

# MUTINY IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

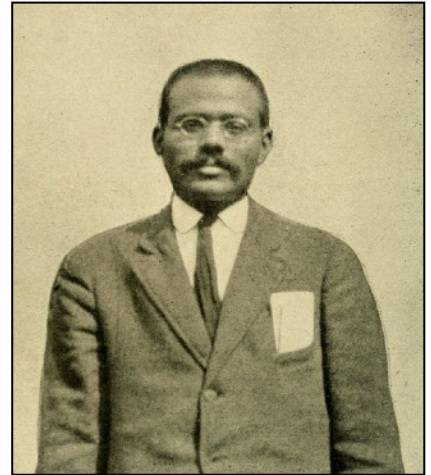
## The Sepoy Mutiny

The 1915 Singapore Mutiny, also known as the 1915 Sepoy Mutiny or Mutiny of the 5th Light Infantry, was a mutiny involving up to half of 850 sepoys (Indian soldiers) against the British in Singapore during the First World War, linked with the 1915 Ghadar Conspiracy. The mutiny, on 15 February 1915, lasted nearly seven days and resulted in the deaths of 47 British soldiers and local civilians, before it was finally quelled by British forces and Allied naval detachments

The Ghadar party (*Ghadar* is an Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi word for "mutiny" or "rebellion") was formed in the United States in 1913 by Har Dayal, with the aim of ousting the British from India, by armed revolution. The Ghadriles anticipated that Indian soldiers posted overseas would ally with them in their cause, and actively targeted them with propaganda, encouraging them to mutiny against the British.

A young Lala Har Dayal

A few months after the outbreak of the First World War, the Ghadriles had attempted to incite elements of the 130th Baluchi Regiment at Bombay to mutiny, on 21 January 1915. The authorities had become aware of the plan however, and had taken preventive action by reassigning the soldiers to other outposts. The Ghadriles then turned their attention to Singapore, whose regular garrison at this time consisted of only a single regiment of Indian soldiers plus a few British artillerymen and Royal Engineers, protecting British strategic interests.



## Indian 5th Light Infantry

The 5th Light Infantry Regiment of the Indian Army arrived in Singapore from Madras in October 1914. They had been sent to replace the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, which had been ordered to France. The regiment was a long established one dating from 1803. Unusually for 1914–15 it was an entirely Muslim unit.

The 5th Light Infantry mainly comprised Ranghars (Muslims of Rajput origin) and Pathans, commanded by British and Indian officers. Poor communication between the sepoys and their officers, slack discipline and a weak leadership meant that the troops' were disaffected, and propaganda from the Ghadar Party in India, campaigning for Indian independence from British rule, further disaffected the troops stationed in Singapore.

The specifically military grievances which led to the mutiny of the 5th Light Infantry centred on the personality of the commanding officer at the time, Lieutenant-Colonel E. V. Martin. He had been promoted from major in the regiment, although the previous colonel had reported that he was unpopular with his fellow officers and that he inspired little respect among the men.

His appointment led to disunity amongst the British officers, which was in turn reflected by division amongst the Indian officers over the promotion to commissioned rank of a colour-havildar. These issues, which might under ordinary circumstances have been of limited impact, were aggregated by the disruptive external influences of the Ghadar Party propaganda noted above and the entry of Turkey into the war.

### Incitement



Mehmed V, the Sultan of Turkey, who sided with Germany after the First World War broke out, was widely regarded as the leader of the Muslim world. When Britain declared war on Turkey, the Muslims, including those in Singapore, were urged to oppose the British by a *fatwa* issued by the Sultan

A pro-Turkey Gujarati coffee-shop owner, Kassim Mansur, visited the sepoys and even invited them to his home. Together with Nur Alum Shah, a religious leader, Mansur instilled anti-British feelings in the sepoys, and told them it was their religious duty to rise up against the British.

### The mutiny

On 27 January 1915, Colonel Martin announced that the 5th Light Infantry was to be transferred to Hong Kong for further garrison duties, replacing another Indian regiment. However, rumours were circulated among the sepoys that they might

instead be sent to Europe or to Turkey to fight against their Muslim co-religionists. Three Indian officers, Subedar Dundee Khan, Jemadar Christi Khan, and Jemadar Ali Khan, were later to be identified by a court of enquiry as key conspirators in this matter.

When the final order to sail to Hong Kong aboard the *Nile* arrived in February 1915, these and other ring-leaders amongst the sepoys decided that it was time to rebel. On the morning of 15 February, the General Officer Commanding Singapore addressed a farewell parade of the regiment, complimenting the sepoys on their excellent turn-out and referring to their departure the next day, without mentioning Hong Kong as the destination.

At 3:30 pm on the afternoon of the same day, four Rajput companies of the eight companies making up the 5th Light Infantry and 100 men of the Malay States Guides Mule Battery mutinied. The mostly Pathan sepoys of the remaining four companies did not join the mutiny, but scattered in confusion. Two British officers of the regiment were killed as they attempted to restore order.

The mutineers divided themselves into three groups. A party of 100 went to obtain ammunition from Tanglin Barracks, where 309 Germans, including crew members from the German light cruiser SMS *Emden*, had been interned by the British.

The mutineers fired on the camp guards and officers without warning, killing ten British guards, three Johore troops present in the camp and one German internee.

Amongst the dead were: 2nd Lieutenant John Love Montgomerie, Rifles; Sergeant G. Wald, (Reserve) Engineers; Corporal D. McGilvray, Rifles; Corporal G.O. Lawson, Cyclist Scouts; Lance Corporal J.G.E. Harper, Rifles; Private B.C. Cameron, Rifles; Private F.S. Drysdale, Rifles; Private A.J.G. Holt, Rifles and Stoker 1st Class C. F. Anscombe, HMS *Cadmus*.

Three British and one German were wounded, but survived the attack, as did eight Royal Army Medical Corps personnel in the camp hospital, including one who managed to escape under heavy fire to raise the alarm.

The mutineers tried to persuade the Germans to join them, but many of the latter were shaken by the sudden violence and reluctant to do so. Some German sailors and reservists wanted to join with the mutineers, but the majority adopted a neutral stance, refusing to accept rifles from the Indians. Thirty-five Germans escaped but the rest remained in the barracks. As it was the middle of the Chinese New Year, most of the Chinese Volunteers Corps were on leave, leaving Singapore almost defenceless against the mutiny. The British government was caught unprepared, and other mutineers went on a killing spree at Keppel Harbour and Pasir Panjang, killing 18 European and local civilians.

Martial law was imposed and every available man from HMS *Cadmus* went ashore to join with British, Malay and Chinese Volunteer units and the small number of British regular troops forming part of the garrison. British Vice-Admiral Sir Martyn Jerram sent a radio message requesting help from any allied warships nearby. A group of mutineers laid siege to the bungalow of the commanding officer of the 5th Light Infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel E. V. Martin, which effectively blocked the route into Singapore Town. Martin and a detachment of the hastily mobilised Malay States Volunteer Rifles held out through the night of the 15th under sporadic fire. Loyal sepoys who tried to join them were ordered to "go to a safe place" to prevent their being confused in the dark with mutineers.

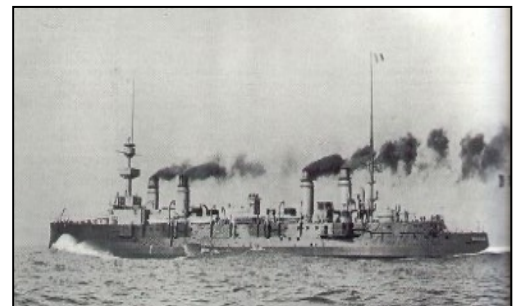
With daylight, the defenders were successful in retaking the regimental barracks at the cost of one killed and five wounded. The mutineers scattered, and despite sniper fire, the general population stayed calm while the volunteers, sailors and marines fought sporadic skirmishes with the mutineers.

### Allied forces

The *Montcalm* (1898–1926), an armoured cruiser of the French Navy, responded to Vice-Admiral Jerram's call for help.

On 17 February, the French cruiser *Montcalm*, followed by the Russian auxiliary cruiser *Orel*, and the Japanese warships *Otowa* and *Tsushima* arrived. Seventy-five Japanese sailors, twenty-two Russians and 190 French marines were landed to round up mutineers who had taken refuge in the jungle to the north of Singapore.

They were joined in this operation by sixty soldiers of the 36th Sikhs who were passing through Singapore, plus Singaporean police, British sailors and Malay States Volunteer Rifles. Lacking strong leadership, the mutiny had started to lose direction – a large number of the mutineers surrendered immediately, and the rest scattered in small groups into the jungles.



Many tried to cross the Strait of Johore, but were quickly rounded up by the Sultan of Johore's army. While local media spoke of serious battles there were in fact only minor skirmishes between the allied landing parties and the now demoralized mutineers. By the evening of the 17th 432 mutineers had been captured.

On 20 February, companies of the 1st/4th Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry (Territorials) arrived from Rangoon to relieve the sailors and the marines. They succeeded in quickly rounding up the last of the mutineers.

### **Trial and public executions**

On 23 February 1915, a court of inquiry was held, at first in secret, but then publicly, to ensure that a fair trial was seen to have been carried out in the crown colony. It lasted until 15 May 1915. Although extensive discord amongst both officers and men of the 5th Light Infantry was identified, the cause of the mutiny was not conclusively established. However, the inquiry agreed that insidious agents had incited the mutineers, who were swayed either by nationalistic or religious sentiments, to band together to fight against their perceived injustice.



**The public executions of convicted sepoy mutineers at Outram Road, Singapore, March 1915**

More than 200 sepoys were tried by court-martial, and 47 were executed, including Kassim Mansoor. Nur Alam Shah was not put on trial, although he was exposed as an active Indian nationalist with links to Ghadar. Instead, he was detained and deported, as the British did not want to stir up trouble among their Muslim subjects. Sixty-four mutineers were transported for life, and 73 were given terms of imprisonment ranging from 7 to 20 years. The public executions by firing squad took place at Outram Prison, and were witnessed by an estimated 15,000 people. *The Straits Times* reported:

An enormous crowd, reliably estimated at more than 15,000 people, was packed on the slopes of Sepoy Lines looking down on the scene. The square as before was composed of regulars, local volunteers and Shropshire under the command of Colonel Derrick of the Singapore Volunteer Corps (SVC). The firing party consisted of men from the various companies of SVC under Captain Tongue and Lieutenant Blair and Hay.

The remnants of the 5th Light Infantry, numbering 588 sepoys plus seven British and Indian officers, left Singapore on 3 July 1915 to see active service in the Cameroons and German East Africa. They were not accompanied by Colonel Martin, who was heavily criticised by a court of inquiry and then retired from the Army. In 1922 the 5th Light Infantry was disbanded. Much the same fate befell the Malay States Guides; they were sent to Kelantan in Malaya to quell Tok Janggut's uprising at Pasir Puteh in April 1915. Afterwards the Guides were sent to fight in Africa and were disbanded in 1919.

### **Aftermath**

The episode persuaded much of the British community in Singapore that they could no longer depend on Indian soldiers to garrison the colony. Although Japanese, French and Russian sailors and marines had helped to suppress the mutiny there was increasing doubt as to whether reliance could be placed on Britain's wartime allies for future help in the perpetuation of their [empire](#). Subsequently, all Indian nationals in Singapore were required to register, causing ill-feelings amongst a predominantly loyal community.



The 1915 Singapore Mutiny Memorial Tablet at the entrance of the Victoria Memorial Hall, Singapore

To enhance Singapore's internal security, the British passed the "Reserve Force and Civil Guard Ordinance" in August 1915, requiring compulsory military service from all male subjects between 15 and 55 years of age who were not in the armed forces, volunteers or police. It has been argued that the mutiny was an event that not only caught the British off-guard but also shook the foundation of British rule in Singapore. However the absence of involvement by the population of Singapore in an affair involving a battalion from India on temporary garrison duty in the colony makes this a doubtful contention.

Sensing weakness in Britain's handling of the mutiny, extreme Indian revolutionaries began to court overseas sepoys more aggressively, and cultivated a friendship with Japan for the overthrow of the British in India. Their plans bore fruit with the formation of the Indian National Army, led by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, during the Second World War Japanese occupation of Singapore.

### Commemoration

To commemorate the event and those British soldiers and civilians killed during the mutiny, two memorial tablets were erected at the entrance of the Victoria Memorial Hall and four plaques in St Andrew's Cathedral. In addition, two roads were later named in memory of two of the casualties as Harper Road and Holt Road, after Corporal J. Harper and Private A.J.G. Holt respectively.

### THE FRENCH ARMY

The French Army mutinies of 1917 took place amongst the French troops on the Western Front in Northern France during World War I. They started just after the disastrous Second Battle of the Aisne, the main action in the Nivelle Offensive in April 1917. General Robert Nivelle had promised a decisive war-ending victory over the Germans in 48 hours; the men were euphoric on entering the battle. The shock of failure soured their mood overnight. The mutinies and associated disruptions involved, to various degrees, nearly half of the French infantry divisions stationed on the western front.

The new commander General Philippe Pétain restored morale by talking to the men, promising no more suicidal attacks, providing rest for exhausted units, home furloughs, and moderate discipline. He held 3,400 courts martial; 554 mutineers were sentenced to death but over 90% had their sentences reprieved. The mutinies were kept secret from the Germans and their full extent was not revealed until decades later.

The immediate cause was the extreme optimism and subsequent disappointment at the Nivelle offensive in the spring of 1917. Other causes were pacifism, stimulated by the Russian Revolution and the trade-union movement, and disappointment at the non-arrival of American troops. Nearly one million French soldiers (306,000 in 1914; 334,000 in 1915; 217,000 in 1916; 121,000 in early 1917,) out of a population of twenty million French males of all ages, had been killed in fighting by early 1917. These losses had deadened the French will to attack.

In April 1917, French General Robert Nivelle promised a war-winning decisive victory. He proposed to work closely with the British Army to break through the German lines on the Western Front with a great attack against the German occupied Chemin des Dames, a long and prominent ridge running east to west just north of the Aisne River.



For this General Nivelle applied a tactic which he had already inaugurated with success at Verdun in October 1916, a creeping barrage, in which French artillery fired its shells to land just in front of the advancing infantry. This was designed to suppress the defending German troops in their trenches right up to the moment when the attackers closed in on them. Nivelle's attack (the Second Battle of the Aisne) completely failed to achieve its main war-winning objective. At the cost of very high casualties the offensive did accomplish some of its objectives: it exhausted the German reserves and conquered some strategic positions. A French tank attack had also been launched near Berry-au-Bac, but half of the Schneider CA1 tanks engaged were knocked out.

The failure was widely felt. Nivelle was removed from his command on 15 May 1917 and was replaced by General Philippe Pétain. A similar battle would have been considered a draw in 1915, but in 1917, after the huge losses at the Battle of Verdun and the Battle of the Somme, the psychology of the soldiers was fragile. The overall failure and the heavy casualties caused a collapse in the morale of the French infantrymen who had been so enthusiastic just a few days before.

The weather that April was particularly inclement, with rain and snow turning the battlefield into the typical quagmire of mud, men and materiel so often associated with the war. These conditions further meant that only a fraction (53 out of 392) of the German artillery batteries had been identified before the whistles blew. As a result, the storm of steel into which the French advanced proved to be almost as costly as the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916 had been to the British. The Germans knew exactly what was coming and they had prepared for the onslaught by retiring from their forward positions, lessening the effect of the French bombardment. As the barrage rained down, the Germans took shelter in the many souterraines that underpinned the ridgeline, bracing themselves for the massed infantry charge.

The 5,000,000 shells that ploughed into their lines ultimately did more damage to the French than the Germans, churning the ground into a seething mass of mud and slime, and when the infantry engaged, their rolling barrage proved woefully inadequate, falling desperately short and immolating much of the advancing French forces before they even breached the enemy's lines. As the attack commenced, the Germans appeared from their deep sanctuaries, dazed but relatively unscathed, and began to strafe the French from the rear. It is estimated that the Germans had 100 machine guns for every kilometre of the battlefield; the French didn't stand a chance.

At the end of that first day, the French had suffered over 40,000 casualties, but despite what had now become a forlorn hope, the attacks continued over the coming days, during which, in a Herculean effort, the 69<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Senegalese Infantry managed to reach Hurtebise farm on the top of the Chemin des Dames ridge before it was finally annihilated, almost to a man. Today, their efforts are memorialised outside the Dragon Cavern museum, in the guise of several stoic statues that gaze down on the former battlefield.

### **The mutinies**

The Nivelle Offensive failed to achieve its strategic objectives; by 25 April most of the fighting had ended. On 3 May the French 2nd Division refused to follow its orders to attack and this [mutiny](#) soon spread throughout the army. Towards the end of the offensive, the 2nd Division arrived on the battlefield drunk and without weapons.

By 9<sup>th</sup> May, the French had finally managed to reach the crest of the ridge en masse, capturing the Plateau de Californie and the Laffaux Mill, but at a cost of more than 187,000 casualties to the German's 168,000. It was an intolerable defeat for an army that had registered few victories during the war, Nivelle lost his command on 15<sup>th</sup> May and the French were left in a state of abject despair. The famous élan spirit of the poilu had been broken, battered and left to die on the slopes of the Chemin des Dames. Finally, after countless battles, the reservoir of moral courage had run dry, and on the 5<sup>th</sup> May the 21<sup>st</sup> Division mutinied.

It wasn't just the slaughter on the field of battle that had broken the French; it was the daily grind, the attritional nature of an industrial war and the feeling of being simply expendable that had finally caused the dam to burst. The French did not benefit from the British attitude to rotation, home leave was regularly cancelled and when men were moved out of the frontlines they were not properly rested before they were sent back in. Rations were appalling and the faith in the Command had evaporated. Nivelle, the hero of Verdun, had failed his men.

Once the 21<sup>st</sup> Division had made their stand, the insurrection spread like wildfire through the lines. Mutinous acts were recorded in 68 divisions, 136 regiments and 23 battalions. Soldiers began to desert at a frightening rate and many of those that stayed refused to go back up the lines. They demonstrated openly and sang revolutionary songs, including the Internationale.

Despite the failures of Nivelle, on the whole the French did adhere to his famous utterance at Verdun, '*Ils ne passeront pas*' (they shall not pass). Any more pointless attacks were out of the question, but the lines were still

defended. The enmity felt towards the High Command was indeed strong, but it was nothing compared to that directed at the hated invaders.

In the end, it was General Petain who finally ended the insurrection and brought order to the lines. He took command and immediately improved living conditions, the allocation of leave and further rotation of troops in and out of the line. He also instigated a policy of focusing attacks on achievable objectives and ensured that artillery, aircraft and tanks properly supported the infantry's assaults. The Germans never grasped what was occurring only a few metres from their positions. If they had, then the outcome of the war might have been very different. Quite why the Germans didn't pick up on the mutiny is difficult to assess, but partially it must be attributed to their attentions being focused on the Ypres salient and the British attack at Passchendaele. Even so, the discontent in the French ranks was no minor event. Between April 1917 and January 1918 as many as 40,000 men were involved in the uprising. As a result, 554 men were condemned to death by the Command, although ultimately only 26 were actually executed.

The main French victory in the war, albeit a pyrrhic one, had been at Verdun. As a result, Petain was held in high regard by the poilu and his efforts to control the line and improve conditions proved to be invaluable. Within a few months of the insurrection being brought under control the Germans launched their Kaiserschlacht offensive, which tore through the Allied lines at a ferocious rate. But by then, a man who many regarded to be one France's greatest soldiers had reinvigorated his armies, enabling them to soak up the German onslaught, a fact that became lost only a few years later, when Petain was accused of treason and complicity in the face of the German invasion of 1940.

Mutiny in the ranks could have happened to any of the armies that occupied the ruined earth of the Western Front, but the fact that it was the French who rebelled is not a complete surprise. Nevertheless, it was certainly not cowardice that shattered their attacking will. The French losses during the war were truly horrendous, with their dead, wounded and missing totalling almost six million men – about double the figure for the British and more than that of the Germans. At the time, France's population was six million fewer than Britain's and fifteen million less than that of Germany. The war was also fought on French soil, further adding to the pressure placed on the French armies, and the hatred that lingered from the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871 perhaps meant that battles were not always conducted with a cool head. But more importantly, the mutiny was the result of men being pushed beyond the limit of what they could endure. Their collective courage had been slowly eroded away by the attritional nature of a war from which there could only be one winner.

For the conflict may have been a war between nations, but in reality it was also a titanic battle between man and his industrially manufactured killing weapons. And in a global conflict between flesh and material, it was always going to be man who cracked first. On 16–17 May, there were disturbances in a Chasseur battalion of the 127th Division and a regiment of the 18th Division. Two days later a battalion of the 166th Division staged a demonstration and on 20 May the 128th Regiment of the 3rd Division and the 66th Regiment of the 18th Division refused orders; individual incidents of insubordination occurred in the 17th Division.

Over the next two days spokesmen were elected in two regiments of the 69th Division to petition for an end of the offensive. By 28 May mutinies broke out in the 9th Division, 158th Division, 5th Division and 1st Cavalry Division. By the end of May more units of the 5th, 6th, 13th, 35th, 43rd, 62nd, 77th and 170th divisions mutinied, and revolts occurred in 21 divisions in May. A record 27,000 French soldiers deserted in 1917; the offensive was suspended on 9 May. Even in regiments where there was direct confrontation, such as the 74th Infantry Regiment, the men did not harm their officers; they just refused to return to the trenches. Most mutineers were veterans who did not refuse to fight but wanted the military authorities to be more attentive to the realities of modern war. The soldiers had come to believe that the attacks they were ordered to make were futile. Moreover, news on the revolution in Russia was being published in French socialist newspapers, while anonymous pacifist propaganda leaflets were very widely distributed.

In Soissons, Villers-Cotterêts, Fère-en-Tardenois and Cœuvres-et-Valsery, troops refused to obey their officers' orders or to go to the front. On 1 June, a French infantry regiment took over the town of Missy-aux-Bois. Ashworth wrote that the mutinies were "widespread and persistent" and involved more than half the divisions in the French army. On 7 June, General Pétain told British commander Sir Douglas Haig that two French divisions had refused to relieve two divisions in the front line.

An examination of French military archives, found that 49 infantry divisions were destabilised and experienced repeated episodes of mutiny. Of the 49, nine divisions were gravely affected by mutinous behaviour; fifteen were seriously affected and twenty-five divisions were affected by repeated instances of mutinous behaviour.

As the French Army comprised 113 infantry divisions by the end of 1917, 43% had been affected. The crisis of morale occurred mainly in the infantry which had borne the overwhelming brunt of casualties since the beginning of the war. Branches such as the heavy artillery, (which was located far behind the front lines); and those cavalry regiments which were still mounted, remained unaffected by the mutinies, providing detachments to round up deserters and restore order. Only 12 field artillery regiments were affected by the crisis of indiscipline.

### **Repression**

Starting 8 June the military authorities took swift and decisive action: mass arrests were followed by mass trials. Those arrested were selected by their own officers and NCOs, with the implicit consent of the rank and file. There were 3,427 *conseils de guerre* (courts-martial). Some 2,878 sentences of hard labour and 629 death sentences, though only 43 executions were carried out.

The relative lack of rigor in repressing the mutinies provoked adverse reactions among some of the French Army's divisional commanders. General Pétain and French President Raymond Poincaré, on the other hand, made it their policy to mend the French Army's morale and not act in a manner that could aggravate the problem of the army's motivation. Activists in some Russian units in France had been spreading word of the revolution underway in Russia and encouraging other Russians and Frenchmen to join them. In June the rebellious First Russian Brigade was encircled by loyal Russian troops in September 1917 at Camp de La Courtine and bombarded with cannon, killing 8 men and wounding 28. This episode became the basis of widespread false rumours that the French had bombarded French units. The Russian ringleaders were sent to North Africa in penal servitude while the rest of the Russian troops (about 10,000 men) were demobilized and transferred into labour battalions. Along with the deterrent of military justice, General Pétain offered two incentives: more regular and longer leave and an end to grand offensives "until the arrival of tanks and Americans on the front". Pétain only launched limited attacks with massed artillery against German strongholds, like Fort La Malmaison. These were taken with minimal French casualties.

As to the mutinous soldiers, they were motivated by despair, not by politics or pacifism. They feared that infantry offensives could never prevail over the fire of machine guns and artillery. General Pétain restored morale through a combination of rest periods, frequent rotations of the front-line units and regular home furloughs.

### **Historiography**

The government suppressed the news so as not to alert the Germans, nor depress homefront morale. The extent and intensity of the mutinies were disclosed for the first time in 1967 by Guy Pedroncini in his volume *Les Mutineries de 1917*.

His project had been made possible by the opening of most of the relevant military archives 50 years after the events, a delay in conformity with French War Ministry procedure. However, there are still undisclosed archives on the mutinies, which are believed to contain documents mostly of a political nature; those archives will not be opened to researchers until 100 years after the mutinies, in 2017.

Smith has argued that the mutinies were akin to labour strikes and can be considered, at least partly, political in nature. The soldiers demanded not only more leave and better food, while objecting to the use of colonial workers on the home front; they were also deeply concerned about the welfare of their families.

The rather subdued repression, according to Smith, was part of the Petain policy of appeasement. Concurrently, that policy saved the appearance of absolute authority exercised by the French high command. Smith thus placed the mutinies into their wider ideological context and demonstrated the extent to which French soldiers and mutineers had internalized the main tenets of Republican ideology.

### **Aftermath**

The most persistent episodes of collective indiscipline involved a relatively small number of French infantry divisions, so the mutinies did not threaten a complete military collapse. However, continuing morale issues in more than half of the front-line formations meant that it would not be until the early months of 1918 that the French Army had fully recovered.

Because of the mutinies, the French high command became reluctant to initiate another major offensive. General Petain's strategy in late 1917 was to wait for the deployment of the American Expeditionary Forces and the introduction in battle of the new and highly effective Renault FT tanks.

Hence his statement at the time : "*J'attends les chars et les américains*" (I am waiting for the tanks and the Americans). He had the support of Prime Minister Clemenceau, who told President Woodrow Wilson in June 1917 that France planned, "to wait for the Americans & meanwhile not lose more ... I like Pétain ... just because he won't attack'."

Historian Martin Evans says, "the French army would sit tight and wait for the Americans." Two other historians say, "Even after Pétain's skilful mixture of tact and firmness had restored military discipline, the French army could only remain on the defensive and wait for the Americans." This ideal came to fruition when the final great German offensives of March/April 1918 were halted by a revived French Army fighting alongside their British and American allies. The British government was alarmed, for it interpreted the mutinies as a sign of deep malaise in French society. While this was not the case, the British Army did have to continue offensive warfare on the western front with only limited support from its allies for the second half of 1917. The British tried to reinvigorate French morale by launching the Third Battle of Ypres, or Passchendaele, which also failed in one of its strategic objectives.

## **THE ÉTAPLES MUTINY**

The Étaples mutiny was a series of mutinies in 1917, by British Empire soldiers in France during the First World War. Before the war, Étaples, 15 miles (24 km) south of Boulogne-sur-Mer, was a coastal fishing port with a fleet of trawlers. It also attracted artists from around the world.

After 1914, the town became one of a series of British Army bases that stretched along the Channel coast of France. Étaples did not impress British women who volunteered to work in YMCA huts at the base. In the words of Lady Olave Baden-Powell, "Étaples was a dirty, loathsome, smelly little town".

On the other side of the river was the smart beach resort known officially as Le Touquet-Paris-Plage, and unofficially as either Le Touquet or Paris-Plage. Le Touquet was in effect officers' territory, and pickets were stationed on the bridge over the Canche to enforce the separation.

Étaples was a particularly notorious base camp for those on their way to the front. The officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) in charge of the training, the "canaries", also had a reputation of not having served at the front, which inevitably created a certain amount of tension and contempt.

Under atrocious conditions, both raw recruits and battle-weary veterans were subjected to intensive training in gas warfare and bayonet drill, and long sessions of marching at the double across the dunes. After two weeks, many of the wounded would rather return to the front with unhealed wounds than remain at Étaples.

On 28 August 1916, a member of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), Private Alexander Little (10th Battalion; no. 3254), verbally abused a British NCO after water was cut off while he was having a shower. As he was being taken to the punishment compound, Little resisted and was assisted and released by other members of the AIF and the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF).

Four of these men were later identified, court-martialled, convicted of mutiny and sentenced to death, including Little. Three had their sentence commuted. While the military regulations of the AIF prevented the imposition of capital punishment on its personnel, that was not the case for the NZEF. Private Jack Braithwaite, an Australian serving with the NZEF, in the 2nd Battalion of the Otago Regiment, was considered to be a repeat offender — his sentence was confirmed by General Douglas Haig and he was shot by a firing squad on 29 October.

### **The mutiny.**

It appears that relations between personnel and authorities at the camp continued to deteriorate. They came to a head on Sunday 9 September 1917, after the arrest of Gunner A. J. Healy, a New Zealander belonging to No. 27 Infantry Base Depot. He and others bypassed the police pickets patrolling the bridges that gave access to Le Touquet, which was out of bounds to enlisted men. His son recalled:

*"It was the practice for those who wished to visit the township to walk across the estuary or river mouth at low tide, do their thing and return accordingly. However in my father's case the tide came in, in the interval and to avoid being charged as a deserter, he returned across the bridge and was apprehended as a deserter by the "Red Caps" and placed in an adjoining cell or lock up. When news of this action reached the NZ garrison, the troops left in a mass and proceeded to the lock up".*

A large crowd of angry men gathered near the "Pont des Trois Arches", heading towards town. They did not disperse, even when told the gunner had been released. It was clear that the protest over the arrest was only the tip of an iceberg, and the atmosphere was tense. The arrival of military police only made matters worse, and scuffles broke out.



Suddenly the sound of shooting was heard. Private H. Reeve, a military policeman, had fired into the crowd, killing Corporal W. B. Wood of the 4th Battalion, Gordon Highlanders, and injuring a French woman standing in the Rue de Huguet, Étaples. Thereafter, the police simply fled. News of the shooting spread quickly. By 7:30 pm over a thousand angry men were pursuing the military police, who fled in the direction of the town. The following morning measures were taken to prevent further outbreaks and police pickets were stationed on the bridges leading into the town. Nevertheless, by 4 pm men had broken through the pickets and were holding meetings in the town, followed by sporadic demonstrations.

On Tuesday, fearing further outbreaks, the Base Commandant requested reinforcements. Meanwhile, the demonstrations gathered momentum. On Wednesday 12 September, in spite of orders confining them to camp, over a thousand men broke out and marched through the town. Later that day, reinforcements of 400 officers and men of the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) arrived, armed with wooden staves.

The HAC detachment was composed mainly of officers and was a unit on which complete reliance could be placed. The HAC were supported by a section from the Machine Gun Corps. The threat worked: only 300 men broke camp and were arrested at Étaples. The incident was now over, and the reinforcements were dispersed.

Many men were charged with various military offences and Corporal Jesse Robert Short (his life now celebrated and remembered in a song by the English Anarchic punk folk band 'the Levellers' on album Static on the airwaves) of the Northumberland Fusiliers was condemned to death for attempted mutiny.

He was found guilty of encouraging his men to put down their weapons and attack an officer, Captain E. F. Wilkinson of the West Yorkshire Regiment. Three other soldiers received 10 years' penal servitude. The sentences passed on the remainder involved 10 soldiers being jailed for up to a year's imprisonment with hard labour, 33 were sentenced to between seven and ninety days field punishment and others were fined or reduced in rank. Short was executed by firing squad on 4 October 1917 at Boulogne. He is buried in the Boulogne Eastern Cemetery.

### **In popular culture**

Poet/soldier Wilfred Owen, resting at Étaples on his way to the line, described the context of the mutiny:

*"I thought of the very strange look on all the faces in that camp; an incomprehensible look, which a man will never see in England; nor can it be seen in any battle but only in Etaples. It was not despair, or terror, it was more terrible than terror, for it was a blindfold look and without expression, like a dead rabbit's."*

Siegfried Sassoon's poem "Base Details" expressed the contempt of infantry veterans for the officers and NCOs who staffed Étaples:

*If I were fierce, and bald, and short of breath,  
I'd live with scarlet Majors at the Base,  
And speed glum heroes up the line to death.  
You'd see me with my puffy petulant face,  
Guzzling and gulping in the best hotel,  
Reading the Roll of Honour. 'Poor young chap,'  
I'd say—I used to know his father well;  
Yes, we've lost heavily in this last scrap.'  
And when the war is done and youth stone dead,  
I'd toddle safely home and die—in bed.*

The English writer Vera Brittain served in the VAD at Étaples at the time of the mutiny; she describes the atmosphere of rumour and secrecy in her book *Testament of Youth*. Female personnel "were shut up in our hospitals to meditate on the effect of three years of war upon the splendid morale of our noble troops".

Meanwhile, "numerous drunken and dilapidated warriors from the village battle were sent to spare beds..... for slight repairs." She says that it was mid-October before the mutiny ended. In a subsequent footnote she concludes that "the mutiny was due to repressive conditions.....and was provoked by the military police".

William Allison and John Fairley's 1978 book *The Monocled Mutineer* gave a very imaginative account of the life and death of Percy Toplis and of his involvement in the mutiny. It prompted questions in Parliament about the events of the mutiny when it was first published, which led to the discovery that all the records of the Étaples Board of Enquiry had been destroyed long since.

A BBC1 television series, also entitled *The Monocled Mutineer*, was adapted from the book, and caused some controversy at the time of its first transmission in 1986, being used by the press to attack the BBC for left-wing bias. Some advertising material issued to promote the series inadvisably claimed that it was a "true-life story".

Official records show that Toplis' regiment was *en route* to India during the Étaples mutiny. No evidence exists to show that Toplis was absent from his regiment.

The official 100th anniversary commemorations of World War One (WW1) mostly record a honourable, noble cause fought by happy, loyal, patriotic soldiers. But the truth is somewhat more complex and varied. The Broadcaster and Journalist Peter Tatchell writes that the 1914-18 British Army was notorious for its frequent appalling mistreatment of working class lower ranks by arrogant, out-of-touch upper class officers who often exploited ordinary soldiers as their personal servants and, under fire, as expendable military ordnance.

Blind obedience, spit and polish and square-bashing drill were the order of the day. They comprised an excessive proportion of basic training – to the relative neglect of weapon proficiency and tactical exercises.

For the average soldier, food was poor, accommodation unsanitary, uniforms and weapons often sub-standard, wages low, recreation restricted, punishments brutal and the post-war demobilisation was delayed without good reason. These abuses provoked numerous uprisings by fed-up foot soldiers. In the closing months of the war, and on into 1919, there were widespread military mutinies, strikes and riots. Significant sections of the British armed forces were awash with rebellion and revolutionary fervour.

Under the impact of the Russian revolution, from 1917 onwards there were attempts to form Councils of Workers and Soldiers within army units. These were, however, short-lived and came to nothing. But protest and dissent were commonplace. At Etaples and Boulogne, between September and December 1917, demonstrations and strikes by troops in protest at their appalling mistreatment by the top brass resulted in scores of Chinese and Egyptian soldiers in the British Expeditionary Forces being shot and wounded after they refused to work and tried to break out of camp.

Even more serious and widespread mutinies erupted in 1918 when a total of 676 troops were officially court-martialled and sentenced to death for acts of sedition and mutiny. Though not all these death sentences were carried out, unofficially many other rebellious soldiers were summarily shot on the spot.

### **PIRBRIGHT**

The first of the big mutinies on the British mainland occurred in early 1918 when machine-gunners in the Guards staged a mass strike at Pirbright in Sussex. For three days, all soldiers refused duty and instead organised their own voluntary training sessions.

The Strike was eventually called off when a Colonel of the Welsh Guards arrived and giving assurance that there would be no victimisation asked for a spokesman from each of the five regiments involved.

**According to an eye-witness:** *"Five old soldiers agreed to come to the front, although to my knowledge they were not the ring-leaders. They were taken off to London under close arrest, court-martialled and sentenced to two years each in a military prison. The breach of faith may have come about because the Colonel was over-ruled by the General Officer Commanding (GOC) London District. But this was naïve to expect the public-school code of honour to be extended to mere rankers. The rest of the rebels numbering a couple of hundred or so, were split into their original regiments, and a detachment sent to the reserve battalion before being put on a draft to France again. Many of those men were killed in action during the great German break-through of March 1918 and subsequent fighting."* John Wood.

### **KINMEL PARK CAMP**

In the autumn of 1918 Kinmel Park Camp and its hospital were assigned to the Canadian authorities, under Camp Commandant M.A. Colquhoun. The Camp was to be a 'concentration area' conveniently situated in North Wales, only a few miles from Liverpool and its docks. The only trouble was that the authorities showed little intention of doing any demobilising.

Weeks passed and few men left for home. Day after day the authorities told the men that their ships had been cancelled, laying the blame upon striking dockworkers. But they did not explain how it was possible for American and Australian troops to sail for home, in their thousands, each week.

Conditions there were unspeakable. The living standard of the 'returning heroes' were inferior to those in enemy prison camps. Many men were sleeping on damp and draughty floors, with very few blankets. There was

insufficient coal for fires. The food was described as little better than pigswill. The soldiers in the camp had been involved in some of the heaviest fighting in the war. Yet, instead of victory parades and peacetime celebrations, they were obliged to watch their comrades die of influenza.

One of the immediate grievances was that recruits who had only just come over from Canada were being sent back first. From the end of 1916 it had been accepted that the disbandment of Canadian troops would take place on a 'first in', 'first out' basis, modified by marital status. This was fiercely opposed by General Currie and Sir Robert Borden, who along with other senior officers, secretly longed for the preservation of the Canadian Forces on an armed footing beyond the Armistice.

Currie's views were overruled by the Privy Council, but Borden pressured Sir Thomas White (acting Canadian Prime Minister) to reconsider Currie's plan to retain the troops until they could be returned in complete units. This plan was eventually accepted, amid great administrative confusion. Dissatisfaction in the camp grew, aggravated by the news of every ship cancellation. It was becoming clear that the economic prospects for returning troops were grim and that this was an important factor in delaying their demobilisation. There were gloomy reports from troops who had returned concerning discrimination in the job market in favour of officers.

Severe unemployment in Canada was coupled with an aggressive anti-working-class policy. There were twelve thousand unemployed in Montreal alone and a similar number in Toronto. The Canadian War Debt stood at over £400 million. As usual the working classes were expected to make the necessary 'sacrifices' for economic recovery. Lay-offs and wage cuts led to industrial unrest. Some troops sent to quell rioting strikers had started to fraternise with them. Returning soldiers were adding fuel to the flames, presenting a very serious threat to the status quo.

On the whole, Canadian Trade Union leaders sided with the authorities. As a result they were ignored by the rank and file. Tom Moore, President of the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress was booed off the platform at a public meeting in Toronto.

During the war, Orders in Council had prohibited meetings of Socialists and the circulation of Socialist literature. Heavy sentences had been imposed for breach of this law. The Canadian authorities held that 'aliens' mainly Russian immigrants, were violating these Orders in Council and plans were produced for the deportation of 'aliens.'

#### **Early in 1919 the 'aliens' had held a mass meeting and drawn up the following statement:**

*"We do not wish to be sent to England as strike-breakers. Nor do we want to be compelled to take up arms against our own people. Let us leave Canada as free agents, just as we came in, to go where we will. We appeal to the workers of Canada and to the soldiers to protect themselves by seeing that justice is done to us. Our cause, in reality, is their cause, for they will have to combat the same elements in the endeavour to make the world better for themselves and their children".*

This protest was circulated to workers and to troops and was translated into seven languages. News of these events and of the ill-treatment of the 'aliens' filtered back to the Canadians at Kinmel Park. The unbearable situation in the camp and the depressing news from home, combined to ripen the conditions for mutiny. The final straw was the arrival of newspapers from home carrying pictures of heroes welcome being given to soldiers who had seen no fighting at all.

On Tuesday 4 March 1919 a meeting was held by the soldiers of Montreal Camp. A strike committee was elected and on it was a young Russian called William Tarasevich (often referred in the press as Tarashaitch or Tarouke). He was picked to give the signal to start the mutiny. The objective was to take over each of the twenty one camps, between them involving up to twenty thousand men.

The newspapers gave contradictory reports of what was happening. **On 7 March 1919, The Times ran a story under the headlines: 'Riot in Canadian Camp: Twelve killed and many injured. VC Trampled to death.'**

*"A serious disturbance by Canadian soldiers occurred at Kinmel Military Camp, near Rhyl, on Tuesday and Wednesday, as a result twelve lives were lost, including that of the Mayor of New Brunswick who had gained the Victoria Cross. About twenty others were injured. In addition, damage estimated at £50,000 was done to the camp."*

**A picture of the aftermath of the mutiny at Kinmel Camp**



The article went on to describe how Kinmel was a dispersal camp for Canadian soldiers, waiting for ships to take them home. It pointed out that the men in the camp were mainly from France. During the last year they had been through some of the fiercest fighting. Their patience had been exhausted during the weeks of delay at Kinmel.

**The article continued:** "On Tuesday night, the men held a mass meeting, which was followed by a mad riot. The outbreak began in the Montreal Camp at 9.30pm with a cry "come on the Bolsheviks" which is said to have been given by a Canadian soldier who is Russian.

The men rushed to the officers' quarters, helped themselves to all the liquor they could find, then went for the stores, disarmed the guards and with their rifles smashed doors and windows, helping themselves to the content of the stores. Boxes of cigarettes and cigars were thrown all about the ground. Then they went out to wreck the whole camp. One portion, where tradesmen's shops supplied soldiers, were stripped and in a few moments not a shop was left standing.

The Church Army and Salvation Army buildings, however, were not touched. The rioters then proceeded to the quarters occupied by the girls, who were in bed and carried away their clothes. The girls were not injured but had to remain in bed the next day because they could not dress themselves. The next day, the rioters were masquerading about the camp in girls' clothing. By mid-day Wednesday, the camp appeared as if it had been passed over by a legion of tanks. Unfortunately a brewers dray containing forty-eight barrels of beer arrived at the camp. The men took fire buckets, broke the barrels and drank the beer.

Then they started shooting all round. In one of the distant parts of the camp, a young soldier stood on guard and attempted to do his duty. In reply to his challenge one of the rioters shot him dead. A little later, a Major from New Brunswick, who had gained the Victoria Cross, attempted to interfere, but in his endeavour to hold the rioters back from such portion of the officer's quarters that was not demolished, he was thrown down and trampled to death. Another officer, going amongst the rioters, was so badly mauled that he died a few hours later. During this time some of the men had been arrested. The rioters demanded the release of the men. The Colonel refused, and the rioters released the men themselves. The whole disturbance was quelled by night and the ringleaders, numbering about twenty, and stated to be mostly of foreign extraction, were taken away.

The Canadian soldiers in the camp, while explaining the cause of the affair, are now regretting it. They say they did not anticipate that it would go to such lengths, and the mob went further than it meant to. The disturbance caused great alarm in Rhyl, when it was reported that five to six thousand men of the camp were going to raze the town.

Yesterday an officer from the War Office arrived at the camp by aeroplane and found everything calm. He addressed the men, telling them it was murder for Canadians to kill Canadians. He gave them an assurance that within a few days about half of the Canadians in the camp should be on their way home. The others would follow quickly. This statement was cheered by the men who said that this was all they wanted. Although this appears a compact story informing the country of a riot by drunken Canadians led by a Russian. Private property had been damaged. Drunken soldiers had gone on a blood-spilling orgy, firing their guns and trampling someone to death. Not an ordinary soldier, but an officer with a VC.

Things hadn't been quite that simple. News of the mutiny reached Parliament. On Monday 10 March 1919, at question time, Mr. McMaster asked the Secretary of State for War *"whether he could make a statement regarding the regrettable discontent and breach of discipline amongst soldiers at a Welsh camp awaiting shipment to their homes on conclusion of long and meritorious service in the field."*

**Captain Guest, Joint Parliamentary Secretary for the Treasury replied:** *"A Court of inquiry has been set up by the Canadian Military Authorities to investigate thoroughly the whole affair. I think the House will agree with me that as the matter is sub-judice, it would be improper for me to make a statement. The Canadian authorities have issued a statement which was published in Saturday's morning papers."*

**A statement appeared in The Times on the morning of 8 March under the headline "The Camp Riot: Further details"** the article stated: "All was quiet yesterday at Kinmel Park, North Wales. It was officially stated that the casualties were five killed and twenty-one wounded. The inquest of the victims was opened yesterday and adjourned until next week.

**Brigadier General M.A. Colquhoun, in a statement yesterday morning, said** *"That no attack was made on the officers who were treated with the greatest courtesy. I myself went in and out amongst the men freely. Some of them actually put down their loot in order to salute me, and then picked their loot up again. Reports of damage are greatly exaggerated. Some fifty or sixty men got out of hand and attacked some canteens. The men in one camp, anticipating danger, armed themselves and contrary to express orders, fired. That was on Wednesday when the fatalities occurred. The girls camp was not attacked. As a matter of fact the girls were treated with the utmost chivalry. No man entered the girls' bedrooms while they were occupied. One man raised the Red Flag in an attempt to introduce Bolshevism, but was shot.*

*In view of the splendid discipline records uniformly maintained by Canadian troops since the beginning of the war in England and France, the 'incident' at Kinmel Park is regretted. It is considered that by comparison with others, discipline amongst the Canadian troops is of a high order. It is also regretted that reports of the incident have been exaggerated. Immediately after the Armistice, Kinmel Park was secured as a concentration area through which Canadian troops stationed near Liverpool could pass through to Canada. Considering the shortage of shipping, the Canadian authorities congratulate themselves upon the splendid record they have for sending troops to Canada.*

*During the month of February, however, the Ministry of Shipping were unable to furnish sufficient ships to carry out the programme as promised to the Canadians. Owing to this, the programme in February and early March had fallen short by one third. This had caused a 'backing up' of troops from Kinmel Park, through to areas in England; through to France. This caused disappointment to the Canadians, some of whom had been overseas, without seeing home, for four years. Immediately upon this matter being reported to the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Sir Richard Turner VC, KCB, he went to Kinmel Park and addressed the men in fifteen different places. They seemed to appreciate his explanations and there is not likely to be any further disturbances.*

*If the number of men originally planned for February had been allowed to embark, it is thought there would have been no trouble. But the shipping situation, owing to strikes and other reasons, is admittedly a difficult matter to control. It is however, hoped that there will not be a recurrence of the delays which have hitherto taken place.*

*It is not attempted, in the slightest degree, to excuse the misconduct of the men who took part in the disturbance. Many of the offenders have been placed under arrest and these, with others involved, will be rigorously dealt with.*

*During the disturbance, a certain amount of damage was done, and it was discovered that civilians were concerned. Up to the present, twelve of these civilians have been arrested and handed over to the local authorities.*

*During the disturbance, three riders were killed and two men on picket duty. Twenty-one soldiers were wounded, of whom two were officers. There is no foundation to the report that a Major, who was a VC, was killed or injured.*

*The troops at Kinmel Park are concentrated units representing the military districts of Canada to which they will proceed. They are not in their original units, these wings being composite formations consisting of personnel belonging to many different units. This sorting out is done in deference to the wishes of the authorities in Canada, in order to avoid delay when they reach the Dominion.*

*A court of inquiry, of which Brigadier J.O. MacBrian CB, CMG, DSO, is President, has been convened to make a thorough investigation into all circumstances in connection with the disturbance."*

**This statement was backed by The Times editorial which praised the previous disciplinary record of the Canadian Army, adding that** *"discipline to an Army is what honour is to a woman. Once lost it can never be restored."*

A closer look at the official statement is warranted. It argues dissatisfaction over the failure to obtain ships had led to the disturbance. This was a feeble excuse. Throughout the winter of 1918-19, at a time of high unemployment, over a thousand ships were standing idle, awaiting repair.

No attempt was made to secure neutral ships for the repatriation of Canadian troops. This could have only meant that the authorities had other plans for them, such as sending them to Russia.

Or it might have meant the Canadian Government, troubled by militancy and unrest at home, were not eager to add a lot of Soldiers, many with revolutionary ideas, to the melting pot of grievances.



**On Monday 10 March 1919 The Times retracted its first account of the mutiny. Under a very small Editor's note, the following appeared:** *"we are requested by Major C. Stephenson, Commanding Number Four Military District Concentration Wing Camp 16 (Montreal Camp), Kinmel Park, Rhyl, who writes on behalf of the officers, NCO's and men of Montreal Camp, to contradict the statement which appeared in The Times on Friday, that the recent outbreak began in Montreal District Camp. The Montreal officers, NCO's and men in fact gave all their efforts to, and were largely responsible for, the quelling of the rioters.*

*We are glad to publish this authoritative denial, which was written before the issue of the official account of the outbreak and the more reassuring version which we published from our special correspondent on Saturday. It is to be regretted that the authorities were unable to issue their official statement a day earlier."*

From this and other accounts in the press, it is obvious that everything was being done to minimise the incident. This is not surprising in view of the precarious situation then pertaining to the British Army. It was certainly unwise from the point of view of the authorities to give any credence to reports of any political motivation behind the mutiny. The net result was a series of inaccurate reports, followed by denials. Serious readers must have been left completely baffled.

#### **A RECONSTRUCTION.**

The sworn statements of people who participated in the events of 4 and 5 of March 1919, are recorded in the Coroner's Inquest held on 20 March 1919. Some of the accounts require close examination, for they point to very obvious contradictions in the officers testimonies.

*"On the evening of 4 March, the men held a meeting during which they elected delegates. At a given signal they took over several camps. There was a minimum of violence, and no firearms were used. The majority of the troops supported the mutiny. By 10.30pm most of the camps were in a state of open revolt. The 'Tin Town Stores' were occupied. The officers were powerless and offered no resistance. There was little or no looting."*

One officer, Lieutenant G. Gauthier, who saw the initial outbreak, was allowed to return unmolested to Camps 19 and 20 (these two camps, which housed a number of officers, were the only two not occupied by the mutineers). There, he prepared his fellow officers for resistance.

The following morning Gauthier, minus his badges, mingled with the men, posing as a private. His aim was to identify 'leaders' so at the earliest opportunity, they could be separated from the rank and file. Meanwhile the officers and 'loyal' men of Camps 19 and 20 were completing their defence arrangements, setting up pickets at strategic points. A guard of fifty men had already spent the night at the entrance to Camp 20, preventing any contact between the inmates and mutineers from other camps.

On 5 March at 2.15pm. Lieutenant Gauthier approached a group of soldiers standing outside the Bakery and warned them to keep away from Camp 20. The men sent him retreating under a barrage of stones, jeers and catcalls. At 2.30pm the mutineers assembled, and an advance party led the way towards Camps 19 and 20. This group was itself led by two men carrying a red flag on two poles. Three other men carried smaller red flags which they used to give signals to the main body of men, some way behind. The advance party approached the officers of Camps 19 and 20 and attempted to negotiate. No negotiations ever took place. As they approached, an officer was seen to give an order. A group of guards immediately attacked the advance party of mutineers, capturing several of them. The prisoners were dragged off to the guardhouse in Camp 20. This action delayed the advance of the main body of mutineers. But they continued to come on, armed with a few stones and rifle butts. Meanwhile the officers and guards were entrenched around Camp 20, the Records Office and the Guard Room. The mutineers tried to force their way into the Guard Room and release the prisoners. The attempt was beaten off. The mutineers then took up positions in Camp 18 facing the officers.

#### **George Copley, a Company Sergeant Major in the Royal Engineers made the following written deposition:**

*"At 2.30pm I saw a number of rioters enter the gateway of Camp 20. Two men leading, with a red flag on two poles. The crowd went to the guardroom, and I could hear their leaders say, "Let's have them out".*

*Stones were thrown through the window of the Guard Room and two or three of their leaders seized fire buckets from their hooks and smashed the windows with them. Then they moved towards No. 18 Camp canteen. Shortly afterwards I saw a crowd collect near the roadway and make a rush between the huts of No. 18 Camp.*

*They were armed with sticks and stones and one or two rifles. I noticed that one of the rifles had a bayonet fixed. Immediately afterwards, I heard shots coming from the direction of No. 20 Camp – I advised my staff to take cover, which they did.*

That the firing was started by the officers is borne out by the following statement from an independent eye-witness, Mr. William Spicer, a representative of the firm of Balfour Beatty & Co., War Department Agents. He wrote:

*"I saw a number of rioters coming through Camp 18 Mess huts towards number 20 Camp. When they saw the soldiers standing outside the Guardhouse, they stopped. They lingered about for some time, then got orders from the direction of Camp 20. The rioters still remained. Then the soldiers of Camp 20 charged.*

*The rioters resisted with sticks and stones. But I saw one rifle amongst the rioters. After a few minutes pause the soldiers from Camp 20 returned back to their trenches. One soldier was wounded by the Blacksmith's Shop and was taken away by others.*

*A soldier came down towards the Blacksmith's Shop and said to the other two soldiers standing by me: "who done the firing?" The two soldiers replied: "That lot from Camp 20." He then said to his pals: "Wait here until I come back, I know where I can get some rifles." Soon after this there was a charge by the men from Camp 20 at the mutineers (who were now armed with a few rifles). One rioter was taken prisoner and marched towards Camp 20. The rioters then cleared back into other camps.*

**Another eye-witness, Arthur D. Abel, also of Balfour Beatty & Co., confirmed that:** "the officers had attacked first. Apparently quite a lot of firing took place. Those in Camp 20 were indiscriminate in their choice of targets."

**Jack Merritt, a driver in the Canadian Field Artillery said:** "At 3pm I was with a gunner called Jack Hickman. We were between two huts in the lines at no. 18 Camp. As we were standing talking together, he was struck by a bullet and fell. He did not speak, dying almost immediately. At the time, a number of soldiers were firing on Camp 19. He was therefore struck by a stray bullet as he was not taking part in the disturbances."

**Concerning the same episode Robert Bowie, a Lance Corporal in the Royal engineers assigned to Camp 18, testified that** "He was in huts 21 and 25 of Camp 18 when two Canadian soldiers came running along the duck-boards, one with a rifle and fixed bayonet, the other with a stick. When they got to the corner of the hut one of them turned round and looked back and was struck by a bullet."

He then fell at Bowie's feet. The latter carried him into hut 21. During the next few minutes several bullets entered the building but there was no further casualties. Looking at the evidence given by officers and NCO's from Camp 20. Their statements at the forementioned inquest on the five men killed at the Kimmel mutiny. They were not submitted as evidence at the inquest; however, those who made the statements were not liable to cross-examination).

Three days before the inquest, on 17 March 1919, the Coroner had received a note from the Canadian President of the Canadian Army's Court of enquiry, saying: 'I regret very much that I cannot furnish you with any statements from the officers, which you ask for, as our proceedings are confidential and cannot be made public at present.'

Superintendent Lindsay of Rhyl Constabulary had however, managed to obtain some statements without the knowledge of the Canadian authorities. They were marked 'Confidential.' Today, they comprise the only existing 'official' records of the events. The evidence contained in these statements concerning the use of firearms does not square with what was said by the civilian witnesses.

**According to Sergeant E.V. Collier, DSO,** "at about 13.00 hours organised bodies of men approached Camp 20 across the open space of ground opposite Camp 20 Orderly Room. The men were advancing carrying a red flag, in open orders and under leaders. They were armed, firing live ammunition. Twice they were driven back by Camp 20 men and we were able to assist MD1 on the rioters left flank and front. After the capture of some of the leaders, the white flag was shown and together about twenty-two rioters were captured. Two went to hospital and five left in a lorry under escort. The balance were dealt with by the MD1."

Attached to the statement was a list of names of the rioters dealt with by officers. Unfortunately this roll is now not available. It would have provided crucial information as to the fate of those who took part in the mutiny.

Where is the roll today? What light could it throw on the mystery hanging over the affair? In St. Margaret's Church Bodelwyddan (near the camp) are eighty-three Canadian graves. The official explanation is that the men died during the influenza epidemic of 1918-19. But rumours still circulate amongst local inhabitants that in some of these graves lie the bodies of mutineers, executed after the events of March 1919. We know seventy-five arrests were made (some reports say seventy-nine). Whilst the dates on the tombstones vary, several of them record deaths as having occurred in March 1919.

Whether or not any of those arrested lie in the graves we may never know. But amongst the graves of the 'influenza' victims are stones bearing the names of Tarasevich, Gillan, Young and Haney, all of whom met with violent deaths.

**The following statement comes from W.H. Bremmer, the Provost Sergeant of Department 6, Camp 19. It was submitted to his superior officer on 7 March 1919:** *"On Wednesday 5 March (time 14.30 hours) the rioters marched on Camp 20. They started to raid the Officers Mess and were immediately set upon by boys from Camp 20. A few were arrested and placed in the Guard Room of Camp 20, the remainder making good their escape across the opposite field.*

*The rioters reorganised and marched on towards Camp 20, with rifles etc. I was standing talking alongside Mr. Carlisle, when he told me to go along with him. I did so, and joined in the attack against the rioters, capturing one of them whom I marched to the Guard Room. I then returned and found the rioters using live ammunition. I returned to the Guard Room and got a rifle and four rounds of ammunition. But when I got back the boys the boys had charged and pushed the rioters back to the rear of ASC. The rioters charged and rushed back to Camp 20. A number of shots were fired from Camp 20, inflicting casualties amongst the rioters. When they were beaten they hoisted the white flag. I immediately rushed out and placed under arrest all the men I noticed to be with the rioters. I had some escorted back to Camp 19 Guard Room, where all the valuables were taken off them. One of my prisoners went to hospital and the remaining five were handed over to the Regimental Sergeant Major."*

**Sergeant Bremmer stated that he had obtained ammunition and that his men were actually firing at the mutineers. This is corroborated by another eye-witness, Captain Douglas Forbes-Scott:**

*"At 14.30 hours I went down to the Camp Orderly Room. Camp 20 men were lined up in a defensive position in and on the trenches alongside the road. Opposite the ASC stable the rioters were lined up. Camp 19 and 20 charged over the ground and brought back some of the rioters. They went over a second time and were met with rifle fire. Three mutineers were hit and they hoisted the white flag. Previously they had been displaying the red flag and urging men to attack the camp. I afterwards heard of the death of Private Gillan by one of the rioters."*

**Private Gillan was killed in the battle with the mutineers after the initial fighting. His death occurred when the mutineers obtained weapons after the first attack from Camp 20. Sergeant Henry Roberts of Camp 19 testified as follows:**

*"On Wednesday at 3.30pm I was one of the party detailed by MD6 to repel the rioters who were endeavouring to invade the camp. Private David Gillan and myself along with several others advanced across the training ground towards AS Corps stables where the rioters were hiding. Many of them were advancing carrying the red flag, in open order, under leaders and were armed, firing live ammunition. Twice they were driven back by Camp 19 and 20 men. After the capture of some of their leaders a white flag was shown. Of the twenty-two rioters captured, seven were by us, and fifteen captured by Military District No. 1, Camp 20. During the fight Private David Gillan was struck by a bullet in the neck. I saw one of the rioters deliberately taking aim in a kneeling position. But just then another party came from behind and we fled, leaving Gillan."*

According to the medical evidence submitted to the inquest, Gillan was shot in the back. If this was the case it could mean that the bullet came from the direction of Camp 20 since his back was turned in that direction. We have already seen evidence as to the use of firearms by officers of Camp 20.

Many arrests were made during the hours following the battle. Gradually the authorities gained control. Seventy-five men were eventually taken away and charged with mutiny. Following a court of enquiry, presided over by Major-General Sir H. E. Burstall, KCB, CMG, there was a court-martial between 16 April and 7 June 1919.

Burstall tried thirty-eight cases, involving fifty prisoners charged with mutiny and other offences. Seventeen were acquitted, twenty-seven convicted of mutiny. Six more were convicted of minor charges. Sentences ranged from ninety days to ten years.

It is not clear what happened to the others. Were they released? Did they die of 'influenza'? It appears that all the leaders were arrested, with the exception of the 'Russian' Sapper William Tarasevich. His stomach was ripped out with a bayonet, by persons unknown. On that same afternoon four other men are known to have died, namely David Gillan, Jack Hickman, Corporal Joseph Young and Gunner William Lyle Haney.

At the inquest on 20 March 1919, the medical evidence concerning the causes of death was as follows:

Corporal Joseph Young, aged 38, died on 5 March 1919 at the Military Hospital Kinmel Camp of a bayonet wound in the head. William Lyle Haney, aged 22, at Kinmel Camp, from a bullet wound to the head. William Tarasevich, aged 29, was killed at Kinmel Camp, his abdomen pierced by a bayonet. David Gillan, aged 26, died as a result of being shot by a rifle. Jack Hickman, aged 21, died as a result of being shot by a rifle.

In his opening address to the jury, the Coroner had said that, contrary to the prevailing rumours, he was satisfied that the Canadian authorities would place all their information at the disposal of the Court. Yet, as is pointed out, he had received a note from the Canadian President of the Court of Inquiry stating that its proceedings were 'confidential'. The Coroner assured the jury that the Canadian authorities would allow facilities for witnesses to come forward. This promise was never kept. The hearing was a travesty, even of its own limited terms of reference. What was the establishment trying to hide?

Many witnesses had been spirited away with the five thousand Canadian soldiers who sailed the previous week on the White Star Line 'Olympic'. It is known that the local police had issued a summons for Sapper 249685 M. Chaka (of Camp 11) to attend as a key witness. The summons was returned by the Canadian authorities with a note explaining that Chaka had sailed for Canada on 13 March and would therefore be unable to attend.

The Coroner concluded his opening address with the warning that *'as proceedings develop, it may appear that one or more persons may become open to accusations of having been criminally responsible for the deaths of these men'*. But that is as far as he would venture to say.

That very morning he had received a telegram from the Home Office informing him that *'the Canadian authorities are investigating the matter and intend to try by Court-Martial, any person found criminally responsible.'*

Although they put in a nominal appearance at the inquest the Canadian authorities were determined to handle the matter themselves. In the witness box Major C.W. Maclean testified how he saw the mutineers approach, led by the red flag. Following the initial stone-throwing he had been called to an Orderly Room to communicate with Headquarters.

When he returned, Private Gillan was dead; shot. Maclean then went to his Headquarters and stayed there until 5pm. He added that the previous night he had received an 'intimation' that there was going to be trouble. When he asked whether the rioters were armed, he admitted he did not see any of them with complete rifles. Those with guns had their stocks broken and the guns being used as clubs.

His own party had been given forty rifles. These had been served out at the 1.30pm parade as a precaution. But, Maclean said no ammunition was supplied since there was none in the camp. Initially bayonets were not fixed. He had given express orders to protect the Record Office: company commanders were left to take what action they deemed necessary. Concluding his evidence the Major confirmed that seventy-five prisoners had been taken. Of the five dead men, on one was 'one his side'. He could not be sure whether the other men killed were rioters or lookers-on.

Lieutenant Gauthier gave evidence. He said that Camp 20 was the last Camp to be attacked. In all the other camps an organised defence had failed. He had particularly wanted to protect the Records Office, as all other records in the camp had been destroyed. When questioned about the shooting he testified that his men had disobeyed his orders. This evidence was contradicted by the next witness, Major E.V. Collier. He claimed that the mutineers were the first to fire. They were led by one man, a Russian. When questioned as to the cause of the mutiny he replied, *"drink had helped to aggravate it."* He knew of no dissatisfaction. A juryman asked him directly what its cause was. He replied, *"part Russian, part drink."* Collier then described how, the previous day, expecting trouble, he had summoned his men and cautioned them not to use ammunition.

A juryman asked him why he bothered to caution them, since the previous witness had just said there was no ammunition in the camp. Collier replied, *"perhaps they might have brought some back from France as souvenirs"*.

The ammunition question was finally resolved when Major St. George (Assistant Provost Marshal) said that "no ammunition was given out. It was all stored in one place and the rioters never got it". The evidence of Sergeant Bremmer reveals that there was ammunition available in the Guard Room of Camp 20. But it is clear that the mutineers had no access to it. How much of it was given out to the officers and men defending Camp 20 remains a mystery.

In his summing up, the Coroner tried to cover up as best he could. He said "It is impossible for the jury to say that any person was responsible. There are contradictions in the evidence as to who fired the first shot. I have informed the Home Office that there is no evidence to conclude that criminal charges should be brought against any individual".

The jury duly returned an open verdict. They added "There is no evidence to say who inflicted the said wounds, or whether any person or persons are criminally responsible for the deaths of the deceased".

## AN ASSESSMENT

The fate of the Kinmel mutiny was due to a number of factors. First, the men failed to prevent the officers from preparing a defence in Camps 19 and 20. Lieutenant Gauthier was able to move about the camps at will, identifying ring-leaders and preparing the officers' resistance. The only chance the mutineers had of achieving their objective would have been to obtain complete control of the whole Kinmel Park area.

This should have been done on the first night, while they still held the initiative. By leaving Camps 19 and 20 alone, the officers were given time to prepare their defences. Perhaps the most important factor contributing to their defeat was that the men left communications in the hands of the officers. Not every camp at Kinmel was even kept aware of the rapidly evolving situation.

Finally, then men underestimated the ruthlessness and determination of the officers. When a mutiny is underway, there can be no unarmed approaches to armed officers. Unless a mutiny is 100% solid, the authorities will use all means at their disposal to crush it. When necessary they will not flinch from bloodshed. On the credit side, the mutiny achieved certain immediate gains. Shipping shortages or no, the mutiny altered repatriation plans. Shipping materialised, as if by magic. Between the mutiny and 25 March some fifteen thousand troops left Kinmel. By the end of the month some thirty thousand had been repatriated.

The authorities had recognised that the only reliable weapon against mutiny was demobilisation. Those who had participated in the events had learned something of greater importance: that the war machine was not invincible.

Outside St. Margaret's Church at Bodelwyddan, not ten minutes' walk from Kinmel Park, stand eighty-three Canadian graves. They are arranged in four rows. Eighty-two are simple white slabs, carry the numbers and regiments of the deceased. But there is a hierarchy even in death. A red sandstone cross dominates the white slabs. On it are engraved the words "To the proud memory of Private David Gillan, who was killed at Kinmel Park defending the honour of his country".

Of those who defended their rights to be human beings. Corporal 438680 Joseph Young, Gunner 1251417 William Lyle Haney and Sapper 1057297 William Tarasevich, of the Canadian Railway troops, lie buried side by side. In the second row of graves, nearest to the church. This is a tightly packed row and something strange immediately strikes one. How came the nineteen men in this row, lie buried so near to each other, when their deaths were widely spaced in time as 18 January 1919 and 6 April 1919?

In the other three rows there is a great deal more clustering in the dates of death. Where all the dead buried where they now lie? Or were the reburied there at some later date? How accurate are the dates on the tombstones? Were nearly all the deaths due to influenza as the official versions of events would have us believe?

Were no reprisals exacted on the mutineers? And what do the words 'Sometime, sometime, we will understand' on the tombstone of Corporal Joseph Young, really mean? Opinions are divided on these and other matters. Local people, including some formerly closely associated with St. Margaret's, believe the church's Burial Register dealing with the period of the mutiny spent a while at the War Office.

A memorial dominates the Canadian section of the little graveyard. Above the Maple Leaf on the tombstone it proclaims: 'This memorial was erected by their comrades. Their name liveth for evermore'. A strange epitaph for the victims of an 'influenza epidemic' with only marginal impact on the civilian population.

### **WITLEY MILITARY CAMP SURREY**

Often simplified to **Camp Witley**, was a temporary army camp set up on Witley Common, Surrey, England. The camp was about 7 miles from Bramshott and appears to have been set up in the early part of the First World War. Camp Witley was one of three facilities in the Aldershot Command area and possibly established by the Canadian Army; the others being Bordon and Bramshott near Liphook.

There are many references to the camp but in March 1915 one reference including the costs on the huts to the taxpayer apparently £13.00 per man, of which £4.00 represented the hut and £9.00 for recreation room, stores, light, and so forth. The camp at this time was apparently under construction still.

WITLEY Camp, of which Milford Camp - the Artillery quarters - forms a part, had for some time been used as a Canadian training centre. On the high ground the infantry and other units occupied a camp which readily lent itself to efficient training; while on the slope of Rodhill there was ample accommodation for the Artillery, Army Service Corps and Engineers.

Witley is in an ideal situation for the training of artillery. It is surrounded by large areas of rolling common land covered with gorse and heather, giving opportunities for the most extensive manoeuvres. The soil is principally sand and, easy to excavate when practising the construction of gun-pits, and adequate cover is available for the





purpose of concealment. In addition, the camp is in one of the most attractive districts of England.

Beautiful old-world villages, and spots of historical and artistic interest lie within easy distance ; good roads run in every direction; and on each side sweeps of rich agricultural land, picturesquely dotted with the quaintest of farm buildings, please the eye. Witley and environs, after a sleepy, dreary winter, presents a spring setting of unsurpassed beauty and richness. etc.

The 202nd battalion arrived at Witley Camp on the 30th November 1916 but no quarters were available so the battalion was split and quartered with six other battalions for one week. They were then gathered together and

proceeded to Bramshott Camp where normal training commenced.

On the 30th December the 202nd Battalion again moved to Witley Camp going to the 12th Training Brigade in the south camp before being absorbed into the 5th Canadian Infantry Division, 13th Canadian Brigade in February 1917 and later on the 28th May 1918 the battalion was absorbed into the 9th Canadian Reserve Battalion.

The 202nd mostly ended up in the 10th, 31st, 49th, 51st Battalions C.E.F. as reinforcements to the front lines in France.



Kinmel was not the last mutiny amongst Canadian troops stationed in Britain. Between November 1918 and June 1919 there were thirteen instances of riots and mutinees involving Canadian troops. A few months after the Kinmel events, authorities returned to their policy of delaying the demobilisation of Canadian troops. This was a contributory factor to a mutiny at Camp Witley, which was a repeat performance of Kinmel. On Saturday night 14-15 June 1919 a large number of troops demonstrated against the delaying tactics of the authorities. The action was sparked by the arrest of some soldiers for gambling. An attempt was made to release them. This quickly flared up into a full-scale riot. The main targets were the camp shops which also had a reputation for over-charging, a theatre and a Salvation Army hut which were all burnt down.

According to the authorities, the delays in repatriation were due to the Liverpool dock strike. But in the Daily Herald on 17 June 1919, a report on the mutiny stated that the soldiers actions had nothing to do with the Liverpool dock strike. Nor was it a drunken rampage as other newspapers had reported. An ultimatum had been issued by the soldiers that further action would be taken if all their demands were not conceded. The authorities capitulated.



### WOODCOTE PARK CAMP EPSOM

'YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU'. Such was the call in August 1914 that by mid-September three and a half thousand volunteers of The University and Public Schools Brigade (UPS) paraded in Epsom High Street. The War Office had selected Woodcote Park as a likely place for a military camp and the chairman of the Royal Automobile Club, The Hon. Arthur Stanley, had been asked if he would 'form a Brigade of infantry.'

The Woodcote Park Estate had been purchased by the Royal Automobile Club in 1913, and it was therefore an obvious place to train the new recruits.



Raised from the Universities and Public Schools of the empire, the ranks of the original volunteers quickly swelled to their required five thousand. Initially, they were billeted in homes in Epsom and Ewell, Ashted and Leatherhead. In February 1915, however, they were to move into the brand-new camp. This was divided into two parts. 'The Farm Camp', situated near to the present entrance to the estate, and 'The Ridge Camp' which created the line for The Ridge residential road today.

Situated within the camp were all the usual facilities of a military base. One hundred huts each housing fifty men had been built by Humphreys Ltd. of Knightsbridge, ably assisted by members of the UPS, also Cookhouses, Mess Halls, Ablutions, an indoor Rifle Range, a large Recreation Hall, Barbers, a Church, a shop and a Post Office.

The whole camp was supplied with electricity, mains water, telephone lines and a regular bus service to Epsom. They were a self-contained military unit able to train on the 338 acres of club property and all the while the golf course still stayed open! Once they had entered camp the men of the UPS became Royal Fusiliers forming the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st service battalions and exercising in Woodcote Park they also used Epsom Downs, Headley Heath and the surrounding countryside in order to attain a level of efficiency.



We have a very good idea of what life was like for the recruits at this time thanks mainly to one Harry Johnson who was the sub-postmaster in Ashted. Harry had a camera, a motorbike and facilities to turn his photographs into picture postcards, selling them at his Post Office. Many photos were taken during the life of the camp and these coupled with the notes written on the reverse of the cards give us a unique insight into military life at Woodcote Park at this crucial time.

The weather during that first winter

at Woodcote Park Camp was severe, delaying the erection of the huts. On 22 January 1915 an inspection by Lord Kitchener was held in blizzard conditions. This parade was held on Epsom Downs and, in total, over 20,000 troops were drawn up for inspection, the UPS having been joined by soldiers encamped all over the district.

Reveille was at 0400hrs to allow for the march to the Downs. Lord Kitchener, who arrived at 1030hrs, stayed only five minutes before going to inspect even more men of his eponymous Army.



By February, all four Battalions were in the newly finished camp and training continued in earnest. We read in one card that the men were frustrated because they 'can't wait to get at the Hun' and were thoroughly fed up with the incessant parades and route marches. The



camp newspaper 'The Pow Wow', produced by the Fusiliers themselves, clearly shows that even after nine months of war, the spirit of jingoism persisted.

At the beginning of May, it was time for the Royal Fusiliers to be moved on, firstly to Clipstone in Nottinghamshire, then to Salisbury Plain and thence to France. Many of the original recruits, because of their background, were to receive commissions in other regiments to fill the many gaps that were appearing in the ranks of the army, others were to stay with the regiment until their battalions were disbanded later in the war.

Many were not to return. The departure of its original incumbents left a big gap not only at Woodcote Park but also in the locality. These men had brought spirit and also income to the district. Their replacements were to be of a different ilk.

The powers that be decided that the camp should become a Convalescent Hospital and in June orderlies were sent to prepare the way for the first patients. Initially, The Farm Camp area was the hospital but very quickly the whole site was ready to receive many ANZAC troops who had been wounded at Gallipoli. Harry



Johnson was still taking pictures and in some of those we can see the slouch hats of the Australians and the typical headgear of the New Zealand soldiers.

There were also British troops convalescing and, like their Colonial fellow patients, all were waiting to be discharged, many to be returned to the frontline. Not all were war wounded. Levels of sickness and disease in the army were high. Even so all wore the bright blue uniform of the wounded soldier, and many were allowed into Epsom town as they returned to full health.

King George had first visited Woodcote Park in October 1914, when he inspected the UPS but on 18th July 1916, accompanied by Queen Mary and escorted by the Commanding Officer Colonel Kilkelly, the Royals talked with the patients and the Queen opened the 'Queen Mary's Tea Rooms'. At this time there were over 3000 convalescents at the hospital, which now included many Canadians with only a few ANZACS left.



Such were the injuries sustained by the Canadians during the Somme offensive that in August 1916 the whole military establishment was handed over to the Canadian Army as their main convalescent hospital, Major L.E.W. Irving commanding. Canadians are well featured in the postcards of Harry Johnson. On one they can be seen practicing baseball, surely a new sport to this country. The recreation hall was put to good use with homemade entertainment as well as concert parties brought down from London, lectures and musical recitals.

We also learn of personal stories including how a wounded soldier reached Woodcote, having been on a hospital ship that was torpedoed in the Channel. At this time The Duke of

Connaught, third son of Queen Victoria, was not only The Governor-General of Canada but also President of The Royal Automobile Club. In this dual capacity he was to visit the hospital, a visit that was recorded uniquely on a Pathe newsreel.

The war dragged on until the Armistice in November 1918 and all this time the hospital was kept busy. Into 1919, there were still Canadians at Woodcote Park but in June there was a riot by Canadian soldiers in Epsom. Following

the arrest of some mutineers, fierce fighting broke out between Canadian troops and the British Police during an attempt to release the arrested men from a nearby Police Station. In the fighting a Police Sergeant Thomas Green died of a fractured skull. Eight Canadian soldiers were charged with manslaughter.

As the British authorities soon learned, even the rigours of military prison did not damp the spark of mutiny. There were several instances of men convicted of mutiny going on to help with the organisation of resistance in prisons.

The case of Private C. McDonnell of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Machine Gun Corps, provides a good example. He was sentenced on 21 January 1919 by a Field General Court Martial, to five years imprisonment on a joint charge of attempting to persuade members of His Majesty's Forces to join a mutiny and taking part in a mutiny.

He was sent to No. 7 Military Prison where he participated in another mutiny. On 24 March 1919 he was sentenced to death. This sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. Another hero had disappeared into history. The camp was used for a while as Queens Mary's Convalescent Centre, still being used by ex-servicemen. After a short period as a Training Centre for War Pensions Administration the Camp was eventually returned to The Royal Automobile Club in 1923. This is just brief summary of events that took place at Woodcote Park during nine years of the club's history.



## SHOREHAM ARMY CAMP

*'In a night, a dark and dirty night unfortunately, the invasion came which has transformed our quiet little town into a garrison town. Hundreds, thousands, seeking shelter under dripping canvas.'* **The Shoreham Parish Magazine, No. 298. October 1914.**

On Saturday 12 September 1914 over 12,000 men arrived in the small coastal town of Shoreham to sleep under canvas on the South Downs and start military training at Shoreham Army Camp.

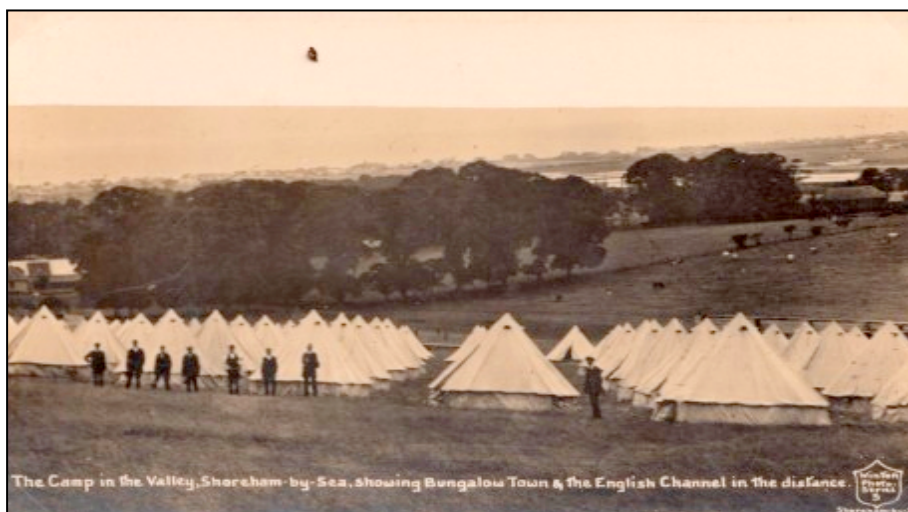
Why did they come? When the First World War began in August 1914, Field Marshall Kitchener put out the call for volunteer recruits to join a new British Army.

By September 1914 he had formed 16 new Army Divisions (over 300,000 men). Most of the

24<sup>th</sup> Division, which included regiments from the Southeast, were sent to Shoreham Army Camp for training. The Camp became part of the Army's Eastern Command. The new raw recruits, lived first in bell tents around Buckingham Park and Slonk Hill and soon the Downs were covered in canvas. The tents did little to protect the now 20,000 recruits from the wind, cold and endless mud so more permanent wooden huts were hastily constructed across the Camp. Terrible weather in December 1914 forced the recruits to move into warm billets in Shoreham, Worthing and Brighton.

From spring 1915 the soldiers returned to the Camp to stay in the new 'hutments' or huge sheds. The Camp now spread from Mill Hill in the West to Slonk Hill in the East and down to Bucking. By autumn of 1915 most recruits had left for the battlefields of France and a new wave of trainees took their place.

In December 1915 a Depot for 'convalescing' and wounded soldiers was created to retrain them for the Front Line. In autumn 1916 Shoreham Camp also became a base for the large Canadian Expeditionary Force. Later in the war South African soldiers also arrived at Shoreham Camp. After the Armistice of November 1918, Shoreham Camp became a holding point for many troops awaiting demobilisation. At the end of the year, the spate of





rebellions accelerated. On 13 November there was mutiny at Shoreham when troops marched out of base camp in protest at brutality and degrading treatment by an officer had pushed a man up to his thighs in mud.

One of the mutineers from North Shields reported: "The next day the General came down and formed us into three sides of a square, drove his motor car into the centre, read the Army Act out and then invited any man to step out and go to work who he liked; I was made to fall out on the right by myself and you can imagine my feelings as being the only soldier of over twenty years' service. Of course, I knew the consequences of my act, but I never saw such loyal men in my life. Not one man moved. I could hear the sergeants in the rear of the men telling them to stand by me and it was as well they did, or I should have got ten years or so."



They won. The next morning, the army responded by demobbing a thousand soldiers, my name at the top of the list and the following morning and another thousand each week thereafter.

The huts started to be sold off in February 1919, but troops remained, despite a mutiny, in the Camp into late summer. By 1920 little remained but the brick and concrete bases of the huts and the grass slowly returned to the Downs. It is estimated that during the 6 years over 100,000 men had trained and lived in Shoreham Camp.

## POLITICS

The Election campaign following the Armistice of November 1918 encouraged the growth of disobedience in the services. In a desperate to win votes Lloyd George had made promises of immediate demobilisation. It matters little whether he intended to keep these as the Military authorities had already decided to the contrary. However, the promise itself had the effect of weakening military discipline.

The war was over, and in the absence of external threats, the pressure to submit to authority was less. This was not fully appreciated by those in command. There remained a feeling of militancy, even revolution, in the air. People believed it was possible to build a more just society than the one that had sent millions to their deaths and this attitude was not confined to Britain. From 1918 on, the fears of European war were replaced by fears of internal revolution throughout Europe. In Britain these fears were not laid until the combined efforts of the Government, and the TUC had defeated the General Strike in 1926.

There is no more promising material for revolution than soldiers returning from wars, careless to danger and accustomed to risks and taking collective action. Peace held no prospect for them. The homes 'fit for heroes' were not fit for pigs. The winter of 1918-1919 was the nearest Britain came to social revolution. That winter was the nearest Britain ever came to social revolution; the authorities lacked the support of the armed forces, and the career minded in the TUC were faced with a similar situation in industry.

Dissatisfaction within the army had a number of sources, one of which was the pivotal scheme. Only 'key men' those with jobs to go to, could be demobilised. This meant latter recruits could be released before those with longer service. The scheme was worsened by bureaucratic bungling; men were sent home for Christmas and told those who had found jobs need not return. But forms had to be completed by their employers and that contract endorsed by the Ministry of Labour. Only then would the man's unit be asked if he could be spared.

While this was taking its course, the men had to return via Folkestone to Calais. Some were demobbed on arrival, only to discover there was no transport back to England and to make matters worse, there were no facilities for food and refreshment on the return journey. Added to all of this was the threat of being sent to fight against the Bolsheviks in Russia. Although the Government were insisting that only volunteers were being sent, there was widespread knowledge that many unwilling conscripts were sent.

## SHORNCLIFFE CAMP FOLKESTONE

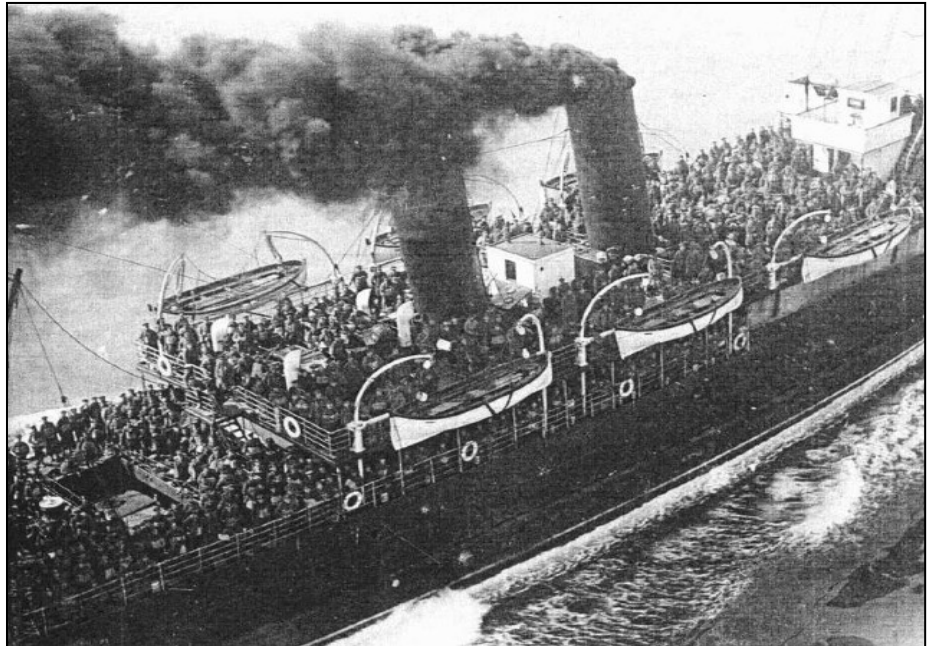
On 3 January 1919, virtually the entire garrison at Folkestone refused to attend reveille in protest at poor food, excessive officer privileges and orders that they return to France. At a huge demonstration, 10,000-strong, the troops voted to form a Soldiers' Union.

**The *Daily Herald* on 11 January described the events as follows:**



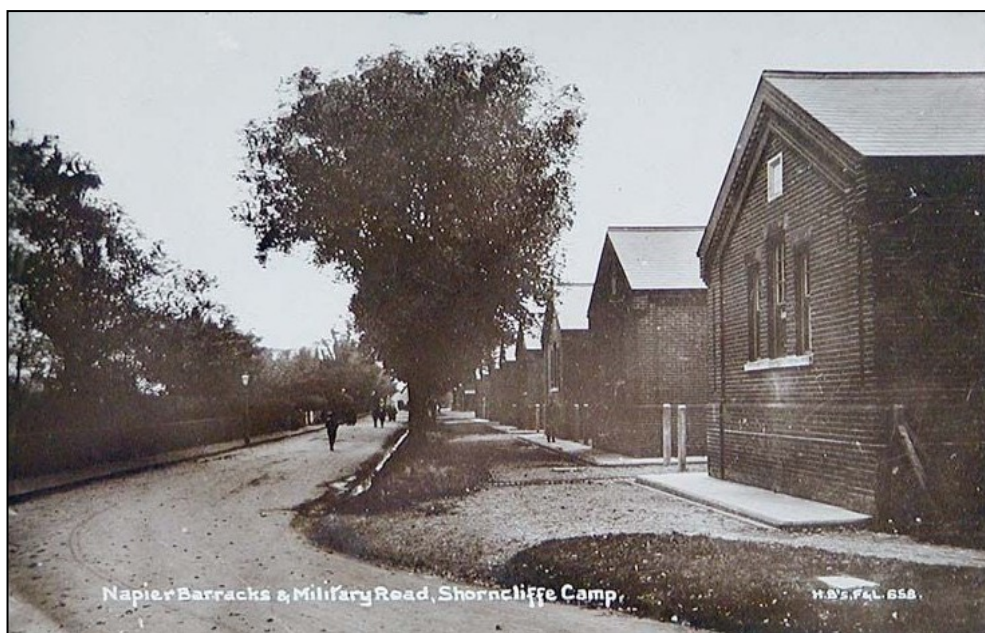
*"On their own signal – three taps of a drum – two thousand men, unarmed and in perfect order, demonstrated the fact that they were fed up – absolutely fed up. Their plan of action had been agreed upon the night before: no military boat should be allowed to leave Folkestone for France that day or any day until they were guaranteed their freedom.*

*It was sheer, flat, brazen open and successful mutiny. Pickets were posted at the harbour. Only Canadian and Australian soldiers were allowed to sail – if they wanted to. As a matter of no very surprising fact they did not want to. One Officer tried to interfere. He leapt across the gangway and got a rough-house. 'I am a relative of Douglas Haig,' one of the officers pleaded. 'We are all King's messengers,' said another party. But nothing of that kind availed them.*



*"Meanwhile troop trains were arriving in Folkestone with more men returning from leave and on their way to France. They were met with pickets . . . in a mass they joined demonstrators. "On Saturday an armed guard of Fusiliers was posted at the quays by the Army authorities. They carried fixed bayonets and ball cartridges. The picket approached. One rifle made a show of going up: the foremost picket seized it, and forthwith the rest of the guard fell back. "The mutineers visited the station in a body, after having posted their own harbour guards, and tore down a large label marked 'For Officers Only.'*

*"On Saturday a great procession of soldiers, swelled now to about 10,000 marched through the town. Everywhere the townspeople showed their sympathy. At midday a mass meeting decided to form a soldiers' union. They appointed their officials and chose their spokesmen."*



Sir William Robertson, from the War Office, came down from London and conceded the men's demands, everyone was to be given seven days leave. The men were allowed to elect one hundred and forty demobilisation committees from their rank and file and complete indemnity was promised.





## DOVER

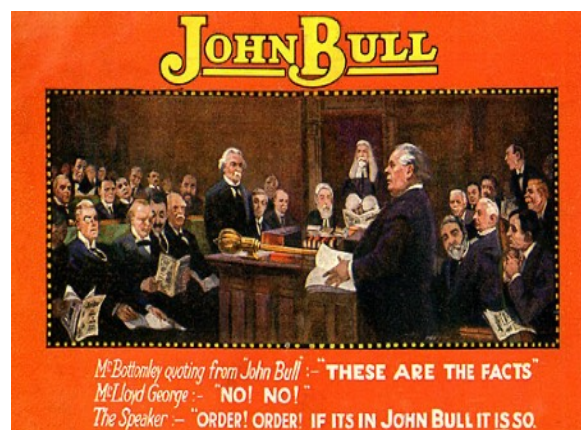
Another four thousand troops demonstrated at Dover in support of the Folkestone mutiny. They held a mass meeting at the harbour station and selected a deputation to meet the authorities. They then marched up to the Town Hall, behind their deputies, formed lines on either side of the road. The Mayor had to admit them into the Town Hall, where a piano was provided for their entertainment and nearby cinemas were opened for the soldiers to enjoy a free film show.



The implications of these mutinies were very serious and to prevent a spread of unrest it was resolved that Horatio Bottomley, well known demagogue and MP and editor of the magazine 'John Bull', be sent to intervene 'as the soldiers' friend'.

A team of Ministry of Labour officials backed by an army of clerks arrived to speed up the checking of labour contracts, so that those with jobs could be quickly released.

Horatio Bottomley (1860 – 1933) was the founder and editor of the magazine 'John Bull' and an independent MP from 1918 to 1922. He was convicted of fraudulent conversion in 1922 and died a pauper. A demagogue, he pocketed a fortune out of war-time recruitment meetings, where it was said that the size of his peroration was determined by the size of his 'take'. He 'took' £79,000.



## RASC OSTERLEY PARK ISLEWORTH

One of the more spectacular events took place on Monday 6 January 1919, when over fifteen hundred members of the Army Service Corps at Osterley Park Isleworth seized lorries and drove them into Whitehall. It was widely

believed that this corps would be the last to be demobilised, but the men had other intentions. Within four days they were all demobilised.

#### **Other incidents**

At Shortlands RASC Depot some five hundred men who marched to the central hall at Bromley. Also further demonstrations in London, when four hundred men bound for South Russia refused to board a train – this was a surprising incident as all soldiers destined for Russia were supposedly volunteers. Later during this week, mutinies broke out at Bristol, Fairlop, Grove Park, Kempton Park, Park Royal, Sydenham and Aldershot.

How near was Britain to a full-scale revolution during these weeks? The Army was in disarray; soldiers and sailors councils and demobilisation clubs were being formed. Delegates from various camps were beginning to combine their efforts and resources. The number of strikes in Liverpool and Glasgow were increasing. There were riots in Glasgow and troops sent to occupy the streets were beginning to fraternise with the strikers and demonstrators. There were riots in Belfast and a national rail strike was imminent. From August 1918 until mid-1919, even the Police Force was affected by militant strike action.

#### **BIGGIN HILL KENT**

The airfield was originally opened by the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) during the first world war. At first it was used for wireless experiments, but was then established in 1917 as part of the London Air Defence Area, responsible for defending the capital against attacks by Zeppelins and Gotha bombers. To this end, 141 Squadron of the RFC was based at Biggin Hill and equipped with Bristol Fighters.

The dispute at RAF Biggin Hill in January 1919 was in many ways typical of the smaller struggles of this period. The five hundred men of RAF Wireless Experimental Establishment at the South Camp of the 'now famous' airfield at Biggin Hill had been living in absolutely appalling conditions. Most of them slept in tents, the camp was a sea of mud and all the duck-boards and other 'stealable' fuel had been burnt to obtain warmth in the freezing weather. The dining hall was a canvas hangar with its roof in shreds. The men had to eat in a morass of three inches of mud. Food was prepared in a cookhouse which was, and open, rusty shed and matters were made worse by the attitude of the officious authorities.

One evening, after a particularly foul meal, the men held a meeting. They had already complained many times previous, without result. The meeting decided overwhelmingly in favour of strike action. The 'Red Flag' was sung and there were calls for a more active and radical policy, including for a march down Picadilly smashing all the windows en route. These proposals were defeated. The next morning no one turned out for duty. When the Orderly Officer tried to discover what was happening, he was turned away from the dining hall by a sergeant and two men who refused to recognise his authority.

The men removed all magnetos from all vehicles in the camp, including those belonging to civilian contractors. Support came from the men of 141 Squadron of the RAF stationed at the neighbouring North Camp, who refused to intervene on the side of the authorities. The strike committee was in complete control. A deputation was sent to the Commanding Officer, Colonel Blanchy (the new RAF ranks had not been fully introduced) and presented the following demands:

No man to be victimised.

Unless a satisfactory answer from the Commandant is received, we will put our case to Lord Weir via our deputation proceeding to his quarters. The men will state that when they 'go sick' the Medical Officer says that their complaints are due to the disgraceful conditions of the camp food and sanitary arrangements.

We demand that Major (unnamed) shall be dismissed from this unit.

Leave to be carried out in the normal way.

The men demand that they leave the camp until it is put into a habitable condition by the civilian employees.

Temporary release of those men who have jobs waiting and those who want to get jobs pending discharge. While the men are at home demobilisation must continue and the men advised by letter or telegram.

Abolition of work on Saturday afternoons and Sundays.

Restrictions on the YMCA to be removed. Prices in canteen to be lowered and a full explanation given as to what happens to P.R.I. funds. Efficient transport to be provided for officers, NCO's and men.

#### **Grievances – Sanitary.**

Only five Basins in the wash house for five hundred men.

Wet feet – no gum boots issued.

Dirty leaking huts.

No baths.

Inefficient latrines.

#### **Grievances – Food.**

Shortage.

Badly cooked.

Dirty Cook-house staff.

Dining Hall in a disgraceful condition.

Fully trained cooks should be substituted for present inefficient youths.

#### **These demands to be conceded by noon today.**

Colonel Blanchy offered to accompany the delegation to the Area HQ at Covent Garden to support their case and the men agreed. The magnetos were replaced in a sufficient number of vehicles to transport the delegation. Meanwhile the rest of the camp remained on strike.

The Area Second-in-Command was shown around the camp by the strike committee and the outcome was the whole camp was immediately sent on leave for ten days, during which time the conditions were drastically improved, and the other demands largely conceded. When the strike ended there were no victimisations. The struggle met with complete success.

#### **THE WAR CABINET**

There was panic at the War Office. The War Cabinet was deeply divided and on 6 February Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, wrote in his diary:

*"The whole of the demobilisation has been completely boxed up by Lloyd George, who in his anxiety to get votes at the General Election, kept adding every sort of authority to help...If Lloyd George doesn't announce to the country that the war is not over, the whole army will be turned into rabble."*

#### **The next day, following talks at No. 10 Downing Street, he wrote:**

*"I told Lloyd George to come out into the open and back the War Office...to crush the poisonous parts of the press...to say that the war is not over...To prepare the public mind for armies of occupation in India, Gibraltar, Malta, France etc...This frightened Lloyd George and he agreed"*

On 8 January delegates from the Folkestone and Dover mutinees arrived in London, with delegates from other camps. This was the first sign of the growth of rank-and-file links. No matter what the War Office intended, the Army was going home. There was nothing the Government could do but to concede to their demands.

#### **Field Marshal Wilson was furious, and he recorded his displeasure in his diary:**

*"The whole trouble is due to Lloyd George and his cursed campaign for vote catching. Now he is forced up against something ugly as I told him he would be. At a meeting of the military members this afternoon we agreed the AG should draw up a paper showing how constant civilian interference has wrecked our carefully worked scheme for demobilisation and explaining clearly that unless soldiers were allowed to run our own show, we would have a disaster."*

The War Cabinet had adopted a scheme to retain a large percentage of the troops, in some form of compulsory service. Wilson and Churchill supported sending troops to Russia to 'knock-out' Bolshevism. When Lloyd George left for the first Paris peace talks, they co-operated to devise a compulsory service scheme. The plan aimed at having a million men in khaki, ready to put forces on the Rhine, to send men to Russia, to provide other armies of occupation and to cope with the situation in Britain.

From the point of view of the fanatics in the War Office, the manpower demands for Britain's post war policy (repression in Ireland, intervention in Russia, occupation of the Rhineland, and curbing industrial unrest at home) were incompatible with large-scale demobilisation.

Wilson and Churchill agreed that once they had piloted the scheme through the War Office Cabinet, they should go together and confront Lloyd George with a 'fait accompli'. They could then put the scheme in operation without further delay.

Lloyd George, more aware of the realities, suspected that the scheme would not be accepted by the troops already in open defiance. Churchill was therefore, prevented from putting his plan to the War Cabinet.

#### **Undaunted, Wilson and Churchill held an unofficial Cabinet meeting which Wilson noted:**

*"An unofficial Cabinet meeting took place in the form of certain 'conversations'. The case was put strongly by Churchill, that discipline was disappearing fast in the Army and Haig added that if things continued there would be no army left in France."*

Reluctant assent was given to their proposals. No Secretary was present, and no minutes taken. Following the meeting Churchill and Wilson crossed the channel and pressured Lloyd George into an equally unwilling agreement.

Even members of the Government expressed reservations at this blatant breach of faith. 'Bonar Law' says Wilson *"is terrified of the scheme coming out, because of his election pledges."* The next stage was comparatively easy ; the support of the press was needed for the re-introduction of compulsory service".

**Wilson had no doubt they would comply, and he wrote in his diary:**

*"We will get all the press to bring out their puffs on Wednesday, and we will follow up with an Army Order on Thursday. Then the great adventure of compelling a million men in the name of peace will have begun. There is not a moment to lose. All power within the army is slipping away. We shall get one million men, who will be compelled to serve for months. Of course if these men refuse to serve, we are done, but I have no fear, Winston and I can get full support from the press."*

As expected, the meeting with the press went off smoothly. Churchill and Wilson told them their responsibility to the nation. The hacks eagerly complied. According to Wilson "the press behaved loyally and understood that the Army was in a state of flux and that the men were disposed to take their opinions from what they actually read in the newspapers."

But events were slipping out of the hands of megalomaniacs in the War Office. Unrest was sweeping the country. The common soldier was beginning to write history with his feet. Whatever the War office had in mind, the troops were determined to make their own decisions. A military adventure in Russia was low on their list of priorities.

A Cabinet Paper (no. 1772 of 12 August 1920) says *"Never have we known such excitement to be aroused against any project as has been aroused amongst the workers by the possibility of war with Russia. Everywhere, ex-servicemen are saying they will never take part in any war again. The workers are dead against war with Russia. The call for troops in Ireland has left England and Scotland bare of serviceable troops. This does not yet, however, seem to be known by the extremists."*

By 8 January 1919 some three hundred thousand men had been demobilised. The release of 'pivotal' men alone was proceeding at four thousand a day. Disturbances were still taking place throughout the country. On the 8 January over four thousand RASC men marched from Park Royal to Whitehall, where a reluctant Sir William Robertson conceded their demands for immediate demobilisation and promised there would be no victimisation.

#### **WESTERHAM HILL AERODROME**

Also on this day a demonstration by six hundred men of the Flying Service at Westerham Hill Aerodrome in Kent.

#### **HYTHE**

Several hundred men of the RAF School of Imperial Gunnery at Hythe marched to the Hotel Imperial and protested.

#### **FELIXSTOWE**

Several hundred RAF men at Felixstowe marched on the Harwich defence.

#### **EDINBURGH**

One hundred men of the Highland Light Infantry marched to the headquarters of the Scottish Command in Edinburgh.

#### **MAIDSTONE**

A large contingent of men from the Queen's, the Gloucester's and the Wiltshire's in Maidstone held a protest meeting in the high street before marching to the Town Hall. The first significant concession was the abolition of the contract system.

#### **P O L I T I C I A N S**

In a desperate attempt to keep control, Lloyd George made an appeal for restraint on 9 January 1919. This was followed up by an Army Council notice to all units stating:



*"Officers and soldiers who embarked on and after 12 January for leave in the United Kingdom are only permitted to proceed on leave to the United Kingdom on the distinct understanding that they are to return to their units on the expiry of their leave and that they will not be demobilised under any pretext whatsoever, while on leave."*

The day this notice was published, a large number of RAMC men in Blackpool refused to go on parade until all restrictions on their Corps were lifted. By now the number of 'pivotal' men released daily had reached six thousand and a further seventy thousand had been received. Meanwhile about one hundred and twenty-five thousand miners had secured demobilisation and it was estimated that no less than one hundred and forty thousand men each week were being discharged in the United Kingdom alone.

The military authorities hoped to gain some control over the demobilised troops since they believed that a clash between the Government and organiser labour was inevitable. The was, therefore, considerable embarrassment when the Daily Herald published a circular that had been sent to discharged members of the Honourable Artillery Company, which stated:

*"The Commanding Officer hopes that all those who have served in the HAC and are physically fit and able to rejoin in the event of any national emergency, should communicate their address from time to time with the Officer Commanding the Honourable Artillery Company Depot."*

*Those who are fully competent as either motor mechanics, mechanical railway, electrical engineers, dispatch riders, telegraphonists, signallers etc., are particularly requested to notify on the back thereof, these or any other special qualifications which they may possess."*

The Government were pinning hopes on their ability to defeat the unions in the event of a confrontation. There was plenty of evidence before the Trade Union Leader's that in the event of a showdown, the Army would not stand by the Government. However, the labour bureaucrats did everything they could to avoid a confrontation.

## **SOUTHAMPTON**

A reminder of the strength of ordinary soldiers came from Southampton, in the middle of January, when twenty thousand soldiers went on strike and took over the docks. Robertson, Commander in Chief of the Home Forces, sent General Trenchard to restore military authority.

### **Hugh Montague Trenchard, 1st Viscount Trenchard, GCB, OM, GCVO, DSO**

Trenchard had witnessed several mutinees in the French Army and was quite prepared to employ the most ruthless measures. Nevertheless, he underestimated the men as he approached to dockgate and attempted to address the reluctant audience. A chorus of boos and catcalls accompanied his remarks. The meeting came to an undignified end when a group of men took hold of him and gave him a going over before ejecting him.

**Said Trenchard** *"It was most unpleasant. It was the only time in my life I'd been really hustled. They said they did not want to listen to me. They told me to get out and stay out."*

Smarting from his minor injuries and major wounds to his pride, Trenchard acted with the vengeful cunning which had preserved his military caste for generations. Indifferent to the grievances of the soldiers, many of whom had seen active service, he saw only a mutinous rabble to be put down by force. Fully aware that the mutineers were not armed, he phoned a request to the Garrison Commander at Portsmouth for two hundred and fifty armed men plus an escort of Military Police. In spite of fierce objections from southern Command, Trenchard made it perfectly clear he would initiate a blood-bath.

The following morning Trenchard returned to the quayside and waited for the troop train from Portsmouth. Only when the unarmed mutineers had been surrounded by armed troops with their safety bolts in firing positions did Trenchard make a second attempt to address the troops. And even then he was told to 'drop dead' by a sergeant, who was promptly arrested.



Following this incident, the mutiny collapsed and one hundred and seventy were personally selected by Trenchard as ringleaders, fifty-three of whom were confined in a nearby troopship.

The docks were now quiet, but a few soldiers had barricaded themselves in their billets. Hose pipes were commandeered and after an hour, Trenchard's riot squad had captured about a hundred soaked and shivering men who were then forced to stand in the January frost outside Trenchard's office until the latter had satisfied his desire for vengeance. A few weeks later, in early February, Trenchard was called in by Churchill, then Minister for War and Air, and was congratulated on his ***"masterly handling of the Southampton riots"*** and appointed Chief of the Air Staff.

Unrest amongst the troops merged with unrest in industry. By February 1919 large numbers of soldiers were refusing to return to the continent. Civil disturbances in mining areas, which under normal circumstances would have been quelled by a show of force, presented grave problems to the authorities, since it was not clear whether the troops could be relied upon. Eventually the Army Council decided that there was a Guard's Division that could be trusted and issued instructions for them to be brought back from the continent. The Guards were used on a number of occasions, for example to disarm the Light Infantry at Colchester, when they refused to embark for Russia.

## THE NAVY

There was considerable talk of mutiny at Portsmouth, in the summer of 1918. The threat was serious enough for Lionel Yaxley, an Admiralty Agent, to write a report of impending trouble. This was only averted by immediate improvements in pay and conditions. Demand for 'lower deck' organisations were taken seriously. Agitation for Trade Union representation was spreading throughout the navy.

The material conditions of the sailors certainly justified a mutiny. Between 1852 and 1917 there had been only one pay increase, amounting to one penny a day in 1912. Wartime inflation had reduced the sailors nineteen pence per day to a mere pittance. Another twopence a day was granted in 1917, plus a miserable separation allowance of ten shillings and six pence weekly, for wives. Following a series of mutinees in 1919, pay increase of over two hundred per cent were granted.

After the Russian Revolution, the British Navy was sent into action against the Russians. It proved ineffective, but this ineffectiveness had less to do with the efforts of the Bolsheviks, than with the unwillingness of the British Seamen to fight. The extent of these mutinees can be measured by reference to the following comment made in the House of Commons by G. Lambert MP on 12 March 1919.

*"Undoubtedly there was, at the end of last year, grave unrest in the Navy. I do not wish to be violent, but I think I am correct in saying that a match would have touched off an explosion."*



George Lambert (Later Viscount Lambert) MP for South Molton Devon

He was first elected as Liberal MP for South Molton at a by-election in 1891. He was Civil Lord of the Admiralty, 1905-1915, "a post for which he had no obvious qualifications. 'A farmer sent to sea' was a jibe frequently heard in those days" (*The Times*).

## THE NAVY AND THE ARMISTICE

Shortly after the Armistice with Germany, the crew of a light Cruiser at Libau on the Baltic, mutinied. Many other ships were sent home from Archangel and Murmansk after similar experiences. In spite of a propaganda campaign against Russia it was becoming increasingly difficult to obtain reliable crews. Refusals to weigh for Russia were a regular occurrence at Invergordon, Portsmouth, Rosyth, Devonport and Fort Edgar. Dockers refused to load the 'Jolly George' with an arms consignment for Poland in May 1920, but little is said about far greater challenges to authority to the armed forces. An example in early 1919 where a group of Dockers discovered that the destination of a large cruiser being refitted at Rosyth, was Russia.

Together with some members of the Socialist Labour party they leafleted the crew, who refused to sail. In fact the crew stayed put for three weeks, although isolated in mid-stream, until their demands were met, and they were paid off at Portsmouth.

In January 1919 there were mutinies on the Mine-sweepers at Rosyth. On 13 January, there was a mutiny on the patrol boat 'Kilbride' at Milford Haven, where the Red Flag was hoisted. This was an uneasy year for the Admiralty. On 12 October 1919, one hundred and fifty seamen had broken out of their ships at Port Edgar on hearing that they were due to return to the Baltic. The First Destroyer Flotilla was prevented from returning to the Baltic war.

Eventually, half the ships sailed on 14 August, their crews made up from Atlantic Fleet battleships. Although most of the mutineers were arrested, forty-four men made their way to London to present petitions at Whitehall. They were arrested at Kings Cross Station and sent to Chatham Barracks.

Between 12 October and 21 November 1919 some ninety-six offenders had been arrested and punished, ten by imprisonment. It should also be remembered that the Government had repeatedly pledged that only volunteers would be sent to fight against the Russians, but it is clear this was not the practice employed by the Admiralty. Those who did not intend to 'volunteer' had little choice but to mutiny and face the consequences.

By November 1919 the discontent had spread to the aircraft carrier 'Vindictive' in Copenhagen. A Marine detachment was called in to disperse a group of seamen demanding leave. Two men were arrested. Later two Stokers were caught trying to stop the fan engines. They were each given five years and the following morning virtually no one turned up for duty. This provoked Captain Grace to arrest five more allegedly 'ringleaders.' They were condemned to ninety days hard labour before a dishonourable discharge. Another six were arrested, but resistance continued. The next morning fourteen crewmen were still refusing duty and were arrested. That same evening another two arrests were made.

Meanwhile the crews of the minesweepers operating in the Baltic declared that they had had enough. There were incidents aboard the Flagship 'Delhi' in December, when only 25% of the crew responded to a command to return to Biorko in the Gulf of Finland. There was further naval mutiny in Russia, that of the gunboat 'Cicala' in the White Sea. Death sentences were imposed on the 'ringleaders.' The fact that these were later commuted to one year imprisonment reflects the continuing strength of the sailors movement.

Mutinies in the forces of intervention were not confined to the Navy. There was a large mutiny at a Marine Battalion at Murmansk. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Royal Marines, formed in the summer of 1919 at a time of unrest over demobilisation, were originally intended to police Schleswig Holstein. But, at short notice, the Battalion had been diverted to cover the evacuation of Murmansk. They were sent to the Lake Onega region, a further 300 miles south of Kem. In August 1919 two companies refused duty; ninety men were tried and found guilty of mutiny by court martial. Thirteen men were sentenced to death and others up to five years imprisonment.

None of the death sentences were actually carried out, the ninety mutineers were shipped to Bodmin Prison, where they continued their resistance to arbitrary authority. In this they were acting in the best traditions of the Royal Marines. In December 1918 some Marines had been involved in a mutiny inside Bodmin Prison which had resulted in three death sentences, later commuted to five years penal servitude.

Continued resistance paid off. The ninety men arrested after the Murmansk incident had their sentences reduced as follows: the thirteen sentences to death were commuted to five years, but twelve of whom were released after only one year and the other after two years. Twenty men, originally given five years were released after six months. Fifty-one men sentenced to two years were also released within six months.

In recognition of the fact that their officers had acted contrary to Army instructions in employing young and inexperienced lads at the front, the remainder of those arrested were either released or had their sentences commuted to six months. Following the announcement, on 22 December 1919 of these acts of 'clemency' the

First Lord of the Admiralty told the Commons that 'bad leadership' was a factor behind the mutiny. He even hinted at the possibility of disciplinary measures being taken against several officers.

Many other mutinies occurred in North Russia. One took place in the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment, which ended with death sentences being passed on two sergeants whilst other mutineers were cowed by White Russian machine gunners called in by the English officers. Many of these mutineers were suppressed. They highlighted the reluctance of British sailors to fight against Russia when the Government was theoretically committed to a policy of peace. Contrary to what the people were being told and at the very moment when hysteria surrounding the Armistice was at its height, the Foreign Office and Admiralty were finalising their arrangements for intervention in Russia.

The Navy was not only required for the anti-Bolshevik crusade and to defend Britain's imperial commitments. It was also needed to quell internal disturbances. Towards the end of the war, seamen were trained in the noble art of 'blacklegging' in the event of strikes by railwaymen or power workers. The battleship 'Vanguard' was sent to the Mersey to command Liverpool during the Police strike of August 1919.

Resistance in the Navy continued between 1919 and the time of the Invergordon mutiny. In 1930 there were no less than six major movements within the Navy against conditions of work and arbitrary injustice of naval discipline. The 'Revenge', the 'Royal Oak', the 'Vindictive', the 'Repulse', the 'Ramillies', and the 'Lucia' were all affected.

### **CALAIS (1919)**

There was a growing campaign against the censorship of news from home and soldiers at Calais elected delegates who also acted as distributors for the then prohibited Daily Herald. At Le Havre, Royal Artillery units rioted on 9 December 1918, burning down several army depots in the course of the night. The most sustained mutiny by troops took place at army camps surrounding Calais. Unrest within the units stationed there had been building up for several months beforehand over issues such as cruel and humiliating punishments, the censorship of news from home, and bad working conditions in the Valde Lièvre workshops.

There was also discontent over the savage ten-year sentences imposed on five teenage soldiers at a Court Martial at Etaples on 22 September 1918, for relatively minor breaches of discipline, and the harsh regime in Les Attaques military prison, where detained soldiers were flogged and manacled for trivial offences such as talking to each other and were only issued with a single blanket, even during the severest of winters.

**Lieutenant-Colonel F. Hall asked the Prime Minister** *"if his attention had been called to the report which had been published in the Daily Herald with regard to the conditions at Les Attaques Military Prison near Calais: if, as there stated men are confined in this camp for trivial offences such as overstaying leave for a few days; if they are supplied with only one blanket each in the coldest weather and are flogged and placed in irons and hand-cuffs for conversing with each other, and, if there are no grounds for these charges, will he consider to the taking of criminal proceedings for the publication of such reckless and libellous statements for the purpose of bringing the Army into disrepute"*

### **Hansard 26 May 1919.**

Mr. Forster: *"The report from France has now been received and it shows that the allegations referred to by my hon. And gallant friend are quiet unfounded. The men are supplied with the same number of blankets as all other troops on the line of communication living under canvas. No men are put in irons unless the Governor of the prison is satisfied that is necessary on account of violence. As regard the offences for which men are confined to the camp, these are of all descriptions and include small offences for which short sentences have been awarded."*

The Calais mutiny began after agitation for demobilisation. It coincided with the arrest of Private John Pantling, of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, while delivering what the authorities described as a 'seditious speech to an assembly of soldiers.'

In January 1919 these grievances exploded into agitation for improved conditions and speeded demobilisation. At Valde Lièvre camp, troops elected a Soldiers' Council and called for a general strike. To a man, they refused to go on parade at reveille. Instead of their normal guard duty, troops manned picket lines and set up defensive positions throughout the camp.

At another base in nearby Vendreux, 2,000 soldiers walked out in sympathy and marched to Valde Lièvre as a gesture of solidarity. After a mass meeting, the 4,000 mutineers descended on the army headquarters at Calais

and seized control. Within three days, 20,000 troops had joined the mutiny, including women's units of the Queen Mary Army Auxiliary. In a wave of spontaneous unionisation, a Calais Soldiers' and Sailors' Association was established, which linked with similar soldiers' committees in other units of the army by affiliating to the newly formed Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Union.

For the duration of the strike, each unit elected delegates to a Camp Committee and each camp in turn sent delegates to the Central Area Committee which coordinated the strike and issued orders from the occupied Calais army headquarters. This committee secured the support of the local French civilian population, including the railway workers who put an embargo on the movement of all British military goods.

When General Byng arrived with troops to put down the mutiny, his soldiers already delayed by two days of 'blacking' of British transport, were unable and reluctant to suppress the strikers and many of them eventually joined the rebellion. Powerless to crush the mutineers, army chiefs were forced to concede to the soldiers' demands for improved food, new barracks, greater freedom of leave and the abolition of weekend work.

This successful mutiny at Calais had an immediate ripple effect throughout the British forces. While this was taking place, there was a distinct hardening of the attitude of the officers. The soldiers spent the weekend organising the other camps into Soldiers Councils.

On Sunday the officers struck back and re-arrested Private John Pantling. The news spread quickly. On Monday the newly organised Soldiers Councils called a strike. Not a single man turned up for reveille. The sentries were replaced by pickets. That same morning, at another camp in nearby Vendreux, over two thousand men came out in sympathy. Later that morning they marched to Calais camp as a gesture of solidarity.

After a mass meeting both camps marched behind brass bands towards the headquarters, where Brigadier Rawlinson was stationed. By now the mutineers totalled over four thousand. The HQ was quickly surrounded and a deputation entered. They demanded the release of Pantling. The authorities capitulated and promised that he would be back in his camp within twenty-four hours.

## **Other**

Similar soldiers' protests, strikes, riots and mutinies took place in cities, ports and barracks all over Britain well into 1919. Influenced by their working class and trade union roots – and the strong sense of camaraderie that evolved in fighting units during the war – the military rebels had genuine grievances and felt a burning desire for a fair deal.

Faced with the threat of a generalised rebellion – and talk of revolution – army chiefs hastily improved conditions and speeded up demobilisation. They feared that keeping dissenting troops together and under arms could risk a revolution. They were right. In 1919, Britain came close to a workers and soldiers uprising. But it's not a story that the official WW1 commemoration wants to highlight. It might give people the wrong ideas.

Throughout the summer of 1919 mutineers continued to break out within the Allied Forces, frustrating the War Office's attempt to maintain a significant peace-time army. Mass meetings were held by soldiers serving in Kantara, Egypt, during which two men from each unit were elected to form a Central Committee.

The Committee's task was to put forward the various grievances of the men, but it seemingly confined itself to what the press described as 'legal activities.' A meeting of two thousand five hundred men was recorded by a Daily Herald reported on 4 June 1919. It ended peacefully with the singing of the National Anthem.

Although the authorities issued orders forbidding meetings of the central delegation they also made vague promises about demobilisation. These promises were given a distinct sense of urgency when soldiers refused to do duties and set up their own guards. Despite orders, forbidding meetings, the Kantara Soldier's Council was still functioning as late as 25 June 1919.

## **Hansard 5 June 1919.**

**Mr. Cairns:** asked the Secretary of State for War "*whether during April a strike of civilian telegraphists took place in Egypt; whether military telegraphists who had been sent to the demobilisation camp at Kantara, were recalled in order to take the places of strikers; and whether he will have immediate enquiries made with a view to preventing the military forces being used for strike-breaking purposes and to secure the immediate demobilisation of the men who have served in Egypt for three or four years without leave?*"

**Mr. Churchill:** "*A report on this question has been called for, and I will communicate with the hon. Member later.*"

**Mr. Lunn:** asked the Secretary of State for War “whether he is aware that soldier’s councils have been instituted amongst the troops in Egypt; that at Kantara such bodies decide what guards and fatigues are necessary, the Ordnance Corps at Cairo struck on the 12<sup>th</sup> instant and an ammunition dump was fired that evening; is he aware that a mass meeting of the troops was held on 13 May 1919 in Cairo to protest against the compulsory retention of men who volunteered for military service; that a general strike of the men serving in Egypt is threatened; and he will do his utmost to allay the unrest by speeding up demobilisation?”

**Mr. Churchill:** “I am aware that there has been a certain amount of unrest in Egypt regarding demobilisation and I am calling for a report as to the facts”.

Although a general amnesty for mutineers and other military offenders was never officially endorsed, continual unrest amongst the forces created an atmosphere in which the government was obliged to pursue a policy of ‘clemency’. By the end of December 1919, some twelve hundred years had been remitted.

Meanwhile, repeated outbursts of mutiny in England continued to cause grave concern. At Aldershot nine thousand reservists had been recalled to the army because of the ‘crisis’ caused by the coal strike and the threatened rebellion in Ireland. They proved a very unwilling tool of repression.

Early in May 1919 several hundred men made plans for a ‘rising’ predicting that ‘soon the red flag will be flying over this town.’ On Friday 6 May a skirmish took place during which Superintendent W. Davis of the Aldershot Constabulary was injured. On Saturday, the reservists, led by a private waving the red flag, ran wild in Union Street, Wellington Street, Gordon Road and Victoria Road. Later, the soldier with a red flag was seen perched on top of a bus shouting ‘come on the rebels’. Over sixty shops had their windows smashed and were looted, including a jeweller’s. The men stuffed their pockets with diamonds, watches etc., before hurling the clocks at local traders. The police were overcome but military loyalists attacked the rioters with bayonets and pick-axe handles.

#### **Hansard 26 May 1919**

**Mr. Adamson:** “I desire to ask the Home Secretary whether he can give the House any information regarding the serious trouble which arose outside the House this afternoon between a procession of discharged soldiers and sailors and the police, and also to ask the right hon. Gentleman to say what the Government is doing with a view to removing the causes which led to processions such as this?”

*I understand that the procession consisted entirely of discharged and demobilised soldiers and that they were making their way from a meeting in Hyde Park to the House of commons with the intention of interviewing the Prime Minister and the Minister of Labour, and of ascertaining whether it was possible for the to get work. These men left their work in order to answer the country’s call.*

*In many cases they were promised their work on their return. They come back to find that is impossible for them to get employment. The Government would be well advised to face the seriousness of the situation”.*

**The Secretary of State (for the Home Department) Mr. Short:** “There was this afternoon, unfortunately, a somewhat serious situation as between a procession of discharged soldiers and sailors and the police. I cannot agree for a moment that the cause of the unfortunate situation was the lack of employment, or the lack of work, or that it had anything to do with it, or that it had anything whatever to do with a legitimate grievance.

*The cause of the unfortunate situation was that the men, unfortunately acted under the control of wild spirits who were amongst them, instead of under their own proper leaders. The Leaders of the men, so far as I have been able to ascertain, or those who appeared to be leaders of the soldiers and sailors, were very anxious to try to prevent any such procession taking place, but they were unable to do so.*

*The police, therefore, were obliged to take steps to bar the way of the procession. They barred the way by Constitution Hill and the procession went down Grosvenor Place and tried to turn up New Palace Road. They were barred again by the police, and as the road happened to be under repair, there were missives handy for the wild spirits and they used blocks of wood to assail the police and used the poles to trip up the horses of the mounted police.*

*The same sort of scene occurred outside Parliament Square. From first to last the police behaved with the greatest restraint. With regard to the dissatisfaction of the crowd, we cannot possibly debate that question in the short time that is left on the Motion of Adjournment.*

*All I can say is that, so far as the police are concerned, so far as the information that I have been able to obtain is concerned, they have behaved throughout in a way worthy of the highest commendation, and that all the trouble arose from the fact that wild spirits, whether they were Trade Union spirits or not, I do not know, and I do not*



*believe they can be got amongst these men and got the better of them, and supplanted their own and saner leaders, and that was the cause of the whole trouble”.*

In January 1920 the Chief of the Imperial General Staff warned the Cabinet that the army's inability to aid the civilian power constituted 'a grave cause for anxiety'. He prohibited its employment except as a military force 'to be used only in the last extremity'.

In March 1920 the War Office estimated that only twenty-five thousand (out of forty thousand considered necessary) for the maintenance of Home Security would be available. These limited forces contained a high proportion of untrained soldiers with insufficient military discipline.

## **BULGARIA IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

The Kingdom of Bulgaria participated in World War I on the side of the Central Powers from 14 October 1915, when the country declared war on Serbia, until 30 September 1918, when the belligerent parties signed the Armistice of Thessalonica. In the aftermath of the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913, Bulgaria found itself isolated on the international scene, surrounded by hostile neighbours and deprived of the support of the Great Powers. Anti-Bulgarian sentiment grew particularly in France and Russia, whose political circles blamed the country for the dissolution of the Balkan League, an alliance of Balkan states directed against the Ottoman Empire. The failure of Bulgarian foreign policy turned revanchism into a focus of Bulgaria's external relations.

When the First World War started in July 1914, Bulgaria, still recovering from the negative economic and demographic impact of recent wars, avoided direct involvement in the new conflict by declaring neutrality. Strategic geographic location and a strong military establishment made the country a desired ally for both warring coalitions, but Bulgaria's regional aspirations were difficult to satisfy because they included territorial claims against four Balkan countries.

As the war progressed, the Central Powers of Austria-Hungary and the German Empire found themselves in a better position to fulfil Bulgarian demands and persuaded the country to join their cause in September 1915.

Though the smallest member of the Central Powers in area and in population, Bulgaria made vital contributions to their common war effort. Its entry to the war heralded the defeat of Serbia, thwarted the foreign-policy goals of Romania, and ensured the continuation of the Ottoman war effort by providing a geographical conduit for material assistance from Germany to Istanbul.

Though the Balkan theatre of the war saw successful campaigns of rapid movement in 1915 and 1916, the conflict degraded into a state of attritional trench warfare on both the Northern and the Southern Bulgarian Fronts after most Bulgarian territorial aspirations had been satisfied. This period of the war substantially weakened the Bulgarian economy, created various supply problems and reduced the health and morale of Bulgarian troops on the front lines.



Under these circumstances, the Allied armies based in Greece, composed of contingents from many Allied countries, managed to break through on the Macedonian Front during the Vardar Offensive (September 1918) and cause the rapid collapse of a part of the Bulgarian Army.

There followed an open military rebellion and the proclamation of a republic by the rebellious troops at Radomir. Bulgaria, forced to seek peace, accepted an armistice with the Allies on 30 September 1918. For the second time in half a decade, the country found itself in the midst of a national catastrophe.

Tsar Ferdinand I assumed responsibility for his country's foreign-policy and military failures and abdicated in favour of his son Boris III on 3 October 1918. The Treaty of Neuilly (1919) marked the formal conclusion of Bulgaria's participation in World War I. Stipulations of the treaty included the return of all occupied territories, the cession of additional territories and the payment of heavy war reparations.

**Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria**

## **THE KIEL MUTINY**

By September 1918, Germany's military situation was close to hopeless. Kaiser Wilhelm II was advised to request the Entente Cordiale for an immediate cease-fire and put the government on a democratic footing, hoping for more favourable peace terms.

On 3 October, the Kaiser appointed Prince Maximilian of Baden as the new imperial chancellor. In his cabinet the Social Democrats (SPD) also took on responsibility. The most prominent and highest-ranking was Philipp Scheidemann, a prominent leader of the SPD as undersecretary without portfolio.

## Morale

Following the Battle of Jutland, the capital ships of the imperial navy had been confined to inactive service in harbor. Many officers and crewmen had volunteered to transfer to the submarines and light vessels which still had a major part to play in the war. The discipline and spirit of those who remained, on lower rations, with the battleships tied up at dock-side, inevitably suffered.

On 2 August 1917, 350 crewmen of the dreadnought *Prinzregent Luitpold* staged a protest demonstration in Wilhelmshaven. Two of the ringleaders were executed by firing squad while others were sentenced to prison. During the remaining months of the war, secret sailors' councils were formed on a number of the capital ships.

## Naval order of 24 October 1918



The plan to force a naval clash on the high seas

While the war-weary troops and the population, disappointed by the Kaiser's government, awaited a speedy end to the war, the imperial naval command in Kiel under Admiral Franz von Hipper, without authorization, planned to dispatch the fleet for a final battle against the Royal Navy in the English Channel.

The naval order of 24 October 1918 and the preparations to sail first triggered a mutiny among the affected sailors and then a general revolution which was to sweep aside the monarchy within a few days. The mutinous sailors had no intention of being sacrificed in the last moments of the war. They were also convinced that the credibility of the new democratic government which was seeking peace would be compromised by a simultaneous naval attack.

## THE WILHELMSHAVEN MUTINY



**Sailors demonstrating at Wilhelmshaven**

The sailors' revolt started on the Schillig Roads off Wilhelmshaven, where the German fleet had anchored in expectation of a planned battle. During the night from 29 to 30 October 1918 some crews refused to obey orders. Sailors on board three ships from the Third Navy Squadron refused to weigh anchor. Part of the crew on SMS *Thüringen* and SMS *Helgoland*, two battleships from the First Navy Squadron, committed outright mutiny and sabotage.

However, when, a day later, some torpedo boats pointed their cannons at these ships, the mutineers gave up and were led away without any resistance. Nevertheless, the naval command had to drop its plans as it was felt that the crew's loyalty could no longer be relied upon. The Third Navy Squadron was ordered back to Kiel.

### Sailors revolt in Kiel



**Sculpture in Kiel to remember the 1918 sailors' mutiny**

The squadron commander, Vizeadmiral Hugo Kraft, exercised a manoeuvre with his battleships in the Heligoland Bight. When it "functioned perfectly (*tadellos funktionierte*)" he believed he was master of his crews again. While moving through the Kiel Canal he had 47 sailors from the *Markgraf*, who were seen as the ringleaders, imprisoned. In Holtenau (end of the canal in Kiel) they were brought to the Arrestanstalt (the military prison in Kiel) and to Fort Herwarth in the north of Kiel.

The sailors and stokers were now pulling out all the stops to prevent the fleet from setting sail again and to achieve the release of their comrades. Some 250 met in the evening of 1 November in the Union House in Kiel. Delegations sent to their officers requesting the mutineers' release were not heard. The sailors were now looking for closer ties to the unions, the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD) and the SPD.

Thereupon the Union House was closed by police, leading to an even larger joint open-air meeting on 2 November, at the large drill ground (Großer Exerzierplatz). Led by the sailor Karl Artelt, who worked in the repair ship yard for torpedo boats in Kiel-Wik and by the mobilized shipyard worker Lothar Popp, both USPD members. The sailors called for a large meeting the following day at the same place. This call was heeded by several thousand people on the afternoon of 3 November with workers' representatives also being present.

The slogan "*Frieden und Brot*" (peace and bread) was raised showing that the sailors and workers demanded not only the release of the imprisoned but also the end of the war and the improvement of food provisions. Eventually the people supported Artelt's call to free the prisoners and they moved in the direction of the military prison.

Sublieutenant Steinhäuser, who had orders to stop the demonstrators, ordered his patrol to give warning shots and then to shoot directly into the demonstrators. Seven men were killed and 29 were seriously injured. Some demonstrators also opened fire. Steinhäuser was severely injured by rifle-butt blows and shots, but contrary to later statements, he was not killed. After this incident, commonly viewed as the starting point of the German revolution, the demonstrators dispersed, and the patrol withdrew.

Wilhelm Souchon, the governor of the naval station, initially asked for outside troops but revoked his request for military assistance when his staff claimed the situation was under control. Souchon had been deployed to Kiel only a few days earlier on 30 October 1918 and therefore had to rely heavily on his staff. On 4 November, however, the request was renewed, resulting in six infantry companies being brought to Kiel. Some units stayed in the city quarter Wik and in the Marinestation der Ostsee. However, these troops also showed signs of disintegration, and some joined the revolutionaries or went back.

On the morning of 4 November groups of mutineers moved through the town. Sailors in a large barracks compound in a northern district of Kiel (Wik Garrison: Tirpitz Hafen) refused obedience: after a division inspection of the commander, spontaneous demonstrations took place. Karl Artelt organized the first soldiers' council, and soon many more were set up. The governor of the navy station had to negotiate and to order the withdrawal of the units. The imprisoned sailors and stokers were freed.

Soldiers and workers brought public and military institutions under their control. When, against Souchon's promise, different troops advanced to quash the rebellion, they were intercepted by the mutineers and were either sent back or joined the sailors and workers. By the evening of 4 November, Kiel was firmly in the hands of approximately 40,000 rebellious sailors, soldiers and workers, as was Wilhelmshaven two days later.

Late in the evening of the 4 November a meeting of sailors and workers representatives in the union house led to the establishment of a soldiers' and a workers' council. The Kiel 'Fourteen Points' of the soldier's council were issued:

**Resolutions and demands of the soldiers' council:**

- The release of all inmates and political prisoners
- Complete freedom of speech and the press
- The abolition of mail censorship
- Appropriate treatment of crews by superiors
- No punishment for all comrades on returning to the ships and to the barracks
- The launching of the fleet is to be prevented under all circumstances
- Any defensive measures involving bloodshed are to be prevented
- The withdrawal of all troops not belonging to the garrison
- All measures for the protection of private property will be determined by the soldiers' council immediately
- Superiors will no longer be recognized outside of duty
- Unlimited personal freedom of every man from the end of his tour of duty until the beginning of his next tour of duty
- Officers who declare themselves in agreement with the measures of the newly established soldiers' council, are welcomed in our midst. All the others have to quit their duty without entitlement to provision.
- Every member of the soldiers' council is to be released from any duty
- All measures to be introduced in the future can only be introduced with the consent of the soldiers' council

These demands are orders of the soldiers' council and are binding for every military person.

Other seamen, soldiers and workers, in solidarity with the arrested, began electing workers' and soldiers' councils modelled after the Soviets of the Russian Revolution of 1917, and took over military and civil powers in many cities. On 7 November, the revolution had reached Munich, causing Ludwig III of Bavaria to flee.