the Germans.

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00:16:28,915 --> 00:16:32,915

Sir Edward Gray, Foreign Secretary, underlined the official approach.

149

00:16:32,915 --> 00:16:40,915

He said, Captain Turner was fully informed of the presence of hostile submarines in the vicinity of the place in which he was torpedoed.

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00:16:41,915 --> 00:16:47,915

The inquiry was told that Captain recklessly took the unarmed Lusitania into a danger area.

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00:16:52,915 --> 00:17:00,914

Lusitania was deliberately sent into a hazardous area where there is a German U-boat without escort

152

00:17:00,914 --> 00:17:05,914

and with a dangerous cargo and the tragedy could have been avoided.

153

00:17:06,914 --> 00:17:08,914

The Lusitania was designed as an armed cruiser.

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00:17:09,914 --> 00:17:16,914

The archives of the National Maritime Museum clearly hold the drawings showing that she was designed to carry 12, 6 inch guns.

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00:17:17,914 --> 00:17:20,914

The guns were actually fitted on May the 13th, 1913.

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00:17:21,914 --> 00:17:26,914

Churchill had the thought of the Lusitania being attacked by the Germans very much on his mind.

157

00:17:27,914 --> 00:17:35,914

He commissioned a paper on the political repercussions in the event of the Lusitania being sunk by a German submarine five weeks before this happened.

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00:17:36,914 --> 00:17:40,914

That morning the Lusitania approached the old head of King's Sail.

159

00:17:41,914 --> 00:17:46,913

The King of England had seen the American ambassador and said to him, what will happen if the Lusitania sunk?

160

00:17:47,913 --> 00:17:52,913

Now the Admiralty says she was clearly warned and she was told to stir a certain cause.

161

00:17:53,913 --> 00:17:56,913

But in the Admiralty records the page of that signal log is missing.

162

00:17:58,913 --> 00:18:04,913

North and South Coast of Southern Ireland is a little signal station called Valencia which monitored those signals.

163

00:18:05,913 --> 00:18:08,913

And the pages of that signal book are still there.

164

00:18:09,913 --> 00:18:13,913

They clearly show that the Lusitania was not told that the U-20 was waiting for her.

165

00:18:14,913 --> 00:18:21,913

And worst of all, the only sensible message clearly identified her to anybody listening.

166

00:18:22,913 --> 00:18:30,912

That reads, to Alfred Vanderbilt, aboard the SS Lusitania Valencia, hope you have a safe crossing looking forward to seeing you soon.

167

00:18:31,912 --> 00:18:35,912

The last minute and without telling anyone on board the Lusitania, all those escorts were withdrawn.

168

00:18:36,912 --> 00:18:45,912

Either it was monumental mismanagement or a calculated risk and I've come to conclusion it's a calculated risk.

169

00:18:47,912 --> 00:18:54,912

Buried in Queenstown, far from home, the victims may therefore have been casualties of international diplomacy.

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00:18:55,912 --> 00:19:00,912

Churchill, it is known, wished above all to bring the United States into the war.

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00:19:01,912 --> 00:19:11,911

He wrote later, in spite of all its horror, we must regard the sinking of the Lusitania as an event most important and favorable to the Allies.

172

00:19:12,911 --> 00:19:16,911

At the summit, true politics and strategy are won.

173

00:19:17,911 --> 00:19:22,911

The maneuver which brings an ally into the field is as serviceable as that which wins a great battle.

174

00:19:23,911 --> 00:19:30,911

Those who died in the Lusitania were perhaps victims not just of war, but of politics.

175

00:19:33,911 --> 00:19:37,911

Echoes of the Lusitania began in 1941 with the USS Greer.

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00:19:38,911 --> 00:19:41,911

An American destroyer, the Greer was on a mail run to Iceland.

177

00:19:43,911 --> 00:19:48,911

A British patrol plane spotted a German submarine and alerted the USS Greer.

178

00:19:48,911 --> 00:19:51,911

The Greer began to aggressively track the U-boat.

179

00:19:53,910 --> 00:19:57,910

The Germans, wishing to avoid detection, submerged.

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00:20:01,910 --> 00:20:05,910

For two hours, the Greer and the German U-boat played a game of cat and mouse.

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00:20:06,910 --> 00:20:15,910

Because the Greer was unmarked, the Germans assumed they were being pursued by a British destroyer and the U-boat fired a torpedo at the American ship.

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00:20:18,910 --> 00:20:21,910

The USS Greer set off depth charges.

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00:20:28,910 --> 00:20:41,909

In spite of what Hitler's propaganda bureau has invented, in spite of what any American obstructionist organization may prefer to believe,

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00:20:41,909 --> 00:20:50,909

I tell you the blunt fact that the German submarine fired first upon this American destroyer, Greer,

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00:20:50,909 --> 00:20:55,909

without warning and with deliberate design to sinker.

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00:20:57,909 --> 00:21:02,909

Just as the sinking of the Lusitania speeded America's entrance into World War I,

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00:21:02,909 --> 00:21:07,909

the Greer incident provided the same two leaders, Roosevelt and Churchill,

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00:21:07,909 --> 00:21:13,909

with reasons for stepping up America's hostilities toward Germany prior to World War II.

00:21:37,908 --> 00:21:44,908

The Greer was a place where veterans, their families and others can connect, share stories and pass on the legacies of all American veterans.