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MEDITERRANEAN  
FLEET, 1919–1929

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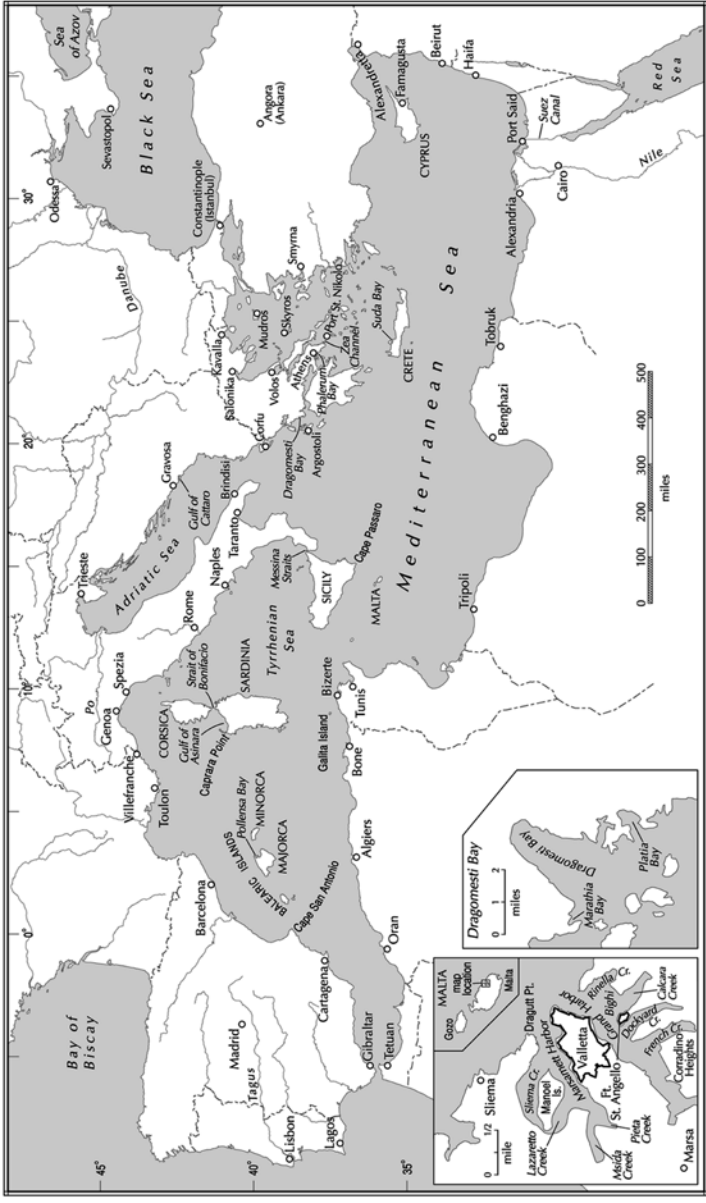
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Map 1 The Mediterranean

# THE MEDITERRANEAN FLEET, 1919–1929

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## PREFACE

The Mediterranean Fleet in the period between World War I and World War II produces memories of squadrons of imposing battleships accompanied by numerous cruisers and flotillas of destroyers. The fleet strived for perfection in the appearance of ships and the precision of their handling. The very number of warships available is striking when compared to the present day. The annual cruises to varied and generally interesting ports provided ample subject matter for numerous letters home or entries in diaries. The social and sporting life at Malta, the main base of the fleet for much of the time, was also noted. The Fleet regattas, sometimes at secluded bases along the Greek coast, were followed with great interest. Fortunately for the naval historian, there are numerous collections of private letters, diaries, midshipmen's journals and unpublished memoirs available in repositories such as the Imperial War Museum in London. There is understandably a rosy haze of nostalgia about the Mediterranean Fleet of this era, enhanced by the gruelling years of the war that followed. This memory of a golden age, however, can be deceiving. Much of the period between the wars was one of crisis or impending crisis. Financial problems loomed large even in the 1920s with, for example, restrictions on the expenditure of fuel. In the 1930s there was a growing sense of the potential vulnerability of the fleet's aging ships to the growing threat of air power. Once-friendly states like Italy were now potential enemies.

The documents reproduced in this volume cover the decade following World War I. For most of the first half of that decade the activities of the Mediterranean Fleet were concentrated in the Eastern Mediterranean, Sea of Marmora and the Black Sea. The war had hardly ended before the Mediterranean Fleet found itself involved in actions against the Bolsheviks and intervention on the side of the White Russians. This was a situation of neither war nor peace, familiar by the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century. The political-diplomatic situation was confused, the policy of government at home seemed uncertain, and the on-again, off-again policies towards the White Russians frustrating to all concerned. The final defeat of the latter and the end of hostilities in the Black Sea region brought little relief to the Mediterranean Fleet for

the British were now confronted with renascent Turkish forces led by Mustafa Kemal determined to resist the harsh provisions of the Peace Treaty with Turkey. Once again the government's policy seemed uncertain. Prime Minister Lloyd George tilted towards the Greeks and there was limited intervention in the Sea of Marmora, but some of the naval leaders had doubts about this. In 1922, the victorious Kemalist forces would confront the British at the border of the so-called neutral zone. The Chanak crisis of 1922 saw sizeable reinforcements sent to the Mediterranean Fleet and the distinct threat of war, eased by the Armistice of Mudania and, despite a confrontation over Smyrna in 1923, the threat of war would evaporate by the conclusion of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. The Mediterranean Fleet would finally be able to return to peacetime routine although there was renewed threat of war over Mosul in 1925–26. These events are the subject of the majority of the documents. The final part of the volume, the latter portion of the 1920s, shows the Mediterranean Fleet back to preparation for a major war, applying the lessons of the World War, and, especially, studying how to make use of the new weapons, aircraft carriers and aircraft.

The names of geographical features appear in a bewildering variety of forms and spellings in the contemporary documents. Whenever possible and as long as clarity does not suffer they are reproduced as originally written with apologies to today's linguist purists or staunch champions of consistency. For reasons of space, some of the headings of documents have been shortened or slightly rearranged. Salutations and formal endings have generally been omitted. Documents unless otherwise noted are typescript. All citations unless otherwise noted are from the National Archives of the United Kingdom (formerly Public Record Office), Kew. Minor omissions are indicated by an ellipsis, more substantial ones by a row of asterisks.

There are many people who helped in the preparation of this volume and the editor would particularly like to thank: Roderick Suddaby, Keeper of Documents at the Imperial War Museum, London as well as his colleagues at the museum; Captain Christopher Page, RN, and his colleagues at the Naval Historical Branch, Portsmouth; the staff of the Manuscripts Division and Library of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich; the Churchill College Archives Centre, Cambridge; the large number of people always ready to assist at the National Archives at Kew; Michael Simpson; and the Inter-Library Loan Office of Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida. The manuscript was guided through the publication stage by the Society's General Editor, Dr Roger A. Morriss. The maps were prepared by Peter Krafft, Cartographer, Florida Resources and Environmental Analysis Center, Florida State University.

For permission to reproduce copyright material, I would like to thank: Mr Charles L. Drage and his co-executors of the estate of the late Commander Charles H. Drage; Mr Richard de Robeck (Papers of Admiral Sir John M. de Robeck); and Brigadier G. L. D. Duckworth (Papers of Captain A. D. Duckworth). Documents in Crown Copyright appear by permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

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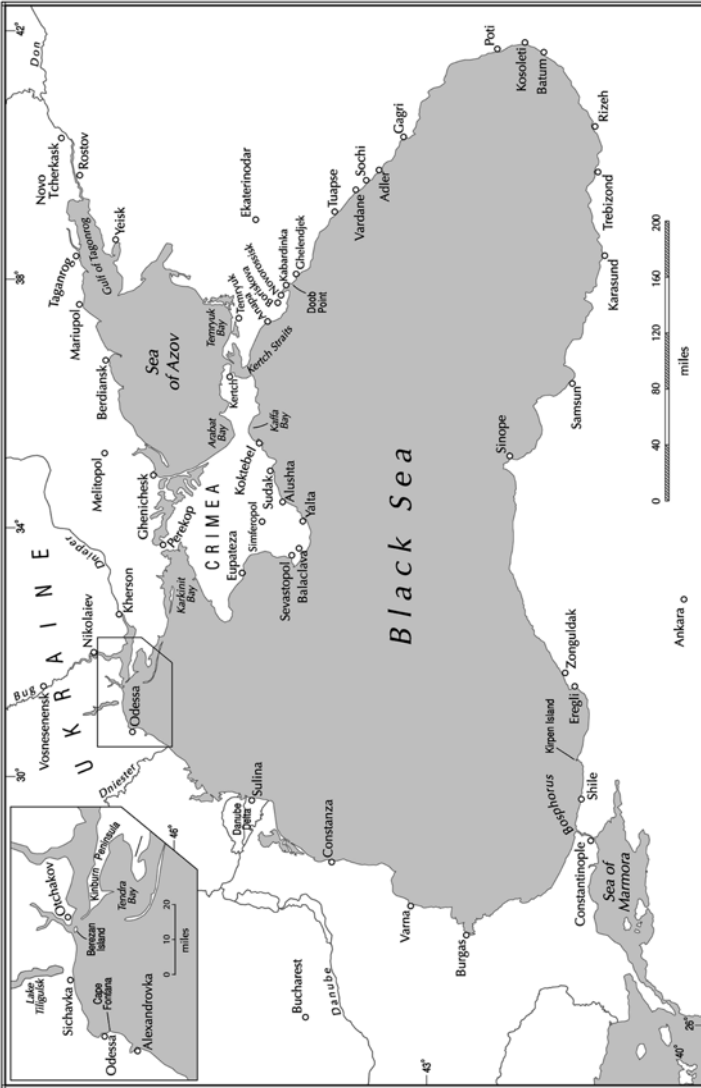
## GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACNS	Assistant Chief of Naval Staff
Adm	Admiral
ADM	Admiralty Records, The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew
Admy	Admiralty
AF	Atlantic Fleet
AHQ	Air Headquarters
Amb	Ambassador
AOC	Air Officer Commanding
AoF	Admiral of the Fleet
A/S	Anti Submarine
ASDIC	Anti Submarine Detection Equipment (developed by the Anti Submarine Detection Committee)
Asst	Assistant
A/T	Anti Torpedo
BCS	Battle Cruiser Squadron
BMM	British Military Mission
Brig Gen	Brigadier General
BS	Battle Squadron
BTY	Beatty MSS, The National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
C & M	Care and Maintenance
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief or Commanding-in-Chief
C-in-C (A)	Commander-in-Chief (Afloat)
Capt	Captain
Capt (D)	Captain Commanding Destroyer Flotilla
Capt (S)	Captain Commanding Submarine Flotilla
Cdr	Commander
Cdre	Commodore
Chf	Chief
Chllr	Chancellor
Chmn	Chairman
CMB	Coastal Motor Torpedo Boat
CNS	Chief of Naval Staff

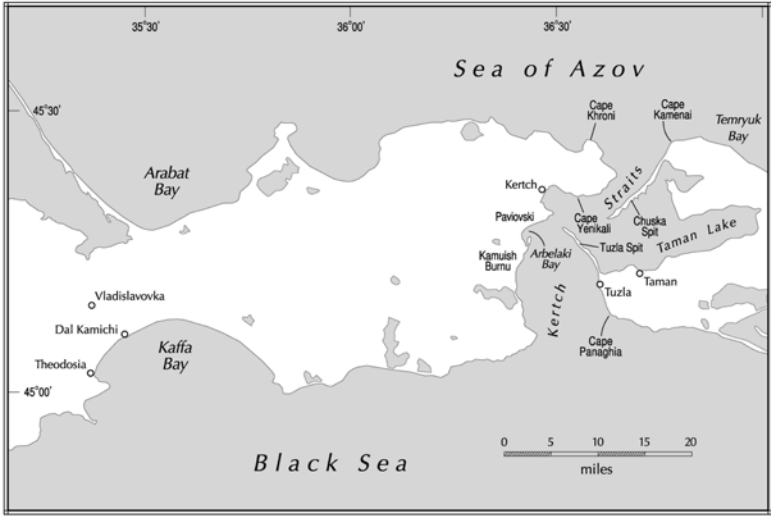
CO	Commanding Officer
Col	Colonel
Con	Conservative
Conf	Conference
COS	Chief of Staff
CS	Cruiser Squadron
Cttee	Committee
DCNS	Deputy Chief of Naval Staff
DCNO	Deputy Chief of Naval Operations
D/F	Direction Finding
DF	Destroyer Flotilla
DNI	Director of Naval Intelligence
DOD	Director of Operations Division
D of P, or DP	Director of Plans Division
EC	Electro-contact (mines)
ERA	Engine Room Artificer
f/i	for information (of)
FL	First Lord of the Admiralty
FM	Field Marshal
FO	Foreign Office; as source location, Foreign Office Records, The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew
FOO	Forward Observation Officer
FS	Foreign Secretary
Gen	General
GOC	General Officer Commanding
Govr	Governor
Govt	Government
GSO (N)	Naval Liaison Officer on General Staff
HA	High Angle
HBM	His Britannic Majesty's
HC	High Commissioner
HE	High Explosive
HHMS	His Hellenic Majesty's Ship
HIM	His/Her Imperial Majesty
HMAS	His Majesty's Australian Ship
HMS	His Majesty's Ship
HSMS	High Speed Mine Sweep
i/c	in command
imp	Imperial
IWM	Imperial War Museum, London
LCS	Light Cruiser Squadron

Lib	Liberal
LT	Local Time
Lt-Cdr	Lieutenant Commander
Med	Mediterranean
Minr	Minister
ML	Motor Launch or Mine Layer
MNB	Mobile Naval Base
M/S	Minesweeping or Minesweeper
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
NDO	Naval Detachment Officer
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
NTO	Naval Transport Officer
OCRAF	Officer Commanding Royal Air Force
OP	Observation Post
pdr	pounder (weight of shell fired by gun)
PM	Prime Minister
PMO	Principal Medical Officer
PNTO	Principal Naval Transport Officer
PO	Petty Officer
Pres	President
PV	Paravane (apparatus for sweeping mines)
RA	Rear Admiral or Royal Artillery (depending on context)
RA (2)	Rear Admiral second-in-command
RAC	Rear Admiral Commanding
RA (D)	Rear Admiral Commanding Destroyers
RAF	Royal Air Force
Rep	Representative
RFA	Royal Fleet Auxiliary or Royal Field Artillery (depending on context)
RHN	Royal Hellenic Navy
RM	Royal Marine(s)
RMA	Royal Marine Artillery
RMLI	Royal Marine Light Infantry
RN	Royal Navy/Naval
RNR	Royal Naval Reserve
RNVR	Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve
R/T	Radio Telephony
Sec	Secretary
SL	Sea Lord (1 SL=1st Sea Lord, 2 SL=2nd Sea Lord, etc.)
SNO	Senior Naval Officer
SNO (A)	Senior Naval Officer Afloat
SP	Staging Post

SPO	Stoker Petty Officer
Sqdn	Squadron
S/R	Spotter/Reconnaissance (Aircraft)
SRMO	Senior Royal Marine Officer
S/T	Submarine Telegraphy (underwater sound communications)
Sto	Stoker
T/B	Torpedo Bomber
TBD	Torpedo Boat Destroyer
Tgm	Telegram
USS	United States Ship
VA	Vice Admiral
V/S	Visual Signalling
WO	War Office
W/T	Wireless Telegraphy
1 L	First Lord



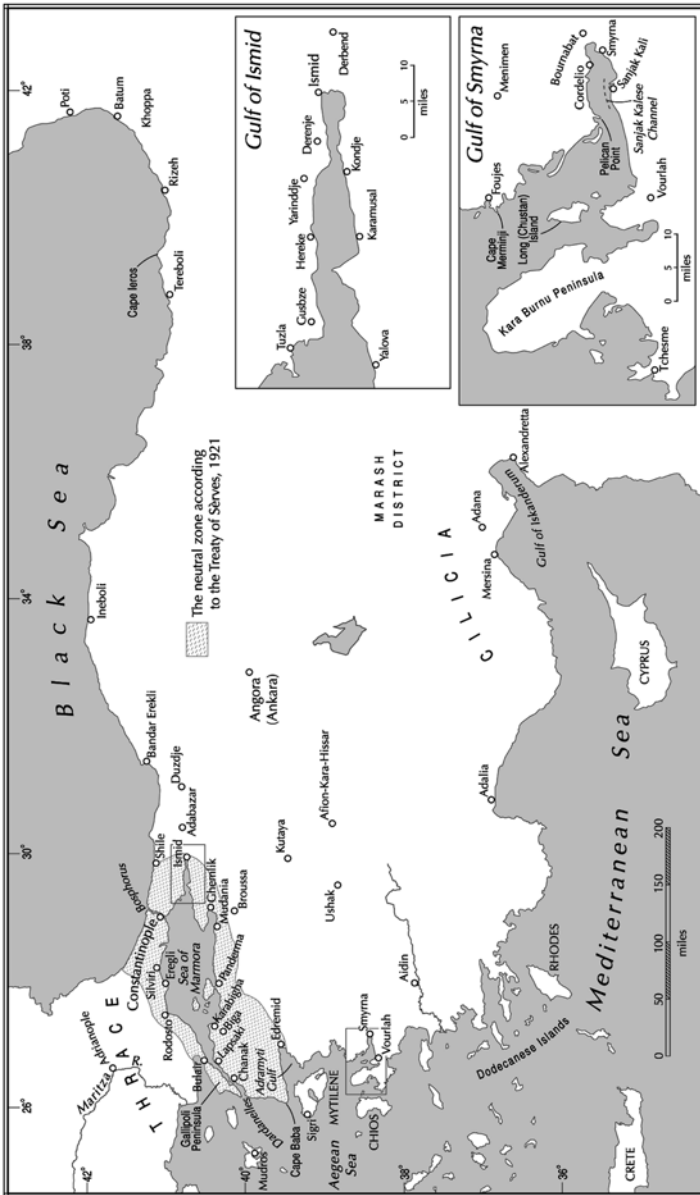
Map 2 The Black Sea



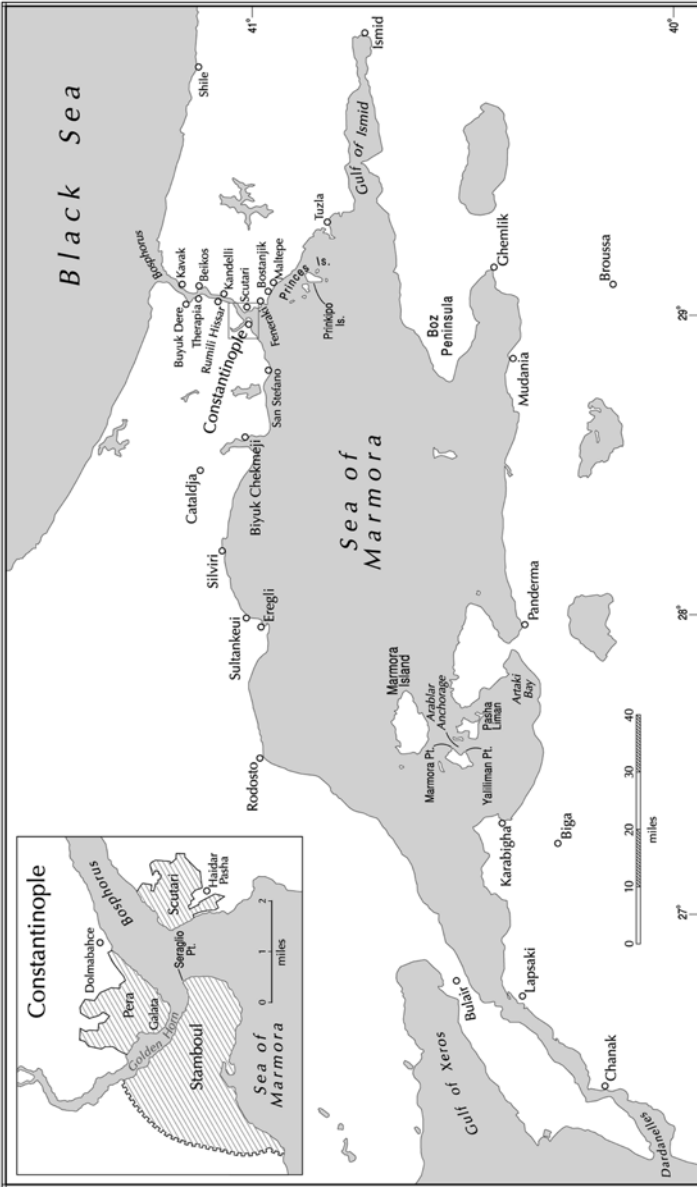
Map 3 The Kertch Straits



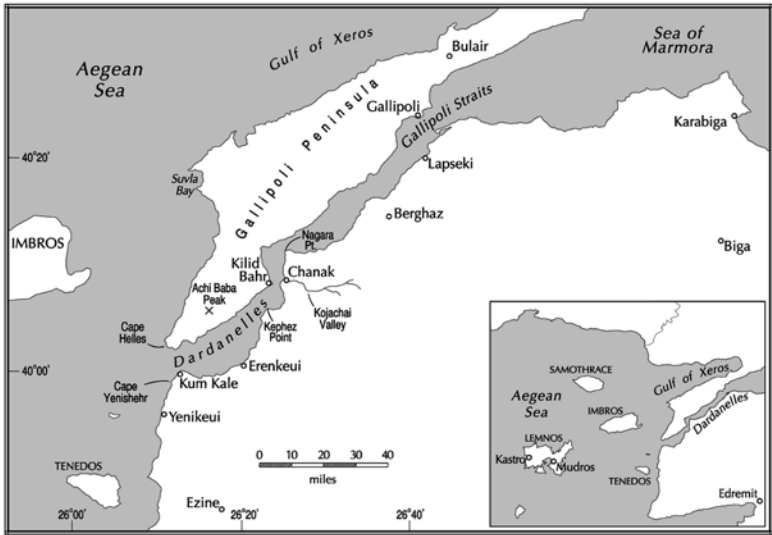
Map 4 The Caspian Sea



Map 5 Turkey



Map 6 The Sea of Marmora



Map 7 The Dardanelles



Map 8 Palestine

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## PART I

### 1919: THE UNTIDY AFTERMATH OF THE WAR

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On 30 October 1918, Admiral Sir Somerset Gough-Calthorpe, Commander-in-Chief of British naval forces in the Mediterranean, concluded an armistice with representatives of the Ottoman Empire at Mudros, the island off the Dardanelles that had served as a British base since the operations in 1915. Marines and Indian troops landed on the Gallipoli peninsula and occupied the fortifications that had defied the British and French in 1915 and minesweepers set to work to clear channels through the formidable minefields. Finally, on 12 November at midday, Calthorpe, flying his flag in the dreadnought *Superb* in company with her sister ship *Temeraire*, the semi-dreadnoughts *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon*, 5 British cruisers and 18 destroyers (3 Australian), led a British squadron through the Dardanelles. The British were followed at half-hourly intervals by a French squadron (5 battleships, 2 armoured cruisers, 6 destroyers), an Italian squadron (2 battleships, a cruiser, 3 destroyers) and a Greek squadron (armoured cruiser, 3 destroyers). The British and Indian troops occupying the forts were paraded as the Allied ships passed. The Allied fleets cruised through the sea of Marmora during the night and anchored off Constantinople at 08.00 Local Time on 13 November.<sup>1</sup> The British quickly left for the Gulf of Ismid which would be their main base for the present.<sup>2</sup>

Calthorpe and the Allies were immediately faced with the problem of what lay beyond Constantinople and the Bosphorus in the Black Sea. A week after their arrival off Constantinople on Admiralty orders British and Allied warships began to fan out to ports along the Black Sea to show the flag and to take steps to expedite carrying out the naval provisions of the armistice with Turkey and Germany.<sup>3</sup> The collapse of Russia and the Bolshevik seizure of power in late 1917 had led to German and Austrian forces penetrating deeply into Russian territory including the occupation of the Crimea and major naval base of Sevastopol. The fate of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, once a relatively formidable force that had enjoyed a fair

<sup>1</sup>Calthorpe to Admy, Tgm No. 678Z, 11 Nov and Tgm No. 684Z, 13 Nov 1918, ADM 137/1767.

<sup>2</sup>Calthorpe to Admy, Tgm No. 686, 13 Nov 1918, *ibid*.

<sup>3</sup>Calthorpe to Admy, Tgm No. 737Z, 23 Nov 1918, *ibid*.

measure of success in the Black Sea until the revolution and collapse, had been a matter of concern to the Allies who feared the Germans and their Allies would seize some or all of the ships and employ them in the Mediterranean. These fears proved to be exaggerated; manpower and other technical difficulties prevented the Germans from employing all but a small number of the Russian warships, others were scuttled by the Russians themselves.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, there was still much uncertainty over the remnants. Calthorpe had indeed planned operations in the Black Sea before the armistice with Germany on 11 November ended the necessity.<sup>2</sup> However, large numbers of German and Austrian troops now had to be repatriated. The situation was complicated by the fact that, following the collapse of Russian power, they were in some places one of the few means of maintaining law and order.

The success of the Bolsheviks had been challenged by counter-revolutionary and nationalist forces. The result was a civil war in Russia and the outcome at this stage was still uncertain. The Allies had already intervened in Northern Russia, ostensibly to prevent supplies falling into German hands, but increasingly to support the White forces.<sup>3</sup> Bolshevism had a powerful ideological appeal and was viewed with fear by the Allied governments, not least because of the danger of it spreading to their own populations. There was also danger that it could spread to the armed forces where war weariness was evident and indeed had been a major factor in the triumph of the Bolsheviks in Russia. To complicate matters the former subject nationalities of the Russian Empire now attempted to achieve their own independence, fighting against both the Red and White forces on occasion.

Calthorpe therefore faced a challenging situation. He actually wore two hats for, in addition to being Commander-in-Chief of British Mediterranean naval forces responsible to the Admiralty, he was also appointed High Commissioner at Constantinople, responsible to the Foreign Office. The

<sup>1</sup>The anxiety over the fate of the Russian Black Sea Fleet is examined in Paul G. Halpern, *The Naval War in the Mediterranean, 1914–1918* (London and Annapolis: Allen & Unwin/Naval Institute Press, 1987), chaps xi–xii, pp. 457–87, 542–55. Relevant documents are published in Paul G. Halpern (ed.), *The Royal Navy in the Mediterranean, 1915–1918* (NRS Vol. 126, Aldershot: Temple Smith for the Navy Records Society, 1987), Docs Nos. 163, 179–80, 182, 187, 191, 193, 241.

<sup>2</sup>Calthorpe had initially wanted to send British and French submarines into the Black Sea but the situation would have been complicated by the terms of the armistice with Turkey calling for the evacuation of German troops, since that evacuation might have to take place by sea. Calthorpe to Admiralty, Tgm No. 631Z, 6 Nov 1918, ADM 137/1767.

<sup>3</sup>The exhaustive study of the British role in Russia at the time is Richard H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917–1921*, 3 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961–73). See also Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, Vol. IV: *The Stricken World, 1916–1922* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), Part Two; and Clifford Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade: The British Invasion of Russia, 1918–1920* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006).

multi-national aspect of the problem meant he also had to take into account Allies who had their own agendas and whose interests did not always match those of the British. He moved as quickly as possible with an Allied squadron to Sevastopol to secure control of the Russian fleet. Calthorpe has been described by one of his staff officers as a mild-mannered unassuming man who initially on his appointment had some difficulty getting his authority recognised. He was, however, someone who grew into his job, now considerably expanded, and beneath the placid surface there were signs of a steely resolve.<sup>1</sup> This is evident in his unsympathetic dismissal of Russian objections to removal of Russian warships from Sevastopol with the words this was a 'salutary and desirable object lesson of the consequences of allowing their ships to fall into German hands and to be manned by them with the clear intention of using them against the Allies' [1].

The Admiralty was anxious in the aftermath of the war to reduce forces and expenditures. A massive rundown of naval establishments and forces began. The task was difficult to accomplish because of the necessity of keeping a strong fleet in Home waters until the final peace with Germany was concluded.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, a naval campaign against the Bolsheviks in the Baltic also developed.<sup>3</sup> In the face of these pressures Calthorpe made his case for the necessity of strong British forces in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean [2, 6]. The Mediterranean command was a large one with far-flung forces. They included a gunboat flotilla on the Danube to enforce the armistice conditions regarding navigation on the Danube and the fate of the former Austrian river flotilla,<sup>4</sup> a light cruiser squadron and other ships in the Adriatic, the Aegean Squadron in the Eastern Mediterranean and the British flotilla in the Caspian. The latter was isolated by geography from any contact with the Mediterranean Fleet but its commander reported to Calthorpe through the British Rear Admiral Black Sea. The Caspian flotilla originated during the war when a small British, Indian and Cossack force under Major-General Lionel Dunsterville

<sup>1</sup>The description is from then Lt-Cdr John H. Godfrey cited in Halpern, *Naval War in the Mediterranean*, pp. 371–2. See also Patrick Beesly, *Very Special Admiral: The Life of Admiral J. H. Godfrey*, CB (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980), pp. 47–8, 52–9. Godfrey's own memoirs are full of interest but privately printed and difficult to obtain: J. H. Godfrey, *The Naval Memoirs of Admiral J. H. Godfrey*, 7 vols in 10 (Hailsham, Sussex, 1964–6).

<sup>2</sup>On questions of demobilisation, see Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars*, Vol. I: *The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism, 1919–1929* (London: Collins, 1968), pp. 102–7; and Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, Vol. V: *Victory and Aftermath* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 202–3; 221–4.

<sup>3</sup>The standard account is Geoffrey Bennett, *Cowan's War: The Story of British Naval Operations in the Baltic, 1918–1920* (London: Collins, 1964).

<sup>4</sup>A short account with summaries in English is Paul J. Kemp, *Die Royal Navy auf der Donau, 1918–1925* (Graz: H. Weishaupt, 1988).

(the ‘Dunsterforce’) attempted to prevent the Germans and Turks from profiting from the collapse of Russia to make gains in the Transcaucasian region, notably seizure of the oil resources of Baku. Dunsterville was compelled to evacuate Baku in September 1918, but the armistice with Turkey created a new, complex and chaotic situation.<sup>1</sup> The improvised Caspian Flotilla under Commodore David T. Norris was composed of hired merchant ships, armed by the British and manned by mixed Russian and British crews, plus a handful of CMBs (coastal motor boats). The ships retained their names and so one had the unusual sight of British warships named *Kruger* and *Emile Nobel*, the latter the originator of the peace prize and the former a one-time enemy of the British Empire. Nevertheless, this strange flotilla fought a successful action against potentially superior Bolshevik naval forces [29, 31].

The Adriatic force was essentially a peacekeeping force and destined to be run down and ended as soon as possible. The situation in the Adriatic was also complex and the rivalries between Italians, French and the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes potentially dangerous. Commodore W. A. H. Kelly, commanding the British Adriatic Force, realised the inconvenience of maintaining a British force of some importance in the Adriatic but believed, ‘it is undoubted that the presence of these ships has already prevented conflict between the different contending parties’.<sup>2</sup> The Admiralty attitude towards the Adriatic, however, was expressed in a minute to a report concerning unrest at Spalato:

We will have to withdraw from the Adriatic sooner or later, and when we do there will undoubtedly be trouble between the Italians and Jugoslavs. As British naval interests are not in any way involved, it is considered that the sooner we withdraw from the Adriatic the better, particularly as such withdrawal will considerably assist in the solution of the demobilisation problems we are contending with.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the British force in the Adriatic was, as the Director of Naval Intelligence pointed out, to support British foreign policy, if not naval

<sup>1</sup>The complex situation is explained in W. E. D. Allen and Paul Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border, 1828–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953; reprint Nashville, TN: Battery Press, 1999), chap. xli. See also: Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars*, Vol. I, pp. 161–3; Brig Gen Frederick James Moberley, *Operations in Persia, 1914–1919* (London: HMSO, 1929; facsimile edn, London: HMSO, 1987), pp. 364–6, 384–9; Dunsterville gave his account soon after the war in Maj. Gen. L. C. Dunsterville, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce* (London: Edward Arnold, 1920).

<sup>2</sup>Kelly to Calthorpe, 3 Jan 1919, ADM 137/2514.

<sup>3</sup>Minute by DOD (F[oreign]), 21 March 1919, concerning FO to Admy, Spalato, Austria. Report of Internal Unrest and Action Taken, 19 March 1919, ADM 116/1817.

interests, and it was not until the autumn of 1919 that the situation permitted the Admiralty to plan to order the 3rd Light Cruiser Squadron to proceed to Constantinople leaving only one or two ships in the Adriatic.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of the Mediterranean Fleet was in the Aegean and, especially in 1919, the Black Sea. Here, Rear Admiral Michael Culme-Seymour was in command with his flagship, at first the semi-dreadnought *Lord Nelson* [3]. Calthorpe had asked, for reasons of prestige – especially to impress the Turks – in this contested area, for more powerful and imposing ships than his own flagship *Superb*, one of the early dreadnoughts. There was always the possibility the French or Italians would send more powerful and impressive ships.<sup>2</sup> He would have liked a 15-inch gunned ‘*Queen Elizabeth*’ or ‘*Royal Sovereign*’ class but this request was denied and he received the *Iron Duke* instead. The latter had been Admiral Jellicoe’s flagship at the Battle of Jutland, but was no longer the latest or most powerful of the Navy’s warships. *Iron Duke* would remain flagship of the Mediterranean Fleet for the next five years. Her sistership *Emperor of India* became Seymour’s flagship in the Black Sea.

The major components of the Mediterranean Fleet consisted of: the 4th Battle Squadron (*Iron Duke*, *Marlborough*, *Benbow*, *Emperor of India*, *Ajax* and *Centurion*); 3rd Light Cruiser Squadron (6 ‘C’ class cruisers); 6th Destroyer Flotilla (2 destroyer leaders and 16 destroyers); 5th Submarine Flotilla (depot ship and 5–6 submarines); 4th Minesweeping Squadron; 6 monitors; 22 sloops; and 3 seaplane carriers. Naturally, given the necessity of refits, not all ships were available at any given moment. By 1 July 1919 there were very few ships on the Mediterranean Station outside of the Sea of Marmora or Black Sea. On this date there was only a cruiser, two destroyers and a sloop at Fiume in the Adriatic, an old cruiser in the Red Sea, an old battleship as depot ship at Port Said, the 5th Submarine Flotilla at Malta and ships proceeding to or from, or under refit in, Malta and England. The situation, aside from positions of individual ships, had not greatly changed at the end of the year.<sup>3</sup> In the first few years after the World War, beyond brief periods at Malta for rest or refit, the Mediterranean Fleet saw relatively little of the Mediterranean.

Potentially the most effective resistance to the Bolsheviks in Southern Russia was the so-called Volunteer Army under the leadership of General

<sup>1</sup>Minute by DNI, 2 March 1919, *ibid.*; Minute by DOD (F), 11 Oct 1919, ADM 116/1879.

<sup>2</sup>Calthorpe to Admy, Tgm No. 126Z, 22 Nov 1918, ADM 137/1767.

<sup>3</sup>*Position and Movements of HM Ships* [‘Pink List’], 1 July and 30 Dec 1919. Copies in Naval Historical Library, Portsmouth. On 1 July, the battleship *Benbow* was under refit at Malta, *Ajax* was being fitted with a kite balloon winch at Malta and *Centurion* was under refit at Devonport.

Denikin.<sup>1</sup> On 13 November 1918, a conference considering policy towards Russia was held at the Foreign Office presided over by the Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour. The decision was reached to occupy the port of Batoum and establish relations with Denikin and render all material support possible.<sup>2</sup> On 23 November, the cruiser *Liverpool* had sailed with a Military Mission for Denikin.<sup>3</sup> Batoum was linked to Baku by rail although movements by rail were sporadic. The British assumed control of Batoum town and port and a British battalion was also sent to Tiflis.<sup>4</sup> Supplies to Denikin were sent via Novorossisk. Nevertheless, the situation for Calthorpe as to whether or not he could render active military assistance was ambiguous and in February 1919 he asked for clarification [4]. On 1 March, the Admiralty informed him that the War Cabinet had approved such active assistance provided no naval forces were landed without prior permission from England [5]. The help was badly needed for at this stage the Volunteer Army and other anti-Bolshevik forces were weak and, by the beginning of April, Nikolaiev with its shipbuilding yards was lost and Odessa and the Crimea threatened [7]. Wartime agreements had placed both Odessa and the Crimea in French zones of responsibility<sup>5</sup> and to the disgust of Admiral Seymour the French precipitously evacuated Odessa on 4 April. The threat to the Crimea and Sevastopol provoked concern on the part of King George V over the fate of the Dowager Empress of Russia who, with remnants of the Russian Imperial family had found refuge in the Crimea [9]. The Empress was, however, brought to safety in the *Marlborough* [8, 10]. Admiral Seymour's ships joined with French warships in providing artillery support to the Volunteer Army forces defending Sevastopol as well as to the Volunteer Army forces defending the Kertch Straits, the narrow passage between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov [11, 12, 14]. Calthorpe also urged the French naval commander, Vice Amiral Amet, not to give up Sevastopol even if the remainder of the Crimea was overrun, but if evacuation was unavoidable it would be necessary to

<sup>1</sup>A convenient introduction to Denikin is in Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1919–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 18–36.

<sup>2</sup>Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars*, Vol. I, pp. 155–6.

<sup>3</sup>On the subject of Allied intervention, see George A. Brinkley, *The Volunteer Army and Allied Intervention in South Russia, 1917–21* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), chap. iii.

<sup>4</sup>Calthorpe to Admy, Tgm No. 887Z, 2 Jan 1919, ADM 137/1767.

<sup>5</sup>According to the convention agreed at Paris 23 December 1917 concerning Southern Russia, French activity against the enemy would be north of the Black Sea with a zone of influence in Bessarabia, Ukraine and the Crimea. The British sphere of activities against the Turks would be to the southeast of the Black Sea with zones of influence in the Cossack territories of the Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia and Kurdistan. Admy to Calthorpe, Tgm No. 318Z, 27 Nov 1918, ADM 137/2281.

destroy as many ships and as much material that might be used against the Allies as possible [13]. Any hope of retaining Sevastopol probably ended on 19 April when a mutiny broke out in the French ships in the harbour [14]. Sevastopol fell, although the British were able to neutralise most of the Russian warships that could not be towed away. Nevertheless, the British had to face the prospect of the Bolsheviks controlling all the major ports and naval bases. Calthorpe found it particularly disturbing that they were in control of a number of unfinished submarines in the yards at Nikolaiev. There was a distinct possibility one or more of these might be finished and employed at sea with serious implications for British operations in the Black Sea. Calthorpe, who had been primarily concerned with anti-submarine operations throughout his command in the Mediterranean during the past war, made plans to meet this contingency, including a blockade of the mouth of the Bug River at Ochakov and a system of controlled sailings or convoys [15, 32]. The French agreed that naval operations against Bolshevik naval forces and submarines in the Black Sea would be under his command [33]. However, he received the disturbing news from the Admiralty that it was impossible to send out any reinforcements at present [21, 30]. The Mediterranean naval staff in a critique of Calthorpe's plans made a startling observation: 'The Mediterranean cannot raise a single ship fitted with modern submarine hunting appliances, or find officers and ratings specialised in their use' [35]. Given that the war had been over for less than eight months and anti-submarine operations had been the major occupation of the British forces in the Mediterranean, this rapid deterioration in anti-submarine capabilities is shocking. Calthorpe ordered an experiment to be conducted with a British submarine to investigate the possibility of an enemy submarine passing through the Bosphorus and operating in the Sea of Marmora. The results were encouraging, tending to minimise the threat [38]. It also became apparent that the danger of the Bolsheviks putting submarines under construction at Nikolaiev into service was exaggerated and that there was no immediate risk [41].

The Mediterranean Fleet was not immune to its own disturbances from discontented time-expired men or those subject to demobilisation and anxious to return home now that the war had been over for several months [27]. The issue seemed most acute in the depot ships in the Aegean. Fortunately, these problems were never as serious as those which affected the French Navy, and were successfully handled without harsh measures or general disciplinary action [28, 34]. The Admiralty had made a conscious effort to address the problem and, by early July, the overwhelming majority of men eligible for demobilisation in the Aegean command had been replaced by active service ratings [40].

The different armistices which had ended the fighting in October and November of 1918 were not final peace treaties and during the winter and spring of 1919 these were in the process of negotiation in Paris. A final settlement with Turkey was destined to be delayed far longer than anyone might have anticipated, but by May there were already decisions which would have important consequences for the Mediterranean Fleet. Greece had long-standing ambitions in Anatolia and these were likely to be bitterly resisted by the Turks with the danger of widespread violence.<sup>1</sup> Prime Minister Lloyd George, openly pro-Greek, ordered the Navy to escort and support if necessary the movement of Greek troops to the port of Smyrna for the purpose of protecting the large Greek population [17–20]. The occupation was the occasion of unfortunate incidents involving bloodshed, and a precursor of strong Turkish resistance to the Greek advances involving open warfare and culminating in the horrific events of September 1922 when Turkish forces recaptured Smyrna [24, 25].

British forces were clearly overextended and, in a period when there was a necessity for reduction of commitments and expenditures and a shortage of manpower, the decision was reached in London to withdraw from the Caucasus and Caspian Sea. For a time it appeared as if the Italians would take over a mandate for this region. The Italian mandate never materialised, the British nevertheless turned over the Caspian flotilla to General Denikin [31, 42].

The Navy, in the meantime, continued active support of the Volunteer Army's defence of the Kertch peninsula [16, 23, 26, 31] including operations in the Sea of Azov [22]. The tide of the war changed momentarily in June of 1919 and the Volunteer Army was able to undertake an offensive which resulted in the recapture of the Crimea and Sevastopol. Once again, the Royal Navy provided active support [36, 37, 39]. This support extended to the Volunteer Army's offensive northwards and westwards that led to the capture of Odessa on 24 August [42, 43, 45, 47]. The reoccupation of Nikolaiev also provided the opportunity to eliminate once and for all the potential danger from the submarines there should the changing fortunes of war bring a return of the Bolsheviks [44, 46]. The British also joined the handful of White Russian warships restored to service in the Sea of Azov, although in these waters shoal water greatly restricted the employment of any ships drawing more water than a destroyer, especially in the Gulf of Taganrog in the northeast [48].

<sup>1</sup>For a summary of the background with emphasis on the naval aspect, see Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars*, Vol. I, pp. 181–6. A thorough study of Greek ambitions in Asia Minor is: Michael Llewellyn-Smith, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919–1922* (London: Allen Lane, 1973).

Vice Admiral John M. de Robeck succeeded Calthorpe as Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Station as of 26 July 1919. Like his predecessor, he was also appointed High Commissioner at Constantinople. De Robeck is remembered mostly for his role as commander of British naval forces during the operations at the Dardanelles in 1915 and his opposition to a renewed attempt to force the Straits with naval forces, a decision that played a large role in the ultimate British evacuation of the Gallipoli peninsula. His role as Mediterranean C-in-C after the war is less well known although he had considerable naval and diplomatic responsibilities. A fervent anti-communist, he had strong opinions on men and events which are clearly evident in his reports. His command was anything but a sinecure. He considered that Great Britain's first duty in the Black Sea was 'unreserved support for the only force there is for government and good order', namely General Denikin. He stressed that this support should include the re-establishment of a revitalised Russian Black Sea Fleet, possibly with the aid of a British Naval Mission [49]. However, there would be insufficient time for this to take place for, in the autumn of 1919, the White forces, who had advanced far inland in a drive for Moscow and were thus distant from British naval support, were stopped at Orel in October and suffered reverses sending them into full retreat. By the end of the year, Odessa was once again threatened [50].

1. *Vice Admiral Calthorpe*<sup>1</sup> to Admiralty

[ADM 137/2281]

HMS *Superb*  
12 December 1918CONFIDENTIAL

Z.44/50322.

[Carbon]

## GENERAL LETTER

The following report is submitted in continuation of my general letter No. Z.40/50321 of the 10th December 1918.

2.– The Allied Squadron under my command<sup>2</sup> arrived at Sevastopol at 1000 on the 26th November and secured to buoys. During the afternoon I received visits from the following:–

Rear Admiral Klochkovsky, Russian Navy.

General de Bode, Chief Military Representative in the Crimea of General Denikin.<sup>3</sup>

Deputations from: the Ukraine Government

the Crimean Government

the Mayor and Town council of Sevastopol

The Polish inhabitants of Sevastopol

Vice Admiral Hopman,<sup>4</sup> German Navy.

General Count von Waldersee,<sup>5</sup> German Army.

<sup>1</sup>VA [later Aof] Hon Sir Somerset Arthur Gough-Calthorpe (1864–1937). 2nd son of 7th Baron Calthorpe. Commanded 2nd CS, 1914–16; 2 SL, 1916; British C-in-C Med., 1917–19; HC at Constantinople, 1918–19; C-in-C Portsmouth, 1920–23.

<sup>2</sup>Calthorpe's command consisted of: British battleships *Superb* (flag) and *Temeraire*; scout cruiser *Skirmisher*; six destroyers; submarine depot ship *Adamant* and submarine *E.21*; French battleships *Justice* (RA Lejay) and *Democratie* and one destroyer; Italian battleship *Roma* and gunboat *Agordat*; and two Greek destroyers. Calthorpe to Admy, Tgm No. 759Z, 26 Nov 1918, ADM 137/1717.

<sup>3</sup>Gen Anton I. Denikin (1872–1947). Commanded VIII Corps, Russian Army, 1916–17; after the March Revolution, COS to successive C-in-Cs during Kerensky govt, 1917; imprisoned for support of Kornilov's attempted coup, Sept 1917; following Bolshevik seizure of power, escaped with Kornilov to form anti-Bolshevik force, Dec 1918; after death of Kornilov in action became C-in-C Armed Forces of South Russia (The Volunteer Army), 1919–20; subsequent to the victory of the Red Army went into exile and died in the US, 1947.

<sup>4</sup>Vizeadmiral Albert Hopman (1865–1942). Head of Zentralabteilung, Reichsmarineamt [Imp Navy Office], 1911–15; RA commanding Scouting forces [Aufklärungsstreitkräfte] in the Baltic, 1915, 1916–17; advisor in Turkish Ministry of Marine, 1916; served on Armistice Commission in Bucharest and Odessa, 1917–18; commanded naval forces in Black Sea and head of Nautisch-technischen Commission dealing with the Russian Black Sea Fleet after the German occupation of the Crimea in the spring of 1918.

<sup>5</sup>Generalleutnant Georg Graf von Waldersee (1860–1932). Oberquartiermeister on staff of German Eighth Army, July–Oct, 1918; German Gen in Odessa and Govr of Sevastopol, Oct–Nov, 1918.

I held a conference with the German Admiral and General as to the measures required to carry out the terms of the armistice, the French Rear Admiral<sup>1</sup> being present.

3.— The general situation in the Crimea on my arrival was as follows.

There were 11,000 German troops quartered in Sevastopol and the other principal towns, whose presence was effective in maintaining order. It was generally anticipated that on their evacuation the Bolshevik element, which had ceased activity on arrival of the Germans, would reassert itself with all its attendant horrors, unless the Germans were replaced by Allied forces. The Bolsheviks were stated to have large quantities of arms in concealment and to be only awaiting their opportunity. The Volunteer Army, which exists almost only in name, has at its disposal less than 1,000 men in the whole of the Crimea, and these are ill armed and lack equipment and stores. The chief point of danger is in Sevastopol itself, where there are immense and widely separated stores of munitions and material in the forts, magazines, and dockyard. All of these are in a state of neglect and confusion, and without anyone to look after them. Magazines are in many cases open and munitions dangerously mixed and accessible; many valuable stores such as silk, copper and rubber, have been removed by the Germans and Russian pillagers. Some of the most important stores were guarded by the Germans; some others by a few men of the Volunteer Army or town guard. The Crimean Government appears to be composed of men of little influence, and has no armed forces nor police at its disposal. Its main desire is to obtain the assistance of anyone who is likely to afford protection to the Crimea, and therefore it looks to the army of General Denikin and also to the Allies for salvation from the Bolsheviks. It has hitherto been entirely amenable to German control for the same reasons.

4.— Allied Committees were appointed to investigate and deal with the following questions arising out of the armistice with Germany, and other matters specified:—

- (a) W/T stations, submarine cables, and telegraphs.
- (b) Torpedo Boat Destroyers, Torpedo Boats, Minelayers, minesweepers and other small surface craft.
- (c) German and Russian submarines.
- (d) Transports and Merchant Ships in the Black Sea.
- (e) Coal, oil, ordnance, aircraft and other stores.
- (f) To render the older Russian Battleships and Cruisers of the Black Sea Fleet incapable of hostile action.
- (g) To investigate the condition of the forts and batteries of Sevastopol area and to ensure their being incapable of hostile action.

<sup>1</sup>Contre amiral Lejay, commanding 2nd division of 2eme escadre.

5.– Arrangements were made for the following ships of the Russian Black Sea Fleet to be manned by the Allies in accordance with clause 29 of the terms of the armistice.

By British.

Battleship *Volya*, by Officers and men drawn from *Agamemnon*.

Torpedo Boat Destroyer *Derski*, by Officers and men drawn from *Superb*.

Torpedo Boat Destroyer *Schastlivi*, by Officers and men drawn from *Temeraire*.

By French.

Torpedo Boat Destroyer *Bezpokoini*.

Torpedo Boat Destroyer *Kapitan Saken*.

By Italians.

Torpedo Boat Destroyer *Zorki*.

By Greeks.

Torpedo Boat Destroyer *Zvonki*.

In addition the following German war vessels were handed over and manned as follows:–

By British.

Submarines *UB.42*.

*UC.37*.

By French.

Submarines *UB.14*.

*UC.25*.

Yacht *Lorelei*.

The above are all the German and Russian men-of-war which have been manned by the German Navy, with the exception of two Russian submarines which were manned by the Germans for a short time only and then discarded as inefficient.

6.– It was also arranged that the evacuation of German troops from the Crimea and Caucasus, which had already commenced, should be completed as soon as possible. For this purpose I sanctioned the continued use of the German and Austrian merchant ships which were employed on this service. All troops are being evacuated through Nicolaief and thence by rail, railway transport from Odessa to the North having recently been stopped by Russian revolutionary bands.

7.– There was a divergence of views between myself and the German Admiral as to whether ‘merchant vessels’ were included in the ‘German material’ to be abandoned under clause 29 of the terms of the Armistice.

As my official instructions (Admiralty telegram No. 235z) showed clearly that the British interpretation of the expression included merchant ships, the German Admiral gave way, under protest.

The correspondence on this point has been submitted separately in my letter No. Z.45/52563 of 12th December.<sup>1</sup>

8.— Having received reports as to the probability of a serious situation arising at Odessa, H.M.S. *Beaver* with Major General Ballard<sup>2</sup> (attached to the Roumanian Mission) proceeded there from the river Danube, followed by H.M.S. *Nereide* from Varna, and at the same time I dispatched H.M.S. *Skirmisher* from Sevastopol. I also arranged for Allied ships to visit the following ports in pursuance of the policy of showing the Allied flags as widely as possible:—

Nicolaief: 2 British and 1 French Destroyers.

Berdiansk and Ghenichesk: 1 British Destroyer.

Kertch, Mariupol and Taganrog: 1 British and 1 French Destroyer.

Officers of this mission have also visited Rostov and Novo Tcherkask. Trebizond: H.M.S. *Forward*.

Yalta and Theodosia: British and Allied Destroyers.

The general effect of these visits has been excellent. The ships on all occasions have been well received, but the opinion prevails at all ports that the situation is very unstable.

It was also arranged for a party of Allied Officers and men to make a brief tour of the Crimea by rail, during which visits were paid to Simferopol, Djanskoi, Melitopol and Novo Alexief.

9.— On 4th December I proceeded to Odessa in H.M.S. *Superb* in order to ascertain personally the state of affairs at this most important commercial port. I remained for two days, during which time I received several deputations, and visited General Rauch of the Russian Army, who was in military charge there. From him and other sources I ascertained that the situation was comparatively quiet, due to presence of 4,000 German troops whom it had not been possible to evacuate, but, as in all other places, an outbreak was expected when these troops left.

Communication by rail with Kieff is cut at Vosnesensk by revolutionary Ukraine forces under the leadership of Petlura.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Not reproduced. Early in January Calthorpe reported that the Allies 'had taken vigorous action regarding shipping in enemy hands'. Of the 14 German ships to be abandoned to the Allies, the French had already taken over and manned 5 and would continue to take over the remainder. The Italians had taken over all Austrian ships, and all British ships, except one working for the Russian Volunteer Army and another that had been sunk, were now restored to the British flag. Calthorpe to Admy, Tgm No. 879Z, 4 Jan 1919, ADM 137/1767.

<sup>2</sup>Maj Gen Christopher Ballard, head of British Military Mission in Roumania, 1917–18.

<sup>3</sup>Simon Vasilievich Petliura (1877–1926). Sec. Gen. for Military Affairs in Ukrainian Govt, 1917; notorious for leading anti-semitic pogroms in the Ukraine, captured Kiev, summer, 1919; campaigned against Denikin, 1919–20; allied with Poles in struggle against the Bolsheviks and attempted to organise anti-Bolshevik uprising in the Ukraine, 1920–22; murdered in Paris, 1926.

Over 70 merchant steamers, chiefly Russian, are lying idle at Odessa due to lack of coal and crews. Many of them will require large repairs before they are fit for service. Endeavours are being made by the French and ourselves to charter and use some of this tonnage.

In addition to H.M.S. *Skirmisher* and British Destroyers, the French Battleship *Mirabeau* was present and has since been joined by *Justice* (Flag of Rear Admiral Lejay).

I have just received information from *Skirmisher* that Petlura's forces have entered the town, which has been evacuated by the representatives of the Ukraine Government and by the Volunteer Army. Order has so far been maintained.

10.— Captain G. K. Chetwode,<sup>1</sup> who had been sent to Nicolaief with H.M. Ships *Tribune* and *Shark*, having reported on 8th December that the situation there was critical, as forces of the Petlura party were advancing on the town, and moreover the German troops could not be depended on to resist them, I dispatched H.M.S. *Canterbury* from Sevastopol, followed on the 10th by H.M.S. *Grafton*. The latest information from Nicolaief is that, as in the case of Odessa, the town has been evacuated by the Ukraine Government representatives and by the Volunteer Army, but that order is being maintained by the forces of Petlura and by British and German patrols.

11.— The whole political and military situation in the Ukraine is so complex, and changes with such rapidity, that it is impossible to foresee what developments may occur. It seems probable, however, that the continued evacuation of German troops by rail will become impossible, and for that reason, and at the urgent request of Vice Admiral Hopman, I have advocated by telegram No. 823z that ten large German transports should be sent to the Black Sea to embark the whole of the remaining troops for conveyance by all sea route to Germany.

12.— Pending the arrival of the French division which has been ordered to the Ukraine I considered it necessary to make provision for a minimum military force to replace the Germans on their departure from Sevastopol. Otherwise the presence of the Fleet alone could not have ensured the proper protection of the magazines and dockyard against pillage and arson. I have therefore withdrawn 500 British marines from the Dardanelles and Bosphorus forts and have established them at Sevastopol until the arrival of the French, when I hope to be able to remove them.

<sup>1</sup>Capt [later Adm Sir] George Chetwode (1877–1957). Capt (D), 5th DF (Med), 1917–19; Dep DNI, 1923–5; commanded battleships *Queen Elizabeth* and *Warspite*, 1925–7; Naval Sec to FL, 1929–32; commanded 1st CS, Med Fleet, 1932–3; Adm commanding Reserves, 1933–6; retired list, 1936.

13.— H.M.S. *Liverpool* and one British Destroyer are remaining at Batoum until the arrival of H.M.S. *Theseus*, who will be stationed there as base ship during the occupation by British Military forces.

14.— I am taking steps with all minesweeping forces available to clear the approaches to Varna, Constanza and Burgas, as it is intended to land military stores at these ports at an early date. Further sweeping operations will be continued in the Black Sea so far as my resources permit.

15.— Good progress has been made in the work of preparing for sea the war vessels taken by the British at Sevastopol. Generally speaking, they were found to be in an indescribably filthy condition, and some parts of their machinery and fittings were missing or damaged. The work carried out by the ships detailed to take them over has been most creditable to the Officers and men concerned.

16.— The Battleship *Volya*, the two Russian Destroyers, and the two German submarines taken over by the British have carried out trials under their own power, and H.M.S. *Adamant* left Sevastopol today, 12th December, with the two submarines for Ismid, where they will remain with a British care and maintenance party. *Volya* and the two Russian Destroyers, manned respectively by navigating crews from H.M. Ships *Agamemnon*, *Superb* and *Temeraire*, will be ready to leave within the next few days for the same place.

The removal of these ships has caused considerable feeling amongst the Officers of the Russian Navy and the local population. I consider, however, that it is a salutary and desirable object lesson of the consequences of allowing their ships to fall into German hands and to be manned by them with the clear intention of using them against the Allies.

16.— I enclose an additional copy of this report, which I submit may be transmitted to the Foreign Office in order that that department may be aware of the circumstances which from time to time require me to be absent from Constantinople.

## 2. *Calthorpe to Admiralty*

[ADM 137/1767]

18 January 1919

[Telegram]

RECD. 8.28 p.m.

966Z. Your 609Z. British Naval Forces are required in Aegean and Black Sea:

- A. To ensure coasting trade with Turkey.
- B. To protect British interests and enforce Allied policy in Russia.
- C. To supply and maintain Caspian Forces.

These entail following duties among others: Control of all Merchant Shipping; blockade; Govt. Transport; supervision of interned Men-of-War, and arrangement for transport of British, German and Turkish Troops in very large numbers. Allied flags must also be frequently shown in Russian and Turkish ports to restrain Bolshevist activities and to protect Allied subjects and Armenians. At the present time there is not a single British Consul in the Black Sea except a Vice Consul Novorossisk who is a Swede. British Naval Officers are therefore only Officers to whom reference can be made on any subject affecting British interest, and the numerous and extremely varied requests for information or action which I receive both from Admiralty and Foreign Office have to be dealt with by them. Ukraine and Crimea being French Zone does not materially alter matters since British representatives of some sort are necessary. French also rely on our support in many ways and recently asked for additional British Naval Forces at Nicolaieff which I had to refuse. I consider British ships should constantly be represented at Smyrna, Odessa, Nicolaieff, Sevastopol, Novorossisk and Batum, and one Battleship in addition to H.M.S. *Caesar* at Constantinople<sup>1</sup> where display of force is most necessary.

Present disposition is: H.M.S. *Superb* at Constantinople; H.M.S. *Temeraire* at Sevastopol; H.M.S. *Lord Nelson* cruising with Rear Admiral; H.M.S. *Theseus* at Batum; H.M.S. *Grafton* at Odessa; H.M.S. *Sentinel* at Nicolaieff; H.M.S. *Agamemnon*, H.M.S. *Forward*, H.M.S. *Foresight* refitting; H.M.S. *Liverpool*, H.M.S. *Endymion* ordered home; H.M.S. *Canterbury* at Constantinople for stores and provisions after 5 weeks valuable work at Nicolaieff.

Monitors and Gunboats now in Danube were ordered there by your 277Z 19th Nov. H.M.S. *Humber* spare ship for Danube if required. Monitors *M.16*, *17* and *18* retained for use in rivers of Russia if so required in spring.

H.M.S. *Adventure* at Smyrna. Aegean has only two scouts and cannot do with less. H.M.A.S. *Brisbane* has gone home. H.M.S. *Pyramus* has paid off. H.M.S. *Pelorus* is essential at Helles until Dardanelles minefield is cleared. Four old Mudros Torpedo Boats similarly required [as bases] for inner line minefield. Remaining 'M' Class Monitors have paid off except *M.19* and *M.29* which will shortly do so. Fleet Messengers not already sent home are working for P.N.T.O. who states that they cannot be spared. Sloops and old Fleet Sweepers are doing essential Ferry services and in this connection it must be noted that Navy is providing stores and mails in the

<sup>1</sup>The old battleship *Caesar* (1896) was used as a depot ship for the Black Sea and Marmora at Constantinople.

Mediterranean and Black Sea and that I am constantly called on to provide passage for important Naval and Military Officers, Officials and Missions of all sorts. Four of these vessels are required in connection with the repatriation of Armenians. Orders have been issued already to send home all Trawlers and Drifters whose retention is not essential for mine sweeping or transport of stores and this is being done. No previous orders have been received to reduce 5th D.F. [Destroyer Flotilla] but this should be possible and proposals will be made. H.M.S. *Sir Thomas Picton* and H.M.S. *Earl of Peterborough* being under Italian orders I asked Admiralty on Dec. 18th my 847Z to take action regarding their proceeding home. My 843Z of Dec. 17th asked for information as to disposal of Motor Launches and my 947Z 14th Jan. requested reply on this point.

1208.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. *Rear Admiral Seymour<sup>2</sup> to Calthorpe*

[ADM 137/1740]

HMS *Lord Nelson*  
25 January 1919

#### LETTER OF PROCEEDINGS

[Carbon]

In continuation of my Letter of Proceedings to the 31st December, dated 20th January, No. 1755/6, I have the honour to make the following report to the present date:—

2. On January 1st I transferred the Command of the Aegean Squadron to Commodore M. Fitzmaurice,<sup>3</sup> CMG, and assumed command of the Sea of Marmora, Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Sea of Azov, etc., as directed in Commander-in-Chief's Memo. No. 50313, dated 19th December, 1918.

3. The Commander-in-Chief having been present in the command in general charge during this period is fully aware of the general situation in certain parts of the Command, which is therefore only lightly touched upon in this report.

<sup>1</sup> Time of origin.

<sup>2</sup>RA [later VA Sir] Michael Culme-Seymour (1867–1925). Succeeded his father as 4th Baronet, 1920; commanded battleship *Centurion* at battle of Jutland, 1916; Dir of Mobilisation Division, Naval Staff, 1916–18; commanded British Aegean Sqdn, 1918; RA commanding Black Sea and Caspian Sqdn, 1919; C-in-C North America & West Indies, 1923–4; 2 SL, 1924–5.

<sup>3</sup>Cdre [later VA Sir] Maurice Swynfen Fitzmaurice (1870–1927). COS in Eastern Med Sqdn, 1916–18, commanded *Dreadnought*, 1918, SNO Coast of Palestine, 1918; Cdre commanding British Aegean Sqdn, 1919; DNI, Admiralty, 1921–4; C-in-C Africa Station, 1924–7.

4. I left Constantinople in *Lord Nelson* on the 3rd of January, visiting Gallipoli, Chanak and Ismid, returning on the 7th January, leaving again on the 11th January for Batum, where I arrived on the 14th January.

5. I left Batum on the 19th, arriving at Novorossisk on the 20th January. On the 21st I proceeded by train to Ekatarinodar returning the same evening and leaving Novorossisk for Batum on the 22nd, arriving on the 23rd, and leaving Batum for Constantinople a.m. Saturday, January 25th.

6. The general situation in the Caspian up to the 31st December is very clearly set out in S.N.O.'s report of that date. Since then the main developments are the destruction of the Bolshevik Base which was being established at Stavo Terechnaya Bay, and the capture of the *Alsageric* (Bolshevik Hospital Ship), which had been used for military purposes. This operation was very successfully carried out by Lieut.-Commander R. Harrison, RNR, to whom great credit is due ...

7. On the 23rd I received a report that the Bolshevik merchant vessel *Amacia* had also been captured.

8. During this period the labour situation in Baku has become critical, and although higher wages have been offered the situation remains unsettled, due not only to the question of pay, but apparently to anti-British feeling.

9. The Bolshevik tendencies of the three Russian gunboats and the four Russian armed merchant vessels appear to have increased rather than diminished, and I have proposed to the Volunteer Army authorities that they should be paid off, being at present a potential danger to our command in the Caspian. It is also understood that it has been proposed that the Volunteer Army forces under General Bicharakov should be disbanded, and if this proposal and the demobilisation of the Russian vessels were carried out, it is thought the situation would be much improved.

10. A considerable number of guns, stores, aeroplanes, motor boats, etc., and ratings, have been transported to the Caspian during this period, and an aerodrome established at Petrovsk where a Battalion of Gurkhas has been stationed.<sup>1</sup>

11. The British troops stationed at Baku have also been increased and they have been placed under the same general command as the rest of troops in Trans Caucasia.

12. The most serious part of the situation is the delay in re-fitting and re-arming of our vessels that would ensue in the event of strikes.

<sup>1</sup>Headquarters for a flight of DH.9 aircraft under the command of Col. R. Gordon, RAF, was established at Petrovsk on 15 Jan. A second flight of DH.9s for the latter had reached Baku by the 14th.

13. I had a long conversation on the 14th with Major-General Forestier-Walker,<sup>1</sup> commanding the 27th Division. On the 15th he left for Tiflis, where his permanent headquarters are ...

14. I saw General Sir George Milne<sup>2</sup> on his arrival on the 18th January, and he left for Tiflis on the 19th with the intention of proceeding to Baku and across the Caspian to Merv, expecting to return to Constantinople in about a month.

15. The situation at Batum is quite satisfactory, though the Georgians have been giving a certain amount of trouble. There has been some little difficulty in arranging for the repatriation of the Turkish troops from the district, but most of them have now been repatriated by sea, or marched to Trebizond, and it is hoped that they will all have been cleared out shortly.

16. At Poti the SS *Varna* still remains with 1500 German troops on board waiting for orders as to where she is to proceed. The troops are allowed a good deal of liberty and get drunk on shore, when they are liable to insult any British officers they meet, but otherwise are not at present giving any serious trouble, though it is most desirable that they should be removed. Von Kress<sup>3</sup> is still at Poti living in a train.

17. The Georgians were, at first, very obstructive, but have become very much more amenable lately.

18. A detachment of British troops has been stationed at Poti where HMS *Goshawk* has also been for some time. Lieutenant A. C. Maund, her commander, appears to have behaved with great tact and discretion ...

19. At Trebizond the situation is a little difficult. The number of Turkish troops there is increasing, some demobilized and some not; there are also many bands of brigands or semi-brigands in the district.

20. The French diplomatic agent has taken a strong line, and calls himself 'High Commissioner'. The only British representative – Sub-Lieutenant Hutchinson, RNVR – who was sent here by GSO (N) has done well, but he is, naturally overshadowed. It is very desirable that a British Diplomatic Agent with Consular experience should be sent there.

<sup>1</sup>Maj Gen Sir George Townsend Forestier-Walker (1866–1939). Brig Gen, Gen Staff of II Corps, BEF, 1914; commanded 21st Division at Battle of Loos, 1915; commanded 27th Division on Salonika front and at Tiflis, Georgia, after the Armistice.

<sup>2</sup>Lt-Gen [later FM] Sir George Francis Milne (1866–1948). Created 1st Baron, 1933; commanded 27th Division, 1915; commanded XVI Corps, 1916; C-in-C British Salonika Force, 1916–18; C-in-C Armies of the Black Sea, 1919–20; Chief of the Imp Gen Staff, 1926–33.

<sup>3</sup>Generalmajor Friedrich Kress von Kressenstein (1870–1948). Member of German Military Mission in Turkey and COS, VIII (Turkish) Army Corps, 1914–15; led unsuccessful attack on Suez Canal, Feb 1915; COS in Turkish Fourth and subsequently Eighth Army, 1915–18; commanded Turkish-German forces occupying Tiflisi, Georgia, 1918; head of German delegation in Transcaucasus region, 1918–19; commanded 7th Infantry Division (Reichswehr), 1923–9.

21. I dispatched HMS *Sikh* there on two occasions to settle and enquire into certain matters which were satisfactorily adjusted. A party of naval and military officers inspected Russian war material at Trebizond, and lists have been forwarded to Major-General Poole.<sup>1</sup>

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23. The town of Novorossisk is quiet, but it is doubtful if this would be the case were the troops of the Volunteer Army removed. There is a good deal of suppressed Bolshevism in the town.

24. On arrival at Ekatarinodar on the 22nd I saw General Poole and was disappointed to find that General Denikin had gone to the front. General Denikin has now assumed command of all the Anti-Bolshevist armies in Southern Russia and will shortly establish his headquarters at Sevastopol. I saw his Second-in-Command (General Dragoumiroff) and pointed out to him the inherent danger of the situation on the Caspian coast by the Bolshevist tendencies of the Russian-manned vessels, and I requested that they should be paid off ...

I have told the SNO, Caspian, that should he find it necessary to pay these vessels off before they receive directions from the Volunteer Army he is authorised to do so and that he is also authorised to prevent them leaving Baku without his concurrence.

\* \* \*

26. An appreciation of the military situation in that region is attached, and it will be seen that the position is very critical in the important Donetz basin.

The condition of the military hospitals is deplorable and medical stores and assistance are urgently required.

The Volunteer Army Government are relying, with confidence, on Allied support, and asked me many questions as to our intentions, to which I could only give non-committal answers. If it is decided to give them active support the effect of tanks and aeroplanes, accompanied by the necessary mechanics, would be very great; but I am unaware whether it is intended to send these, though I gather that our support is not likely to be extensive. They look upon Georgia as very much part of the proposed United Russia and do not at all realise that there is a prospect of the Allies recognising a separate Republic there. The authorities were most civil in providing a special train for me both ways, which covered the distance in a little over four hours.

<sup>1</sup>Maj Gen Frederick Cuthbert Poole (1869–1936). Commanded Archangel Force, 1918; British Military Mission in the Caucasus, 1918–19.

27. I received a reply from General Denikin by telegram, after leaving Novorissisk on the question of paying off the Russian vessels in the Caspian, and handed it to General Erdeley,<sup>1</sup> whom I found at Batum on the 24th. He has not yet received permission from the military authorities to proceed to Baku, but I have requested them to facilitate his transit.

28. The Commander-in-Chief will have later information in his possession concerning the remaining ports on the Station than I have, and I have therefore no remarks to make on them.

#### MINESWEEPING OPERATIONS

29. D.2358 *Redrift*, D.2353 *J.A.C.*, and D.1923 *D.H.S.* fitted with Actaeon Sweeps left Constantinople on 3rd January to clear the inshore area extending 15 miles to the Westward of the northern entrance to the Bosphorus.

On 9th January drifter *Redrift* cut the moorings of a mine in 17 fathoms of water, Refuge House AGAT CHILI (Chart 2230) bearing south by west. Drifter *J.A.C.* was detailed to sink mine, which was exploded by rifle fire.

30. The four late Bulgarian motor boats, now manned by British Active Service Ratings, originally detailed for Bulgarian T.B. *Chrabri* were directed to clear the northern channel into Varna, Lieut.-Commander Lamotte, RN, in drifter *Young Sid* proceeding to take charge of the operations.

31. On 4th January Commander Charles E. Turle, RN,<sup>2</sup> was appointed Mine Clearance Officer for Aegean and Black Sea.

32. On 10th January, in accordance with instructions received from the Admiralty that only volunteers were to be used for minesweeping, all minesweeping operations in Black Sea Command were stopped with the exception of two trawlers detailed in each case to maintain the swept channels into the Bosphorus, Burghaz, and southern channel into Varna.

33. Volunteers for minesweeping are now being organised in complete crews, and it is hoped that most of the trawlers and drifters may be sent home shortly.

34. Further details of minesweeping operations will be reported by Commander Turle, RN.

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<sup>1</sup>Probably Gen I. G. Erdeli, chf rep of Denikin and the Volunteer Army in Baku in early 1919.

<sup>2</sup>Cdr [later RA] Charles Edward Turle (1883–1966). Mine Clearance Officer for Aegean and Black Seas, 1919; Head of British Naval Mission to Greece, 1927–9; retired list, 1934.

#### 4. *Calthorpe to Admiralty*

[ADM 137/1767]

Malta, 18 February 1919

[Telegram]

SENT: 17th 8.45 p.m. RECD: 5.55 a.m.

278. In view of the fact that British forces are operating with Admiral Kolchak's<sup>1</sup> anti-Bolshevik Army at Omsk; that anti-Bolshevik operations appear to be taking place in the North of Russia; and that British forces are opposed by Bolshevik forces at Merv. It is requested that I may be informed whether active assistance may be given to the Volunteer Army in South Russia when it appears desirable by H.M. ships observing that our present indefinite policy is creating an unfavourable impression in the Volunteer Army.

Sent to Admiralty. 1606.

Repeated to R.A. Black Sea.

#### 5. *Admiralty to Calthorpe*

[ADM 137/1767]

1 March 1919

[Telegram]

SENT: 21.21.

521. Repeated to R.A. Black Sea, 319. Your 1606<sup>2</sup> of 17th February. War Cabinet have approved that active assistance may be given to Volunteer Army provided that no Naval forces are landed without reference to and permission from England.

#### 6. *Calthorpe to Admiralty*

[ADM 137/1767]

Constantinople, 22 March 1919

[Telegram]

SENT: 18th 10.40 p.m. RECD: 7.03 a.m.

110Z. For Admiralty and Foreign Office.

I wish to call attention to existing situation in Eastern Mediterranean and to point out in view of recent developments a further considerable reduction in our Naval Forces in the Mediterranean may lead to my being

<sup>1</sup> Adm Aleksandr Vasilevich Kolchak (1874–1920). Commanded destroyer during Russo-Japanese War; COS in Baltic Fleet, 1914; commanded DF, 1915; promoted RA and commanded Baltic Fleet's Destroyer Division, 1916; VA, 1916; C-in-C Black Sea Fleet, 1916–17; naval mission to Washington, 1917; nominal cdr of White Forces in Siberia, 1918–20; captured and executed by Bolsheviks, 1920.

<sup>2</sup>Doc. No. 4.

unable to cope with any serious crisis that may arise. Owing to the uncertain and feeble action of French in the Ukraine and Crimea situation is becoming increasingly grave. Understand that the Bolsheviks have already secured ports of Nikolaeu [Nikolaiev], Kherson and Berdiansk and the growing danger of falling of Odessa and the invasion of Crimea rendering it in my opinion imperative that our Naval Forces in the Black Sea should not be reduced at present. Moreover the situation in Caucasus and on North Coast of Asia Minor can only be controlled by having men of war immediately available to send to those ports where outbreaks occur or are only prevented by these means.

State of affairs at Smyrna has every appearance of becoming critical in the near future. Considerable unrest exists at the present moment in Egypt. Control of the tribes and prevention of the traffic in arms from Arabia to the Sudanese will fully occupy our Small Monitor Forces in the Red Sea for some time to come. For the above reason I deprecated most strongly any steps which would tend diminishing British Prestige or would render it difficult if not impossible to comply with Naval, Military or Political requirements of all kinds in the Near East which can only be met by employment of Men of War. In foregoing connection attention is also drawn to my telegram number 966Z 17th January to Admiralty<sup>1</sup> which defined generally duties to be performed by British Naval Forces in the Aegean and Black Sea. Although large reductions have been made and are being made in our Naval Forces the majority of these requirements remain and are considerably added to by recent developments.

### 7. *Rear Admiral Seymour to Calthorpe*

[ADM 137/1740]

HMS *Lord Nelson*, 1 April 1919

#### BLACK SEA LETTER OF PROCEEDINGS.

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#### II. OPERATIONS

1. I arrived in Constantinople in *Lord Nelson* on 20th March, and remained there during the period under review [18–31 March].
2. The Commander-in-Chief in *Superb* left Constantinople on 26th March for Port Said.

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<sup>1</sup>Doc. No. 2.

11. In view of the serious threat to the Crimea caused by the Bolshevik advance in the direction of PEREKOP *M.17* has been sent to Sevastopol with the intention of operating from KARKINIT BAY. It is feared that the Bolshevik forces will endeavour to work down to ADAMASKAYA SPIT (Chart 2996) so as to cross over Perekop Bay and attack the Volunteer Army forces in the rear. From a position in Karkinit Bay *M.17* will, it is hoped, be able to protect this flank. *Empress* with 2 seaplanes ready for working (others will be got ready as soon as personnel can be obtained from England) is being sent up to assist in spotting for *M.17*. The Volunteer Army have equipped a shallow draught barge with two 6" guns for a similar purpose. Enquiries are being made as to the possibility of obtaining other monitors from Mudros with a view to their working on the other side of the Perekop neck, in the vicinity of GHENICHESK. *M.18*, who is under repair at Constantinople, will be sent up as soon as defects are completed.

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16. The military situation in South Russia and Caucasia is dealt with in the 'Appreciation of the Situation' ... (Sub-enclosure 2).

[signed] M. Seymour

Rear Admiral Commanding Black Sea

[Enclosure]

*Sub-enclosure 2. The Situation in South Russia and Caucasia 31st March.*

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On 11th March Allied Forces (Greek and French) at Kherson were attacked by greatly superior Bolshevik forces and after heavy fighting were compelled to withdraw from the town. All Allied subjects were evacuated, and the Allied casualties were slight. It is, however, reported that the Bolshevik casualties were severe and that they lost over 2,000 men. The Greeks, in particular, did good work with the bayonet.

During the evacuation the inhabitants of Kherson, including the women and children, actively assisted the Bolsheviks by firing on the Allied troops; a striking example of the popularity of the Allies in South Russia. The French sloop who was present covered the evacuation, and then continued the bombardment in retaliation.

No soon had Kherson fallen than General d'Anselme, the French Commander-in-Chief, decided to evacuate Nicolaiev. His principal reasons were:—

- (i) The inadequacy of his garrison.

(ii) The threat to his flank.

(iii) The incorrect assertion that with the fall of Kherson, Nicolaiev had lost its value.

It is now becoming apparent that the evacuation was probably unnecessary, and that it was really evacuated because General d'Anselme lost his head. Apart from the blow to the prestige of the Allies the loss of Nicolaiev may have serious results in other parts of the Black Sea, in rendering them liable to submarine attack.

However, the orders were issued and water transport was provided for all Allied subjects who wished to leave. There were still about 5,000 German troops in the town, and these were ordered to cover the evacuation, being warned that their own evacuation depended on their so doing. After the whole of the French and Greek troops had been evacuated the remainder of the Germans were evacuated by sea, with the exception of about 500 who joined the Bolsheviks.

It is generally reported that the evacuation was agreed upon between the Bolsheviks and the French High Command, and that on conditions that the former did not attack during the withdrawal they should be allowed to occupy the town, and take possession of its valuable shipping and military stores. It is certain that, although efficient steam vessels were removed from the port, the docks, slips and ships building were left undamaged. There are, unfortunately, on these slips the following ships in the various stages of completion shown below:—

6 to 8 Submarines. 60% completed.

4 Cruisers. Long way from completion.

1 Dreadnought. Long way from completion.

5 River gunboats. Various stages. (These are probably motor lighters fitted with 6" guns).

4 Destroyers. 60% completed.

It is considered possible that one or two of these submarines could be prepared for sea in three months, so it must be accepted that, by the end of July, the Black Sea will be liable to attack by submarines unless steps are taken now to prevent their egress from Nicolaiev.

To effect this the French are contemplating the construction of a net defence in the narrows at Otchakov, but this may be less simple than it sounds if it is true, as it has been reported, that the Bolsheviks are mounting guns to cover the Nicolaiev and Kherson channels.

The solution may be found in the extensive use of aircraft in bombing operations.

In Odessa itself considerable anxiety was felt by the inhabitants on hearing of the evacuation of Kherson and Nicolaiev. In the first place the loss of Kherson cuts off the main supply of provisions to Odessa. In the

second place it was evident that the French High Command could not be relied on to defend the town, and that they were liable to panic at any moment, when they would give orders to evacuate it.

General d'Anselme held that his forces were inadequate to defend Odessa from attack from without, as he was in constant fear of an internal crisis. General Sannikoff, the local leader of the Volunteer Army (Reported trustworthy by the British Mission with General Franchet d'Esperey<sup>1</sup>) gave it as his opinion that the workers in the town were generally contented, and that there was little likelihood of a rising.

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General Franchet d'Esperey arrived at Odessa on 20th March. His first act was to dismiss General d'Anselme's Chief of Staff – Freydenberg – who has been described as General d'Anselme's 'evil genius'. He quashed the idea of the local command that Odessa would have to be evacuated, issued proclamations that the town would be held, and generally took steps to restore confidence. Greek and French reinforcements continue to arrive, and the ban formerly imposed on the mobilisation of the Volunteer Army has been removed. General Schwarz has been appointed Military Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the South Russian forces.

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The state of affairs in the Crimea is also very unsatisfactory. The Volunteer Army garrison at Perekop has been reinforced by the garrison at Simferopol who have been relieved by Greek troops. HMS *M.17* has now been sent up to operate in Karkinit Bay with a view to affording protection to the left flank of the Perekop garrison. It was feared that the Bolsheviks would try to work down to Adamanskaya Spit, and cross over the shallow waters of Perekop Bay and attack the Volunteer Army detachments in the rear. *M.17* will be assisted by seaplanes from *Empress*, and the Volunteer Army have equipped a barge with two 6" guns for similar duties.

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It is then, unfortunately, quite clear that the situation of the Volunteer Army in the Crimea is as bad as it can be. The troops are tired, short of food and clothing, and low in morale. It is improbable that they would

<sup>1</sup>Gen [later Marshal] Louis Félix Franchet d'Esperey (1856–1942). Commanded French Fifth Army, 1914; commanded Army Group of the East, 1916; commanded Army Group of the North, 1917; commanded Army Group of the Centre, 1918; Allied C-in-C at Salonika, June–Nov 1918; commanded successful offensive which forced Bulgaria to seek an armistice, Sept 1918; Marshal, 1921; Inspector-Gen, North African Forces, 1923–31.

long resist any determined attack either against Perekop or the Simferopol railway, though both these positions should be easy to defend. They are thoroughly disliked by both Bolsheviks and Bourgeoisie and the first news of a Bolshevik success in the north is almost certain to provoke a general Bolshevik outbreak in the Crimea, accompanied by more than the usual list of outrages and massacres, for the Bolsheviks will fall upon the Russian aristocracy, so many of whom have taken refuge in the Crimea, with particular fury.

Preparations have therefore been made for the evacuation of Allied subjects at short notice, and, of course, if the worst happens as many Russians as possible will be taken away to save them from massacre; but in any case this can only be a small proportion as they are so scattered all over the Crimea. And when the massacre has taken place the blame will undoubtedly be apportioned to the Allies, and perhaps more particularly to the British – in whom, at the beginning, so much confidence was placed – for their lack of policy and general indecision.

As was pointed out ... the retention of the Crimea is considered of great importance, and although statements have now been made that it is proposed to hold it, it must now be clearly realized that the Volunteer Army can no longer do this, and that the Allies must provide the necessary military force. A month ago a comparatively small Allied force would probably have prevented any attack on the Crimea at all; and in any case their presence would have restored confidence in, and encouraged, the Volunteer Army, and at any rate given them an opportunity of recovering themselves and reorganising.

It is now too late for any half measures, and any operations for the defence of the Crimea must be undertaken with adequate Allied military forces. The Bolshevik forces between the Dnieper and Melitopol are estimated at 18,000 with machine guns, artillery and an armoured train. They have with them a large number of Chinese who are used mainly for massacres and as storm troops.

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8. *Rear Admiral Seymour to Calthorpe*

[ADM 137/1741]

H.M.S. *Lord Nelson*, 8 April 1919BLACK SEA LETTER OF PROCEEDINGS.

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## II. OPERATIONS

The outstanding event of the week is the sudden evacuation of Odessa by orders of the French. Up to the date of the last Letter of Proceedings the French had stated that they intended to hold on to ODESSA and the CRIMEA, the military situation in the former place having improved. As General Franchet d'Esperey told me personally, on the morning of the 3rd April, the military situation had been re-established, and it was not necessary to evacuate ODESSA for military reasons, but solely on account of the difficulty of feeding the population which is now 1,000,000 compared with 600,000 in pre-war days.

2. Although I have no proofs I have a strong conviction that the evacuation was not really necessary for food reasons, but was really political. General Franchet d'Esperey told me it was ordered from Paris. I gather there has been an attempt on the part of the French to blame the American Food Commission for not supplying food, as they say that the Americans insisted on being paid in gold which was not available. Admiral Bristol,<sup>1</sup> I believe, denies this statement, and says that he offered them 500 tons of foodstuffs. Other reports from Odessa state that there was food there for varying periods up to 6 weeks.

3. On the evening of the 2nd April I had heard rumours from the Captain of the Greek *Averoff* that an evacuation of ODESSA was possible, and asking me in that event to lend what assistance I could in evacuating the Greek civilian population. This rumour was, however, unconfirmed till the morning of the 3rd when at 09:30 LT a telegram was received from *Skirmisher* stating that the French authorities had ordered the evacuation of ODESSA by the Allies commencing that day. It was not clear from this whether a military as well as a civilian evacuation was intended, as it had been thought possible, by the French, that the situation could be saved by evacuating a proportion of the civilians.

<sup>1</sup>Adm Mark Lambert Bristol (1868–1939). In charge of aeronautical development in US Navy, 1913–16; commanded *North Carolina*, 1916; commanded *Oklahoma* (Battleship Division 6, European waters), 1918; commanded US naval base, Plymouth, Oct 1918–Jan 1919; member International Armistice Commission in Belgium, Nov 1918; commanded US naval detachment, Eastern Med, 1919; US HC to Turkey, 1919–27; member of US delegation, Lausanne Conf, 1922–3; C-in-C Asiatic Fleet, 1927–9; Chm, Gen Board, 1930–32; retired, 1932.

4. There were about 250 British subjects to be removed. *Princess Ena*<sup>1</sup> was already, fortunately, on her way to ODESSA to remove some of the British subjects who had previously expressed a wish to clear out. *Caradoc* proceeded immediately to ODESSA from CONSTANTINOPLE. *Heliotrope* who was at SEVASTOPOL was ordered to ODESSA with despatch. I then went to see General Franchet d'Esperey who informed me that it was correct that the evacuation had been ordered, and that it included both military and civilians, the intention being to send the Volunteer Army to the CRIMEA or NOVOROSSISK, while the French and Greek troops were to retire overland and hold the line of the DNIESTER. He hoped to hold the CRIMEA though he stated the military situation was 'un peu grave'.

5. The situation in the CRIMEA seemed to me so doubtful that I ordered *Marlborough* from ISMID, where she had proceeded the day before, to proceed to SEVASTOPOL to consult the Senior Naval Officer and then to YALTA to try and persuade H.I.M. the Dowager Empress<sup>2</sup> to embark. The following transports were at once requisitioned and sent to ODESSA:

*Katoria, Kapurthala, Ocama, Sunland.*

They had all left by the 5th. The Cunard steamer *Phrygia* was also in harbour practically empty. She was requisitioned and sent up. The Divisional Naval Transport Officer also proceeded to ODESSA in *Sagitta*. The French asked me to assist in evacuating the Russian Volunteer Army and the Greeks also asked that we should help them to evacuate the Greek subjects.

6. On the 5th April *Tobago* who had been detained at ODESSA arrived with 12 passengers including Countess Tolstoy, lately Lady in Waiting to Her Majesty the Empress, and her two small children. She carried a personal letter from the Dowager Empress to HM Queen Alexandria, and passage on to England was arranged for her in *Forward*. The remainder were landed at Constantinople.

7. On the 6th April *Heliotrope* arrived with 3 British and 34 Russian refugees.

8. On the 7th April, *Princess Ena* arrived with 115 British passengers, who were sent to PRINKIPO, *Princess Ena* returning to YALTA the following day.

<sup>1</sup>*Princess Ena* (1,198 tons) launched in 1906, was originally hired as a Q-ship and subsequently employed as a Fleet Messenger, 1915–20.

<sup>2</sup>Dowager Empress Maria (1847–1928). The widow of Tsar Alexander III (1845–94), she was Dagmar (Maria) daughter of King Christian IX of Denmark and mother of the last Tsar, Nicholas II.

9. The problem of the evacuation of the Russians presents considerable difficulties. Large numbers of them are compromised with the Bolsheviks, and will probably be killed if they remain. They cannot be received at Constantinople but there is very little accommodation for them at Novorossisk. They are not wanted at BATOUM. Many have been sent to Sevastopol, and will probably have to be evacuated from there again shortly. They are at present going mainly to Sevastopol and Novorossisk.

10. As Odessa was in the French zone, and there were 4 French admirals as well as one American and a Greek in that district I did not think it advisable to proceed there myself, from the point of view that the less the British were officially connected with such a discreditable operation the better. I have since heard that Admiral Amet<sup>1</sup> did not proceed there either, but remained at Sevastopol superintending the towing off of the *Mirabeau*.<sup>2</sup> Further details as to the evacuation of ODESSA have not been received up to the present, but will be given in next Letter of Proceedings.

11. *Marlborough* arrived at Sevastopol on the morning of the 5th and proceeded to YALTA on the 6th. On the morning of the 7th a telegram was received from Yalta that the enemy had entered the CRIMEA, and that the French had given orders for the immediate evacuation of Yalta; Her Imperial Majesty embarked on board *Marlborough* that afternoon, but expressed a desire that *Marlborough* should remain off Yalta until the evacuation was completed.<sup>3</sup>

12. *Stuart*, *Dianthus* and *Hibiscus* at once left for Yalta, and *Speedy*, who was about to sail as duty destroyer, was ordered to Yalta instead of Sevastopol. *Grafton* was ordered to proceed from Novorossisk to Yalta with all despatch.

13. *Kapurthala* was ordered by Senior Naval Officer Sevastopol to Yalta.

14. On the morning of the 8th *Marlborough* reported that there was a panic among the refugees on shore, and that the numbers who wished to be evacuated had increased to 4000 of which 1500 had already been

<sup>1</sup>Vice Amiral Jean François Charles Amet (1861–1940). Commanded detachment of naval gunners on the Western front, 1914–15, commanded 2e Escadre, Armée Navale, 1918; theoretical cdr of Allied naval forces off the Dardanelles at time of armistice with Turkey, but on orders of the British govt and to his great indignation excluded from the negotiations; member of Allied Commission supervising execution of armistice, commanded French naval forces in Black Sea, 1919; Inspecteur général du matériel, 1921; C-in-C southern maritime frontier of France, 1922; retired, 1923.

<sup>2</sup>The semi-dreadnought *Mirabeau* ran aground during a snowstorm on the Crimean coast near Sevastopol on 8 Feb It was only with great difficulty, including removal of the forward 305mm turret and side armour, that the ship was refloated and towed to Toulon in April.

<sup>3</sup>The Dowager Empress embarked in *Marlborough* with about 80 of her suite and left for Constantinople on 11 April. Black Sea Letter of Proceedings, 22 April 1919.

embarked. There was no sign of any local rising. The Commander-in-Chief arrived at Constantinople in *Iron Duke* at 08:00 and after reporting to him I left for Yalta in *Lord Nelson*.

15. It seems very doubtful if the French will keep to their intention of holding the CRIMEA, though it is hoped they will at least endeavour to keep Sevastopol.

16. The latest unconfirmed information received is that they wish to send the Volunteer Army to KERTCH with the intention of holding the KERTCH STRAITS. The value of this is not at all apparent, and, in any case, it is doubtful whether they would be able to do so.

17. From the Sea of Azov it is reported that the Bolsheviks have taken Mariupol.

\* \* \*

### 9. Admiralty to Calthorpe and Seymour

[ADM 1/8938]

8 April 1919

[Telegram]

SENT: 1407 G.M.T.

No. 819Z [Calthorpe] and No. 404 [Seymour]

Clear the Line.

My 1402 of 6th April. His Majesty expresses great concern for the personal safety of Empress Marie and other members of the Russian Royal family now in Crimea. Admiralty considers situation is now such that they should be embarked whatever may be their personal desires and removed to a locale [?] of safety as soon as preparations can be made. Their eventual destination will be communicated later. Report what action you are taking.

D.C.N.S.

### 10. Calthorpe to Admiralty

[ADM 1/8938]

18 April 1919

[Telegram]

SENT: 17th 9.50 p.m. RECD. 4.45 a.m.

No. 196Z. For Admiralty and Foreign Office.

My 189Z. H.M.S. *Marlborough* with Empress Marie and party will leave Constantinople for Malta tomorrow morning Friday. Due Sunday evening 20th April. H.M.S. *Lord Nelson* with two Grand Dukes and party will leave for Genoa this evening Thursday April 17th. Due there

Wednesday morning 23rd April. After disembarking them H.M.S. *Lord Nelson* will proceed to Malta and thence will convey Lord Methuen<sup>1</sup> and party to England as previously approved. Request information what further arrangements contemplated in regard to Empress Marie. H.M.S. *Marlborough* has orders to return direct to Constantinople. As the station should not be left with less than three battleships under present circumstances it is for consideration whether H.M.S. *Lord Nelson* should be detailed to bring Empress to England.<sup>2</sup>

### 11. Rear Admiral Seymour to Calthorpe

[ADM 137/1748]

HMS *Emperor of India*, 19 April 1919

In view of the sudden change in the position at Sebastopol I have the honour to make an interim report on the situation at 18:00 LT on 18th April.

2. On my arrival on the evening of Thursday 17th April<sup>3</sup> I found all the British ships anchored outside the harbour, and *Calypto* reported that she was about to bombard. The bombardment did not take place as the Red Army sent in parlementaires about this time.

3. After seeing Captain of *Calypto*<sup>4</sup> I had an interview with Admiral AMET on board *Jean Bart* and he explained the position.

4. At 13:30 LT on 15th *M.17* who was stationed at the head of the harbour reported firing from SE, and at 16:30 LT that there were 40 Bolshevik cavalry in sight. Captain THESIGER went up to *M.17* and found that the Bolshevik cavalry had come down to the shore with a white flag, and after considerable discussion three delegates agreed to go on board *Jean Bart* to meet the Admiral, but Captain THESIGER had to remain as a hostage. During the discussion the French opened fire on the head of the harbour, one shell actually hitting a French sloop, and others falling round the delegation.

<sup>1</sup>FM Paul Sanford Methuen (1845–1932), 3rd Baron. Commanded Methuen's Horse in Bechuanaland Field Force, 1884–5; commanded 1st Division, 1st Army Corps, South Africa, 1899–1902; Govr of Natal, 1909; Govr & C-in-C Malta, 1915–19.

<sup>2</sup>The Admiralty agreed and the Dowager Empress proceeded to Portsmouth in *Lord Nelson*.

<sup>3</sup>Seymour's flag was transferred from *Lord Nelson* to *Emperor of India* on 14 April at Constantinople. The *Lord Nelson* sailed for Prinkipo on the 16th to embark certain of the Russian Grand Dukes for passage to Malta.

<sup>4</sup>Capt [later Adm Sir] Bertram Sackville Thesiger (1875–1966). Commanded cruiser *Amethyst* at Battle of Helgoland and light cruiser *Inconstant* at Jutland, 1916; commanded light cruiser *Calypto*, 1919; battleship *King George V*, 1922; Adm Superintendent, Portsmouth Dockyard, 1925–7; C-in-C East Indies, 1927–9; retired list, 1932; Cdre, RNR, 1940–42; Flag Officer-in-Charge, Falmouth, 1942–4.

5. Admiral AMET decided that the terms of the Armistice were for the Military to decide and turned the delegation over to Colonel TROUSSON.<sup>1</sup> The Bolsheviks demanded that the Allies were to evacuate Sebastopol within 7 days, and that the Red Army should immediately appoint a revolutionary Committee and Workman's Soviet in the town. The French reply was to the effect that they would allow the Red Army to appoint a Soviet Municipal Government, but that no Red Army troops were to be allowed into the town. This was unsatisfactory to the Bolsheviks and the hostilities recommenced at 16:00.

6. All British ships were then moved to positions outside the harbour, as the positions inside were under fire from the Bolshevik positions, and it would be impossible to carry out any direct fire from our ships. At 16:00 all ships opened a heavy bombardment on the Bolshevik troops and headquarters. It is much regretted that the enemy made their headquarters in the English cemetery, and the French found themselves compelled to bombard this.

7. During the night a strong Bolshevik attack surprised the French post at Mamelon and drove out the defenders. Detachments of Senegalese recaptured it at the point of the bayonet on the morning of the 16th.

8. On 16th and 17th our seaplanes did good work with bombs and machine guns. They attacked enemy batteries and troops on the Balaclava road.

9. The French line of advance posts runs from the W/T station to the Mamelon – Aktiar – in front of the Russian cemetery – to the head of Quarantine Bay. The main line runs from the west side of Careening Bay and follows the line of the bastions to Quarantine Bay. Of this the French hold the eastern sector as far as the head of South Bay and the Greeks the remainder. Admiral AMET stated that there were about 6,000 Allied troops in all. Supplies of barbed wire have just arrived and entanglements are being erected. Admiral AMET has every intention of holding the town, and he says that if his troops are forced to withdraw he will remain there with his ships.

10. The fire of the ships had a great moral effect and the Bolsheviks asked for a conference which took place late on 17th April and a suspension of hostilities till midnight 25th was agreed to. The terms of this armistice are attached.<sup>2</sup>

11. Admiral AMET states that it is possible that the armistice will be prolonged, but I am rather doubtful about this as it appears that the

<sup>1</sup>Colonel Trousson had the title 'Commandant supérieur des troupes alliées en Crimée' with the prerogatives of a major-general. Philippe Masson, *La Marine française et la Mer Noire (1918–1919)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1982), p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>Not reproduced.

Bolsheviks are not yet in force outside the town, and that they will probably use the armistice to bring up considerable reinforcements from outside the Crimea. The French, too, are rather hoping to obtain reinforcements. I think it not unlikely that as soon as the Bolsheviks think they are strong enough they will give 24 hours notice of their intention to resume hostilities.

12. As regards the removal of war material: preparations have been made for demolishing all the guns with the exception of one battery of four 24cm Canet guns which are already in the possession of the Bolsheviks, but whose breech blocks and sights have been removed.

13. The task of destroying the ammunition and mines is so great that they do not propose to attempt it. I do not agree and think that some effort should be made. I hope to be able to persuade Admiral AMET in this sense, and if he agrees shall leave a working party of 60 men to man a tug and four lighters to remove about 500 mines which are in the depot in Quarantine Bay. There are so many mines and so much ammunition at the other end of the harbour in the Arsenals that the French say that its explosion would destroy the town.

14. Admiral AMET is unwilling to sink the old submarines and the destroyers as I think he wishes to use them when treating with the Bolsheviks, so that he could assure them that they would be returned to Russia as soon as a stable government is established.<sup>1</sup> He would like them towed to Novorossisk or Tendra Bay, which latter place he intends to use as a base for watching the entrance to the Bug and Dnieper Rivers.

15. The Volunteer Army have established their headquarters at Kertch, and I believe they will attempt to defend it. I propose to proceed to Theodosia to confer with *Caradoc* as to how assistance can best be given. *Caradoc*, *Fury*, *Parthian*, *M.17* and *M.18* and *Empress* have already proceeded to Theodosia and Kertch, and *Lemnos* is at Theodosia. I hope that their presence will assist to restore the morale of the Volunteer Army.

16. I have agreed with Admiral AMET to be responsible for the south side of the Kertch Peninsula from the town exclusive. The French will undertake from the town inclusive round to the Arabat fort ...

17. I intend to arrive at Novorossisk on Monday 21 April.

<sup>1</sup>They were removed from the dockyard and moored in mid-stream where they could be sunk at short notice. Black Sea Letter of Proceedings, 22 April 1919, ADM 137/1748.

## 12. *Calthorpe to Admiralty*

[ADM 137/1748]

HMS *Iron Duke*, 21 April 1919

SECRET

No. Z.160/5454

Subject: Occupation of Sevastopol by the Bolsheviks.

Possible convention with the Bolsheviks.

I submit herewith for the information of the Board an interim report by the Rear-Admiral, Black Sea, on the situation at Sevastopol on the 18th April 1919. A summary of this report has already been sent by telegram.

2. I also enclose a copy of the draft of a possible convention with the Bolsheviks drawn up by Vice Admiral Amet, and forwarded to me through the Rear Admiral Black Sea, with a message that he would like to have my views on the subject;<sup>1</sup> together with a copy of my reply to Vice Admiral Amet.<sup>2</sup>

## 13. *Calthorpe to Vice Admiral Amet*

[ADM 137/1748]

HMS *Iron Duke*, 20 April 1919

[Carbon]

I have received today from Admiral Culme-Seymour a brief report of the present state of affairs at Sevastopol, and he has also forwarded to me your draft of a possible convention with the Bolshevists [*sic*] on which you asked his opinion and regarding which you desired also to be furnished with my views.

2 In giving my views you will, of course, understand that it is somewhat difficult for me to place myself in imagination exactly in your own position of responsibility, but subject to this I will endeavour to set forth the principles which I consider should be followed in order to support the policy which has been laid down for my guidance.

3. In the first place we are definitely committed to afford support to General Denikin and the Russian Volunteer Army. This being so any compromise with their enemies, unless dictated by absolute military necessity, would in my opinion, be detrimental to their interests and therefore wrong.

4. Although the Allies have been unable to prevent the invasion of the Crimea by Bolshevik forces it is in the highest degree important that the

<sup>1</sup>Not reproduced.<sup>2</sup>Doc. No. 13.