



Sovereignty at Sea: U.S. Merchant Ships and American Entry into World War I (New Perspectives on Maritime History and Nautical Archaeology)

By Rodney Carlisle

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"A compelling account based on exhaustive primary research that re-creates the mindset of politicians, the press, and other policymakers as they make the momentous decision to go to war in 1917. Many know the maritime military dimensions of warfare--here is a story that shows the maritime dimensions of diplomacy and how the rights of American merchant marines mattered in the minds of those in charge."--Timothy G. Lynch, California Maritime Academy

"Scholarly yet accessible, a nice piece of research, especially in primary documents. This is a highly original book on a relatively neglected historical period."--Joshua M. Smith, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy

While numerous studies have examined Woodrow Wilson's policy of neutrality prior to U.S. entry into World War I, none has focused on the actual merchant ship losses that created the final casus belli. This work focuses on what the president knew and when he knew it concerning the loss of ten ships between February 3 and April 4, 1917. By looking at the specifics, Rodney Carlisle offers new explanations for the reasons that led the president, the cabinet, the public, and Congress to decide for war.

Sovereignty at Sea not only adds much to our understanding of maritime and diplomatic history during the First World War period but also speaks to contemporary concerns with issues surrounding the U.S. justification for wars.

Rodney Carlisle is professor emeritus of history at Rutgers University.



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About the Author

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