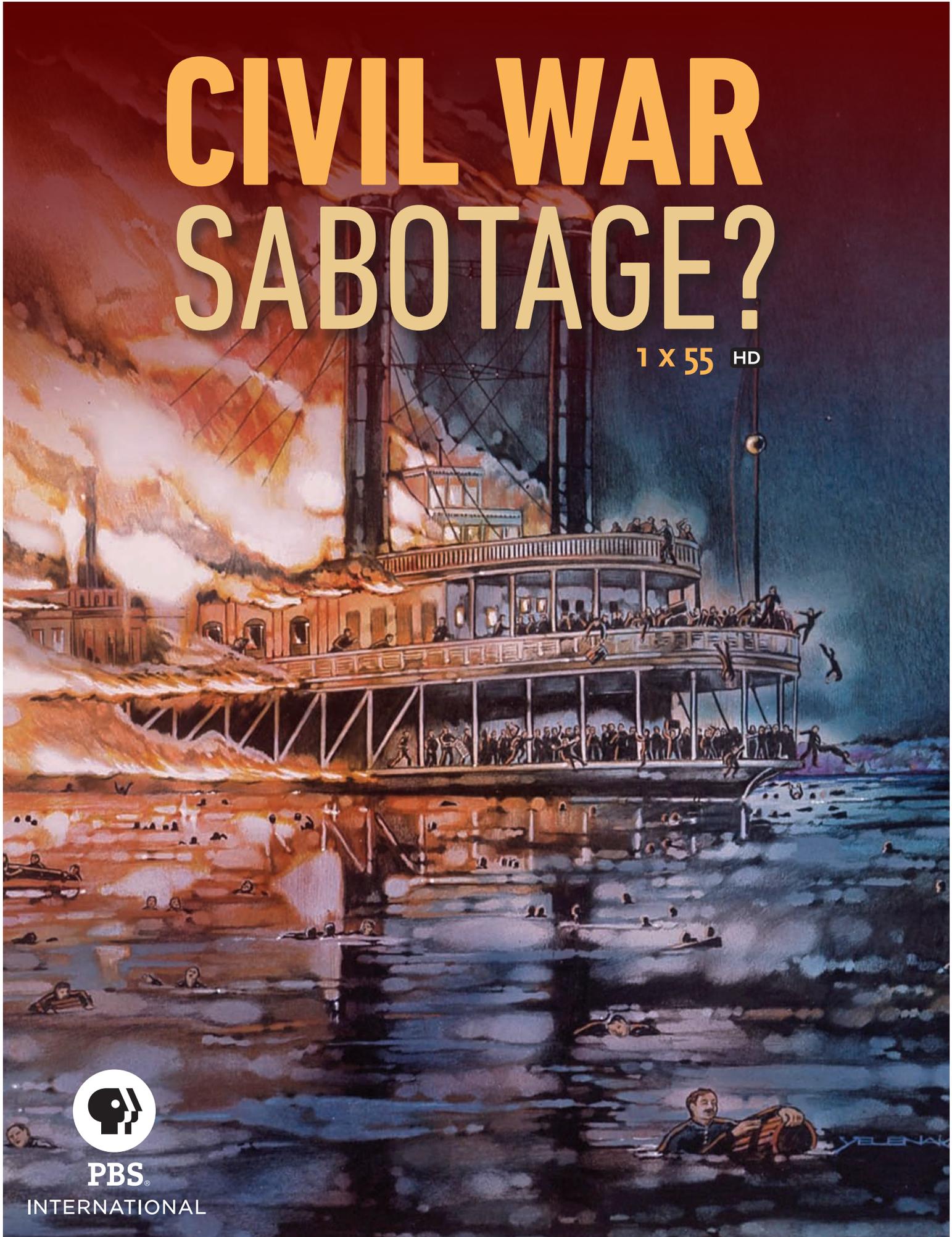


CIVIL WAR SABOTAGE?

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It was one of the worst maritime disasters in U.S. history. More people perished on the *SS Sultana* on April 27, 1865 than on the *Titanic* in 1912. Why, then, do so few people know about the worst shipwreck in U.S. history? And what caused the explosion that took so many lives?

The Civil War was finally over, and most of the passengers aboard the *Sultana* were Union soldiers happily returning to their families from Confederate prison camps. But the number of people on board far exceeded the ship's capacity—they barely had room to stand, and the *Sultana* was dangerously overloaded.

At 2:00 a.m., three of the steamship's four boilers exploded, setting the *Sultana* ablaze and catapulting passengers into the Mississippi River to their deaths. It was a tragedy on a massive scale, yet little is known about what really happened that night. Was it an act of Confederate terrorism, faulty machinery, or dangerous conditions?

Securing the original investigative report and its archives allows a team of historians to forensically examine and scientifically test theories of the boilers' failure. The team also researches the stories of a Confederate agent and spy who burned Union ships on the Mississippi and was an expert in using "coal torpedoes".

Meeting with survivors' descendants to learn new details about the explosion and tracing historical records, the team uncovers a tale of incompetence, bribery, politics, and nepotism that leads all the way to President Lincoln and the White House. Can they solve the mystery of the *SS Sultana*?

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CREDITS

Producers, Directors: Billy Shebar, Bruce Barrow, Lisa Kalikow, Anna Wong

Presenters: Wes Cowan, Kaiama Glover, Tukufu Zuberi

Executive in Charge of Production: Kevin McLoughlin

Photo: Courtesy of The Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection and Insurance Co.



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