

lady reviewer in the *New York Times* detects in Allen Ginsberg's latest poems the onset of middle age, always a decelerating impact. The hair and the blue denim pants and generally undifferentiated *he-she*, or *she-he*, garb are still with us, but now at the family dinner table as well as in the run-away smokerooms and acid communes. And some wearers profess Jesus in however freakish ways. Moreover, the straight world is itself more and more into the kind of self-analysis that could generate conciliation. True enough, there is a continuing sense of scary touch-and-go in the social and political ambience; but Plumb on the moderate left and Mme. Labin on the moderate right have a suggestively consensual view of the hippies. And much more than Charlie Reich's vanilla-flavored version, Mme. Labin's grim factual reporting sets the problem in perspective.

Incidentally, a word of applause for Stephanie Winston's translation of the Labin French into easy, colloquial United States English.

Reviewed by C. P. IVES

Light on the Lusitania

The Lusitania, by Colin Simpson, *Boston*:
Little, Brown and Company, 1973. 303
pp. \$8.95.

SOME, BUT NOT ALL, of the shocking revelations documented in this new study of the "Lusitania Case" by a London *Sunday Times* reporter, Colin Simpson, were excerpted and published in *Life Magazine* of October 13, 1972 to whet the appetite of prospective readers for a forthcoming book which appeared on May 7, 1973, the fifty-eighth anniversary of the sinking of the *Lusitania*. To an earlier generation of readers, researchers, and writers, who have immersed themselves in the study of World

War I, especially U.S.-British and U.S.-German relations, much of the story will be familiar and they are already pretty jaded with shocking revelations. Nevertheless, the new sources which have become available to the author, the new evidence which he marshals, the old sources which he found still closed to him even after fifty years, and the corruption in high places which he documents, will provide considerable shock even for the jaded.

To judge from the opening chapter the author appears to have been enticed into writing the book by his curiosity about the sunken treasure legend and related salvaging operations concerning the *Lusitania*. This curiosity challenged him to seek the facts and led him first in search of the ship's manifest. Four archives revealed four partial manifests, all copies with variations. The problem of the original manifest was resolved for the author among the private papers of the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt where detective Simpson found a carbon copy of the original and obtained a copy for himself. The original, he notes, went down with the ship. Clarification of how and why a true copy of the complete original manifest was among these papers became the starting point for his book, as, keeping his discovery to himself, he asked for and received permission of the British Admiralty and the U.S. Department of State to study the records relating to the *Lusitania*, deposited, after screening, in the British Public Record Office and the U.S. National Archives, respectively.

In both archives Simpson found the information meager and the differences of fact such that the records did not seem to relate to the same vessel. Only in their conclusions were the two sets of papers in agreement and these conclusions, published in a booklet by Cunard Company in October 1915, he makes clear, represent the authorized version of the *Lusitania* affair—the public beliefs of the British Admiralty and the U.S. State Department, shared by them to this day, about what happened and why.

Simpson then quotes extensively from this booklet, setting the stage for the next steps in his investigation. Checking British Foreign Office records he discovers omissions and inaccuracies in the official version. This knowledge leads him to personal contacts with officials of the Cunard Company and its lawyers, and to access to their archives. Cunard's defense at the Board of Trade inquiry in June 1915 and at the New York district court inquiry in 1918 leads him on to the papers of the respective judges, Lord Mersey and Julius B. Mayer. Revelations here include the interesting information that Lord Mersey was "ordered to act as he did," and that the papers of Judge Mayer were not made accessible by the U.S. Department of Justice until May 1968, *i.e.* fifty years afterward.

Since the archives of both judges reveal many contacts with important personages of that time, the private papers of these personages have also been investigated by the author in various depositories in Britain and the United States, again with shocking results. Naturally, German records at the *Bundesarchiv* in Coblenz have been consulted, and earlier revelations of Thomas A. Bailey, Professor Emeritus of Stanford University, regarding the submarine U.20 have been made use of by the author, as well as other primary and secondary published material cited in his bibliography. But the core of the new evidence making up the "startling truth" is drawn chiefly from unpublished material in a variety of British and American archives and is the result of the skilful detective work of the author, assisted by a number of research collaborators duly acknowledged.

In a fast-moving, descriptive, analytical, dramatic narrative of historical reconstruction, Simpson demolishes the official British and American version of the *Lusitania* affair by correcting the errors and discrepancies, filling in the omissions, exposing the suppression of evidence, the legal chicanery, the duplicity and irresponsibility of British and American officials, verifying anew, but from non-German sources also,

the claims of Germany's officials at the time, and above all providing a wealth of new evidence to establish once and for all the facts of the story of the *Lusitania* from her construction to her destruction and the questionable legal aftermath. Simpson's critical analysis of this "legal" aftermath provides as many shocking revelations of injustice and corruption as his delineation of the flaws in the construction and use of the ship, the political machinations involving the ship, and the why and wherefore of her sinking.

The revelations are too many to be presented either in excerpts from the book as published by *Life* or in this review. The book must be read. However, there is no longer any doubt that the *Lusitania* was an armed auxiliary cruiser of the Royal Navy, carrying tons of munitions, other war material, and Canadian military personnel, that she was improperly designed, unstable, short-staffed, and misused by the authorities, all of which contributed to the disaster, and that she sank in eighteen minutes, not because of the *one* torpedo which struck her slightly forward of the bridge, but because of a second explosion, namely of the munitions which blew out the forward bottom of the ship.

There is a lot of other evidence marshalled by Simpson about which also there can be no doubt, including the failure of the escort ship *Juno* to rendezvous with the *Lusitania* and why, the wireless messages sent to and received by the *Lusitania*, the contents of the ship's manifest, the activity of the British agents in New York, as well as the German, and the well-documented roles of all those who played any part in the *Lusitania* affair. There may be doubts about some of Simpson's inferences which imply that top officials in Britain and the United States may have *set up* the *Lusitania* for sinking, but he makes a startling case from the evidence. And those who have ever labored in the same American vineyard as Simpson, to which he now adds the newly available British vineyard, will agree with him that "researching into and

writing these events long after leaves one with a taste of despairing cynicism. . . .”

Even his source references, which are embodied in the narrative, in explanatory notes to each chapter, and in the bibliography, are not without shock for the reader as Simpson reveals the frustrations of the researcher. He finds that documents “have been mislaid,” that the key page of a volume of telegrams is “missing,” but he finds it elsewhere, that the Admiralty War Diary stops “short” of a key decision, that there is no trace “except a receipt” of thirty-five important affidavits which ought to have been in the records of the Board of Trade, but which he finds only on the other side of the ocean, and, most disappointing, that even now the private papers of the then Director of British Naval Intelligence and his staff “are not available for inspection.”

Naturally there are some errors such as that the German military attaché “wore a monocle,” or that the Coroner for County Cork was an “active supporter of the Sinn Féin movement,” but on the whole they are peripheral to the major theme. The book is a thriller, highly to be recommended, and will bring the reader up-to-date on what really happened and why in the “*Lusitania* Case.”

Reviewed by HENRY M. ADAMS