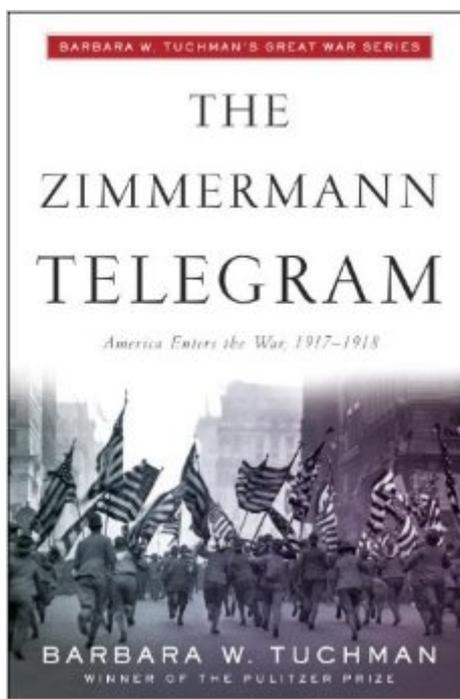


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The Zimmermann Telegram



Synopsis

The Proud Tower, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Guns of August*, and *The Zimmermann Telegram* comprise Barbara W. Tuchman's classic histories of the First World War era. In January 1917, the war in Europe was, at best, a tragic standoff. Britain knew that all was lost unless the United States joined the war, but President Wilson was unshakable in his neutrality. At just this moment, a crack team of British decoders in a quiet office known as Room 40 intercepted a document that would change history. The Zimmermann telegram was a top-secret message to the president of Mexico, inviting him to join Germany and Japan in an invasion of the United States. How Britain managed to inform the American government without revealing that the German codes had been broken makes for an incredible story of espionage and intrigue as only Barbara W. Tuchman could tell it. Praise for *The Zimmermann Telegram* — "A true, lucid thriller . . . a tremendous tale of hushed and unhushed uproars in the linked fields of war and diplomacy . . . Tuchman makes the most of it with a creative writer's sense of drama and a scholar's obeisance to the evidence." —*The New York Times* — "The tale has most of the ingredients of an Eric Ambler spy thriller." —*Saturday Review*

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Customer Reviews

The story that Barbara Tuchman tells in *The Zimmermann Telegram* is one of international diplomacy in the period just before World War One. Tuchman centers her story on the apex of a single article of communication (the telegram) and expands from there. The story begins in the North Sea just before the British declaration of war on Germany. The British cable ship *Telconia* dredges the sea searching for five cables at the bottom connecting Germany's communication with

the of the European and North American continents. All five cables are cut. Furthermore, Britain coaxed Eastern Telegraph, the American owner of the only other cable to North America (running from North Africa to Brazil), to pull the cables that would allow German communication with the world. Germany was now bound to wireless communication for the duration of the war. This is significant because it allowed the British to secretly intercept all German communications, and begin to decode them in the British Naval Intelligence office referred to as "Room 40". Inside Room 40, Britain learned to crack the German code. This is how the British, and consequently the Americans, were able to learn about the Zimmermann Telegram. The Telegram put the British in a precarious position. They desperately needed the United States to become a belligerent and enter the war against Germany if Britain hoped to win the war. At the same time if the British gave the Americans the Telegram and it was released, the Germans might deduce the existence of Room 40 and discover that their code had been unraveled, thereby compromising all British ability to "listen in" on the Germans for the rest of the war.

Ms. Tuchman wrote "The Guns of August" which I believe is the best book ever written about WWI. Unfortunately, she also wrote the book, "The Proud Tower" about the times just before WWI. The Proud Tower was a bore. As such, I wasn't sure what to think before I bought this one. I was hopeful that it might be good and, I was right. The Zimmerman Telegraph is a very good book which, if you like history and mystery, you should enjoy. The Zimmerman Telegraph was especially interesting to me because, while I was in school, I had a professor who taught his belief that the Zimmerman Telegraph was a fraud. It was not. The Zimmerman telegraph was very real and with it the British may have changed the tides of history. .But first, what is the Zimmerman telegraph? Mr. Zimmerman was a German ambassador during WWI. As the war progressed, both sides looked for allies which would tip the scales in the war in Europe. Mr. Zimmerman, and his cohorts, were instructed to induce Mexico into fighting on the German side, if American declared for the allies. Because General Pershing, who was to lead the American troops in Europe, had invaded Mexico during this time (to attack a bandit revolutionary Pancho Villa); Because America had taken about 1/3 of Mexico eighty years earlier; And because America's army was one of the smallest in the world - Mexico's entry into the war seem possible to German leaders 5000 miles away. Mr. Zimmerman, in secret code, wired back and forth to Germany to learn what he should do, and what he should offer. Worse, at times, the Germanys borrowed American supplies, while negotiating about declaring war on America. The British learned about these messages and wanted to share them with the Americans.

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