



## WASHINGTON IS SHOCKED BY THE LUSITANIA LOSS

If Americans Perished, Government Is Confronted With Acute War Problem.

### STARTLING CLIMAX IN TENSE SITUATION

Information Indicates Plans for Ship's Destruction Were Made Weeks Ago.

WASHINGTON, May 7.—Torpedoing of the British liner Lusitania, with scores of Americans on board, shocked official Washington today as had no other instance since the outbreak of the European war.

The feeling was widespread that if any American lives had been lost, the United States, in view of its strong warning to Germany would be confronted with the necessity of taking steps to safeguard the lives of its citizens on the high seas.

The sinking of the Lusitania, marks the climax of scores of incidents since the announcement of the German war zone decree concerning which the American government had been silent. It is now predicted that even though it developed that no American lives were lost on the Lusitania, general representations will be made by the United States, covering all the cases involved—the death of Leon C. Thrasher, an American citizen, when the British steamer Falaba was sunk, the dropping of bombs on the American steamer Cushing, and the attack on the steamer Guldlight, which was wrecked with a loss of three American lives.

#### Creates Profound Sensation.

The report that the Lusitania was torpedoed without warning, created a profound sensation, for it was the first case in which this threatened procedure has been carried out with Americans on board a belligerent vessel. Aside from the diplomatic questions in the case which were widely discussed in Washington tonight, the sinking of the liner brought to light an interesting story of repeated threats and warnings which have reached high officials for several days past of a plan by the German admiralty to sink the Lusitania for the psychological effect it would have on Great Britain and the terror it might spread among ocean travelers generally.

Information from among officials of the government and in diplomatic quarters, tended to confirm the belief that plans for the destruction of the Lusitania were made several weeks ago.

#### Anonymous Warnings.

First the German embassy was instructed to advertise in leading newspapers of the United States, warning passengers against traveling on belligerent ships. Anonymous warnings then were sent to individuals, who proposed sailing on the Lusitania. Most significant of all, were letters received here from officials in Germany by private persons, stating that the Lusitania surely would be destroyed.

From the day the ship sailed from New York, officials here have received inquiries from many sources, almost daily, as to the safety of the vessel. One official was told with much positiveness early today that this was the day selected for the destruction of the vessel.

#### Carried War Munitions.

At the German embassy here, while no comment was made as to whether it was known there that the vessel was to be destroyed, it was said the embassy knew the Lusitania carried arms and ammunition and being advised of the resolution of the German admiralty to attack ships that carried such contraband, officials had believed she would be attacked. At the embassy and among diplomats, friendly to the German allies, there

# WASHINGTON IS GIVEN A SHOCK

## Sinking of Lusitania Comes as Startling Climax at a Critical Time.

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was a general satisfaction, amounting almost to relief when reports came that no lives were lost, for it was urged that the purpose of the German campaign was to destroy British commerce and ships, but not lives. There was a disposition on the part of the Germans to inquire also whether the Lusitania carried any guns on her decks, which might place her in the class of a warship and make unnecessary, according to the laws of international warfare, the giving of a warning.

The officials at the state department said they had not heard that the Lusitania carried any guns. At the British embassy it was revealed that early in the war, after the United States government had been consulted on the question of small guns for the big liners, the advice was given by the state department and heeded, that no guns be carried on the decks.

### "Attack Unexcusable."

The British embassy heard of the disaster through news dispatches and offered no formal comment, though officials stated the attack was absolutely inexcusable and constituted a most flagrant violation of all the rules of international warfare.

Officials of the United States government were slow to express any opinion on the diplomatic phase of the disaster. There remains little doubt tonight, however, in well informed quarters here that the incident will become a matter of diplomatic correspondence between the United States and Germany when complete information is received irrespective of whether any citizens of the United States lost their lives.

Ambassador Page reported briefly on the sinking of the vessel, but as to whether the ship was given warning, whether she was convoyed by British warships and concerning the extent to which lives of Americans who were jeopardized by the attack or subjected to dangers, will be sought through the American embassy at London, and the consulates in Ireland before a decision is reached on the course to be pursued by the United States.

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