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The epic of the black sea revolt

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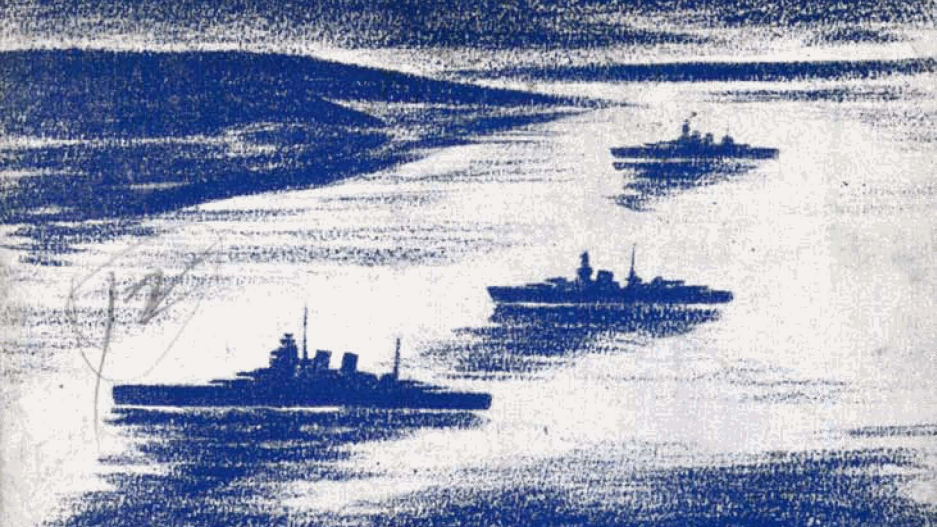
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THE EPIC OF THE BLACK SEA REVOLT

by **ANDRÉ MARTY**

THE EPIC of the
BLACK SEA REVOLT

By ANDRE MARTY

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I. He Who Sows the Wind Shall Reap the Whirlwind

CONTRARY to popular legend, the "Black Sea Revolt" was not limited to the mutinies of the crews of the French warships which were sent to the Black Sea in 1919, but was a revolt of much larger proportions. It included the mutinies of the French troops stationed in the Southern Ukraine and the Crimea (February-May, 1919), the mutinies of the crews of the French warships in the Black Sea (April-August, 1919) and the mutinies of French sailors on ships outside the Black Sea and in French ports (June-August, 1919). Thus these revolts represented an immense movement against the military attack of French imperialism against the great socialist Soviet Republic.

Bourgeois and Social-Democratic spokesmen have often asserted that the primary cause of the mutinies in the Ukraine and the Black Sea was the bad conditions with which the troops and the crews had to put up. To be sure, the French soldiers and sailors on the Black Sea and in Russia were very ill-fed, badly housed, and scantily dressed for life in a cold country; very few leaves were granted, and letters were a rare occurrence. Still, they were on the whole much better off than the soldiers under continuous bombardment in the trenches on the Vardar and in Champagne,

or the sailors on the high seas in constant danger from submarines and mines.

The causes of the mutinies were entirely different.

AGAINST THE ANTI-SOVIET WAR

To every soldier, even the most simple, the armistice of November, 1918, had one definite and clear meaning—at last the imperialist war was over!

But, on December 18, 1918, the 156th Division, dispatched from Saloniki, landed at Odessa; all day long the French soldiers were engaged in severe fighting at the side of Russian White Guard officers of the "Volunteer" Army against Ukrainian soldiers; the fire of guns and cannon was distinctly heard aboard the warships lying in the roadstead ready for battle. Why, this meant that the war was starting all over again! The continual skirmishes that followed the landing, then the departure for a new front and the first battles, opened the eyes of the soldiers and sailors and set them thinking.

"In France the war has ended," they thought, "but here we are starting it all over again. And against a people's republic!" That was what the soldiers and sailors all said.

THE TREMENDOUS INFLUENCE OF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA

At the same time news of the powerful advance of the revolutionary movement in France and throughout the world filtered through to the soldiers and sailors. From men who had been on leave, from letters and, above all, from the new recruits of the young classes they learned of the situation in France, of the unemployment and high cost of living, the rising wave of strikes and the huge workers' demonstrations for bread and progress, against Clemen-

ceau's military dictatorship and against the military intervention in Russia. Similar news came from all parts of the world.

The workers of Germany, Austria and Hungary were fighting an armed struggle, and revolutionary strikes were raging in Italy, Spain, Switzerland, all over Europe, and in far-away Argentina. The bourgeois newspapers were compelled to report the formation of "Soviets of workers and soldiers." These were the expression of determination to fight against the bourgeois regime which was responsible for the war; a confused expression, however, because the Social-Democrats who dominated these assemblies practically everywhere were doing their utmost to rescue the bourgeoisie.

The prestige of the socialist revolution in Russia was growing immensely. The martyred people, above all the soldiers, saw in the Russian Revolution the living embodiment of the way out of the agony they had endured in the months which had passed, the answer to the question of how to get rid, once and for all, of those responsible for their long sufferings and interminable misery, of how to put an end forever to the hated imperialist wars.

The French soldiers and sailors saw before them the revolution which was rousing the masses of the people in France.

WINNING THE ARMY FOR THE CAUSE OF THE PEOPLE

It must be constantly borne in mind, however, that very little would have been accomplished had it not been for the fact that a revolutionary working class party of a new type existed in Russia, a party which knew how to approach the soldiers of the foreign invading armies, which always found the vital arguments which these soldiers found convincing; a party which was able to organize propaganda

among the "enemy" troops despite the terrible conditions of the military dictatorship; a party whose members were devoted to the cause of the workers, the cause of the people, the cause for which they were always ready to sacrifice their lives.

It was the intelligence, the activity and the heroism of the Bolsheviks and of the Russian workers whom they led that awakened the class-consciousness of the French workers in military uniform.

II. How It Began

TOWARD the end of 1918, the Allied troops, by virtue of a special clause in the November 11 Armistice, had virtually replaced the German occupation troops in the Ukraine and in the Crimea. The Bolsheviks continued among the Allied troops the activity by means of which they had previously succeeded in winning over to the cause of the Russian people the Kaiser's divisions which had occupied the Ukraine and the Crimea since the beginning of the year. Naturally, they concentrated their efforts on the most decisive factor—the French army and navy. The British bankers and lords, as has always been their custom, let others do their fighting for them.

The soldiers and sailors learned from the Bolshevik pamphlets and newspapers published in French that they had been assigned to play the role of counter-revolutionary gendarmes. These publications displayed a remarkable knowledge of the situation and of the everyday needs and demands of the French soldiers and sailors. For that reason they were eagerly accepted and read. The French soldiers and sailors in this way came to realize that the Bolsheviks were actually defending their interests. They became sympathizers, at first, and then friends. The Command employed every means "to maintain the morale." It spread fantastic stories about children being devoured and prisoners quartered. The Bolsheviks replied in their leaflets, in

which they showed who were the real murderers, the butchers of the people. They explained what the October Socialist Revolution really was, what it stood for, and what it meant for the workers of the whole world.

The French Command instituted a regime of terror and murder. During the night of March 1, the heroic Jeanne Labourbe, a French teacher, and ten other comrades, five of them women, were executed without a trial—shot with revolvers by French and Russian White Guard officers. But other heroes took their place, and the work continued.

The Military Police of the Army of the Orient, directed by the sinister Benoist, multiplied its acts of provocation, committing the worst of crimes and torturing and murdering prisoners. One of the victims was Ivan Smirnov, a leading member of the Bolshevik Party in Odessa. The French warships bombarded Kherson at close range, killing women and children. The Bolsheviks kept up their activity. The grumbling among the French troops was becoming louder and louder. French soldiers in Odessa were beginning to protest more and more vehemently when Russian workers were led off to prison.

At the beginning of February, 1919, there was serious agitation in the ranks of the army; toward the end of March it became quite deep and affected even the non-commissioned officers. The French Army was thus partially neutralized.

WE WILL MARCH NO MORE!

By the end of January the ring had closed around the southern part of Russia. The occupied zone extended from Tiraspol, in the Ukraine, and skirted the entire coast of the Black Sea. The troops protecting the rear of the White Guards in the Ukraine and in the Crimea were made up of French, Greeks, Poles, Serbians and Russian White Guards.

The French imperialists did everything they could to get a general mobilization decreed in Rumania.

The movement developed in three principal stages:

It began with the soldiers' refusal to march. That was the first form of resistance. On January 30, a battalion of the 58th Infantry (Avignon), supported by two battalions of the 2nd Mountain Artillery (Nice), was marched from Bender in Bessarabia with the object of seizing Tiraspol. At the first chatter of the machine-guns the 58th cut short the battle and fell back, taking along the artillery and cutting its telephone communications.

The 58th went to Tiraspol, which had been captured on February 7 by the Poles supported by the 301st Armored Car Regiment, but only after the men had been promised that there would be no fighting. The regiment was disarmed and evacuated to Morocco.

On March 7, 1919, two companies of the 176th Infantry refused to march to Kherson. They disorganized the front, which was held by the Greek regiments, and thereby made it easier for the Red detachments to capture the city. Similar incidents took place nearly everywhere. Thus, for example, the 1st Zouave Route Regiment of Africa and the 19th Artillery refused to harness the horses for their pieces at the time of the attack upon Odessa on April 5.

But the soldiers no longer limited themselves to refusing to march. A company of the 7th Engineers, influenced by militant trade union members connected with the Bolsheviks, drove away their officers and handed over their material to the workers. It was with great difficulty that they were prevailed upon to follow the army on its retreat to Akkerman.

On April 5, Odessa was evacuated. Whole units quit the city singing the *Internationale*. Greek units often encircled the rebellious French battalions. The higher officers and the generals left the city by sea, or fled in automobiles. The

French army had turned into a disorganized throng with every trace of military discipline gone. It became necessary to send it back to France.

On the Bessarabian front, at Bender, the units of the 4th and 37th Colonial regiments again refused to fire on the Red Army.

THE REVOLT

The sailors witnessed the frightful disorder that attended the evacuation of Odessa. There was hardly any discipline left on board the ships. On practically all the warships the lower ranking officers in the engine rooms made common cause with the crews. The lower officers on deck remained neutral.

It was no longer a question of merely refusing to march. Feeling was running so high that the least incident was bound to precipitate an open revolt with a demand that the General Staff order the ships back to France. That was the second stage of the rebellion.

On April 16, at midnight, André Marty together with three other sailors was arrested at Galatz, Rumania, as he returned on board the destroyer *Protet*, on which he served as chief engineer. Marty and several other sailors, who had left Odessa a few days before, had worked out a plan for seizing the ship soon after she weighed anchor, taking her to Odessa and joining the side of the revolution. Since numerous revolutionary connections had been established on all the ships for quite some time, it was expected that the entire fleet would join the revolt. But just when the plan was on the point of execution it was revealed by three spies.

Hardly three days had passed, however, when in the evening of April 19 the revolt broke out aboard the battleship *France* in the Sevastopol roadstead, from where the

battleship had for two days (April 16 and 17) shelled the Red Army troops approaching the city. The next morning, April 20, the crews of the sister ships, the *France* and the *Jean-Bart*—the latter the flagship of the Admiral—gathered on deck singing the *Internationale*, and ran up the red flag on the bowsprit. Great agitation reigned on all the other warships. Meetings were held by the crews on every ship. In the afternoon a huge demonstration was held on the principal streets of Sevastopol, the French sailors fraternizing with the Russian workers. The enthusiasm was indescribable. Almost at the very moment that the red flag was being hoisted on the mainmast of the *France*, the troops which had been landed from these ships left their forts and made their way to the shore. When they arrived at the dock, the sailors, shouting "Down with the tyrants and the war!", flung their ammunition boxes into the sea. In the days that followed they forced the squadron to depart from Sevastopol. Before April 28 all the warships had sailed for France, except for the *Jean-Bart*, the Admiral's flagship, which stayed at Constantinople for about a month. Throughout this month the crew demonstrated practically every day in the streets of the city, singing the *Young Guard*.

André Marty, imprisoned at Galatz, succeeded in establishing contact with the soldiers of the 4th Colonial Regiment who guarded him, and through them with workers of the Left-wing group of the Social-Democratic Party of Rumania. On April 23, Marty was transferred to the heavy cruiser *Waldeck-Rousseau*, which was threatening Odessa, then already in the hands of the Soviets. Marty managed to get in touch with the crew, and on April 27 they too mutinied and hoisted the red flag.

The revolt had been prepared very carefully. The officers were driven to the stern of the ship, where they were guarded by armed members of the crew. The sailors took over the radio. Landry, the Minister of the Navy, later ad-

mitted that this revolt had been the most serious of all. (Unfortunately, a few minutes before the mutiny started, the Rear Admiral, forewarned by a spy, had Marty unexpectedly transferred to a destroyer. He was taken to Constantinople where he was kept in a Turkish prison attached to the French embassy.)

The destroyer *Fauconneau* joined the movement. On the *Waldeck-Rousseau*, a petty officer of the engine room presented the Admiral with the ultimatum: "Either we return to France at once, or we take the cruiser into dock in the port of Odessa." The Admiral complied with the request of the men. The warship left Odessa for France.

For three months similar demonstrations and mutinies followed one upon another on all the warships in the Black Sea. The last mutiny took place on August 7, on the *Touareg*, which was lying outside Odessa harbor.

The blockade was broken.

IN FRANCE AND ON ALL THE SEAS

One after the other, the warships returned to France. The mutineers, who did not suspect anything amiss, were "given leave." Once they were without arms, the "ringleaders" were arrested.

In spite of the rigorous government censorship, exact information about the Russian Revolution and about the mutinies began to spread. After that it was no longer a question of isolated revolts but of a widespread insurrectionary movement. Almost everywhere larger or smaller committees of sailors were formed, more or less secretly.

The agitation was most serious in Toulon [France's big navy yard on the Mediterranean]. Despite the state of siege, the sailors held meetings on the *glacis* of the ramparts, after having driven out the commander of the naval fortress, Vice Admiral Lacaze. On June 11, demonstrations of

sailors and soldiers took place in the city. The crew of the battleship *Provence*, the flagship of the First Admiral, refused to sail for the Black Sea. The demands were: "Release of all the mutineers of the Black Sea, cessation of the war of intervention in Russia, immediate demobilization." A committee of sailors took upon itself the functions of a revolutionary committee and invited delegates of the soldiers and the Navy Yard workers to join it. The mounted military police and the cavalry succeeded in preventing an attack upon the naval prison, but only after a real battle with the sailors.

Demonstrations of similar nature took place in Brest. Later, demonstrations on a somewhat smaller scale took place in other ports. On June 19, the battleship *Voltaire* at Bizerte, in North Africa, refused to sail for the Black Sea. Some of the sailors tried to spread the movement to the rest of the squadron. Hearing of the events in Russia, demonstrations were held on all the warships—always under the same slogans. We may mention particularly the demonstration on board the cruiser *Guichen* at Itea, Greece, on June 26, and on the cruiser *d'Estrées* at Vladivostok on August 14.

In France, the sailors demonstrated everywhere. Often they were joined by soldiers, as was the case in Toulouse (the unit involved was the 117th Heavy Artillery) on May 20.

The government could only stem this vast movement by a mass demobilization, by quickly disarming many warships, and by recalling from Russia all the ships and the forces of intervention.

Thus it was that the French imperialists, who had sown the wind, reaped the whirlwind.

Following are a few—out of hundreds—episodes of that great epic.

III. How the Army Was Won Over to the People

DURING the early years of the agitation for the release of the sailors of the Black Sea, the idea developed that the French soldiers and sailors, placed in the midst of the Russian proletarians, were carried away by the general enthusiasm, threw away their arms and fraternized with the revolutionary workers. Such a conception tended to represent the revolt on the Black Sea in a dangerously oversimplified and inexact light and is entirely at variance with the truth.

In a detailed study of the Moscow uprising of December, 1905, Lenin shows clearly that fraternization is the culmination of the struggle which the working class party must consciously wage in order to win the army for the cause of the people.

Actually, the fraternization and the revolt on the Black Sea were the result of a fierce struggle. On the one hand, the French General Staff tried hard to maintain discipline—to make sure that the mobilized workers and peasants remained at the service of the insatiable appetites of French imperialism. On the other hand, the Bolshevik Party spared no effort to awaken the class consciousness of the working people in soldiers' and sailors' uniforms, and to show them

that their true interests demanded that they support the proletarian revolution.

To be sure, the objective situation favored the work of the Bolsheviks. There were the bad material conditions of the soldiers and sailors, the tremendous rise of the revolutionary wave in France and throughout Europe, news of which penetrated into the army "through every pore" (letters, men on leave, etc.), and, finally, the growing prestige of the great socialist October Revolution. But, without the systematic activity of the Bolshevik Party, without the heroic sacrifices on the part of the Communists and other revolutionary workers of Odessa, Kherson, Sevastopol, as well as of groups of class conscious French soldiers and sailors, the French imperialists would have had sufficient time to replace their "unreliable" military forces before there was a chance for the revolt to break out. This must never be forgotten.

Even before the departure for Russia, the High Command of the Army of the Orient was worried about this revolutionary activity. In the middle of November, 1918, General Franchet d'Esperey, the commander-in-chief, warned all the commanders of the army corps and of the other units of the army and the navy that "the moment military operations are shifted to Russian territory, there will be the danger that active revolutionary propaganda may be attempted among the troops."

He instructed "all commanders of units and all officers to pay serious attention to the food, the quarters, and everything that can improve the material conditions of the troops."

But he wound up with the following:

"The officers must watch attentively the temper of their men; every violation of discipline must be dealt with ruthlessly and brought immediately to my attention."

On December 8, Colonel Charpy, Chief of Staff, himself came to the soldiers of the 156th Division to explain the reason for their departure for Russia. He told them that the occupation would be temporary, and that the soldiers would be given excellent quarters in the big cities. The next day, the 156th Division was assembled at Varria. Its commander, General Borius, came in person to speak to the men.

"He announced that we would soon embark," wrote Eugene R. of the 1st African Route Regiment.

The general went on to explain:

"We are not going there to fight. Incidentally, we could not fight there, since we are not at war with Russia. But you must know that there are many brigands among the Bolsheviks, common criminals who have escaped prison and who are terrorizing, pillaging and starving the entire population, including the workers, of course. It is to enable this population to get food that we are going there. We want to get them something to eat."

However, feeling was already running high among the soldiers. Thus, Eugene R. writes further:

"Two days later we were at Saloniki. We were to embark the following morning. I saw secret meetings held wherever I went. Everybody was determined to refuse to leave. I loaded my rifle, released the safety catch, and went to bed. I could not sleep all night, thinking of what I was going to do. I had no intention of leaving. But how was I to act? I had loaded my rifle, evidently in the hope that I would make use of it. What was going to happen? Unfortunately, nothing happened. We embarked in the morning without any resistance."

The promises of the General Staff, including the promise of an early demobilization, had achieved their purpose.

Nothing happened either during the embarkation or during the forcible landing at Odessa on December 18.

What was missing was the activity of the Bolshevik Party.

During the first days of the occupation, the Command, foreseeing that revolutionary activity would be carried on among the troops, distributed leaflets and newspapers—written in French—in which the Bolsheviks were represented as bandits. The officers spread stories systematically about the torture and murder of prisoners, about the “nationalization of women,” about a “ferocious dictatorship of a few leaders like Lenin, protected by Mongolian regiments,” and so on. The soldiers found the same stories retold in the French bourgeois and social-patriotic press—the only newspapers they could get. There was even a belief—and the officers did everything to maintain it—that the word “Bolshevik” was derived from the word “Boche,”* and that Lenin was a German agent, which was the reason why Russia had signed a separate peace and thus enabled the Central Powers to hurl all their armies against France.

Another factor that favored the counter-revolutionary activities was the relaxation which their stay in the towns of the Ukraine and the Crimea provided the troops who had come from the mountains of Serbia and Macedonia, or from the French front. When questioned, all the soldiers answered that “We’re better off here than among the bursting shells in Monastir.” Everybody remembered the months and the years of suffering, of malaria and dysentery.

After the losses and frightful difficulties attending the offensive and advance of September-October, 1918, in Macedonia and Serbia, the calm of the first days was welcomed with joy. All the soldiers had the physical and moral feeling that the war was over, and that they would return to France within a few days.

* The French chauvinistic name for “German.”—*Ed.*

THE BOLSHEVIKS AT WORK

But once they were installed, they began to reflect. Their quarters were bad; the food was of the most fantastic kind; letters from France took an impossibly long time—easily a month or even a month and a half. Soon the Russian winter arrived. It inflicted terrible suffering on the men, who were dressed in their usual clothes, their heads covered only with caps or steel helmets, and without any effective protection against the cold.

Leaves of absence were practically stopped owing to the sharp reduction in the number of soldiers. And the soldiers, who could not afford to buy extra food because of the tremendous rise in prices, saw their officers running from banquet to banquet and from one orgy to another.

As the days rolled by everybody waited with constantly increasing impatience for the demobilization which was so extremely slow in coming. In order to quiet the mobilized men, the government announced, on February 25, 1919, that the soldiers would receive a demobilization bonus of 250 francs and an additional fifteen francs for every month of active service upon their discharge from the army. But on March 21 a press communique specified that "demobilization will depend on the signing of the preliminary peace terms."

All these causes of discontent had existed during the entire imperialist war; they had existed in addition to the frightful carnage and terrible sufferings in the trenches. And yet, with the exception of the great mutinies of 1917, they had stirred up very few revolts.

But in the Ukraine, the Crimea and in Bessarabia there were the Bolsheviki who explained to the soldiers the concrete reason for their distress and sufferings—the war from which only the rich profited. The propaganda of the Bolsheviki always had the effect of immediately showing the

soldiers that their most modest demands depended on the solution of the great political problems of the hour, and, above all, on the ending of the intervention. All this was explained in such simple terms and so clearly that even the least educated understood it.

But how much patience was needed, and what organizational efforts and sacrifices the militant Bolsheviks had to make in order to learn the temper and the demands of the soldiers and sailors, to write and print the leaflets and papers, and, then, to distribute them!

* * *

In January the first shots were exchanged with the Red Army and the partisans.

"Our officers have lied to us, they have deceived us!" the French soldiers and sailors could be heard saying everywhere. "We are starting the war here all over again!"

Immediately a leaflet, or a worker propagandist, or a soldier propagandist would appear: "Yes, you are starting the war all over again! The French capitalists are not satisfied with the riches they have stolen with the blood of the soldiers and the misery of the workers and peasants! Look at the mines in the Donetz Basin; they are no longer the property of your exploiters—the French capitalists; they belong to the Russian workers. And you have to suffer and die while your family is waiting for you in misery, in order to seize these mines for the 200 ruling families!"

Simple ideas, which everyone could understand. The arrival of reinforcements of men and material further confirmed these statements. The soldiers and sailors now wanted to know against whom they were fighting. Who was the enemy, and where was he? Who were the Bolsheviks? What did they want?

They found prompt and clear answers to these questions in the Bolshevik leaflets.

The nonsense and lies released in torrents every day by the entire bourgeois and social-patriotic press now back-fired against their own authors. Now they were received by the men with the usual comment: "*Bunk.*"

This marked the collapse of the counter-revolutionary propaganda, while, at the same time, the sympathy for the revolutionary Russian people was constantly growing. With each day that passed the Bolsheviks were winning over ever larger sections of the French army. The frequent arrests and executions no longer struck fear into the hearts of the men; on the contrary, they aroused their unanimous indignation.

French soldiers wrote more and more for the newspaper *Le Communiste*, published (illegally, of course) in French. Here is one of the articles:

"THE TRUTH ABOUT OUR SO-CALLED VOLUNTARY
STAY IN ODESSA

(A letter by French soldiers to their Russian comrades)

"Several months ago, when victory was still in the balance, Clemenceau, the man who may be described as the big dictator, fearing the wavering among the soldiers and in the rear, declared in the Chamber of Deputies:

"We will fight until we attain final victory, but, once it is attained, we shall not continue the war a single hour."

"Despite these promises, however, we are continuing the war.

"When we arrived in Odessa we did not realize what the plans of our government were, and we knew nothing about the political situation in the city. On December 18, blindly obeying our officers, the servants of capital, we insulted the people whom we did not as yet know and who stand for that just Constitution, the Soviet Republic. *Forgive us,*

comrades and brothers; Don't regard us as murderers, for on the day of December 18 we did not understand why we opened fire.

"Today we have the right to ask why it is that when Russia was headed by a tsar, by an autocratic despot, our government was on friendly terms with her. Now everything has changed. Russia is now undeniably a republic, a Soviet republic. Are not our two sister republics akin in their ideas and tendencies? Could not they unite and work for a common cause?

"Is it perhaps because the Soviet republic is too socialistic?

"The trouble is that our rulers do not express the will of the people, but are concerned only with their own interests. They are suppressing our own liberty when they send us to stifle the international movement for social liberation of which we stand so much in need.

"Our place is not here. We have parents who are waiting for our return in the districts that have been liberated from the German militarists. At a time when the most urgent and necessary task of our government should be to restore normal life in the country, both morally and materially, it is busy hindering the liberation of the Russian people.

"Our choice has been made. We are waiting impatiently for the day when we will be able to relate what is happening here, and to open the eyes of the French workers whose minds have been confused by the lies of the entire government press. We are anxious to come to the aid of the Soviet republic, the republic of workers and peasants, the only truly democratic and social republic.

"With friendly greetings,

"A Group of French Soldiers."

The agitation was constantly intensified. Its forms were well adapted to the French: It was spread by word of mouth and, above all, by means of songs. As usual, and as had been the custom all through the war, the soldiers

and sailors took popular songs of the day and changed their words.

One of the most popular was the *Odessa Waltz* sung to the tune of *Strong Men of the Moon*. Here are its last two stanzas:

“After eight days on the high seas
We’ve arrived at last in Odessa town.
The Russians celebrated the event
With cannon and *vintovka** shots.
We were made to join the Volunteers,
A corps made up of officers,
So that we would our brothers fight—
For the Bolsheviks are workers all.

Refrain

You who run the show
Because you’ve got the dough
And piles of stocks and bonds,

If you want the cash,
Make haste to embark,
Ye capitalists—
For the true poilus,
Those who fought in the war,
Are determined today
Not to fight any more,
Nor their brothers to kill
Or by them be killed.

We are enduring our bad lot
Until the day of freedom comes;
We’re suffering in silence now,
For soon we’ll all be going home.
But before we leave for France
A present we shall take along
To give it on the day of reckoning
To our deputies, to Clemenceau.

* Russian for rifle.

Refrain

We'll sing to them again
This little refrain
Until we are hoarse.
In Russia, barons and sirs,
There was no money to be got,
And that's where you lost out.
All we've got there is socks,
And these we'll bring back.
Don't put on any airs,
For we're honest and square,
And we'll deliver these socks
On your jaw."

And on the warships, after the *Song of the Beans* and the *Sailor's Complaint* (sung in the French navy since Colbert!), there already resounded the immortal song of revolt and struggle—*Hymn to the 17th*.

In their rage, police spies murdered Jeanne Labourbe, three young washerwomen, the fine militant fighters Michael Shilikvert and Ivan Smirnov, both leading members of the Odessa Committee of the Bolshevik Party. But the raging of the Command was in vain! They were no longer in control of their troops.

IV. Glory to the 58th

"Your anger was legitimate . . .
His kinfolk no one wants to kill
For the sake of the rich who rule.
Salute, salute and hail,
Brave soldiers of the 17th!"—*Hymn to the 17th.*

THE HONOR of having been the first to refuse to fight the socialist soviet revolution belongs to the 58th Infantry Regiment (Avignon).

In January the regiment was stationed at Bender, on the right bank of the Dniester. Facing Bender, on the other side of the river, is the town of Tiraspol, which was held by the Soviets.

Here are the facts as told by participants:

"On February 1 some of us were sent to reconnoiter in Tiraspol. We had hardly entered the town when we were made prisoners and disarmed. After being questioned for some time, the Bolsheviks said to us:

"If you comrades had captured us, you would have shot us. But we say to you: You are free. We know what your chiefs are worth, who are your enemies as well as ours. Here are your weapons. You may go. And tell your comrades that we wish them no harm. We are even prepared to receive them as brothers, but on one condition—that they come without arms.'

"We left. I had a feeling, as had the other comrades, that

we had been sent as a patrol in the hope that we would become involved in hostilities which would serve as a pretext for starting a battle. The level-headedness of the 'Reds' had thwarted that maneuver.

"When we returned, naturally we told the entire battalion what had happened. It made a considerable impression and aroused great enthusiasm. The soldiers began to see how the war should be ended.

"On February 4, reveille was sounded at four o'clock in the morning for the 2d Battalion. The battalion was in full kit, but its destination was unknown. A detachment of the 2d Mountain Artillery Regiment (Nice) was also to set out. Many of us took the artillerymen aside and reproached them for coming along. Finally we marched. When we arrived at the stream, the discontent became loud. 'So, that's what it is! We are to invade Russia! It's the war again! We've had enough! Enough!' the men shouted.

"The officer in command made a speech:

" 'We are only going to garrison Tiraspol, where we are to secure our food supplies. . . . The Russians borrowed money from us, which they refuse to pay us. We shall encounter revolutionary patrols; but since they are badly commanded and lack arms, the Bolsheviks will flee, and we shall enter the town without firing a shot.'

"Grumbling, we set out. As soon as we came in view of the town we were formed in battle array. The word was passed: '*No firing.*'

"At that very moment there appeared a Russian bearing the flag of truce. He asked for the 'chief,' our commander. He pointed out to him that we were on Ukrainian territory and that we must withdraw.

" 'I have orders to take Tiraspol before noon, and take it I will,' the commander barked.

"The Russian then declared that the town was open to him on condition that he entered without arms.

"The commander repeated what he had said before.

" 'Is this the last word?' the Russian asked.

" 'Yes,' the commander replied.

"The Russian then told the commander that we would be given forty-eight hours to withdraw beyond the railway line, and he assured us that there would be no bloodshed. The Russian then withdrew.

"We advanced. When we were within two kilometers of the town we deployed for firing. Suddenly a Red machine-gun opened fire. We dropped on our bellies and lay flat in the snow. Behind us our artillery opened fire. At about three o'clock, when the shooting had died down a little, carts packed with non-combatants—women and children—began to leave the town from the other side. Our artillery again opened fire, shelling the carts. In a quarter of an hour I counted nine carts which had been swept with shrapnel. Women and children were fleeing through the plain. Incidentally, the artillerymen did not see whom they were firing at.

"We were indignant at this cruelty. We packed up, cut the telephone wires of the artillery and returned to Bender. Naturally, there remained nothing for our officers and the artillery to do but to beat a retreat in their turn.

"On February 6 we were again assembled. We were ordered to set out again. General refusal prevailed. 'No, no!' the soldiers shouted. 'War has not been declared upon Russia! The armistice has been signed! We will not march!'

"These shouts were heard everywhere. The commander was furious, but he had to give in. The soldiers were armed, and he realized that it would be dangerous to insist. We were locked up in the fort. A personal appeal was made to each of us to sign up as a volunteer to fight the Bolsheviks. Everybody refused. For three days the whole regiment was under arrest. Every morning we read in the order of the day that 'all the men are held for investigation to be tried by a court-martial.'

"On February 8 they wanted us to set out for Tiraspol again. The officers told us that the town had been captured and that there would be no fighting, but we did not believe them. Finally we declared that we would go only by rail (a distance of five kilometers) and on condition that the

officers ride in the front cars. Machine guns were mounted in the entrances of the cars behind those of the officers', ready to go into action if it should turn out that we had been deceived again. When we arrived in the town we witnessed the last executions by Polish detachments: Fifty-nine workers had been shot; one worker had been released so that he would go back to report the treatment meted out to Bolsheviks. . . ."

The 58th was evacuated and returned to France.

Glory to the 58th! Glory to the 175th Infantry and the 176th Infantry, to the 1st African Route Regiment, the 19th Artillery, the 7th Pioneers, and others, which continued the glorious revolutionary traditions of the French people, the traditions of the 17th Regiment in 1907, and that of the 217th and 152d in 1917!

V. A Squadron in Revolt

ON APRIL 15 the battleship *France* sailed from the harbor of Odessa. Its crew had been ardent revolutionaries for months. The men of the landing parties had described, upon their return on board, the disorder that had attended the evacuation. They had also brought with them Bolshevik leaflets. Discontent was rife:

"Far from demobilizing us, they are forcing us to start the war again. And we, ourselves real slaves, will be made to massacre the very people who have risen against a slavery worse than ours."

The revolt was now a question of days, perhaps of hours.

When the ship put in at Sevastopol on the morning of April 16, a landing party was immediately sent to the northern fort. Admiral Amet went there and delivered his usual speech: "You are faced with dangerous bandits. They are killing women, children and old people. We have been sent here to stop their crimes. I hope that you will do your duty." And on and on.

In the morning of the 17th the ship took up position in the outer roadstead. At 4 o'clock in the evening the bugles sounded, calling the men to their battle posts. The majority of the crew failed to respond. They took shelter in the latrines. The officers had a hard time manning the six-inch guns which opened a barrage. The *Jean-Bart*—the admiral's flagship—and the *Vergniaud* also opened fire. This

lasted throughout the night. The bombardment continued until five o'clock in the morning of the 18th. The men began to talk openly of throwing the officers overboard. The protests became loud. The admiral was booed. At six o'clock in the evening the battleship returned to the inner roadstead. The sailors Vuillemin, Delarue, Goette and Seroux were arrested and locked up on board the ship.

Anger mounted. Sailors gathered in groups, asking one another: "What are we waiting for? Why don't we free our comrades!"

SATURDAY, APRIL 19

THE REVOLT

The *France*, as well as the *Jean-Bart*, *Vergniaud*, *Justice* and *Du Chavla*, was lying in the inner roadstead, ready for battle. At about three o'clock in the afternoon the crew learned that on the next day, which was Easter, they would have to load seven hundred tons of coal on the ship. At once indignation reigned. The men had counted on getting two days' rest to compensate them for their work of coaling at Odessa. The sailors were seething with anger. At 4:32 P.M. the usual ceremony of saluting the colors was held. When the flag was raised, eighteen sailors, among them Fracchis, Doublier, Huret and Ricros, refused to salute. Then the word was passed: "All those who do not want to work at coaling tomorrow will come to the fore-castle head after the 'up all hammocks' signal."

All through the evening meal there was extreme excitement. The men grumbled and giped. After the hammocks had been put up four hundred sailors gathered on the fore-castle head. This was a normal procedure and the officer-of-the-watch was not worried. The other officers began their dinner. The chief petty officer and the petty officers were at their posts on the deck and at the main storeroom.

Suddenly there was an outburst of song. The men sang the *Song of Odessa*. Cries pierced the calm of the spring evening! "No coaling! Neither Sunday nor Monday!" The master-at-arms, Louarn, came on the scene. He asked for silence and tried to tell the men that this was no way to make their demands known. In answer, the lights were put out, and the men began to sing the *Internationale*. Just then from the *Jean-Bart* could be heard the same song. The officers, infuriated, came out on the quarter-deck.

With shouts of "to arms! Throw them [the officers] overboard! Let's get our rifles!" the sailors rushed toward the quarter-deck, knocking over the master-at-arms.

On the middle deck the sailors encountered the Executive Officer, Commander Lefevre, who was accompanied by the master-at-arms. The officers were nowhere to be seen: the commander had ordered them to arm and assemble secretly.

Lefevre ordered the men off to bed. The sailors replied with shouts of "Death!" At this the master-at-arms was butted in the stomach by a sailor whom he had tried to seize and drag to a cell. The sailor had covered his face with his hands so as not to be recognized. The demonstrators continued on their way to the quarter-deck. First Lieutenant Commander Gauthier de Kemoal came forward to ask them what the crew demanded. He assured them that he would transmit all their wishes to the commander. He was greeted with hoots and laughter, but finally he succeeded in having the crew appoint their spokesmen. He gave them his word of honor that no disciplinary measures would be taken against the delegates.

The sailors Notta and Doublier explained to him that the crew did not want to work at coaling either on Easter Sunday or Monday. And Notta added: "*What are we doing in Russia?* We don't want to fight against the workers, who are our brothers. And we want shore liberty."

The throng of sailors shouted: "To arms! Let's get our rifles!" But Notta told them not to take to arms, that it would be foolish—it would compromise their cause!

It was half past eight in the evening. The sailors listened to him. This was a grave error, which was to imperil the movement at its very inception.

The sailors then marched to the bow, singing the *Internationale*. They went down to the prison and opened the cells, freeing the three prisoners, Dalarue, Coette and Vuillemin, the latter held in solitary confinement. The demonstrators paraded on the main deck, shouting constantly, "To arms!" But they did not take them. They returned to the forecastle head to elect delegates as requested by the First Lieutenant. The men, with the released prisoners now in their midst, were wild with enthusiasm. Vuillemin and Doublier, engine room hands, and Notta, an ordinary sailor, were elected delegates. Again the strains of the *Internationale* filled the air. The crew of the *Jean-Bart* joined in the song. It was 9:30.

Word had come to them that the landing party had refused to make preparations for fighting the Bolsheviks. Their representative was Electrician Petty Officer Duboulez.

The sailors decided to get in touch with the *Jean-Bart* and the *Du Chavla*, from whose decks could be heard the singing of the *Internationale*. A group of sailors, together with the delegates, embarked on a steam launch, despite the objections of the officer-of-the-watch, Electrician Lieutenant Bès de Berc.

Many sailors aboard the *Jean-Bart* had now joined in the singing of revolutionary songs. The launch of the *France* stopped alongside the *Jean-Bart*. The delegates asked the sailors of the *Jean-Bart* what their demands were. The answer was: "Back to Toulon! No more war against Russia!" The delegates of the *France* boarded the *Jean-Bart*, whose crew now assembled on the deck.

The delegates of the *France* asked the men of the *Jean-Bart* also to elect delegates. They appealed to them to stand firm. "Our demands must be granted and they must send us all back to France." The sailors of the *Jean-Bart* accepted the suggestions and again started singing the *Internationale*.

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SAILORS AND AN ADMIRAL

In the meantime Vice-Admiral Amet, commander-in-chief of the Black Sea Fleet, arrived on board the *France*, accompanied by the commander, his Executive Officer and First Lieutenant.

The mutineers came out to meet him. The sailors and the Admiral stood facing each other. The Admiral began his speech with an attempt at intimidation.

"There are two hundred bad Frenchmen among the crew!" he said.

But he was immediately interrupted with shouts of "Death to the tyrant! Catch him! Death!" The Admiral then changed his theme. First he announced that Sevastopol would soon be evacuated. Then he started to describe what Bolshevism meant. When he said that the Bolsheviks were bandits, one of the mutineers interrupted him: "You're Bandit Number One yourself! For having the itch you let me rot in a dark cell! It was you who condemned sailors to five and ten years' hard labor on the slightest pretext!"

Every phrase of the Admiral was interrupted with shouts and hisses: "He lies! He is trying to sing us a lullabye! What nerve! It's all lies!"

The Admiral, realizing his mistake, changed his tone: "My children, I entreat you to maintain order."

But he was interrupted again: "This is no time for preaching!" and then "Death to the tyrant! Bandit! Murderer! Back to Toulon! To Toulon!"

The Admiral then asked: "What do you want?"

Notta came forward and courteously laid before him the demands of the crew:

1. No coaling either on the 20th or on the 21st.
2. Cessation of intervention in Russia and immediate return to France.
3. Shore liberty.
4. No harsh discipline.
5. Better food.
6. More frequent mail service.
7. Demobilization of the old classes, etc.

"The war in Russia is against the Constitution," he said. "Clemenceau has violated the Constitution."

Admiral Amet answered by referring to the iron discipline in the Red Army. Notta then asked him how many soldiers had been executed in the French army, particularly after the mutinies of April, 1917. Another sailor interposed: "I spent four months in a cell on board, with only one hour of fresh air a day." Another sailor shouted: "Beat it, you tyrant!" The demonstrators then turned their backs on the Admiral and marched to the forecandle deck singing the *Internationale* and shouting "To Toulon! To Toulon!"

The Admiral, furious, turned around to leave, threatening Notta: "Tomorrow you'll repent this!"

The singing was continued on the forecandle deck. Together with the crew of the *Jean-Bart* they sang the *Internationale*, the *Song of the Beans*, and the *Song of Odessa*.

VI. The Red Battleship

CAME APRIL 20, Easter, a general holiday. A splendid sun shone in the sky, and the weather was fine all day. On the battleships, the men arose late. On board the *France*, although reveille was later than usual, not a man jumped from his hammock at the sound of the blaring bugle, and the master-at-arms, who came around as usual to rouse the tardy ones, was met with a chorus of cries and the banging of sabots and shoes. The same thing happened on the *Jean-Bart*.

But, since it had been agreed on board the *France* that a big meeting would be held on the forecastle deck at 8 a.m., the men got up about 7 o'clock. The coffee never tasted as good as it did that morning. Apparently the Command had supplied the best mocha for the crew on this occasion. Immediately after breakfast all the men congregated on the forecastle head. Several groups were sent out to round up the few sailors who had gone to work. Only the gangs of engine-room men in charge of the lighting and the pumps remained below deck.

At 8 A.M. the flag was to be raised. And here an unforgettable spectacle unfolded itself in the calm air of the morning:

Practically every sailor on the *France* and the *Jean-Bart* was standing on the vast forecastle heads of the battleships, and, instead of saluting the tricolor being raised on

the stern, they faced forward and sang the *Internationale* while the red flag was being hoisted on the bowsprit.

The officers on the *France* were dumbfounded. The movement, which they had hoped would calm down during the night, had taken on unexpected proportions.

The three delegates, Vuillemin, Doublier and Notta, approached the commander to lay before him the demands of the crew, as had been agreed with the Executive Officer the night before. The First Lieutenant Commander de Kermaal at first refused to listen to them, saying that he could accept only the complaints of individuals. A discussion ensued. In the end the officer agreed to receive the delegates. Vuillemin reiterated the desire of the crew to go back to France immediately and to stop the war against the Bolsheviks, which was unconstitutional because Parliament had never voted for it. The First Lieutenant answered that he had no right to discuss the subject, since he was "not posted on it." Finally he accepted some of the demands. The delegates took the reply back to the fore-castle head, but before speaking they insisted that the red flag be removed.

"Comrades," Notta said, "the First Lieutenant wishes you to know that he is prepared to intervene on our behalf that no disciplinary measures be taken against anyone, but he will do so on condition that order and quiet are restored."

He was interrupted with shouts: "That won't do! We must have a rest! It's a holiday!"

The sailors, dissatisfied with the reply, hoisted the red flag again. By now, almost the whole crew was massed on the fore-castle head and again they sang the *Internationale*, the *Hymn to the 17th* and the *Song of the Beans*. The officer-of-the-watch, Lieutenant Barbier, and Lieutenant Bès de Berc, assisted by the first master-at-arms, tried in vain to quiet the crew. The sailors kept on singing. Lieu-

tenant Barbier, pointing to the red flag, shouted to the men, "You don't realize what this rag means! This is civil war!"

Angry voices answered: "All the worse for you! You're getting what you wanted!" Enraged, the officer made a half turn and withdrew. At that moment two hundred demonstrators formed a triple line in front of the red flag.

Fracchis brought a message from the *Jean-Bart*: "Let all the men on leave come ashore dressed any way at all." The message further said that the civilian population was waiting for them. After some discussion, Vuillemin moved that they stay aboard. By going ashore they ran the risk of being shot at; they would go down at 2 P.M. to look for the landing party. This motion was adopted.

The delegation returned to the First Lieutenant. But they got no answer. The crew, their discontent rising, again started to sing the *Internationale* and the *Song of Odessa*. At 9:15 A.M. Vice-Admiral Amet came on board, accompanied by the commander, his Executive Officer and First Lieutenant. This time his manner was much less brutal than the previous day. When he reached the first line that protected the red flag, he was warned by the sailors that if he advanced one step further he would be thrown into the sea.

The delegates asked for silence, and the Admiral was given a chance to speak.

"My children," he began, "I have not come to remove the red flag, but to tell you that you will regret what you have done, and that you will have cause to repent it."

"We shall never regret having stopped this unlawful and criminal war," the mutineers replied. "We would be outcasts from the ranks of the working class and of humanity if we were to obey your orders to kill our Russian brothers."

"I have lived among sailors for thirty-five years," the Admiral replied, "I know them. I am old enough not to be afraid of death."

His remarks were interrupted with cries: "Old swine! Faker! Bloodsucker! Beat it, you tyrant! Death! Throw him overboard!"

The Admiral then made a half turn, the officers following him, and went back to the *Jean-Bart*.

At 10 o'clock the Executive Officer came around with the proposal to the demonstrators that if they dispersed in good order, each of them would be given a bottle of champagne(!). The answer was: "We're not fish, and we won't bite your bait."

"I have served fifteen months at the front with the Marines," the officer went on.

"Yes, safe in an office in Paris," came the reply.

Upon which the Executive Officer turned round and left.

Upon leaving the *France* the Admiral had ordered that the boilers be fired. The first engine-room mate came to announce the order. He was told that there was not enough coal to take them to France, and that they would refuse to carry out an order to set sail before the ship had taken on coal. The sailors understood that once they were isolated it would be easier for the officers to deal with them en route.

After dinner the crew reassembled on the forecastle head in order to choose those who were to go in search of the landing party at the northern fort, for there were too many volunteers. The enthusiasm was mounting. Almost all the sailors were animated by a powerful revolutionary spirit. The officers were bewildered and they did not know what to do.

It was half past twelve in the afternoon. The Russian steamer *Kherson* was entering the roadstead. It carried about one hundred fifty men who were returning after a long service in France.

When the steamer was within twenty yards distance of the battleship, the red flag was hosted on the main mast

and the sailors began to sing the *Internationale* at the top of their voices. The impression on board the *Kherson* was tremendous. The passengers—sailors and soldiers—joined in the singing. At that moment the demonstrators were gathered on the quarterdeck of the *France*, some of them even stood on the life-lines. A sailor of the *France*, standing in the longboat, waved a red flag; on the *Kherson* a French sailor, perched in the shrouds, answered by waving a red scarf. Aboard the *France*, the *Jean-Bart* and the *Kherson* the *Internationale* was sung while the *Kherson* dropped anchor inside the harbor. It was an impressive moment. The commander rushed up to the bridge and pleaded with the delegates to remove the red flag. Vuillemin intervened on his behalf, and the red flag was removed.

At that moment the crew of the *Justice*, gathered on the forecastle head, began to sing the *Internationale* and raised a red pennant.

The Commander and the Executive Officer appeared on the scene.

"Who hoisted this rag?" The commander asked.

Silence.

"It wasn't hoisted by itself, was it?" he insisted.

"The entire crew is in it," some of the sailors replied.

"So I have a crew of Bolsheviks?"

"We want to go back to France!"

The discussion between the commander and the crew lasted an hour.

"There is one point on which they cannot be moved," the commander stated in his report, "and that is: 'The war is over; we are not at war with the Russians; we want to go back to France.'"

* * *

FRATERNIZATION AND A TRAP

In the city the agitation was growing. From early morning, more and more French sailors could be seen on the streets. Some wore red ribbons on their jackets. The sailors carried on animated conversations with the workers. The streets were patrolled by both French and Greeks, the former walking around with an air of nonchalance, while the latter were on their guard, ready to shoot. At about 1:30 in the afternoon the boats with the men from the squadron who were given shore leave began to arrive at the Graftsky wharf. A large crowd gathered near the wharf. When the longboats of the *Jean-Bart* arrived, followed by those of the *France*, on which the tricolor was so rolled up as to show only the red stripe, the sailors were greeted with cheers. A large group of sailors, singing the *Internationale*, marched up wide Ekaterinskaya Street toward the city. The sailors accepted eagerly the banner of the Metal Workers' Union which was presented to them by the workers. One of them marched at the head of the procession, holding aloft the unfurled banner. The demonstration was rapidly gaining in size as it was joined by ever larger numbers of sailors and civilians.

Led by French sailors, the demonstration moved very slowly. At times it halted, and some of the sailors, perched on the shoulders of their comrades, or standing on house steps, spoke to the demonstrators.

There were about three thousand demonstrators in the parade, including from two hundred to three hundred sailors. Each time a French patrol marched by, it was invited to join, and the sailors threw away their rifles and fraternized with the workers. Nobody was armed—neither the workers, nor the sailors. Those of the armed detachments ashore had thrown away everything: rifles, bayonets, and even cartridge belts. This was a grave mistake, as it turned out later.

The demonstrators marched through Morskaya Street singing. The enthusiasm was great. Many sailors tore the red pompons from their caps and wore them as insignia on their jackets. Others waved little red flags made of red ties or pieces of cloth fastened to sticks.

A little while after they had passed the square, an automobile moving at great speed up Morskaya Street broke into the crowd. It was stopped by the French sailors. The officer inside ordered the sailors to disperse, threatening them with dire consequences. In answer, several sailors jumped into the car and shook the officer roughly, pushing him back into the seat each time he tried to stick out his head. Fuming with rage the officer had to follow behind.

The demonstrators proceeded down Morskaya Street. When they reached the City Hall, the Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee, who spoke perfect French, having once worked in the Galeries Lafayette department store in Paris, delivered a short speech in which he thanked the French sailors for their support and wound up with the slogans of the Revolutionary Committee: "Evacuation of the military from the city and transfer of power to the Soviet." He was frequently interrupted by enthusiastic cheers. A sailor from the crowd made a speech in reply, assuring the Revolutionary Committee of the sympathy of the French sailors and of their support.

The procession resumed its march. By now it had been joined by sailors from all the warships lying in the roadstead. There were even some men from the landing parties, including those from the *Vergniaud* who had abandoned the semaphore signal post and come down into the city. At about four o'clock in the afternoon near Maller's Pharmacy, the demonstrators were approached by a lieutenant of one of the ships who tried to seize the red banner. A heated dispute ensued, there were shouts, threats. A sailor slapped the officer. The latter withdrew. Suddenly,

without warning, volleys of machine guns and rifles rang out and bullets swept the street. Several squads of Greek soldiers, crouched at a point where the street sloped down, about a hundred yards away, had fired volley after volley into the crowd. They were supported by a section of the *Jean-Bart* landing party, commanded by a lieutenant who had given the order to machine-gun the demonstrators.

It was a gruesome scene. On all sides lay the dead; the air was rent with cries and groans. Those who could ran for cover into the side streets. The banner-bearer, a helmsman from the *Vergniaud*, mortally wounded by a bullet, lay on the ground covered by the red banner he had been carrying. A petty officer, a brave man, who had continued shouting "Forward! Death to the dogs!" also fell mortally wounded and lay beside a young girl of sixteen who had been killed outright. . . . The news of the ambush spread quickly in the barracks and on the battleships, rousing a storm of anger among the men.

A section of the landing party from the *Jean-Bart*, which remained at the semaphore post after it had been abandoned by the men from the *Vergniaud*, even wanted to march into the city to open fire on the Greeks. The officers held them back only at the point of revolvers.

The news of the shooting was brought to the *France* by the men who came back from shore liberty. A group of mutineers, headed by Vuillemin, rushed towards the stern. Some of them wanted to retaliate by shelling the Greek battleship *Kilkis*. They signaled this proposal to the other warships. Vuillemin demanded that the officer-of-the-watch call the commander.

"What for?" asked the officer. Amid tense silence Vuillemin told him the story of the shooting that had taken place ashore. He delivered a sentimental speech, winding up with a demand . . . for an investigation and severe punishment of those responsible. What naivete!

The officer promised to transmit the request. Why not! It was decided that on the following morning two letters would be sent to the Admiral, one by Vuillemin on behalf of the crew, and another by the commander.

The chatter of the machine-guns and the rifle volleys excited similar feelings of anger on board the *Justice*. The men on shore liberty returned and told the story in detail. One of the sailors of the ship had been wounded. Feeling ran high. The commander came around to talk to the sailors. He had heard the news, which had been brought to Admiral Amet while the commander had been in conference with him in the afternoon.

The commander exerted every effort to assuage the anger of his crew. A group of sailors tried to prevail upon their comrades to load the guns and open fire upon the Greek battleship *Kilkis*, instead of dealing with the principal culprits—the French Army and Navy Headquarters. Officers and mates then made a rush to get hold of the small arms and rifles; the breechblocks of the big guns were removed to a store-room.

The temper of the men was the same on board the *Vergniaud*. Comrade L., who took part in the demonstration, describes the situation aboard the ship in the following terms:

“We came on board in a rage at what had happened ashore, and distributed among the rest of the crew the leaflets which the Russian comrades had given us. A group of sailors then rushed to the armory to seize rifles and bayonets so that we might take revenge. But the arms had disappeared. Even the percussion locks of the guns had been removed. We were weaponless! It was then that, furious with rage, we went up to the fore-castle head and hoisted the red flag to the top of the mast. The commanders remained unruffled when the strains of the *Internationale* rose in the air.”

The Admiral, who had undoubtedly hoped to quell the revolt with the machine-guns on Morskaya Street, now realized that the effect was the exact reverse. The revolt was assuming menacing proportions. He therefore resorted to his usual subterfuges.

That same evening, the officer who had given the order to fire on the demonstration committed suicide—undoubtedly orders from above. By his death he took upon himself the blame for something for which he was not alone responsible.

The Admiral also decided that the section of the *Jean-Bart* which had taken part in the shooting should not return on board. In fact an announcement was posted in the battery that "if the Petty Officer Marine . . . returns on board he will be hanged." Incidentally it is known that his men had not followed his example, but had fired into the air. Actually, this section never returned to the Admiral's ship and went back to France aboard the hospital ship *Vish-Long*.

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SAILORS AND SOLDIERS—MASTERS OF THEIR OWN DESTINY

At that moment the crews were fully in control on all the warships! The soldiers now followed their example.

At 7 o'clock that evening a delegation of the army stationed ashore came on board the *France*. It consisted of an adjutant, a sergeant, two corporals and two soldiers of the 175th Infantry. The delegates congratulated the sailors and asked them to stand by the soldiers, as the latter feared the colonial troops. They asked the sailors not to sail without them. The sailors assured them that they would not leave them on Russian soil, that there was a sufficient number of merchant ships to take them all to France. The delegation left the ship, confident of the sailors' assistance, but

without having taken any measures to establish regular connections and to coordinate the work.

At nine o'clock the commander sent for Vuillemin. An exciting conversation took place in the presence of a lieutenant which lasted till midnight. When Vuillemin entered the commander's cabin he was offered a chair, but he refused to take it. The commander then offered him a cigarette, which he again refused to accept. Vuillemin presented the demands of the crew. When the commander asked him to persuade the sailors to maintain calm. Vuillemin replied that he could do nothing with this unruly crowd, but that he would try his best to avoid a clash.

The commander, greatly impressed, gave his word of honor that no disciplinary measures or any measures of repression would be taken against the crew. To Vuillemin's remark that there were superiors, the commander replied that in case there was a court martial he would himself be put in the dock, as the best defender of his men.

"If I bring my ship back to French waters in good order, with my officers, my mates and all the men, I shall forget everything," he said. "However, I shall never forgive those who hoisted the red flag, nor those who went to search for the landing party."

* * *

One o'clock in the morning. The night is very calm, the weather fine. But the red warship is awake. Every quarter-hour her searchlights sweep the roadstead, scanning the ships and, above all, the shore. The delegates have taken control of the searchlights in order to make sure that they are not surprised by the colonial troops. Below deck, the sailors stand watch over the munitions rooms.

Machinists, stokers, electricians ensure the regular func-

tioning of the boilers, electric motors, pumps, the lighting system.

The delegates have assigned the duties for the day, and they are the only ones whom the men obey. The search-lights are manned by two electricians and a petty officer. They are relieved every two hours.

There are no sentinels on the bridge, but the electricians sound the signal "all men on deck" at the least sign of alarm.

On that night the eye of the revolution kept watch over the slumbering roadstead.

Imagine what would have happened—as it might have but for an accident—if on that afternoon, or the next day, the *Protet*—on which were men who knew what they wanted—had arrived ready for battle, red flag aloft, the officers arrested. . . . The whole squadron would have followed. . . .

Several days later all the French warships left Sevastopol for France. On May 1, 1919, the city celebrated its liberation.

Naturally the solemn promises were not kept. The sailors of the *France*, as well as of the other ships, paid dearly for their magnanimity. Once the big battleship entered the drydock at Bizerte, where they had agreed to go, the men were given official leave, and therefore landed without arms. After that it was easy to arrest the "ringleaders."

But the whole Sevastopol fleet had quit the Black Sea.

VII. The Lessons

ONE FACT IS beyond dispute: As a result of the Black Sea Revolt, *French imperialism was compelled to relinquish its stranglehold on the October Revolution.*

That was a most important, a most vital factor for the Russian Revolution.

Clemenceau, Millerand, and their friends, had to content themselves with the services of their mercenaries—Denikin, Wrangel and others—in their attempt to overthrow the October Revolution. Later it was the Polish gentry and colonels. However, all these troops—the “Russian Volunteers,” the Poles and Serbs—were inferior, from every standpoint, to the French army, which by the end of 1918 had reached its greatest might and the highest degree of technical efficiency. The White Guards, even though abundantly supplied with material, and even when commanded by French officers, did not rate as a formidable instrument in the war directed by Generals Franchet d’Espérey, Berthelot and Foch. That was the great importance of the Black Sea Revolt. It contributed tremendously to the triumph of the great Socialist Revolution in Russia.

The working class, the laboring peasantry, the peoples of Russia, led in a titanic struggle by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Stalin, and their young Red Army, with Frunze, Voroshilov and Budyonny, finally cleared the

Ukraine and Southern Russia of the counter-revolutionary forces.

The importance of the Black Sea Revolt also consisted in the fact that, under the influence of the great Socialist Revolution, the masses of sailors, soldiers and workers rose in France—not only against the criminal designs of the French imperialists, but also against the official Social-Democratic leaders who had prostituted themselves to the bourgeoisie since 1914: the “Right” Socialists of the type of Renaudel, the “Center” as exemplified by Léon Blum, and the “Lefts” of the type of Paul Faure, as well as the trade union traitors of the *Union sacrée* (“Sacred Union”) like Léon Jouhaux and Georges Dumoulin.

But it must never be forgotten that this great victory of the proletariat and the people of France, and of the international proletariat, was really the victory of the Bolshevik Party, which succeeded in winning the army for the cause of the people. It succeeded in this decisive task, for which innumerable heroes gave their lives.

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