

THE CHILEAN NAVAL MUTINY OF 1931

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ABSTRACT

On 1st September 1931, the most serious mutiny affecting the Chilean Navy in nearly two centuries of existence broke out. The various books and articles which have examined this subject have used as their sources the local press and the participants' own stories. Just in a few cases, historians have had access to official documents, because they were seldom published or access was restricted until now. This has led to gross factual mistakes in the existing historiography, leading to questionable interpretations and to the creation of legends still alive in Chile and elsewhere. This thesis discusses these topics.

The Chilean Navy has in its archives a collection of 35 volumes (about 9,200 pages) of Courts Martial official documents and proceedings never studied by historians. The author used these sources under a special authorization for academic purposes.

The following theories of the causes of the mutiny commonly expounded by contemporaries and subsequent historians have been researched:

- a. Participation of Marxist groups in the origin of the mutiny and exploitation of it.
- b. Participation of the two Chilean populist political groups in the movement's generation (headed by the former presidents Arturo Alessandri and Carlos Ibáñez)
- c. Army and Navy officers' participation in politics during 1924 to 1931 and the consequence in the behaviour of the mutineers.

Examination has also been made of connections with the mutiny on board HMS *Lucia* in Devonport in January 1931 which occurred while the Chilean battleship *Latorre* was being refitted at that port. Months later and being anchored in the port of Coquimbo, Chile, serious mutiny or revolt started on board *Latorre* and spread to other naval units as well as other Navy's, Army's and Air Force's shore establishments. One week after the Chilean mutiny, the Invergordon mutiny started in the Royal Navy Atlantic Fleet. This thesis also compares both mutinies because they had many aspects in common.

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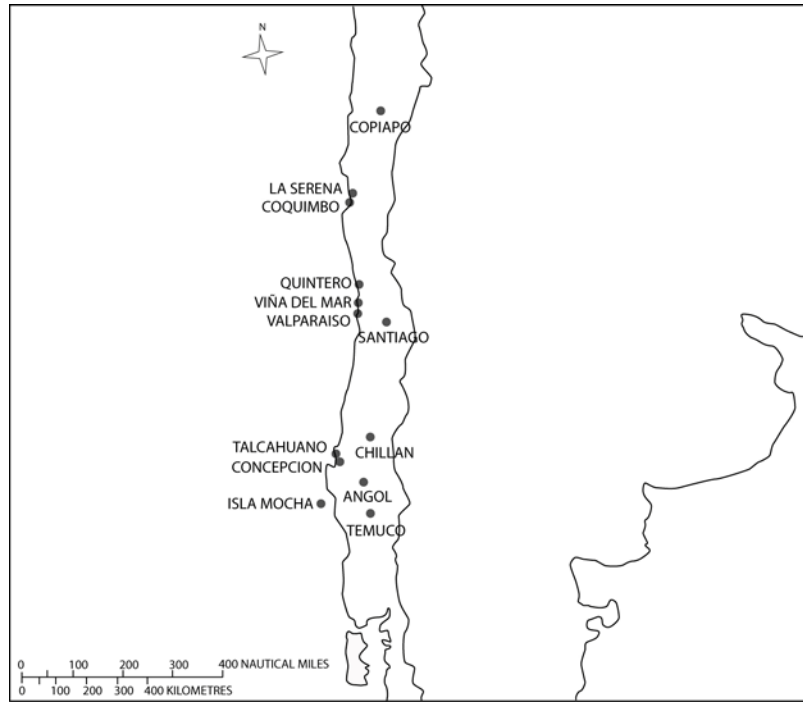
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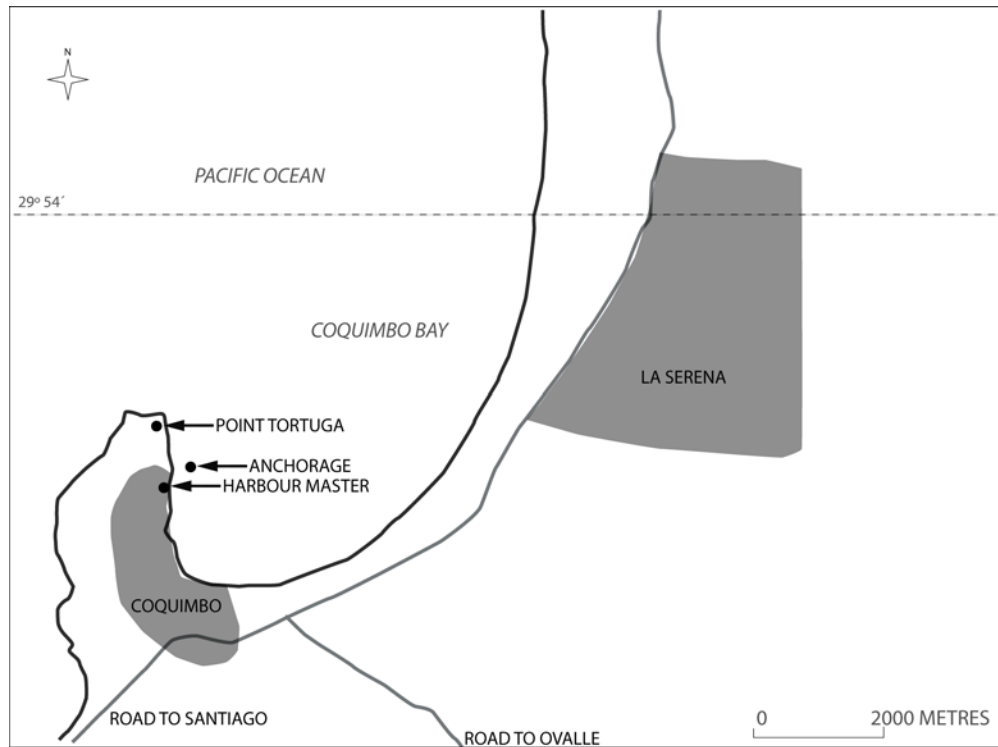
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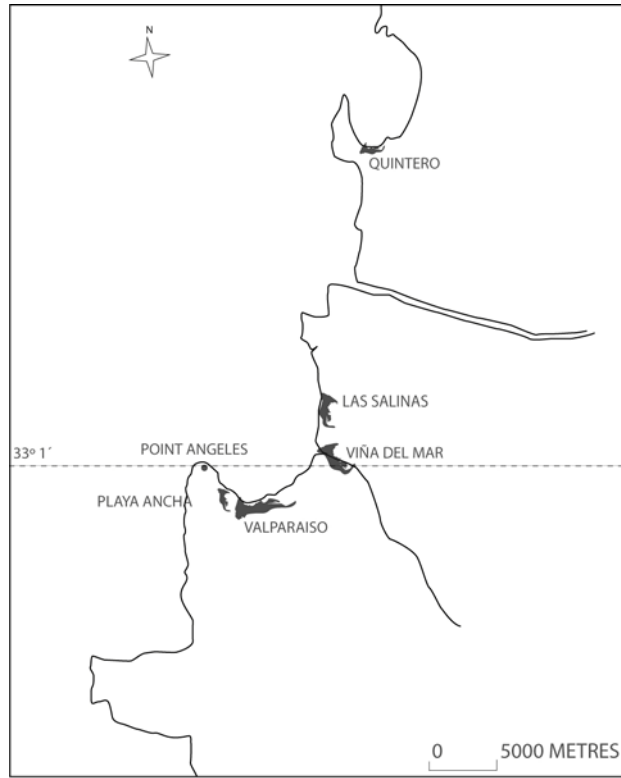
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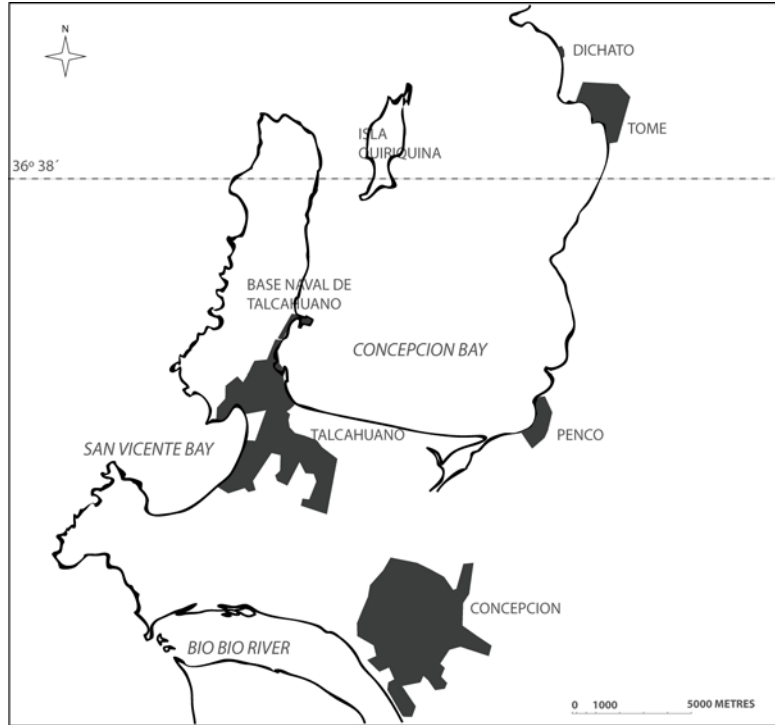
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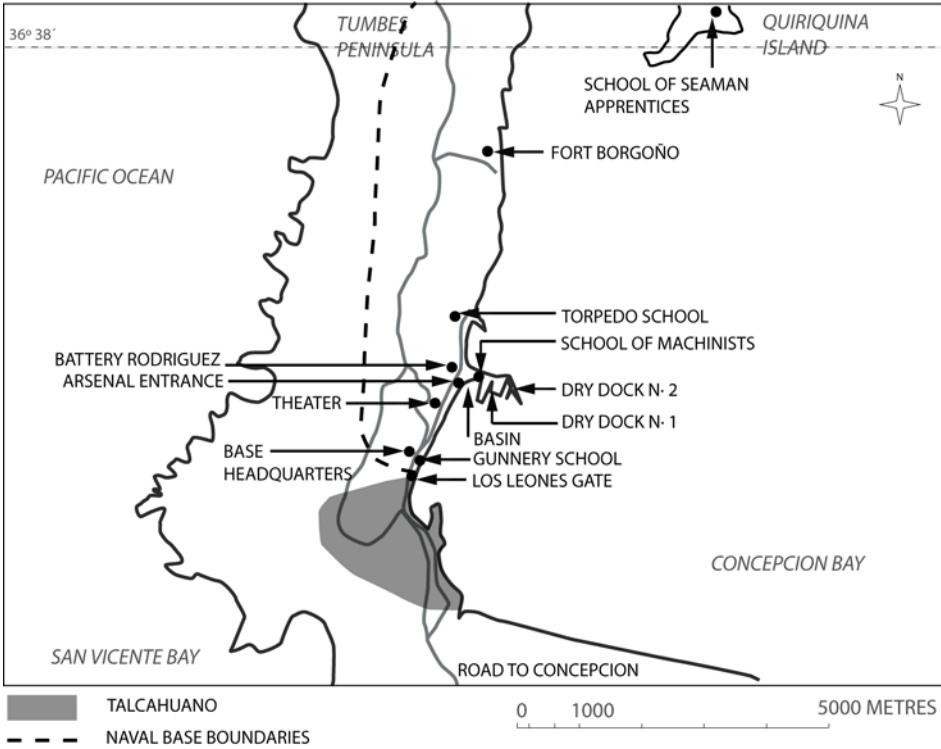
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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. The Chilean Naval Mutiny of 1931 in brief.

General Carlos Ibañez' regime ended suddenly on 26 July 1931 after weeks of civil unrest and financial problems resulting from the world-wide Great Depression. Four weeks later, the new Government decided on a salary reduction for all civil servants (Armed Forces included) to face the situation. This decision was badly communicated, in particular to two squadrons of the Chilean Navy anchored in Coquimbo.

As a result, the ship's companies already in a state of unrest for several reasons to be discussed later, expressed their dissatisfaction by different means, including menaces through the presentation of collective complaints. Since this was an act specifically against the regulations, the Commander in Chief of one of the squadrons decided to call for a muster on 31 August 1931 to be attended by all the crew of his flagship plus delegations headed by commanding officers from the other units of this force.

He addressed them in a harsh way and after this some symptoms of unrest were visible, although the crews obeyed the dismissal order and returned to their normal activities. At the same time, he sent an officer to the other squadron also anchored in Coquimbo with news about what was happening in his force.

In this other squadron everything seemed normal, although its Commander in Chief had reports that the ship companies were concerned about the announced salary reductions. He was about to send an official document expressing his concerns and doubts to the Ministry of the Navy. That evening there was a social meeting with civilians in the officer's mess of *O'Higgins* ending at 21:00 while at almost the same time there was a boxing session on the deck of this flagship attended by crewmembers of different units. This activity and a hidden gathering of crewmembers in the other flagship [*Latorre*] enabled the spreading of the decision adopted by radicalized men to seize their vessels.

At 04:00 on 1 September, the officers on duty and those who were asleep in their living quarters were surprised by armed mutineers who ordered them to hand over their personal weapons and to stay inside their cabins. The two flag officers awakened by the noise tried to dissuade the mutineers without success. The Commodore who made the above mentioned speech then tried to fire at the sailors who were menacing him without

success and he finally was imprisoned as the rest of the officers of both flagships. Some shots were also fired by the mutineers but only one of the officers on duty was slightly injured.

The mutiny spread to the seven destroyers belonging to both naval forces. Three destroyers had to be boarded by mutineers from the flagships while these units aimed their heavy guns and floodlights to convince the undecided crews to join the subversion. Before 05:00, all the units anchored in Coquimbo were under control of the rebels. A few officers who were authorised to stay ashore with their families were imprisoned at their arrival on their ships.

The news of the events in that northern port did not reach the Government until 17:00 on 1 September when a radio message from the mutineers was sent to the Ministry of the Navy in Santiago. The rebels expressed not only complaints about the salary reductions but also regarding other matters. In a later message, they even requested some measures of political character. The reaction of the government at the beginning was to negotiate with the rebels rather than adopting the use of force to stop the illegal movement. For this purpose, a Rear Admiral was assigned to go to Coquimbo and to meet the rebels ashore. After losing a day travelling and discussing with the mutineers by means of messages, the Government yielded to the mutineers' refusal to have meetings ashore and the Admiral was authorised to negotiate on board *Latorre*, the ship where the mutiny started. At the end, the negotiations broke down due to the rigid positions adopted by both the Government and the rebels, and the Admiral announced his decision to return to Santiago.

Meanwhile, the mutiny had spread to Talcahuano where the Navy had an important base, and in a lesser degree to some vessels and shore establishments in Valparaíso and even to a nearby Air Force Base. Some surface vessels and submarines under mutineers' control sailed from Talcahuano to Coquimbo, showing that the situation was worsening.

This moved the Government to use force. Five Army regiments plus the naval officers organized as an infantry company assailed the rebels inside Talcahuano Naval Base on 5 September 1931. There were about ten casualties in each opposing force. The rebel ships and shore establishments in Valparaíso had been recovered by the Army the day before without any fighting.

With Valparaíso and Talcahuano under full governmental control, the rebels on the ships in Coquimbo made desperate efforts to keep the mutiny alive. They received verbal support from leftist organizations and prepared for combat, threatening to open fire on

Coquimbo and the nearby city of La Serena. On 6 September, the Chilean Air Force assembled a force of about twenty aircraft at an airfield out of the range of the ships' guns. Nevertheless, the rebels fired a few guns in that direction until they were finally attacked by the aircraft. The bombardment of the rebel ships did not result in any damage to the ships themselves but caused two casualties on board due to fragments. The aerial attack demoralized the rebels and during that night some of the destroyers abandoned the rest of the mutinied ships, sailing to Valparaíso under their officers' control. This caused the eventual collapse of the mutineers' organization and the rest of the ships were turned back to their commanding officers. Finally all ships were called to Valparaíso and nearby ports where the rebel crewmembers were disembarked and taken under custody by Army troops. They were later prosecuted, condemned, and sentenced to harsh penalties.

The mutiny had important political consequences and left the Chilean Navy in a weakened situation as it will be explained later. After this event a brief period of instability in Chilean politics started again as it had during the Government of Arturo Alessandri-Palma [1920-1925]. Later the country returned to normality in 1932 living through difficult economical and social times until 1933.

1.2. A discussion of the literature covering the period of the Mutiny.

More than seventy five years have elapsed since the outbreak of the most serious mutiny in the history of the Chilean Navy and the events are still controversial.

Most of what has been published in this period of three quarters of a century is based on the press and the memoirs of a few protagonists. The rest of the participants preferred to remain silent about this unfortunate episode. On the other hand, important sources had not been available to researchers. Such is the case of the proceedings of the Courts Martial and the administrative investigations and other official papers. Only partial transcriptions were published by the press of that period.

The unavailability of these sources is the origin of several historical legends about some aspects of this naval mutiny. This thesis will give great importance to the transcripts of the Courts Martial, specifically to the statements made just after the events, before the truth had been somehow twisted, sometimes unconsciously. The diplomatic reports are valuable as well, because they are less emotionally or ideologically compromised. In

particular, the British sources are of exceptional good quality because there were about ten Royal Navy officers serving as advisors and instructors in the Chilean Navy in the 1926-1932 period. In addition, there was an extensive consular network and a strong capability of analysis and synthesis in the British Embassy in Santiago and in the Government agencies in London.

One of the subjects deserving attention is the impact of external influence on the mutiny. Trying to discover the influence of these events is very difficult, because of the scarcity and bad quality of sources.

Various authors have disagreed about the nature of the Naval Mutiny of 1931. Germán Bravo-Valdivieso¹ seems to join the conspiracy thesis probably as a result of the sources he used, particularly those of Edgardo von Schroeders-Sarratea² and other contemporary Navy men and politicians. For this author, the mutiny was clearly a plot organized by the Chilean Communist Party [ChCP].

Gonzalo Vial-Correa³ offers a subtler analysis. He remarks that Comintern's [see Glossary] influence in the Chilean and in the Invergordon mutinies is plausible but it is not fully proven. The Chilean Communist Party may not have helped organize the rebellion but it tried to capitalize on the mutiny after its inception and in its efforts to ameliorate the penalties to the mutineers.

Ricardo Donoso-Novoa⁴ devoted several pages to the mutiny in a long book focusing on the fifty years' participation of Arturo Alessandri Palma in Chilean politics. He includes interesting information about the benefits given the condemned mutineers but numerous factual errors diminish his narrative. Because of his aversion for Alessandri, he accepts without further questioning von Schroeders' assertion that Alessandrists exiles in

¹ Germán Bravo-Valdivieso. *La Sublevación de la Escuadra y el Período Revolucionario 1924-1932*. (Viña del Mar del Mar, Chile: Altazor, 2000).

² Edgardo von Schroeders-Sarratea, *El delegado del Gobierno ante el Motín de las Tripulaciones*. (Santiago: Imprenta y Litografía Universo, 1933).

³ Gonzalo Vial-Correa. *Historia de Chile [1891-1973]*, 6 vols. (Santiago: Santillana, 1981). III: *Arturo Alessandri y los Golpes Militares [1920-1925]*. (1988) pp. 75-76.

⁴ Ricardo Donoso-Novoa, *Alessandri Agitador y Demoleedor*, 2 vols. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1952). II (1954) pp. 54-74.

Europe tried to foment a mutiny in the battleship *Latorre* while it was stationed in Devonport. Unfortunately, he does not supply any more information than Admiral von Schroeders’.

Rodrigo Fuenzalida-Bade⁵ published a general Chilean naval history where he covers accurately the events, except for minor factual mistakes. He does not offer an interpretation, except giving some hints that the origin of the mutiny was the activity of political activists, meaning the conspirators visiting *Latorre* in Devonport and the civilians hired by the Navy to become storekeepers. Both subjects will be discussed later in this thesis.

William Sater's article⁶ claims that it is difficult to establish that Alessandri inspired the mutiny. He writes that it is true that this former President did not trust in the stability of the post Ibáñez provisional government but this is not proof that Alessandri was plotting, adding that:

‘In short, there was no evidence showing that the former President was plotting a Naval Mutiny. If such proofs had existed, Montero certainly had raised charges against Alessandri, eradicating by this process his most powerful political enemy’.

The present writer has a different interpretation about the above subject which will be explained in another part of this thesis [Chapter 12].

Carlos López-Urrutia⁷ agrees with Sater that the mutiny happened within a general context of political instability and economical crisis but argues that the storekeeper ratings Manuel Astica-Fuentes and Augusto Zagal-Anabalón had fomented the mutiny. But these individuals, while important at the time of drafting the first subversive manifestoes, cannot be the main factors in causing the mutiny since they entered the Navy only a few weeks

⁵ Rodrigo Fuenzalida-Bade, *La Armada de Chile. Desde la Alborada hasta el Sesquicentenario*, 4 vols. (Valparaíso: Imprenta de la Armada, 1978). IV, pp. 1174-1175.

⁶ William F. Sater, W, ‘The Abortive Kronstadt: The Chilean Mutiny of 1931’, *The Hispanic American Historical Review*. v. 60. n° 2 (1980).

⁷ Carlos López-Urrutia, ‘The Chilean Naval Mutiny of 1931’, *Revista Derroteros de la Mar del Sur* (n.d) <http://derroteros.perucultural.org.pe/textos/derroteros8/lopez.doc> [accessed 1 October 2009]

before: too little time to permit them gain enough influence over the rest of the crew to initiate an event of such magnitude.

For Luis Vitale-Cometa, a Marxist historian, the 1931 mutiny could have been the ferment for the social struggles of its time but in no case was it a revolution because, he writes:

‘The rebellion had at its beginning an economic character: avoiding a salary reduction. But as the confrontation became worse, the demands acquired a political tone. The sailors started fraternizing with the workers. Nevertheless, the rebellion leadership could not or did not want to reach an agreement with the worker’s organizations as FOCH and IWW⁸. This fundamental mistake of the mutineers led to their isolation and final defeat. In their field, the leadership of the worker’s movement did not know how to evaluate the importance of the rebellion in the Navy. Only a few of Santiago’s unions and Valparaíso...called for a general strike but the majority of the leaders maintained an expectant attitude disregarding an exceptional opportunity for heightening the social change process⁹’.

For the novelist and folk song composer of Marxist trend Patricio Manns the mutiny is simply a revolution. The title of two successful editions of his book *La Revolución de la Escuadra* [The Revolution of the Fleet] is revealing. He states:

‘the mutiny in the Navy was not a spontaneous practical expression. Many previous disturbances...all of political or economical character created a road to the naval rebellion. The Fleet Revolution then mirrors in a visible way the spectre of a social upheaval, the exhaustion of the proletarian electors in the face of an imminent change following the triumphant October Revolution. Its tides arrived to this country with eloquent vehemence from its original focus in the far distant and obsolete Russia of the Tsars¹⁰’.

⁸ FOCH, means *Federación Obrera de Chile* (Chilean Workers Federation). It was a federation of unions created in 1909 and later strongly influenced or controlled by the Communist party. In 1919 the workers and unions closer to the anarchist trend created IWW Chile affiliated to IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) an organization founded in Chicago in June 1905 at a convention of socialists, anarchists, and radical trade unionists from all over the United States.

⁹ Luis Vitale-Cometa, *Interpretación marxista de la historia de Chile*, 5 vols. (Santiago: LOM ediciones, 1983). V (n.d.) p. 322.

¹⁰ Patricio Manns, *La Revolución de la Escuadra* (Valparaíso: Ediciones de la Universidad Católica, 1972) p.19.

Manns does not prove his hypothesis probably because he is a political artist not an historian. The 1931 mutiny did not precipitate a great popular rebellion or a major political change in Chile. The communists, and the proletarian electors, far from being exhausted, participated enthusiastically in the 1931 and 1932 presidential elections. Moreover, Chile normalized its political life after the disruptions caused by the successive changes in government that occurred during 1932. The impact of the economic depression was attenuated during the second administration of Arturo Alessandri [1932-1938].

Other authors of the same trend as Manns agree with him in assigning to the mutiny the character of a revolution. Such is the case of Hernán Ramírez-Necochea¹¹. Other leftist authors have a slightly different point of view.

For Marcos Chamudes-Reitich, who was a member of the ChCP Central Committee in 1931, that year's mutiny:

‘was a spontaneous act and due to this, it was badly organized. Despite this, the party at that time devoted to reorganizing its cadres, estimated that it was a handy and precious opportunity to spread even more a slogan already abandoned. With the party's hopeless tendency for repetition, it kept the idea of creating councils of workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors. In other words, the Chilean soviets¹²’.

Chamudes was afterwards expelled from the ChCP but his opinion is valuable because he witnessed what was happening inside this political organization. At the same time, he has a critical vision influenced by his exit from the party. His short narrative of the events is full of gross factual mistakes.

More recently, Jorge Magasich-Airola¹³ a participant in the leftist political movements of the 1970s analyzed the sources he had available concluding that: ‘there is not enough proof or even clues enabling it to be sustained that the revolt was initiated by the communists. The witnesses and the facts show better that it was an autonomous movement’. He also states that it was: ‘an autonomous Navy men movement having

¹¹ Hernán Ramírez-Necochea, Hernán, *Obras Escogidas* (Santiago: LOM Editores, 2007).

¹² Marcos Chamudes-Reitich, *Chile, una advertencia americana* (Santiago: Editorial PEC, 1972), p15.

¹³ Jorge Magasich-Airola, *Los que Dijeron No*, 2 vols. (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2008). I, pp.183-184

unfortunately a previous unknown organization'. His narrative too has several factual mistakes.

Almost all the above quoted authors used exclusively Chilean sources. López additionally uses American sources. Sater does the same, adding some British sources. These last sources are particularly valuable since at that period there was a mission composed of about ten British officers serving with the Chilean Navy as advisors. In addition, there was a big network of consular agents and an intelligence analysis capability in the Embassy in Santiago and in the Foreign Office in London. Their opinions were biased by the possible influence of the social unrest stimulated by the communists in the British investments in Chile. The occurrence of similar mutinies in UK at the same period also had a bearing in the analysis registered in the British sources found.

Neither López nor Sater used Soviet sources inaccessible at the time they did their research. These are still difficult to access but there is some material in secondary sources. Thanks to the work of Olga Ulianova¹⁴ who based her work on valuable primary Soviet sources, the scope of the communist participation in the Chilean mutiny is now better known.

The lack of accessibility to the proceedings in the Courts Martial and in the administrative processes of 1931-1932 is another difficulty found in the study of this subject by authors already quoted. Only Germán Bravo had a partial access to a few volumes of a total of thirty six containing the proceedings. The rest had to limit themselves to partial chronicles published in the press about the trials.

¹⁴ Olga Ulianova, 'El Partido Comunista Chileno durante la Dictadura de Carlos Ibáñez [1927-1931]: Primera Clandestinidad y "Bolchevización" estaliniana', *Boletín de la Academia Chilena de Historia*. V. LXVIII (2002).

Olga Ulianova, *Crisis e ilusión revolucionaria. Partido Comunista y COMINTERN, 1931-1934*. (México, DF: Universidad Autónoma de México, 2007).

Olga Ulianova, 'Develando un mito: Emisarios de la Internacional Comunista en Chile', *Historia, Instituto de Historia, Universidad Católica de Chile*. N° 41, v. I, January–June, (2008), pp. 99-164.

1.3. The theory of mutinies

Mutinies are not a new phenomenon in naval life. As an introduction, there are several characteristics of rebellions against authority during the century before the one covered by this thesis which can be mentioned. In doing this, we will follow briefly one of Professor N.A.M Rodger's reflections on the Georgian Period [1714-1830] in the Royal Navy stating that one type of mutiny in that period:

'Conformed to certain unwritten rules, which if they had been codified would have looked something like this:

1. No mutiny shall take place at sea, or in the presence of the enemy.
2. No personal violence may be employed [although a degree of tumult and shouting is permissible].
3. Mutinies shall be held in pursuit only of objectives sanctioned by the traditions of the Service¹⁵.

The Chilean Navy was created between 1813 and 1818 in the Emancipation Period coinciding with the last part of the fore-mentioned Georgian Period and had a strong British influence from its beginnings. In the first years of its institutional life there were several seditions not punished but once Vice Admiral Thomas Alexander Cochrane became the Commander in Chief of the squadron in 1818, mutinies and other episodes of indiscipline were prosecuted. Those found guilty were harshly punished. Among those mutinies, it may be mentioned the one affecting the corvette *O'Higgins* in 1819. Chilean crewmembers started the rebellion when they remained unpaid for a long period¹⁶. In this case, the events took place while sailing to the theatre of operations and there was violence. The mutineers were tried in a cursory process and were found guilty and shot. The Spanish by-laws remaining current in the first century of republican life were applied in this trial. A couple of years after that case there was a mutiny in which British officers were involved. They were serving in Chile under contract but they wanted to go to Peru, a country then creating its own Navy. In this case there was no violence and the officers were tried in a Court

¹⁵ N.A.M Rodger, *The Wooden World. An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy*. (New York: Norton, 1996), p.238.

¹⁶ Fuenzalida-Bade, 1978, I. pp. 121-122.

Martial following British rules, a privilege enjoyed by officers of that nationality. As a punishment, some of them were exonerated¹⁷.

These two events briefly mentioned seem to show that the Chilean State started acting differently from Great Britain in cases of serious indiscipline even in the nineteenth century. This is remarkably notorious in cases when the mutineers acted violently. In the rest of that century there was no further collective indiscipline started by enlisted personnel.

A modern study of the theoretical aspects of mutinies can be found in Bell and Elleman¹⁸. These naval historians recently published a book in which naval mutinies at the beginning of the twentieth century are analyzed by different authors, including the Chilean Naval Mutiny of 1931. In the foreword and in chapter thirteen the editors make a synthesis of the theoretical aspects of the problem.

Rose¹⁹ is another author who made an earlier study of naval and military mutinies. Rose claims that the word mutiny: ‘Evokes strong, even violent images of sailors taking over a ship from its officers or hapless soldiers facing a dawn firing squad²⁰,’ and that it creates verbal repulsion. Often the authorities and military leaders avoid using it, employing instead terms like ‘incident’, ‘affair’ ‘collective insubordination’, ‘strike’, ‘disaffection’, ‘sailors unrest’ and other euphemisms. This author adds that:

‘If government abhor the word mutiny, the military does even more so, for the military’s ability to act effectively is founded upon the principle of discipline and mutiny is the antithesis of discipline. To the military, mutiny is utterly unthinkable. It is more than a breach of regulations; is the negation of the military essence²¹’.

For Rose, the military does not like the word mutiny for three reasons, as mentioned above. One as being the antithesis of discipline; the discredit of the affected unit is another reason. The last one is the reluctance of commanding officers to use the word and jeopardize their careers. This third reason is due to the fact that there is a tendency to

¹⁷ Fuenzalida Bade, 1978, I. pp. 196-197.

¹⁸ *Naval Mutinies of the Twentieth Century. An International Perspective*, ed. by Christopher Bell and Bruce Elleman (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

¹⁹ Elihu Rose, ‘The Anatomy of a Mutiny’, *Armed Forces and Society* N° 8 (1982), pp. 561-574.

²⁰ Rose, p.561.

²¹ Rose, p.562.

believe that mutinies are the commanding officers' fault as well as the officers up and down the chain of command. For Rose, the reluctance to use this word is extended by military and government institutions to a reluctance to provide information about mutinies. In Chile, the proceedings and records of the Courts Martial of the Naval Mutiny of 1931 have not been accessible to the public until now. Although the hearings in courts were public and the newspapers of the period published some partial accounts, the Navy has not opened its files until the research for this thesis began.

Another problem in studying mutinies is the dissimilarities among them. Rose quotes Fletcher Platt writing 'there is no such thing as a typical mutiny' and adds that:

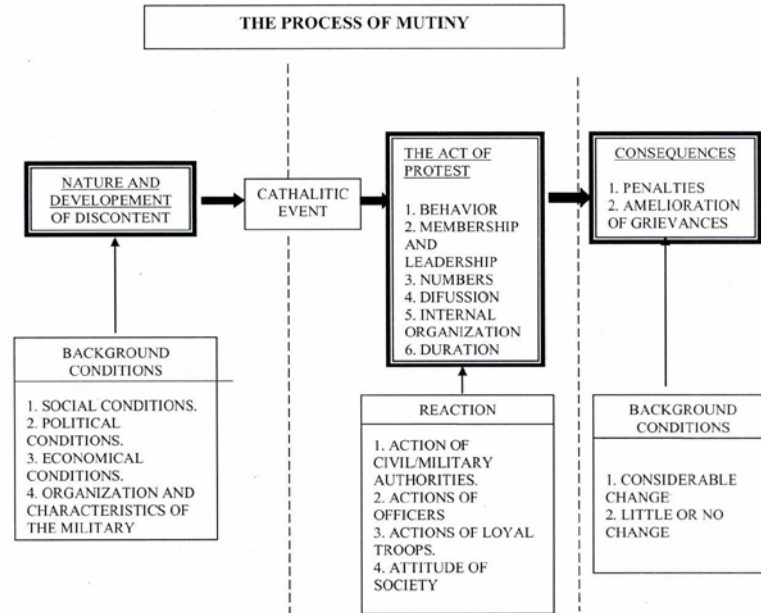
'this is partially true, since mutinies, like men, have attributes which permits at least some generalizations. The various factors which enter into analysis of mutiny may not be precise enough to be considered as social-scientific variables yielding hard-and-fast propositions, nevertheless there are useful ways of organizing information that help describe and explain events and suggests insights into their meaning²²'.

Rose then writes that: 'one way of analyzing mutinies is to conceptualize it as a sequence of three phases: 'the origin' in which discontent of the troops arises and matures, 'the act', during which the collective insubordination takes place and 'the aftermath' in which is found the consequences'.

After analyzing each phase giving illustrative examples, he adds a diagram summarizing his theoretical approach to the subject.

²²

Rose, p. 577.



Source: Rose, pp. 561-574

The difficulties in using the word mutiny are also highlighted by Bell and Elleman. They quote *Black's Law Dictionary* writing that mutiny is an uprising 'against lawful or constituted authority, particularly in the naval or military service'²³. They also quote a professor of law at the US Military Academy suggesting that insubordinate acts did not themselves constitute mutiny unless they aimed to 'usurp, subvert or override' superior or military authority. Additionally, they quote the definition of mutiny as in article 94 of the United States Uniform Code of Military Justice. A person is guilty of mutiny when he 'with the intent to usurp or override lawful military authority, refuses, in concert with any other person, to obey orders or otherwise do his duty'. An individual might also be charged with this offence for creating 'any violence or disturbance' with the same intent.

These authors also write that Great Britain had traditionally emphasised the collective or conspiratorial nature of mutiny. They quote the Naval Discipline Act of 1957 describing mutiny as:

‘a combination between two or more persons subject to service law ...[a] to overthrow or resist lawful authority in Her Majesty Forces....[b] to disobey such authority in such circumstances, or with the object of avoiding any duty or service against, or in connection with operations against the enemy; or...[c] to impede the performance of any duty or service in Her Majesty forces....²⁴’.

The problem in defining certain acts as mutinies arises when there is no seizure of the ship or when the acts are only a refusal to perform any duty. ‘Anxious mutineers often insist that their actions, particularly non-violent, are no more than a form of ‘strike’²⁵. In this case the crews are imitating maritime workers and these episodes are downplayed by the authorities as ‘unrest’, ‘dissatisfaction’ or ‘incident’.

Then Bell and Elleman made a distinction between different types of mutinies²⁶. The first type of mutiny is: ‘essentially isolated or moderate acts of protest over service conditions’ and is labelled by sociologist Cornelis Lammers as mutinies of ‘promotion of interests’. The second type ‘has the aim fundamentally to alter the political status quo within a state’. Lammers categorize this type of mutiny as ‘either secession movement to gain autonomy or seizure of power movements, which represent a form of outright rebellion’.

Bell and Elleman also define a third type of mutiny. It goes clearly beyond strictly naval concerns but stops short of revolution:

‘Mutineers have often attempted to influence or coerce their government on service or political issues without intending to directly challenge the authority or legitimacy of the Government. In democratic states, enlisted personnel have sometimes been willing to resort to mutiny as means of participating in the political process in a manner similar to their civilian counterparts²⁷’.

²⁴ Bell&Elleman, p.2.

²⁵ Bell&Elleman, p.3.

²⁶ Bell&Elleman, p. 265.

²⁷ Bell&Elleman, p. 265-266.

The following is a summary of the three categories of mutinies defined by Bell and Elleman:

Type of Mutiny	Goals	Characteristics
Naval [or Promotion of Interests] mutinies	Sailors seek to improve or maintain their position with respect to income or other work conditions	Grievances relate solely to naval issues, and may be relatively minor and mundane. Grievances may extend throughout the entire navy but are more commonly confined to a single ship or squadron. Usually resolved quickly and easily. Usually passive.
Political mutinies	Sailors seek either: [a] to improve conditions within the navy by exerting pressure on political authorities rather [or in addition to] their superior officers; or [b] to effect changes of a political [but not revolutionary] nature.	Demands go beyond what a ship's captain or even the naval high command can concede. Demands may be unrelated or only indirectly related to conditions of service in the navy
Seizure of Power or Secession mutinies	Sailors seek either: [a] to produce far-reaching or revolutionary changes in the composition or nature of the government; or [b] to entirely escape from the authority of a government	Are most likely to occur in authoritarian, corrupt or weak states. Are most likely to involve violence and the outright seizure of ship [s]

Source: Bell & Elleman, p.266.

There are two relevant opinions in the above book about the origin of mutinies. The first belongs to Professor John Hattendorf who writes in the foreword²⁸ that success in a war situation on board a ship requires audacity and tactical success on the part of the Captain. He adds that these attributes rarely come to bear unless the officers successfully manage their areas of responsibility, leading their men properly and, equally important, the junior officers and the seamen accept the leadership provided and agree at least tacitly to carry out the team effort in combat.

He also mentions the fact that the Navy of the age of sail developed an authoritarian system of discipline, reflecting the social values of that age. But this changed in the mid-nineteenth century. Further changes occurred later.

‘By the twentieth century, vast changes had taken place within navies and their social fabric. Overall, navies had gradually become far more militarized than in centuries before and, at the same time, had become increasingly more reliant on the use of rapidly changing technologies. This in turn began requiring a far different type of seamen, with more advanced training and wider education to operate shipboard equipment.....²⁹’.

Professor Geoffrey Till adds to the above that:

‘since many twentieth-century sailors came from the industrialized and urbanized working class, they were by no means immune to the view and expectations of their former colleagues and neighbours ashore. As a result a two-way movement of influence could easily develop. Sometimes sailors would simply reflect the attitudes and expectations of normal civilian life....But influence could work the other way too....In 1931, during the Invergordon Mutiny, some British authorities were....haunted by the notion that the Bolshevik sailors would radiate out from Plymouth, Portsmouth and Chatham.....to contaminate a British society made acutely vulnerable to sedition by global recession³⁰’.

²⁸ John Hattendorf, ‘Foreword’, in *Naval Mutinies of the Twentieth Century. An International Perspective*, ed. by Christopher Bell and Bruce Elleman (London: Frank Cass, 2003) pp. xii-xv

²⁹ Hattendorf, p. xv.

³⁰ Geoffrey Till, ‘Series Editor’s Preface’, in *Naval Mutinies of the Twentieth Century. An International Perspective*, ed. by Christopher Bell and Bruce Elleman (London: Frank Cass, 2003), p. xvii.

This paragraph could be easily applied to the Chilean situation during the same period as will be demonstrated later.

Bell and Elleman after analyzing other discipline problems in the rest of the twentieth century arrive at the conclusion that:

‘major naval mutinies are probably a thing of the past for Western democratic states. Today’s all volunteer forces enjoy greatly improved conditions of service compared to their predecessors of even 30 years ago. They have access to clearly delineated and generally efficient channels for seeking the redress of grievances, in addition to a range of informal means to make their complaints known to higher authorities. When this is combined with institutional checks and balances, such as practice of outside inspections, there appear to be a few problems that existing ‘systems’ will not be able to handle³¹’.

While the authors quoted above believe that in democratic and stable countries a major mutiny is less possible:

‘The prognosis elsewhere is not as good. There are large proportions of the globe governed by unpopular, weak, or corrupt regimes. These states may be able to deter acts of collective insubordination by the threat of harsh punishment, but these measures only ensure that when the mutiny does break out, there is a high potential for rapid and dramatic escalation. The study of naval mutinies is, therefore, far from over³²’.

In Chile, after the Naval Mutiny of 1931 there was a period of political unrest and indiscipline in the Armed Forces lasting until the following year. It did not particularly affect the Navy as this service was extremely weakened after the mutiny, as will be covered in a later chapter. In the 1960s and 1970s there were acts of collective insubordination when the country was in a period of political turmoil. These events could be classified as ‘political mutinies’ accordingly to the Bell and Elleman categories³³ and the origin of those seditions could be the ‘political conditions’ of that age, as described by Rose³⁴.

³¹ Bell&Elleman, p.275.

³² Bell&Elleman, p.275.

³³ Bell&Elleman, p.266.

³⁴ Rose, pp. 561-574.

1.4. The crime of sedition or mutiny in the Chilean Military Code.

The Chilean Code of Military Justice became effective in the Army on 1 March 1926³⁵. On 30 October 1927 it became applicable to the Chilean Navy as well. Before this date, the Spanish Naval by-laws and the Army general by-laws were effective in this service³⁶. As a consequence, the Chilean mutineers of 1931 were tried under the above quoted code when it had only been in effect for four years.

The Chilean legal system is based on written law, so the wording must be very precise and detailed. This is very important when deciding about offences or crimes and simple violations of the discipline by-laws. This explains why in the Chilean Code of Military Justice nine articles are used to define mutiny or sedition. This crime is defined in article 266 of the version current in 1931, in the following terms:

‘Servicemen³⁷ at least four, who refuse to obey their superiors or who complain or make disrespectful or tumultuous petitions, or refuse to perform their military duties, shall be punished and held accountable for the crime of mutiny or sedition³⁸’.

Later, the code establishes that the penalty will be higher for: ‘those who appear to be leaders, or be the instigators of the sedition, or are the most senior at the location³⁹’. The code makes a distinction between the promoters and the mere performers of the crime. The definition of promoter is given in section 269, stating that:

‘Those leading the troops under arms or in the process of becoming armed who raise their voices in a subversive manner or incite others to commit this crime... [mutiny]... shall always be considered as instigators. If no one is discovered as giving the orders, the penalty’... [for promoting a mutiny]... ‘except death penalty will be imposed on the six individuals considered to be instigators by the officers being present during the events.

³⁵ *Código de Justicia Militar* (Santiago: Instituto Geográfico Militar, 1932).

³⁶ Mario Duvauchelle-Rodríguez, ‘La Justicia Naval Penal Chilena’, *Revista de Marina* No. 115 (May-June 1998/3).

³⁷ The expression serviceman is used in the code meaning officer and non-commissioned officer or enlisted personnel.

³⁸ *Código de Justicia Militar*, p.81.

³⁹ *Código de Justicia Militar*, p.81.

They will be exempted of these penalties if they name the real instigators are discovered by other means⁴⁰.

Under Chilean law, mutiny or sedition can also be committed by civilians because article 277 states: ‘any person, military or not, persuading or helping Armed Forces troops by any means, to commit acts of insubordination, shall be considered as guilty of sedition and instigator of this crime’.

The Chilean Code of Military Justice also punishes those who do not actively oppose a mutiny. Article 274 states: ‘The serviceman who becomes aware of the committal or the attempt to commit the crime of mutiny and does not use all means at his disposition to actively oppose the mutiny, shall be punished by....’.

The Chilean law also defines a second crime against obedience, which is in article 300:

‘The military serviceman that 1] does not keep discipline of the troops under his command or does not energetically restrain any military crime...2] or enables the escape of prisoners by inexcusable negligence ...3] or does not comply with his military duties even without committing disobedience or the crime stated in article 294... shall be punished with the penalty of prison....⁴¹’.

The last section of the above article defines the crime of failure to comply with military duties and, as it may be appreciated, the definition is very wide and ambiguous and would cover mutinies when this crime is committed by less than four people. This offence is somehow equivalent to ‘dereliction of duty’ in the US Uniform Code of Military Justice

The fine line between a mere transgression of discipline defined in by-laws and a crime, such as the failure to comply military duties, is not clear. Nevertheless, the above article is used every time that a serious situation occurs in which there is no specific crime defined in the Chilean Code of Military Justice to charge the offenders. In other words, if certain acts cannot be considered clearly as a mutiny, they may be judged as a failure of compliance of military duties and punished accordingly to the above article.

As a summary, the Chilean military penal code effective in 1931 established that the crime of mutiny or sedition could only be committed by at least four or more military members and the participation of each could be as author, instigator or mere participant. The same offence could be also committed by the military who did not oppose the mutiny

⁴⁰ *Código de Justicia Militar*, p.82.

⁴¹ *Código de Justicia Militar*, p.89.

or who acted negligently in the repression of it. They could also be charged with failure of compliance of military duties when less than four members of the military committed the punishable act. The civilians could also commit the crime of sedition by promoting the mutiny or by helping the mutineers.

Other less relevant parts of the Chilean law related to mutiny will not be commented upon since the above is enough to understand how the courts acted in 1931.

1.5. An introduction to the following parts of this thesis.

Part I of this thesis will be devoted to the remote and immediate origin of the Chilean naval mutiny of 1931. The first chapter will deal with the 1879-1924 period giving a vision of the Chilean Navy serving a country ruled by a quasi parliamentary regime. During those thirty years this service was modernized in terms of organization and materiel. At the beginning of this period, the Navy supported the group that ousted President José Manuel Balmaceda-Fernández in the Civil War of 1891 and this created a special mentality in the naval officers that would be analyzed in this part as one of the concurring factors of the events of the 1924-1931 period. The lack of discipline in the Armed Forces is noted in this chapter as well because it was one of the factors in the environment that prefaced the ensuing mutiny.

The next chapters of this first part deals with the 1924-1931 period in particular when two caudillos, Arturo-Alessandri Palma and General Carlos Ibáñez del Campo disputed the political supremacy, plotting against each other with the support of military and naval officers. Another subject is the long stay of battleship *Latorre* and other Chilean warships in Great Britain at the same time that there was a period of political and economical troubles leading to unrest in both labour and armed forces in that country. Finally, the immediate cause of the mutiny is analyzed, that is, the salary reductions during 1930-1931. The author believes that Part I is essential for understanding what Elihu Rose calls the ‘background conditions for a mutiny’ [see section 1.3].

The second part of the thesis is devoted to the mutiny itself; it is divided into three chapters, each one devoted to a geographical location where the main events took place. The rebellion started on board ships anchored in Coquimbo and then it was propagated to other ships and shore establishments in Valparaíso and Talcahuano. The end of this

movement started when the Government recovered these last two ports, and the last chapter of this part deals with the end of the rebellion. This part narrates what Elihu Rose calls ‘the act of protest’ and the ‘reaction’ [see section 1.3].

Part III is devoted to the aftermath. One chapter will deal with the consequences upon the Chilean Navy. They were very important because this service was weakened and could not recover until the end of the Second World War for the reasons that will be explained. The other chapter deals with the political consequences of the mutiny. It covers the importance attributed by leftist-oriented authors and groups and the influence on the politics of the 1930s.

Finally, the author’s interpretation ends the thesis examining whether the events of 1931 were really a revolution, as claimed by some authors, or was merely a mutiny.

PART I: THE ORIGINS

2. THE REMOTE ORIGINS OF THE MUTINY.

2.1. The war against Perú and Bolivia (1879-1883) shaped an attitude in the Navy.

This conflict known in Chilean literature as the War of the Pacific almost involved Argentina until Santiago's early victories discouraged Buenos Aires.

The first phase of the war was essentially a maritime contest which ended when the Chilean Navy obtained a degree of control of the sea allowing land forces to invade Peruvian territory, including Lima. By 1880, Bolivia, for all interests and purposes, had abandoned the conflict and its onetime ally. By 1884, Chile had annexed Bolivia's seacoast as well as occupied three Peruvian provinces. It would ultimately return one of these in late 1920s in the period immediately before the mutiny. López-Urrutia⁴², Fuenzalida-Bade⁴³ and the author of this Thesis⁴⁴ have studied in detail the participation of the Chilean Navy in this conflict.

The final victory significantly shaped the victor's attitude. As Collier and Sater concluded: 'The already well-developed Chilean sense of superiority was much enhanced by victory. A new set of heroes took its place in the national pantheon⁴⁵'. By 1924 some of

⁴² Carlos López-Urrutia, *Historia de la Marina de Chile* (Santiago: Andrés Bello, 1969).

Carlos López-Urrutia, *La Guerra del Pacífico 1879-1884* (Madrid: Ristre, 2003).

⁴³ Fuenzalida-Bade, 1978. v.IV. pp. 919-1016.

⁴⁴ Carlos Tromben-Corbalán, *Ingeniería Naval, una Especialidad Centenaria* (Valparaíso: Imprenta de la Armada, 1989).

Carlos Tromben-Corbalán, *La Contribución de la Armada al Desarrollo Nacional* (Valparaíso: Armada de Chile, 2000).

⁴⁵ Simon Collier and William F. Sater, *A History of Chile. 1908-1994* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.137.

that war's survivors still served in the Armed Forces, a few even reaching the highest positions in the Navy and this influenced their attitudes giving strength to their opinions.

2.2. The 1891-1924 period in Chilean politics.

Within ten years of the conclusion of the War of the Pacific, the Navy would side with the Congress when the legislature rebelled against the chief executive, starting what became known as the Civil War of 1891 [see Glossary]. Early research by the author of this thesis⁴⁶ indicates that the Navy's officer corps joined the rebels largely for personal reasons because this service enjoyed close relationship with legislators as well as the elites of Valparaiso, Chile's most important port and the centre of international trade as well as domestic industry. This bloody conflict ended with a rebel victory, a fact that would have a significant impact in the Navy's subsequent development and mentality.

The losing side, the Presidential Party, was headed by President José Manuel Balmaceda-Fernández. It was defeated, although it enjoyed the support of almost the entire regular Army. As a consequence of war, most of the Army's officers were cashiered although later, when a war with Argentina seemed quite possible, they were slowly recommissioned. Not surprisingly those officers who rebelled against President Balmaceda or entered the Army during the conflict reached the higher ranks. In the Navy the few officers who remained loyal to the President were exonerated at the end of the conflict. Later they were recommissioned but these officers did not reach the top. The policy followed by the victors regarding the defeated officers of both services was covered by the author in an early research article⁴⁷.

To understand the background to the 1931 mutiny we have also to study the post 1891 organization of the Navy. The rebel Navy acted under the direction of Admiral Jorge Montt-Álvarez who also was elected as President immediately after the Civil War. After his presidential period, he directed naval affairs until 1913, leaving this service in the hands of his disciples. Montt had commanded a ship during the War of the Pacific as well as leading

⁴⁶ Carlos Tromben-Corbalán, 'La Armada en la Guerra Civil de 1891', *Revista de Marina*. 112/829 (1995), pp. 613-618.

⁴⁷ Carlos Tromben-Corbalán, 'Sanciones y Amnistías en la Historia Naval de Chile', *Revista de Marina*. 112/829, (1995), pp.186-190.

the winning side of the Armed Forces in the Civil War of 1891. Thanks to his war record, he enjoyed immense prestige.

Montt reorganized the Navy after 1891 to correct the deficiencies he had observed in both conflicts. As a result of these changes, this service became socially and politically distant from Santiago and closer to Valparaíso⁴⁸. The new Navy, however, was not without problems. As José Toribio Merino-Saavedra says as a witness of that period:

[The Navy's organization]... 'was an imperfect copy of the Royal Navy and essentially was in correspondence to the personality of Admiral Montt who became widely empowered with his organization His dependence on the Minister of the Navy was mostly theoretical since his rule made the Navy a State within the State itself⁴⁹'.

That organization created by Montt in the political context of the 1890s outlived its validity but was still in force in 1924, a fact which dissatisfied junior officers trying to modernize the Navy.

At the turn of the century, differences within the Catholic Church altered existing political ideas and fomented social change. While a majority of the executive officers shared a conservative catholic vision, the rest of the officers were more liberal and some of them even belonged to secret societies such as the Masonic Lodges, who were antagonistic towards traditional Catholicism. There were also a few Protestant officers, mainly the result of their family origins whose religions did not prohibit their belonging to such societies. Engineers, surgeons, supply and pilot officers generally tended to be less conservative than the executive officers.

In 1924 and 1925, the Navy Roster of Officers⁵⁰ [*Escalafón de Oficiales Armada de Chile, 1924*] numbered two vice admirals, eight rear admirals and twenty two captains. The

⁴⁸ José Toribio Merino-Saavedra, *Memorias del Último Director General de la Armada antes de la Dictadura*. (Santiago: Dirección General de Prisiones, 1932), p.4.

⁴⁹ Merino-Saavedra, p.5. This author, as most of others of his age, writes in an ambiguous way, making it difficult to understand what he is really trying to express. This is especially true for readers not familiar with the context. Translating his writing into English is a difficult task. His merit is that he is one of the few naval officers who published his memoirs during this period.

⁵⁰ *Escalafón de Oficiales al 1° de enero de 1924*, (Valparaíso: Imprenta de la Armada, 1924)

two vice admirals and five out of the eight rear admirals had served in the final episodes of the War of the Pacific. All the flag officers and thirteen of the twenty-two captains in 1924 fought in the Civil War of 1891 and some of them on ships participating in the rebellion against President Balmaceda. It is important to stress how significant it was in the 1920s to be a veteran of that conflict.

Both wartime experiences influenced the mentality of those officers as well as that of the winning political groups after 1891, a class characterized by Vial Correa⁵¹ as an oligarchy because it: ‘Handled the country alone, without anybody casting over them any political, economical, social or cultural shadows’.

Vice Admiral Francisco Nef-Jara was in 1924 the most senior admiral since Montt left this service in 1913. He was promoted to this rank in 1919 and he had seen action on board ships at the end of the conflict started in 1879. In the Civil War of 1891 he was a lieutenant on board various naval units. His second in command since the 1920s was Vice Admiral Miguel Aguirre-Gómez who had similar experiences in these conflicts as Nef. Another flag officer, Rear Admiral Luis Gómez-Carreño in addition of having served in warships in the War of the Pacific, had been a lieutenant in 1891 and saw action in the combat between naval units and land forces. Later he led a landing party that fought in the land battles of Concón and Placilla. In these last actions, Luis Langlois-Vidal⁵², served as a midshipman under Gómez Carreño. He as a Rear Admiral was later promoted to the Navy’s higher position in 1925; in this period he would participate in brief but important political matters as will be covered later.

The clash between conservative Catholicism of the senior officers and liberalism of the younger members of the Navy is a fundamental cause of the indiscipline of those years.

The engineers constituted the most dissatisfied group of the Chilean naval officer corps. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, when the first steam ships arrived, engineers were looked down upon, considered mechanics because they lacked the advanced education which the executive officers possessed. Later, due to the technological

⁵¹ Gonzalo Vial-Correa, *Historia de Chile [1891-1973]*, 6 vols. (Santiago: Santillana, 1981). v. II: *Triunfo y Decadencia de la Oligarquía* (Santiago: Zigzag, 1983), p.10.

⁵² Luis Langlois-Vidal, ‘Recuerdos de la Guerra Civil de 1891’, *Revista de Marina*, N° 536 (1946), pp.3-19.

complexities, the Navy would have to invest substantial education resources, creating a School of Engineers, to improve the skills of these technical officers. This establishment achieved a high level of proficiency in the first decades of the twentieth century, graduating technically qualified engineers. Despite their skills, naval protocol and regulations discriminated against engineering officers in particulars such as uniforms, chain of command, and other matters. An executive officer of that period, José Toribio Merino-Saavedra, for example, had a very low opinion of the engineers. He writes:

‘Regarding esprit de corps and discipline, they never had it and they created an antagonistic bloc to the executive officers that opened a breach. It was through this breach that the seed of indiscipline and subversion was introduced to break this important service...⁵³, [the Navy].

No matter that the author of the above comment was a prestigious officer, whose opinion was listened to by the Navy Board [see Glossary] and even by the President, as it will be seen later, the author of this thesis does not share his view. Discipline broke down due to several causes as will be demonstrated later, and the attitude of the engineers was only one of them. Nevertheless, the above quote has been introduced to demonstrate the mentality of the contemporary executive officers.

The naval engineers constitute an example of a group of Chileans, rising through the education provided by the School of Engineers, to the same intellectual and social level as those executive officers who graduated from the Naval Academy [‘Escuela Naval’]. Yet despite their educational achievements, the engineers suffered socially and professionally at the hands of the executive officers.

The political, social, and economic problems of the 1920s were not exclusively Chilean. Indeed, many of the ideological or political influences came from the northern hemisphere. In the post World War One era, the prevailing liberal ideology was displaced by nationalism, socialism, communism, and fascism in all its variations. Although somewhat delayed, eventually these influences reached Chile, arousing enthusiasm in the middle and lower classes.

One example of the above came out of researching sources of that period when a foreign influence not often mentioned was found. It is General Miguel Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship which started in Spain 12 August 1923.

⁵³

Merino-Saavedra, p.6.

Clarence Haring wrote in 1931: ‘..it is not improbable that events in Italy and in Spain suggested the military coup d’etat at Santiago in September 1931⁵⁴’. Frederick Nunn, another scholar also writes years later that Major Marmaduke Grove-Vallejos, a character who will appear often in the following chapters: ‘..led discussions on the political influence of the Spanish Army among officers of Santiago’s military garrison⁵⁵’. The Chilean press⁵⁶ covered the first anniversary of General Primo de Rivera’s coup. Even liberal newspapers, such as *La Nación*, often published articles and statements of this General concerning the political situation in Spain.

Primo de Rivera’s regime was the first to recognize the new government organized in Chile in September 1924 and this move was praised by the local press and the public. Soon after, the Chilean Army Aviation signed a contract to buy engines manufactured in Spain. According to Marina Casanova-Gómez⁵⁷ this contract was the result of the ideological closeness between the governments of Chile and Spain.

While the already-mentioned social and political changes occurred, the Chilean Navy grew significantly but in a chaotic way between the Civil War of 1891 and World War One and even later.

The incentive for increasing the naval forces between 1891 and 1925 was a sort of South American navalism [see Glossary]. In Chile the incentive for this was that the victories in the nineteenth century demonstrated the influence of Sea Power. Another factor was the critical situation due to the border disputes, especially with Argentina. These factors provoked a disorderly growth of the naval forces. Several ships of advanced technology were added, and this made the deficiencies in quantity and technical skills of officers and men evident. In spite of the internal efforts of the Navy to obtain its personnel

⁵⁴ Clarence H. Haring, ‘Chilean Politics, 1920-1928’, *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, v.11, N°1. (1931), p.1.

⁵⁵ Frederick M. Nunn, ‘Military Rule in Chile: The Revolution of September 5, 1924 and January 23, 1925’, *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, v.47, N°1, (1967), p.3.

⁵⁶ Anon. ‘Un Gobierno Militar’. *Revista Zig Zag*. Santiago, 13 September 1923.

⁵⁷ Marina Casanova-Gómez, ‘Las relaciones Diplomáticas Hispano-Chilenas durante el Reinado de Alfonso XIII. 1923-1930’, *Ensayo, Tiempo y Forma*. 5 vols. v. 3 (1990), p.389.

by means of its schools, the solution adopted was to incorporate people directly from civilian life, including foreigners, especially for the engineering corps and for other technical branches and this would have consequences in 1931.

A second phase to strengthen the fleet started in 1910 but it was delayed and influenced by the outbreak of the First World War. As a consequence, even after this conflict, the same method already described was used to overcome deficiencies in personnel procurement.

The strain between Chile and Argentina, at the beginning of the twentieth century, provoking the reinforcement of the naval forces, had diminished by the 1920s. Nevertheless, with Perú there were serious problems since the subject of Tacna and Arica was still pending, because the Treaty of Ancon⁵⁸, finally ending the War of the Pacific, left the final destiny of those two provinces, which were Peruvian before the conflict, as a pending subject. The treaty established that a plebiscite should decide the final sovereignty of each of those territories but the referendum never took place, due to reasons that are not to be explained here. In several occasions both countries tried to comply with this part of the treaty and in the 1920s it was expected that finally the plebiscite would take place. For this reason, the Chilean Armed Forces, and the Navy in particular, had to support the actions of the Government, keeping units deployed for long periods in the far distant northern ports from Antofagasta to Arica. Sometimes this deployment was due to an entirely different reason, such as supporting the local authorities in their efforts to maintain the social order in serious riots occurring from time to time in the nitrate, copper and iodine mines. In this last type of mission, the crews came into direct contact with the social unrest occurring in that period, keeping activists imprisoned on board the ships.

As a summary, the Chilean society had been changing rapidly in the period between 1891 and 1924, as in many other countries. The middle class and to a lesser extent, the popular sectors, had become more educated and, as a consequence, these sectors sought to improve the quality of their lives, participate more fully in the nation's political life, receive a greater share of public expenditures, and even rise in social status. Thanks to the wealth generated by the sale of nitrates, the quality of education improved as did the number of schools. It was during this period that the government built more public schools, hired foreign teachers and professors and sent students abroad to improve their knowledge. In

⁵⁸ Peace treaty signed in Ancón, Peru on 20 October 1883.

many cases those who benefited from these programs, belonged to the middle class. The Armed Forces also participated in this process, enrolling better educated civilians, sending personnel abroad or receiving foreign instructors and advisors.

It is possible that the majority of naval officers did not become fully aware of how education was changing the middle and lower classes. Certainly it is likely that level of education of the lower decks had improved and that this factor might have influenced how the rebels of the 1931 mutiny reacted.

In summary, the Navy entered the second decade of the twentieth century with high ranked executive officers strongly influenced by the naval mentality resulting from the War of the Pacific and the Civil War of 1891. This behaviour, resulting from professional pride due to the results obtained in those conflicts was enhanced by liaisons with the predominant social classes, the oligarchy in Vial Correa's wording. The rest of the officer corps did not share this vision, either because of education or social origin. Another characteristic of this period is the rivalry with the Army, something that was diminishing as the memories of the internal conflict of 1891 were fading away, but even in 1924, thirty years after that war, it was still possible to observe attitudes and facts pointing to this problem.

The crews or enlisted personnel [see Glossary] did not make a conscious choice to join the rebel cause in the Civil War of 1891; they only followed their officers at their units. From 1891 until 1925, they did not show enthusiasm for any particular political party. But the officers' political activity during 1924 to 1925 would set a precedent which lower deck personnel would emulate; they would no longer passively follow their officers' orders.

3. 1924-1931: A PERIOD WHEN DISCIPLINE WAS BROKEN IN THE ARMED FORCES.

3.1. Alessandri and the meddling of military and naval officers in political affairs

The period between 1924 and 1931 is when the discipline in the armed forces was broken due to the participation of the officers in politics. This subject is covered in the literature from the standpoint of the political events. The author thinks that the historians covering this period do not explain what really happened in the Navy, although the events in the Army are better explained. For this reason it is necessary to devote certain space to the Navy in particular.

Arturo Alessandri Palma, representing the hopes and expectations of popular sectors and the rising middle class, won the presidency in a very tight electoral contest. Soon after taking office in 1920, he clashed with the conservative opposition, which was very strong in Congress, and which blocked his legislative initiatives. Pressed by his electors and by the opposition, he chose to use the military to threaten a dissolution of Congress. He named members of the army as cabinet ministers and started visiting barracks where he indulged his populist speaking skills to arouse the public. The opposition, using social contacts in Valparaiso in the same way as happened in 1890 and 1891, responded by attracting elements within the Navy to their side. It should be remembered that the right was relying upon precedent since some admirals had participated in the Civil War of 1891 as junior officers.

By 1924 the opposition had organized an anti-Alessandri conspiracy, while using its majority in the Senate, to block all legislation regarding retirement, promotions and pay that might benefit the military. The members of Congress, however, committed a crucial error since they began to debate a proposal to grant themselves an annual salary. Since the constitution prohibited paying legislators a salary, the congressmen stated that they were not discussing a salary but an emolument [*'Dieta Parlamentaria'* or Member of Parliament Emolument]. This issue came under discussion while the vast popular and middle class sectors were enduring a severe economic crisis, the result of the collapse of the nitrate markets, a principal source of government revenue.

The Navy shared the public's disdain, Captain Carlos Andonaegui Guarda, the commanding officer of cruiser *Blanco Encalada*, then sailing off the Chilean coast on a midshipmans' cruise, writes that the officers' salaries were:

'..derisory, a Navy Captain in command of a ship earned \$1,166.66 per month but he had to expend part of it paying the expenses inherent to this position on top of taking care of his family. The reader can make up his mind if this was possible. From my point of view, I would have to confess that I could not cope with it and I had to get help from my parental family...But even in this situation, we kept performing our delicate duties with sacrifice and abnegation. We had the hope that better days should come⁵⁹.

It is worth saying that in the lower ranks the situation was even worse, particularly because for long periods the ships were stationed in the northern ports, due to the frequent tensions with Peru regarding the unsolved subject of the sovereignty of Tacna and Arica departments, and the serious labour unrest happening periodically in the nitrate ports.

The following cover the political context and events from a general perspective, since what happened specifically in the Navy will be treated later.

The Navy High Command, although not enjoying a close relationship with the President, made him aware of the danger of institutional stability that threatened the nation. Alessandri, distrusting this service's political trends searched for elements within it that might support him, concentrating on those who supported his liberal political views and probably those who were freemasons.

The immediate cause of the collapse of Alessandri's presidency was an episode called the 'Ruido de Sables' in Chile's history [see Glossary: 'Sabre's Noise']. A considerable number of low ranking officers, belonging to the Santiago's Military Garrison showed noisily their disagreement with the Congress when it tried to approve the 'Dieta Parlamentaria' while delaying the discussion of laws they considered beneficial to the Nation and the armed forces. These demonstrations were directed from the shadows by Major Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, the Director of the Cavalry School.

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Carlos Andonaegui-Guarda, *Memorias* (Typewritten document handled to the author by Captain Andonaegui's family) (n.d.), p.74.

Ibáñez later became one of Chile's leading politicians. One of his biographers⁶⁰ called him an 'enigmatic caudillo', since he was a very private person, who said little, who sometime acted quickly, but who on other occasions showed himself hesitant and irresolute. In 1924, he became convinced that the nation had to change the character of the political institutions, which in hands of irresponsible civil actors, had caused it untold grief⁶¹. Clearly, he would emerge as one of the leaders of a group of young and low ranking officers who would change Chilean politics. Vial-Correa⁶² has studied thoroughly this character.

Signs of unrest were evident in the Senate galleries on Tuesday, 2 September 1924 and the following day. At the same time, some naval officers began to denounce the Parliament's attempt to use a subterfuge to obtain salaries for themselves.

Initially, Alessandri wanted to punish the officers who participated in the Senate demonstrations, but desisted, instead inviting a delegation together with their commanding officers to the 'La Moneda' palace [see Glossary]. There are two versions of this meeting. That of the President, who said that he only wanted to become aware of the complaints, and that of one of the officers, who claimed that the Head of State proposed the officers create a committee to draft a list of laws that the Parliament would either have to pass or the Army close the Congress. The fact is, apart from the differing versions, that the junior officers started meeting every time in a more organized fashion until they created the 'Military Junta' [later called Military and Naval Junta, see Glossary]. This was an organism completely out of the institutional framework and soon it would increase its participation in national politics.

⁶⁰ Ernesto Würth-Rojas, *Ibáñez, caudillo enigmático*, (Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico, 1958)

⁶¹ He was an Army major in 1924 who had participated in a military mission in El Salvador where he gained experience of being a political actor as well as a soldier, when he fought in Salvador's war with Guatemala. After returning to Chile he was a very cautious man never showing himself at the centre of the political stage. Indeed, until he became Minister of War in 1925, he had never held political office.

⁶² Gonzalo Vial-Correa. *Historia de Chile [1891-1973]*, 6 vols. (Santiago: Santillana, 1981). IV: *La Dictadura de Ibáñez [1925-1931]*. (1996) pp. 75-76.

Two middle grade officers, majors Ibáñez and Marmaduke Grove-Vallejos, competed to control the Military Junta, initially from the shadows. Grove had been a student in the Naval Academy before joining the Army. This fact, as well as his social connections to prominent groups in Valparaiso, made him the ideal liaison with the Navy. As time elapsed, Ibáñez displaced Grove from the leadership of the military reformists and both subsequently followed political careers. Ibáñez became president of Chile in 1927, as well as the 1950s, while Grove served in the Parliament and helped found the socialist party in the 1930s.

In the middle of the crisis, which started in September 1924, Alessandri tried to neutralize the actions of naval officers whom he considered hostile to his political views. Later in this section this subject will be covered in detail. The President also tried to overcome gracefully the political instability of those days, inviting active-duty officers to become members of the cabinet.

General Pedro Pablo Bennett-Argandoña an eyewitness of that period wrote that on the 5 September 1925: ‘Two important acts occurred: the designation of a Junta or Committee representing the officers and the elaboration of a list of grievances that would be presented to the President⁶³. Nobody knows who designated the members of the committee and probably the list was prepared by Ibáñez, Grove and other officers close to them. Bennett also supplements the list of this group with the names of the participants representing the different Army units and including significantly General Pedro Pablo Dartnell-Encina, the Commander of Santiago’s Garrison. Commander Julio Dittborn-Torres was the naval officer to participate in that committee but he never wielded much influence. Bennett’s book included a list of the committee’s requests. In other garrisons across Chile similar committees were created.

Finally, late on 5 September 1924 a new Cabinet took office with General Luis Altamirano-Talavera as Minister of the Interior and Vice Admiral Francisco Nef-Jara as Minister of Finance, who also served as ‘Director General de la Armada’ [‘Navy’s Director General’: see Glossary]. Next day, the crisis did not diminish even with the new cabinet. The Military Junta tried to attract naval officers, sending emissaries to Valparaiso and Talcahuano, but these quickly discovered that the Navy was more interested in deposing

⁶³ Juan Pablo Bennett-Argandoña, *La Revolución del 5 de septiembre de 1924*, (Santiago de Chile: Balcells & Co, n.d.), pp.27-28.

Alessandri and closing the Congress than in pressing for a program of political reforms or the approval of certain laws. The meeting of Army and Navy officers took place on Sunday, 7 September and it was agreed to incorporate three commanders and a lieutenant commander into the Military Junta. This marked a significant change because until then largely junior military officers had dominated the deliberative organism.

While this happened in the Armed Forces and the Government, the rest of the country adapted to the new situation.

Bennett noted that:

‘The Military Junta commissioned several officers to go to labour centres to explain the scope of the military movement’ [...and that these envoys...] ‘expend a good deal of time’ [...explaining...] ‘the benefits of it for the working classes⁶⁴’.

The labour organizations initially refrained from political activity with the exception of the local chapter of I.W.W. Also, FOCH Santiago’s section, ended its analysis agreeing that it would remain expectant but without supporting the military movement started in September 1924.

Monday, 8 September, was a very special day since the Congress finally approved eight laws that it had earlier refused to pass. Alessandri and the members of Congress thought that with the enactment of these laws the Military and Naval Junta would dissolve themselves and that the country would return to normality, a republic ruled by a president and assisted by a cabinet where high ranked officers were members. The junta, however, retained power because its reformist military officers, assisted by some anti-Alessandri naval representatives, refused to step down. Although the rebels did not have a clear majority, the President resigned near midnight but the junta asked him to refrain making it effective immediately and to request instead a leave of absence for a limited period. The recently nominated cabinet offered its resignation as well but the President left La Moneda, seeking asylum in the American Embassy on 9 September at dawn. The Senate disregarded

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Bennett, p.84.

his resignation, instead granting him a leave of absence for six months in addition to permitting him to travel out of the country⁶⁵.

In this situation, the Minister of Interior [see Glossary] became Chief of State as Vice President. General Luis Altmirano-Talavera succeeded Alessandri since he was Vice President [see Glossary] as the acting Minister of the Interior, but the pressure for the dissolution of the Parliament continued. Consequently a 'Junta de Gobierno' [or Government Junta, see Glossary] composed of Generals Altamirano and Bennett plus Vice Admiral Nef took office on 12 September 1924. This body assumed the power of the executive branch of Government. This same day a Santiago newspaper in its evening edition published an important document issued by the Naval and Military Junta which stated the rationale for the military's intervention in national politics. This statement, in the future, would be known as the 'Manifiesto of 11 of September 1924'. Its text can be found in Bennett⁶⁶ and *La Unión* one of Valparaíso's newspapers⁶⁷. One of the most important facets of this document was its statement that the purpose of the military movement was to: 'Call for a free Constituent Assembly to elaborate a new fundamental law in accordance to the national aspirations'. This last declaration shows that this was a revolutionary movement in the sense that it sought to modify the political institutions, changing the Constitution first passed in 1833. In addition to the 'Manifiesto of 11 of September 1924', the Military and Naval Junta also promulgated a 'Statement to the Armed Forces' which explained the Junta's actions. It also hoped to maintain the integrity of the military's chain of command in the services which is a contradiction in itself because the Junta was an organization out of the regular structures of the Army or the Navy.

In these same days, *La Nación*, a Santiago newspaper supporting Alessandri, published several articles reporting frictions between officers of the different branches of the Armed Forces. On the same day that the manifesto appeared, a group of naval officers sent an open letter to the editor of *La Nación* which is worth citing because it reveals the political environment of that period:

⁶⁵ In those days the President had to request an authorization from the Senate to leave his position and to travel outside Chile according to the Constitution.

⁶⁶ Bennett, pp. 102-103.

⁶⁷ 'Manifiesto de la Junta Militar al País', *La Unión*, Valparaíso, 12 September 1924, p.1.

‘The Naval Committee has bitterly become aware of reports published in your newspaper suggesting the existence of differences between the Navy and the Army, regarding the great movement that has been created to reinstall the civic tradition in this country. Categorically and with energy we dismiss such an unpatriotic and tendentious attitude. On the contrary and energetically, the Navy and the Army, tightly united, will eagerly watch closely all the elements who are collaborating with their high purposes and those who obstruct them⁶⁸’.

Despite the good intentions to maintain harmony between the members of both services, in January 1925 a serious rupture shattered the tenuous unity and the origin of this serious problem will be explained in the following section.

Early after the political change of the beginning of September a new initiative of the young officers belonging to the Military and Naval Junta took place. They started giving conferences on political and social issues to workers organizations that often requested this type of meetings. In those days, the Undersecretary of the Navy decided as well to issue a ‘Manifesto to the Workers’⁶⁹.

These types of conferences were given usually in public meetings taking place in squares or theatres. An example of this is the ‘Homage to the Navy and Army’, as it is called by *La Unión*, which took place in a theatre in Valparaíso on 25 September 1924⁷⁰. Several naval officers were present, among them, Vice Admiral Salustio Valdés-Cortez and Rear Admiral Luis Langlois-Vidal. There were different speakers among whom was Commander Lautaro Rosas-Andrade, a retired officer who would become Minister of Finance when Ibáñez rose to a position of authority in Government. Another orator was Lieutenant Commander Carlos Frödden-Lorenzen. His speech, which had clear political implications, strongly supported the Junta de Gobierno Altamirano-Nef-Bennett; amazingly, he talked representing the Navy despite the ‘Director General de la Armada’ being present. Years later, Frödden would hold high cabinet positions and would be mentioned as one of the factors precipitating the Naval Mutiny of 1931.

While this political activity was taking place, the Commander in Chief of the Fleet, Rear Admiral Guillermo Soffia-Guzmán, arrived in Valparaíso. He disembarked

⁶⁸ La Nación, Santiago, 12 September 1924.

⁶⁹ Bennett, pp. 113-114.

⁷⁰ ‘Gran Asamblea Ayer en Honor del Ejército y la Armada’, *La Unión*, 25 September 1924, p.1.

immediately from his flag ship and went to the Navy Club. The people attending that political meeting only became aware of the presence of this flag officer when it was finishing. Those in attendance then decided to go to the nearby club to acclaim him. Soffia accepted the cheering from a balcony, making a speech. Two lieutenants, Enrique Cordovez-Madariaga and Adirio Jessen-Ahumada, spoke as well from the same place. Accordingly to a summary published by *La Unión*, Cordovez said: ‘The change of regime produced in this country... in my opinion, has no precedent in the world history since it is a social revolution without bloodshed, partisan flags or caudillos⁷¹’. Jessen mentioned his: ‘Desire of destroying the electoral machine working for so long in this country...’ [and he also extended] ... ‘an invitation to the labour societies to cooperate with the new regime⁷²’. Clearly these meetings in public places expressed the naval officers’ hostility toward politicians and in particular to Alessandri in some cases.

One of the laws that the Congress so rapidly approved was one which established that officers in the Armed Forces could not stay in service longer than forty years. In the Navy this meant that the three vice admirals and one rear admiral had to retire and an officer of this last rank would become ‘Director General’. This law started a cycle of frequent changes in the high command, hindering the necessary continuity but, at the same time, facilitating the promotion to higher ranks. This goal was a cherished desire of the reformist officers in both services. Regardless of the new law, Vice Admiral Nef kept his position as a member of the government as well as Rear Admiral Luis Gómez-Carreño who stayed as Minister of War and Navy, both as retired officers recalled to duty. Analyzing an official document⁷³ it is possible to conclude that eight out of the ten serving vice admirals and rear admirals at the beginning of 1924 had to retire within twelve months. As a consequence of these forced retirements, those flag officers commanding the fleet units at the onset of the mutiny of 1931 were just lieutenant commanders at the beginning of the 1920s.

⁷¹ ‘La Gran Asamblea obrera de ayer en el Teatro Novedades’, *La Unión*, 29 September 1924, p.5.

⁷² ‘La Gran Asamblea obrera de ayer en el Teatro Novedades’, *La Unión*, 29 September 1924, p.5.

⁷³ *Escalafón de Oficiales 1924-1925*, ed. by Armada de Chile, (1925).

The internecine struggle between the Military and Naval Junta and the Government Junta continued into 1925. The reformers accused the later of being too close to the coalition called 'Unión Nacional' [National Union, see Glossary], headed by the Conservative Party; the Government Junta considered the Military and Naval Junta as a superfluous organization, in part because the legislature's acceptance of the reform package had removed the rationale for its existence. The Armed Forces, in short, should devote themselves only to their professional duties, leaving the Government Junta exclusively in charge of leading the state. This serious difference between the two juntas would precipitate another institutional crisis in January 1925 when a series of coups would plunge the nation again into a political maelstrom.

3.2. January 1925, the peril of another civil war.

When the crisis of September 1924 erupted, Admiral Nef, the Director General of the Navy received a call from President Alessandri. Unfortunately the communication was unsatisfactory. Probably for that reason, Gaspar Mora-Sotomayor, the Minister of War and Navy sent a letter to Nef asking him: 'In the event of a movement causing a perturbation of the institutional stability' [... to answer him whether...] 'Admiral Soffia is a trustworthy person to be kept in charge of the fleet in case the above situation occurs'⁷⁴. Later, he also inquired if it would be a good idea to concentrate the units of the fleet in Valparaiso, sending to Talcahuano those ships that might be useful to Rear Admiral Arturo Acevedo-Lay, the base commander of the southern port of Talcahuano. Finally, he wrote to the highest authority in the Navy suggesting that he might do what he thinks is more convenient if he is satisfied with Admiral Soffia. Mora wrote also that if the Director General of the Navy was not satisfied with Soffia's behaviour, he would have to propose the name of another admiral to the government to become commander of the fleet⁷⁵.

⁷⁴ 'La Marina en el Momento Histórico', *La Unión*, 10 September 1924, p.6.

⁷⁵ The details about this letter and how it was delivered on 5 September 1924 are in a book written by General Enrique Monreal Nodeau who is an eyewitness of that period.
Enrique Monreal-Nodeau, *Historia documentada del período revolucionario, 1924-1925*, (Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1929), pp. 147-149.

At the same time, the President, unable to have a good telephone communication to the Navy's higher ranking admiral, also chose to send him a letter on 5 September 1924. He asked about the attitude of the Navy towards the situation created by the Army's young officers in Santiago. Accordingly to the only source available, the answer was:

'The Navy is a service of order and in any case, it will respect the Constitution. In short, the Navy would not oppose the President but it could do nothing against the Army in case of a coup'⁷⁶.

It is very likely that the President and the Admiral were concerned about what happened in 1891 because both lived through that period as youngsters. Widening what was covered before [in section 2.2] it must be remembered that at the beginning of that year the Congress, dominated by the oligarchy, had stated that the President violated the Constitution while the country was in the middle of a serious political crisis. The fleet supported the Congress's position while the Army remained loyal to the executive, thus precipitating a cruel civil war that ended President Balmaceda's regime.

At the same time that the Director General of the Navy replied to the President; he gathered the Navy Board and communicated what was transpiring in the capital, stating that:

'A period of serious and disgraceful agitations has started in this country. It is impossible to foresee the consequences of shattering the Constitutional order and the guarantee of civil rights. The unleashed ambitions of parties, groups or institutions would struggle to gain power, damaging the external credit, the organization and the future of the country'⁷⁷.

This statement by the senior admiral of the Navy indicated that although some officers of high rank might have had an unfavourable opinion of the government led by Arturo Alessandri, they regretted that the institutional integrity of the country had been broken. Lower ranking officers in the Navy had a different position because according to Captain Merino-Saavedra this last group considered:

'The September military movement as a consummated fact... accepted by 'esprit de corps' with the other service and with great enthusiasm. This reaction was logical since the benefits of the new laws regarding salaries, promotions and retirement had taken the services out of the stagnation of the past'⁷⁸.

⁷⁶ 'En Valparaíso', *La Unión*, 6 September 1924.p.6.

⁷⁷ Merino-Saavedra, p.6.

⁷⁸ Merino-Saavedra, p.6.

More significantly, the Government and officers of the Army and the Navy were also plotting. The last group acted in Valparaiso as well as in Talcahuano.

Accordingly to a source openly opposed to Alessandri⁷⁹ the Executive Committee of the Naval and Military Junta had agreed to request the resignation of the President and the dissolution of both chambers of Congress as well as calling for the dismissal of those Army officers who were close to the President on 6 September 1924. This same day, about one hundred naval officers gathered in the Navy Club sent a supportive telegram to their colleagues assembled in the Army Club. The most senior of the officers signing this communication was Rear Admiral Luis Gómez-Carreño.

While Nef had a loyal but uncompromising attitude towards Alessandri, the Commander in Chief of the Fleet Rear Admiral Soffia had a different view as reported by the press a few weeks after the events. Soffia was with his naval force in Talcahuano, while the flagship *Latorre* was being repaired when the September movement began and he learned the news via the local newspaper reports. He stated later to the press that:

‘I called for a commanding officers’ meeting that very same night in order to know their opinion...All of them said that they agreed with their comrades of the Army and that they considered that the movement was patriotic...At the next day, I gathered the officers of the flagship as well as the petty officers. I made a presentation about the events that were taking place in Santiago; I talked extensively about this and I made a report of the country’s situation, of the serious crisis affecting specially the humble homes and the lack of honesty of the men ruling the country⁸⁰’.

This process of consulting the subordinates about political matters had become customary in that period, being indicative of the lack of discipline. In any case, such an act violated article 157 of the Constitution of 1833: ‘the public forces are essentially obedient. No armed corps may deliberate’. The same article, with identical wording, would be article 22 in a new constitution which became law in 1925. Unfortunately, the law seemed a dead letter; the habit of the 1920s of consulting and deliberating about political events and the participation in acts of adhesion or rejection to different ideas, all of dubious legality, would be a causative factor of the naval mutiny of 1931 in the Talcahuano Naval Base.

⁷⁹ ‘En Valparaíso’, *La Unión*, 6&7 September 1924. p.1.

⁸⁰ ‘El Jefe de la Escuadra, Almirante Soffia, habla a la Escuadra sobre los Recientes Acontecimientos Nacionales’. *La Unión*, 29 September 1924, p.1

At the end of Soffia's presentation, those present requested the performance of an act to express their support to the military movement. The Admiral describes enthusiastically this manifestation of support, particularly when at the end of the ceremony a telegram arrived announcing that laws considered by the young officers as necessary had been approved by Congress. It must be remembered that such legislation was rapidly approved on 8 September and that was the last day that Alessandri remained as President. Soffia adds about those days that: 'The position of the fleet was perfectly clear in a timely sent telegram of adherence to the military movement'⁸¹. This message did not call for the resignation of the president.

Days before his fall and learning of the attitude of the Commander in Chief of the Fleet, which indicated his support of the rebels, the President decided to remove him from command. Alessandri concluded that while Soffia and his officers supported the military movement, they opposed the President as head of state. Unfortunately, Alessandri's use of some highly irregular practices would poison the atmosphere.

The President, in collusion with the governor of Concepción [see Glossary] planned first to invite Soffia and Rear Admiral Acevedo, one of Alessandri's supporters inside the Navy, to a meeting. Once convened, the government would imprison Soffia and offer command of the fleet to Acevedo. The plot did not work because Soffia, claiming he was ill, refused to attend but instead remained on board his flagship. He subsequently claimed that the meeting should have taken place on board his flagship because he was senior to Acevedo. He then summoned the officers' meeting already narrated, starting the deterioration of discipline in the fleet. Accordingly to Vial Correa, Soffia:

'was afraid that the invitation for a meeting was an ambush designed to arrest him. This is the origin of the legend that the pro Alessandri Freemasons (because don Arturo, Aguirre Cerda, Mora and Acevedo belonged to that organization) would try a counter coup using the fleet on the night of the 4 September but that Nef and Soffia aborted the conspiracy ending the naval career of Acevedo'⁸².

⁸¹ 'El Jefe de la Escuadra, Almirante Soffia, habla a la Escuadra sobre los Recientes Acontecimientos Nacionales', *La Unión*, 29 September 1924, p.1.

⁸² Vial-Correa, v. III, 1988, p.384.

Our interpretation is that the President and both of his ministers acted in the light of events such as those of 1891. They tried to solve the problem initially using a regular method and complying with a duty assigned to their positions.

It must be recalled that the fleet at that time was participating in exercises near Talcahuano, when *Latorre* suffered a technical malfunction and had to go to that dockyard for repairs. When they docked, the officers became aware of the events in Santiago and Admiral Soffia summoned them, as well as all hands of the fleet, to indicate their support of the military movement. This act had special emotional characteristics in the flagship, as reported by an important witness of those days⁸³ and Soffia, showing that the Commander in Chief of the fleet was disaffected toward Alessandri's regime

How did President Alessandri become aware of the political attitudes of Admirals Soffia and Acevedo? *Zig Zag*, a weekly magazine published on 27 September, noted that the President became aware of both admirals' attitudes months before, while he and his party were on board battleship *Latorre* with them. The magazine wrote that after that meeting, the President became concerned about Soffia's political views and this is why he decided to remove him from his command at the first signs of military unrest.

What other evidence exists about Soffia's political ideas to justify Alessandri's removing him from command? First, there is a statement of Captain Merino-Saavedra, already described as a valuable eye-witness of that period who wrote that this admiral was: 'One of the few officers belonging to a political party...arousing distrust among the officers for being conservative⁸⁴'. In short, Merino implies that Soffia belonged to the Conservative Party, a group clearly and strongly opposed to Alessandri's Liberal Party. We must add that Captain Merino-Saavedra became commanding officer of *Latorre*, Soffia's flagship, in November 1924 and both knew each other throughout their naval careers. We have not found any other evidence of political affiliation of this Admiral and our conclusion is that it is very likely that Guillermo Soffia, as a private citizen, supported the Conservative Party's ideas and may be that this attitude was noticeable in his meetings with the President and naval officers of that period.

Admiral Acevedo denied participating in the manoeuvres to remove Soffia from the Navy. *La Unión* the conservative newspaper of Valparaíso, reported that the officers of the

⁸³ Bennett, p.83.

⁸⁴ Merino-Saavedra, p.7.

Talcahuano Naval Base sent a telegram to the Naval Headquarters in Valparaiso stating: 'In view of the latest events, we support enthusiastically our colleagues of the Army and we hope that the present Cabinet will achieve its program⁸⁵'. Among the most prominent signatures in this message are those of the Commander in Chief of the Naval District Admiral Acevedo and his Chief of Staff Captain Huerta-Lira. Clearly this message did not seek Alessandri's resignation; it is only supportive of the new Cabinet organized with the participation of naval and military officers. But, as we know, that resignation took place at the following day no matter that the majority of the Navy had not requested this action.

As other evidence of that period's political atmosphere, it must be said that Commander Olegario Reyes del Río, an active-duty officer and Commander Lautaro Rozas-Andrade, a retired officer, offered their own versions of the attempt to replace Admiral Soffia as Commander in Chief of the Fleet. They published the reply given by Vice Admiral Nef to the Government already quoted. They also indicate they supported the idea that the Navy should join the military movement taking place in the first days of September 1924. Their ideas are openly stated in an article bearing their signatures⁸⁶, a clear evidence of naval officers' involvement in political actions.

The final outcome of the dispute between Soffia and Acevedo was that the government that succeeded Arturo Alessandri's regime dismissed Rear Admiral Acevedo on 15 September⁸⁷, and he retired on 24 November 1924. His replacement as Commander of the Naval Base at Talcahuano was Captain Ismael Huerta-Lira. Later, when Alessandri returned to power, in March 1925, he appointed Acevedo to serve as the governor of first Antofagasta and then Santiago, which is an evidence of political affinity between them.

Captain Huerta-Lira as Chief of Staff of the Naval District before he replaced Rear Admiral Acevedo witnessed the climate of political deliberations in Talcahuano and the events on board Admiral Soffia's flagship. As an example of the above, he points out that:

'The members of the Naval Committee were designated, almost unanimously, in a general meeting on board battleship *Latorre* and Captain José Manuel Montalva took the position of President. There were no engineers in this Executive Committee. After *Latorre* sailed to Valparaiso,

⁸⁵ 'En Valparaíso', *La Unión*, 8 September 1924, p.1.

⁸⁶ 'La Marina en el Momento Histórico', *La Unión*, 10 de September 1924, p.1.

⁸⁷ Decreto *Supremo* (Act of Council) N° 1337, 15 September 1924.

the meetings were very scarce and only the Executive Committee stayed active⁸⁸.

The handling of differences between executive and engineering officers was introduced before [in section 4.1] and will be covered again later, since the chronological order will be followed again to cover the actual naval participation in the September crisis.

On 6 September, the Military Junta agreed to send one of its leaders, Marmaduke Grove, to contact the Navy, trying to attract its officers to the movement started in those days by the junior officers of the Army. The Junta thought that since Vice Admiral Nef was recently nominated to the cabinet, the Navy would support the movement started by them. Lieutenant Colonel Alfredo Ewing, however, informed the Military Junta that when Alessandri announced for the first time in the afternoon on 6 September that he would resign. Nef, as 'Director General' of the Navy, stated he would not remain in the government if the President would abandon it⁸⁹.

Further evidence that some of the Navy's officers wanted Alessandri's resignation no matter Nef's position is the following. Carlos Sáez-Morales, an Army Major, witnessed this period adding his version to Vial Correa's⁹⁰. Sáez says that Grove's meeting with naval officers took place in the Navy Club on 7 September and there, Rear Admiral Gómez Carreño supposedly said to this military leader: 'Tell Lucho⁹¹ Altamirano he could count on us if Alessandri would leave and the Congress would be closed⁹²'. The Admiral's testimony seems quite accurate. Several historians such as Vial Correa have written that Gómez- Carreño became disaffected with the President during his term in office. Grove says that while he was researching the Navy attitude, Guillermo Rivera, a prominent

⁸⁸ Ismael Huerta Lira, *Informe del Comandante en Jefe del Apostadero Naval de Magallanes [sobre los sucesos ocurridos en Talcahuano entre SEP 1924 y ENE 1925]*, (24 de mayo 1925. Transcription from an unpublished typewritten report. Chilean Navy Archives. Valparaiso), p.1.

⁸⁹ Carlos Sáez Morales, *Recuerdos de un Soldado. El Ejército y la Política*, 3 vols. (Santiago: Biblioteca Ercilla. 1933), v.I, p.87.

⁹⁰ Vial-Correa, v. III, 1988, p.394.

⁹¹ Lucho is a familiar way of saying Luis in Spanish. In this case, meaning General Luis Altamirano-Talavera.

⁹² Sáez, v.I, p.94.

politician of Valparaiso told him that day that: ‘Nef should never be considered as part of the new government since he would not accept the President leaving his position⁹³’. If we stick to this second hand source, the deliberation to participate in political matters was considerable at that stage, also in the Navy, and it was evident that several high ranking members wished the President’s exit [except Nef and Acevedo]. Another evidence of this attitude is in secondary sources such as Monreal⁹⁴ and Donoso who writes:

‘Francisco Huneeus Gana went to Valparaiso at the beginning of the year... [1924]... to check with those who were conspiring ... [such as]...Gómez-Carreño and Soublette who favored a complete change of government, including, evidently Alessandri’s exit and the dissolution of Congress. The Navy feelings of strong opposition to the disruptive politician heavily influenced the President’s downfall⁹⁵’.

It must be said that Donoso is an author strongly biased against Alessandri and this explains why he called the President a ‘disruptive politician’.

General Bennett stated⁹⁶ that there was a difference between the attitude of the Army and the Navy regarding the movement that started the government’s fall in September 1924. Initially, both the senior and the junior Navy’s officers supported the movement because it maintained naval discipline. The only discrepant views were Acevedo’s who supported Alessandri and Nef’s who wanted that Alessandri stayed in office making the changes pursued by the young military officers. The Army, however, was divided; the junior officers, particularly in Santiago’s garrison, supported the movement; a few generals would only join it later. The rest of the garrisons across Chile were not part of this movement. A witness to that period attributes this attitude to the fact that the Army, unlike the Navy which had the post of ‘Director General’, lacked a unified command.

It is worthwhile to note how the cruiser *Blanco Encalada*, at that time serving as a training ship for midshipmen reacted. The vessel was anchored in Puerto Slight, close to Gulf of Penas, when its commanding officer wrote:

‘We intercepted a message announcing the coup on 5 September...an event that caused... [me]... a deep surprise, anda great concern. It was not

⁹³ Sáez, v.I, p.94.

⁹⁴ Monreal, p.156.

⁹⁵ Donoso, v.I, p.373.

⁹⁶ Bennett, p.63.

possible to have a clear idea of the events, because it was a long time since I had the last news from the centre of the country. I decided then to wait in that port to see how the events worked out and to keep calm acting prudently...An officer's delegation approached suggesting the convenience of adhering to the new movement. I, in accordance of the above criteria, did accept the suggestion. At midnight a message was intercepted from the Director General to the Magellan Naval District requesting it to show itself in favour of the movement. With this document in hand, I was able to make a sound decision. I wrote then my personal commitment and those of my officers and crew⁹⁷.

Again, this quotation enables an appraisal of the disruptive spirit of that age heavily influencing the events in the Mutiny of 1931. It also enables it to be stated that the indiscipline was not only a problem of the fleet or in the ships and shore establishments of Talcahuano Naval Base. It was a more generalized problem and it had been concocted over a long period because the above took place in a ship that had been on an extended training cruise, isolated from other naval units.

8 September constituted an important date since the Congress approved, without further study or discussion, the eight laws it had bottled up for so long. On the same day, several naval officers were incorporated into the Military and Naval Junta. There is some disagreement on this point: Ricardo Donoso⁹⁸ named only a few, but General Bennett's list⁹⁹ is the best because he is an important witness of that period, giving also the place where they were selected [see Appendix]. This means that the Military and Naval Junta was a group not clearly organized and having a variable membership of unknown origin. The engineers tried to become members of this deliberating body but the Army, fearing it would antagonize the Naval High Command rejected their petition. Ibáñez took notice of this fact and would contact the engineers later. As it has already been noted Alessandri submitted his resignation on 8 September, and over the course of the next two days a new government was consolidated.

General Bennett says that in the meeting in the Navy Club on 7 September the creation of a Committee was agreed as well as sending delegates to Santiago's Naval and Military Junta. In Talcahuano a similar committee was created. Bennett gives only the

⁹⁷ Andonaegui, p.76.

⁹⁸ Donoso, v.I, p. 398.

⁹⁹ Bennett, p. 81.

names of two members: Commander Alejo Marfán and Lieutenant Junior Grade Ramón Beytía, which is evidently incomplete information.

Bennett wrote that in that event it was decided to name: ‘...commissions of officers to give conferences in worker’s centres and societies about the real story of the events producing the end of the politicking from the Government¹⁰⁰’. Later, this source gave the following names, among others, as members of these commissions: Commander Arístides del Solar-Morel, Lieutenant Commanders Carlos Frodden Lorenzen and Adirio Jessen-Ahumada. All these officers would keep performing clearly political activities in the following days¹⁰¹ and even they would also have certain prominence in the Naval Mutiny of 1931. Officers in addition to those stationed in Valparaíso also participated in such activities as did Army representatives who spoke to railroad and custom house workers.

Two comments may be added to the above. The creation of such committees was clearly out of the disciplinary framework, considering the constitutional prohibition mentioned before. It shows also one characteristic of this period in particular because while the 1833 Constitution was valid, no other events of this type took place, except in 1891. Giving speeches to workers organizations was also an illegal activity for Armed Forces officers.

Once President Alessandri became a guest in the American Embassy, the Navy pressed for his exit from Chile. According to General Bennett¹⁰², Rear Admiral Gómez-Carreño arrived at Santiago on the 10 September informing the Cabinet that the Navy not only wanted Alessandri exiled, but it also wanted to dissolve the Congress. In effect, the following day Congress was closed and it would not convene again until the end of 1925.

The 11th September 1924 was a very important day. As it was mentioned, the Altamirano-Nef- Bennett Government Junta was sworn in; it dissolved the Congress and issued a statement of its program. At the same time, the Naval and Military Junta published another statement in the *Diario Ilustrado* evening edition. This was a conservative newspaper published in Santiago. The document¹⁰³ rationalized the reasons of the military

¹⁰⁰ Bennett, p. 81.

¹⁰¹ ‘La Gran Asamblea Obrera de Ayer en el Teatro Novedades’, *La Unión*, 29 September 1924, p.5.

¹⁰² Bennett, p.72.

¹⁰³ ‘La Junta Militar’, *El Diario Ilustrado*, Santiago 11 September 1924.

intervention in politics. On this same day, a new Cabinet was sworn in, civilians occupying the Ministries of Interior and Finance, while Rear Admiral Gómez Carreño became Minister of War and Navy, replacing General Bennett.

The civilian ministers requested the immediate dissolution of the Naval and Military Junta fearing that this body would try to dominate the Government Junta's policies. They correctly noted, moreover, that this organization did not enjoy any legal basis for existing.

The Navy insisted that Rear Admiral Gomez-Carreño be a minister, in order to compensate for the fact that two generals were serving on the Government Junta. Both services placed: '...Great hope about the acts ...of the Admiral; he was the person wanted to purge the officer's corps of bad elements without hesitation¹⁰⁴.

Over the next three months the military's opinion changed. The Minister of War and Navy, for example, ordered the arrest and expulsion of Daniel Schweitzer because this attorney staunchly supported Alessandri and because, summoned by the Santiago Military Garrison to warn him to cease any participation in political activities, he did not attend. Gómez Carreño's rationale was that since Schweitzer was a foreigner, he was forbidden from expressing opinions about Chilean politics¹⁰⁵.

The same day, 11 September, the Naval and Military Junta finished its internal organization with a roster of a majority of Army's officers plus a few members of the Navy and Police [see Appendix E]. The membership of this group was composed of a majority of young officers who were critical of the Government Junta. The remainder, a much smaller group consisted of the senior military, the naval and the police officer. The Military and Naval Junta decided, as a whole, to approve its decisions by seventy five percent of the vote instead the usual fifty one percent. Very soon Lieutenant Colonel Bartolomé Blanche-Espejo and Commander Carlos Jouanne de la Motte du Portail became Under Secretaries of the Army and the Navy. General Bennet writes¹⁰⁶ that Jouanne was the naval officer: 'Who played the most important role in the Junta'. The lack of representation of the engineers in this or in other similar organizations did not go unnoticed in Talcahuano, where most of

¹⁰⁴ Bennett, p. 90-91.

¹⁰⁵ Vial-Correa, v. III, 1988, p. 468 and Bennett, p. 175.

¹⁰⁶ Benntett, p.77.

these officers were concentrated due to the fact that the School of Engineers and the dockyards were located in that port.

Captain Huerta-Lira called a general meeting on board cruiser *O'Higgins* to listen a report of the Talcahuano's Executive Committee. 'The great majority of the engineers objected to the existence of this Committee, calling for its abolition and claiming that they did not trust its president¹⁰⁷'. When the Committee's head, Captain José Manuel Montalva-Barrientos, tried to refute these charges, the discussion became so heated that Huerta, the acting Commander in Chief, decided to cancel it. He also writes:

'From that time on, the discussion transformed into a declared war between the executive officers in one side and the engineers in the other. One of the results of this conflict was a collective petition signed by no less than sixty of the engineer, pilot and supply officers...This application was duly sent to the higher levels of the Navy with a short report signed by myself because I was leading an unofficial meeting only as it was requested by those attending¹⁰⁸'.

The date of this meeting is unknown. It must have occurred at the end of the period between October and December 1924. Regarding the engineers' problem, Rear Admiral Soffia stated in a Navy Board meeting on 3 October 1924 that the number of these officers should be reduced; an action that would upset them.

The engineers' unrest, arising in the midst of the disruption of the institutional order, became a public issue. *La Unión* published a couple of articles¹⁰⁹ noting that the 'Instituto de Ingenieros', an organization representing these officers, was demanding that the Navy give the engineers the same status as the executive officers. In the first of these articles, the author opposed the demands of the engineers. Accordingly to 'Baden' [pseudonym] there were too many engineers and these, being technical officers did not deserve a place in the chain of command. In the second article, the Director General of the Navy, Vice Admiral Valdés, excused himself from giving an opinion, claiming that he was not fully aware of the subject. He also added that he wondered that the engineers had made demands outside of the regular institutional framework. The Chief Inspector of

¹⁰⁷ Huerta Lira 1925, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Huerta Lira 1925, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ 'Petición de los Ingenieros de la Armada a la Excelentísima Junta de Gobierno', *La Unión*, 3 & 4 November 1924. pp.1-3.

Engineering, Rear Admiral Engineer Diógenes Córdova responded to *La Unión's* charges, noting that 'Instituto de Ingenieros' was not part of the Navy, but was composed only of retired officers. While he too claimed that he lacked any information on the issue, he noted that Commander Edgardo von Schroeders-Sarratea, the Chilean Naval Attaché at London, had studied the situation of the engineers in the Royal Navy. His report supported the demands that the 'Instituto de Ingenieros' presented to the Government Junta. After praising von Schroeders, Córdova says that: 'he writes that the subject of the Engineers was solved with the fairness and tact known by the British Empire when it takes care of problems affecting its Navy'.

At the end of September another meeting of the Armed Forces officers and worker's organizations occurred. *La Union* described the events writing¹¹⁰ that in the theatre belonging to the Sacred Hearts Congregation the speakers were a member of the government and a retired general plus two workers José Luis Sepúlveda and Manuel Astica. Two months later Astica participated in the Convention of the Catholic Youth held at the Public Hall of the Federation of Catholic Missions. At that time, Astica presented and read a paper entitled 'The social subject and the youth. The duty we should assume'. This speaker would reappear later as one of the leaders of the Naval Mutiny of 1931 [see sections 7.1 and 7.3].

Later he would say that during the period 1924 to 1925 he was a Christian socialist, not a communist and this seems to be true due to the subject, audience and place where those presentations were made and the publicity made by the conservative and catholic newspaper *La Union* of Valparaiso. At the same time, another meeting took place in a theatre at Santiago where Luis Emilio Recabarren the founder and leader of the 'Partido Socialista Obrero' later called Communist Party, said:

'The Army committed a seditious act punishable by the laws in order to make a whole reform in the functions of different activities in the country. The workers had the same purposes and if they had been the initiators of this movement, for sure they would not be in good situation now' ...[and he finished saying that]...'he considers highly attractive the program of the new Government¹¹¹'.

¹¹⁰ 'Ayer se Clausuró Solemnemente la Convención de la Juventud Católica de Chile', *La Unión*, 17 November 1924, p.2.

¹¹¹ 'Reunión obrera en el Teatro Novedades', *La Unión*, 21 September 1924, p.5.

General Mariano Navarrete Ciris, returning to Chile from abroad, reported to the Minister of War, Admiral Gómez Carreño, at the middle of October. The Minister told him of his idea of restoring the Armed Forces to a state of discipline. He told him that he wanted the dismissal of the Naval and Military Junta. The Army officer fully agreed. Later, he would have an important role in the political and military events leaving his testimony in a valuable book¹¹².

In those days Gómez-Carreño and the Naval and Military Junta were pressing the Government Junta but for different reasons. The Minister wanted the junior officers ordered to return back to their duties and the Junta they organized objected that the Government was not satisfying their wishes of radical reconstruction.

A rift between both Juntas became evident at a social event of the Cavalry School on 25 October. This establishment was under the command of Ibáñez, the hidden leader of the movement that caused Alessandri's exit from the Government the month before. At the event, Nef and Gómez Carreño were criticized in the presence of naval officers, and some members of the Army proposed that junior members of the Navy be admitted to the Military and Naval Junta. The naval guests showed themselves opposed to this idea. Ibáñez said that it was not in their intention to disturb the Navy. It was agreed that Commander Jouanne would travel to Valparaíso to explain the situation to the officers serving there. Vial-Correa and Donoso cover this event in their books but in our opinion, Sáez¹¹³ is more accurate and he is a valuable witness since he was present.

An Army-Navy Sport Championship, taking place in Santiago, revealed the differences between pro-Alessandri liberals and conservatives supporting the Government Junta. Days before the start of the event, a group of ladies requested permission to celebrate a mass before the event to express thanks for the new Government. Gómez-Carreño accepted. His agreement angered the liberals who considered that the planned Catholic ceremony was a political statement rather than a religious act. They argued also that celebrating mass in an Armed Forces event would be a demonstration of the affinity of the Military Government with the coalition headed by the Catholic Conservative Party. The junior officers of Santiago's garrison preferred to avoid this religious act and finally it was

¹¹² Mariano Navarrete Ciris, *Mis Actuaciones en las Revoluciones de 1924 y 1925*, (Santiago. Ediciones del Bicentenario, 2004), pp.67-75.

¹¹³ Sáez, v.I, p.125.

eliminated from the program¹¹⁴. Although this was a minor disturbance between two different political views, it demonstrated that the junior Army officers were adopting a more liberal stance than the conservative admirals represented by Gómez-Carreño.

We have already mentioned that the cruiser *Blanco Encalada* was making a training cruise along Chile's littoral, ending in Valparaíso in October 1924. Its commanding officer, Captain Andonaegui-Guarda, did not participate in the political events and due to this we have quoted only a couple of his comments. The detachment of this officer regarding those events makes his observations more valuable. Fortunately he left them in an interesting and unpublished narrative. He says that at his arrival at Valparaíso:

'The political events progressed hesitantly....The Government Junta seemed to be obliged to follow the Naval and Military Junta. In this organism there were senior members with good intentions but there were also some excited officers sponsoring resolutions impossible to enact because they were inadmissible. No matter this, the flow of 'Decretos Leyes' [Orders of Council] kept coming, especially those meant to raise salaries and improve the career conditions for junior officers. To obtain their objectives it was essential to create vacant places in the officers' lists to enable the promotions¹¹⁵, ...[and this prompted many retirements].

This rapid promotion of officers would have a consequence later.

At the end of October, retirements and personnel changes took place in the Navy's high command. Vice Admiral Salustio Valdés Cortez became Director General and he would have an important role in the events of the following months. The Naval and Military Junta decided also to solve its internal problems at the end of this month, selecting a committee to interact with the government. Among the members were Lieutenant Colonels Blanche and Ewing, Commanders Jouanne, Barros and Dittborn, Majors Ibáñez and Poblete, Police Chief Dinator and Lieutenants Lazo and Urizar¹¹⁶. This group, which reported to the Government Junta on 4 November, raised the possibility that the conflict would disappear or, at least, it would be diminished. We must recall that the dispute was that the Government Junta and the Cabinet did not recognize the Naval and Military Junta as an organization within the State and this caused tensions and constant threats of resignation of those former high authorities.

¹¹⁴ Bennett, p.139.

¹¹⁵ Andonaegui, p.88.

¹¹⁶ Sáez, v. I, p.126.

An illustrative example of that environment was when General Altamirano scolded Lieutenant Lazo for being disrespectful. The junior officer answered that: ‘Since 5 September nobody can talk about discipline in the Army¹¹⁷’. The Navy Commander Luis Escobar, present in this event, supported the General stating that the notion that the Armed Forces could not raise the issue of discipline was unacceptable. The entire affair was a demonstration of the state of confusion inside the services.

As the menace to the existence of the Government Junta and the Cabinet from the most excited members of the Naval and Military Junta continued, Commander Jouanne specified to them in a meeting that:

‘Now it is my turn to talk representing the Navy. We are empowered to support the Naval and Military Junta as long as there is a Government Junta. If the Admiral and both Generals retire’...[from this Junta] ... ‘a new situation would be created and we would not be able to stay as part of the Naval and Military Junta¹¹⁸’.

The discussions continued until a solution to the clashes between both organizations was found in the form of a public statement worded as follows:

‘The Naval and Military Junta states that it never claimed to act as an official organism of the State, but this does not preclude it from maintaining its collaboration with the Government Junta¹¹⁹’.

The above statement, drafted by the committee, did not please the full membership causing additional difficulties among both Juntas. The conflict arose relative to the projected reforms of the political institutions. The Government wanted to convoke a constituent assembly to approve the changes and the Naval and Military Junta thought that this method could jeopardize the reforms because such assembly would be directed by the same political parties that precipitated the situation the military movement wanted to prevent. General Bennett observed¹²⁰ this crisis from the perspective of being member of the Government Junta and he confirms that Admiral Nef had his resignation ready. When the rebel members of the Naval and Military Junta learned this, they finally ceased demanding changes.

¹¹⁷ Vial-Correa, v. III, 1988, p. 450.

¹¹⁸ Sáez, v.I, p.131.

¹¹⁹ Sáez, v. I, p.132.

¹²⁰ Bennett, p.150.

The clashes between both juntas had not finished as is demonstrated by the following statements. The first was issued by the Minister of the Interior denying that the Government had recognized the Naval and Military Junta, adding:

‘There is no other political organism having part or all the empowerment to direct the State affairs in this transition period leading to the restoration of the democratic regime than the Government Junta¹²¹’.

The Government created a great unrest with the above statement and led to several meetings of the Military and Naval Junta but only one thing became known to the public. It was a statement from Vice Admiral Nef saying: ‘Our gratitude to the Army and Navy officers for their act of pure patriotism on the evening of Thursday¹²², [he means 6 November 1924] implying that their organization was in the process of being dismissed which is not entirely true.

Another event would reveal that the Government had a transient character. The Government Junta called for the direct elections of the President, Senators and Deputies. This was a change because Presidential elections were indirect until then. It was clear that the Government considered that Alessandri’s term in office had expired and that it did not want to subject the country to the same stress as in the indirect elections of 1920. The Government Junta thought as well that Chile should retain, probably with some modifications, those institutions created through the evolution of the 1833 Constitution, probably with some improvements. It was also evident that it disagreed with the radical changes sought by the junior officers, especially those of the Army.

A new protagonist would appear in the political climate of the end of 1924, becoming more important in the following years. The Government discovered that the unions opposed the regime and that there were contacts between leftist elements and Captain Juan Millán-Iriarte a member of the Naval and Military Junta. Millán would contact naval officers later in Talcahuano playing an important role in the turmoil¹²³.

The unrest in the Navy continued. Talcahuano’s engineering officers opposed the nomination by the Bureau of Naval Personnel of Captain Montalva as the delegate to the

¹²¹ ‘Falsos rumores circulados en la tarde de ayer sobre supuesta renuncia de un miembro de la Junta y del Ministerio’, *La Unión*, 7 November 1924, p.8.

¹²² *La Unión*, 7 November 1924, p.8.

¹²³ Navarrete, p.114.

final examinations in the School of Engineers. Captain Huerta, the Base Commander, successfully convinced Vice Admiral Valdés, when he visited the southern station together with Rear Admiral Luis Langlois the Director of the Bureau of Naval Personnel of nominating another officer.

Huerta previously sent to Valparaiso a document drafted by the engineers attacking Captain Montalva for his performance as President of the Officers' Committee. The visiting naval authorities stated that Huerta should have ruled in this case instead of sending the document to Valparaiso but the Base Commander disagreed, quoting the regulations. Finally, the two admirals met with the engineers, supply officers and pilots to explain to them that the Navy's high command was concerned about their problems and that a commission would study the subject and recommend solutions. Among other aspects, it was already decided that the engineering officers would wear a star, the symbol of executive officers, on the cuffs of their uniforms. Huerta writes¹²⁴ that this solution: 'left those officers very satisfied'. That same afternoon, the General Director of the Navy met several executive officers as well. He talked about reconciliation among the officer corps and the privileges intended to be given to the engineers. The executive officers, however, stated their opposition to the intentions of the Navy's high command. Later, Captain Montalva met the two admirals in a hearing and the same subject was discussed thoroughly. Admiral Valdés later met again with the engineers, supply corps and pilots officers to discuss an incident between them and Captain Montalva on board the cruiser *O'Higgins*. He said that he considered that the issue was closed, declaring that Montalva said he had never intended to offend anybody. The engineers attending accepted the Admiral's resolution, but added that the Navy's high command should have declared that Montalva's intervention was inappropriate¹²⁵.

The events in Talcahuano demonstrate the volatile atmosphere within the officer corps and the high level of discord within the Navy. This problem became known by the leaders of the Military and Naval Junta in Santiago. Major Ibáñez would use this lack of unity to achieve his political goals later.

¹²⁴ Huerta, pp. 3-4.

¹²⁵ Huerta, p.4.

Meanwhile, the Proceedings of the Navy Board dated 3 and 22 October, 25 November and 3, 4 and 22 December 1924¹²⁶ show how promotions and destinations were handled by the High Command of the Navy and the decision to reduce the admission of students in the School of Engineers following Rear Admiral Soffia's proposal increased the anger of the engineers.

Regrettably things did not improve: a new source of friction developed between the Minister of War and Navy and Carabineros' officers over a letter seeking to nominate Lieutenant Colonel Alfredo Ewing as a candidate for the presidency. Vice Admiral Nef requested that Ewing be dismissed and Gómez Carreño carried it out immediately. The Government ordered General Navarrete to take the command of the Carabineros while retaining his post as Army's Chief of Staff. The Naval and Military Junta supported Ewing but the naval members did not, claiming that they did not have any instructions from their commanders on how to act¹²⁷.

The visit to Talcahuano of the highest naval authority, already covered, apparently calmed the situation but soon it worsened again because the engineering officers in that base became aware that the concessions made by Admiral Valdés were not approved in Valparaíso. Furthermore, the political situation was daily becoming more uncertain and there were some rumours about a military movement that would overthrow the Government Junta. All this became known because junior officers' commissions travelled around the country visiting the local garrisons, defending their ideas and because engineering, supply corps and pilots officers from Talcahuano visited Santiago to contact members of the Naval and Military Junta. Commander Barros-Merino, one of the delegates to that organization, visited Talcahuano with news that showed that the majority of the Navy in Valparaíso disagreed with the main positions of the Talcahuano's officers. In this base, Captain Huerta says¹²⁸:

‘We were very few wanting the Government Junta to be absolutely independent from the Naval and Military Junta. The majority had the opinion that this last committee could not disappear’.

¹²⁶ Proceedings of the Naval Board, 3 Oct, 22 OCT, 25 NOV, 3 DEC, 4 DEC, 22 DEC 1924. Chilean Naval Archives.

¹²⁷ Navarrete, p. 84-85.

¹²⁸ Huerta, p. 5.

The conflicts and frictions between both Juntas led to a final crisis in December 1924. Lieutenant Colonel Blanche, the Naval and Military Junta's president requested the mediation in this dispute of Ismael Tocornal, a prominent politician, and the Cabinet offered its resignation in the best parliamentary style.

The Navy Board adopted two resolutions on 12 December regarding the conflict between both juntas. In the afternoon of that day it decided to support unconditionally the Government Junta and after listening to Commander Jouanne, a member of the Naval and Military Junta, who travelled especially to Valparaiso, it decided to reaffirm its endorsement. Vice Admiral Valdés, the Director General of the Navy read the following public statement:

'1st. Having the country an organized Government, the Navy does not consider as necessary the existence of a Naval and Military Junta; 2nd. The Navy reiterates its support of the Government Junta; 3rd. For the same reasons, it has decided to cancel the existence of a Naval Information Committee and to call back its representatives in the Naval and Military Junta. This resolution would be communicated to that body as an act of courtesy; 4th. The Navy will deal directly with the Government Junta following the valid laws¹²⁹.

It is clear from the above that the Navy's high command supported the moderate or conservative policies of the Government Junta and had also a favourable opinion from the naval members of the Naval and Military Junta [Jouanne and others] who had less extreme positions than the majority of the Army's membership.

General Bennett writes that when the Government requested the dissolution of the Naval and Military Junta it counted on: 'The Navy's discipline and the unconditional support of its admirals because in this occasion, as in other in the past, they decidedly backed their superiors in the Government¹³⁰'. But this support was not absolute, as we know, due to the rupture between the executive and the engineering officers.

The same day [12 December] the Naval and Military Junta stated it had agreed:

'1st. To request the Cabinet's resignation; 2nd. To leave free Lieutenant Colonel Ewing to pursue his candidacy; 3rd. To request that General Ortiz-Vega becomes Minister of War; 4th. To request Mr. Emilio Bello-Codesido

¹²⁹ Navarrete, pp. 87-88.

¹³⁰ Bennett, p.103.

to organize a new Cabinet: 5th. To dismiss itself if the Government Junta accepts the above¹³¹.

It must be noted that Emilio Bello-Codesido was a liberal politician and that the above statement shows political hostility to Rear Admiral Gómez-Carreño, the Minister of War, from the Naval and Military Junta or at least from its most radical members.

On the next day, 13 December, a great number of Santiago's Military Garrison officers gathered in the Army Club seeking the resignation of the Naval and Military Junta. They were discussing the subject when an officer arrived with the news that this organization had agreed to dissolve. Carlos Sáez gives details of the process leading to this decision. He says that when requested to do so by the president of this board, Lieutenant Colonel Blanche, he drafted a statement adding that he also talked to General Altamirano to make him aware that the moderate officers accepted the dissolution but warning that now the most radical members would be free to overthrow the Government.

The statement mentioned by Sáez said that the Naval and Military Junta did not favour a military candidacy for President and that it decided its self dissolution due to the incidents resulting from Colonel Ewing's candidacy. It expressed also its confidence that the Government Junta would carry to a happy end the movement initiated by the Armed Forces. The tone used shows an important participation of the moderates, Sáez being one of those. As a sample of the way of thinking in that period, it must be added that there was an interchange of telegrams published by *La Unión*¹³². In the first one, a group of Army officers expressed to the Secretary of the Naval Club its joy at the disappearance of the Naval and Military Junta. Valparaiso answered with satisfaction at this message.

Grove and Ibáñez proposed to General Bennett to change the composition of the Government Junta in December 1924 where he was one of members. In return, they would dissolve the Naval and Military Junta. Bennett predicted that this step would lead to a Civil War due to the possible reaction of the Navy. The conspirators answered that by imprisoning Admirals Nef and Gómez-Carreño, the Navy would accomplish nothing because of the differences between the Navy Board and the executive officers, over the issue of the engineering officers. It is true that in that time this service was divided and, moreover, it was riddled with undisciplined officers, something especially notorious in

¹³¹ Navarrete, p. 163.

¹³² 'Entre Militares y Marinos. Cambio de Telegramas', *La Unión*, 14 DIC 1924, p.1.

Talcahuano. In this atmosphere, Ibáñez and Grove started to prepare for a coup that would change the membership of the Government Junta.

The coup started in the morning of 23 January when all the commanding officers of the Regiments in Santiago who were loyal to the Government Junta were imprisoned by the followers of Ibáñez and Grove. In the afternoon, the mutinous units went to La Moneda and captured everyone who was inside, including Admirals Nef and Gómez-Carreño but not Soffia who was able to flee and leave for Valparaiso. General Bennett was that day in another town for unknown reasons and when he came back he requested to suffer the same fate as that of the other members of the Government Junta. When this did not happen, he resigned from the Army.

Those who organized the coup wished the return of Alessandri no matter the mistrust of some military officers. A demonstration of this orientation was the visit that the Military Attaché in Paris, General Luis Cabrera, made to the former president.

The plotters had no hesitation in using all the possible means to achieve their objectives, including those that could jeopardize the internal peace such as the treatment of the Admirals in La Moneda. They were not stopped by the peril of a deep internal conflict among the Armed Forces.

The coup found the Navy extremely divided just as it would be during the 1931 mutiny. By 1925, the Navy consisted of two very different generations of officers: those in the high command, consisting of members tied to the social sector that imposed a pseudo parliamentary regime in 1891, with its virtues and defects. In the other side were the junior officers, who supported the goals arising in the Chilean middle class that came to the government with President Alessandri in 1920, expecting a better future. The clash between the generations in these months of unrest in 1924 and 1925, turned into an open dispute which Ibáñez shrewdly manipulated, shaking this service deeply for a long time.

One of the causes for conflict was that once the imprisonment of the Admirals in Santiago and the overthrow of the Government Junta became known in Valparaiso, a meeting was called for in the Navy's headquarters late on 23 January 1925. The following statement expressing disagreement with the military coup was issued.

'1st. The navy does not accept this procedure, the way it was achieved and the idea that it does not have a political objective; 2nd It has decided to wait until it can listen to its representatives in the Government to adopt a

resolution; 3rd. It states solemnly that it has decided to keep internal order by all means¹³³.

This statement was followed by the imprisonment of the Army officers arriving at Valparaíso to take control of the Police. A Navy Commander was named to assume this task.

The situation became so serious that troop movements from the Army and Navy took place during the whole day. The following morning [24 January 1925], Vice Admiral Salustio Valdés went to Santiago trying to obtain the liberation of the Admirals imprisoned in La Moneda. Nef and Gómez-Carreño claimed that there must be no special consideration for them in seeking a political agreement. They also expressed their willingness to stay out of the new situation. Their attitude enabled Admiral Valdés to negotiate from a better position with the rebel Army officers. The Revolutionary Committee [see Appendix E] refused to accept the liberation of the Admirals before arriving at the organization of a new Government Junta. Admiral Valdés decided to return to his headquarters because he did not believe he was empowered to settle such matters without the agreement of the Navy Board. This episode reflects eloquently one of the problems of this service at that period: the limited power of the Director General of the Navy to solve an urgent issue.

The Navy issued a long manifesto on 25 January 1925¹³⁴ stating its purpose of avoiding the use of force and opposing the recall of Alessandri and this opened the way to a solution of the conflict.

In an effort to reconcile positions, it was decided by the military that no nominations of candidates for presidential elections would be accepted. Then negotiations started with the aim of nominating a new Government Junta with a civilian, a military and a naval member; but the tension between both services did not diminish. Worse, the internal naval difficulties became more acute within the fleet when the destroyer *Williams* was ordered to support the Coraceros Regiment, a military unit in favour of the Navy's positions in the clash with the rebel Army officers of Santiago, and the destroyer's

¹³³ Merino-Saavedra, p.8.
Donoso 1952, p.399.
Monreal, p. 184.

¹³⁴ Monreal, Appendix.

engineering officers refused to carry out their duties¹³⁵. They asked instead to be sent ashore. The situation did not worsen but it demonstrated the extent of the divisions and the poor state of discipline within the naval officer corps.

In the same sense, but even more serious are the events in Talcahuano. As a summary, we may add that the Naval Base and the town became involved in a spiral of political and social agitation culminating in the invasion of the naval base by an unrestrained mob convinced that it could stop the peril of civil war which to its way of thinking was being created by the intransigent attitude of the Navy. This episode has not been covered thoroughly by the historians due to the lack of sources¹³⁶. But in the preparation of this Thesis an extensive narrative by Captain Huerta-Lira, a direct witness of those days, was found. These events are additional evidence that the Navy was a broken service since within the mob or supporting it, there were engineering, supply corps and pilot officers in civilian clothes¹³⁷.

The news about the Santiago coup reached Talcahuano on 23 January and on the following day, the statement in which the Navy reacted rejecting it also reached the southern base. Captain Huerta, the acting Commander in Chief of the Naval District and Base decided to call for a meeting on board the cruiser *O'Higgins* where he read the Navy's statement. From the beginning, the engineering, supply corps and pilot officers expressed their support for the coup adding that they would not participate in a civil war. They had already sent a first telegram supporting the coup¹³⁸. Moreover, when the most senior engineering officer, who was present in Talcahuano because he was performing an inspection, expressed his support to the high command of the Navy, the lower ranking

¹³⁵ Monreal, p.204-205 writes about a similar attitude in the engineering department of *Latorre*. Unfortunately, he does not quote or identify his source except saying that it was an engineer of the battleship who informed him.

¹³⁶ Nevertheless, Monreal, pp. 201-202 contains a narrative of the events in Talcahuano without giving his sources and this makes it less valid, although he inserts some telegrams. He was not present in the events in that port.

¹³⁷ Merino, p.9.

¹³⁸ Monreal, p. 201.

engineers remained silent¹³⁹. The meeting was terminated by Captain Huerta due to the lack of compromise among those attending. Still he decided to send a telegram to the headquarters in Valparaiso saying that: 'Unanimously all the actions taken were approved, that is, to protest for not having informed the Navy of this new revolution.....¹⁴⁰'.

This action initiated a telegraphic war. The engineering, supply corps and pilot officers and even the crews sent wires to General Pedro Pablo Dartnell-Encina, identified as one of the leaders of the coup, undermining the opinion of their Commander in Chief stated in the above telegram. This attitude might be considered a surprise but we also know from Captain Huerta that: 'Many engineers participated in those meetings'...[taking place in Talcahuano] ...'deliberating and keeping the contact between the rest of the officers and the civilian elements¹⁴¹'.

To deepen the breakage of the naval consensus, this situation was not only instigated but also used by Army officers in favour of the coup as follows. Major Carlos Millán-Iriarte who had been denied access to the Naval Base by Huerta, met downtown a gathering of disaffected engineering, supply corps and pilot officers¹⁴² in hopes of convincing them that the Navy wanted to precipitate a civil war and that these officers should not participate in that type of adventure¹⁴³.

On Sunday, 25 January, the Navy issued a new critical manifesto about the coup, accusing the rebel Santiago Army officers of trying to reinstate the same corrupt regime

¹³⁹ An unidentified engineer stated in Monreal , p. 202 that in that meeting they clearly said to Captain Huerta that they had already sent a telegram supporting the coup and that they would not participate in a Civil War.

¹⁴⁰ Huerta, p. 6.

¹⁴¹ Huerta, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴² Monreal, p. 204 writes that the meeting was requested by the officers.

¹⁴³ Another evidence of disagreement within the Navy is the statements made by Commander Agustín Prat to *Revista Sucesos* on 17 February 1927, two years after the events and when he was retired from this service. He says that he was the commanding officer of the reserve cruisers *O'Higgins* and *Esmeralda* moored in Talcahuano. He was the only executive officer supporting openly the coup of the 23 January 1925. He adds that his officers supported him signing the document and due to this, Captain Huerta became more moderate in his actions. Monreal, p. 209-210.

that was deposed in September¹⁴⁴. Captain Huerta gathered the officers again repeating the above statement. The executive officers demonstrated agreement but the engineering, supply corps and pilot officers were not present since they were still in a meeting outside the base with civilians for Alessandri. When that afternoon they learned of what happened, they again showed their disagreement with the rest of the Navy.

After those meetings, the Commander in Chief of the Naval District and Base wanted to test [using his own words] the: ‘crew’s pulse’... [in order]... ‘to report consciously to the headquarters and to let it know the exact situation of Talcahuano’s Base¹⁴⁵’. He ordered a meeting of the lower deck personnel where he read them the statement of the Navy and then he checked their opinions:

‘The answer to this polling was that the personnel almost unanimously said that they supported the new movement, and that they already sent a telegram in this sense to general Dartnell. Only the crews of destroyers *Blanco*, *Uribe* and *Lynch* had the same thoughts as the headquarters in Valparaiso...¹⁴⁶’.

The situation could not be more delicate. Huerta faced the possibility of a civil war. He had to resist the pressure and threats from those who favoured the Santiago coup, managing at the same time a complex internal situation among his officers. Another problem arose: it was difficult to defend the base from a land attack because the guns of its forts were installed to defend it from an attack from the sea and its commander did not have the total support of his men.

Confronted by this critical situation, Huerta chose to react prudently:

‘There was no other choice than conciliation, to try to calm down the moods, destroying the campaign being made by civilians, of speaking to the crews and doing what was possible to avoid an armed conflict that would spark immediately an outburst. Things were in such state that only a mere spark could start a fire¹⁴⁷’.

¹⁴⁴ The statement requests the compliance to the ‘Manifesto of the 11 September 1924’, the abandonment of the idea of the return of Alessandri and of the candidacy of Ladislao Errázuriz for president nominated by Union Nacional. Monreal, pp.198 -200.

¹⁴⁵ Huerta, p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ Huerta, p. 8.

¹⁴⁷ Huerta, pp. 9-10.

On Monday 26 January, amid a sensation of vulnerability and internal rupture, the Navy's high command decided to negotiate and requested the intervention of Agustín Edwards-McClure. Although he was a follower of Alessandri, he enjoyed a great prestige in this service.

Meanwhile, rumours circulated everywhere [either created or not by some interested groups] and caused concern in the population. In Talcahuano they did great damage. The dockyard workers had a meeting the night before in the main square outside the base. The agitators lectured them that the Navy wanted a civil war and that they should not support it. The following day the men seemed restless and not working in order to avoid helping prepare the ships' readiness.

It had been ordered by the Naval Headquarters that the submarines and the surface units of the fleet anchored there should steam to Valparaiso and these preparations were impossible to hide. Observing the dockyard workers' unrest, Huerta¹⁴⁸ ordered the Coastal Gunners [see Glossary] to be placed on the alert. That afternoon, at the end of the working day, the dockyard workers instead of going home, went to the Submarine Base trying to prevent those units from getting underway. The Commander in Chief of the Naval District and Base assisted by some officers, tried to calm an excited mass of about five hundred workers. He authorized the submarines' machinists to go ashore on leave and also he tried to go with the workers to the town. At the same time, Captain Huerta tried to convince the Director General of the Navy to cancel the orders given to the submarines to sail to Valparaiso and also reported that with activists urging the mob against the Navy, there was an atmosphere of unrest inside and outside of his base.

As a result, the headquarters in Valparaiso cancelled the order already given regarding the submarines. This decision had to be made known in and outside the base, but rumours and lack of trust prompted nocturnal meetings, where it was asserted that news of the measures adopted by the high command of the Navy was untrue. At the same time, alarming news about a breakdown in the negotiations had arrived. There were rumours that the Director General of the Navy, the Navy Board and highly ranked officers would go on board, making some remember the events of 1891¹⁴⁹. To check the reality of these reports

¹⁴⁸ Huerta, pp. 8-9.

¹⁴⁹ Monreal, p.210-211 writes that this was the general feeling among the civilians.

there is no other evidence than Captain Huerta's Memoirs where he wrote that some of these rumours became known through intercepting radio communications¹⁵⁰.

The news arriving at midnight of the success in the negotiations conducted by Agustín Edwards in Santiago brought some relief in the strained situation. At noon next day, the boards placed in front the newspapers offices said reports of success were not true yet and that the negotiations had failed due to the Navy's attitude, and once again false information about the submarines sailing off that evening spread. When the workers ended their activity and arrived in town, they learned this news and they gathered immediately in the main square. Captain Huerta, informed of this situation, sent two representatives to categorically deny the rumours. But his attempt to quell the demonstration failed. The mob demanded to enter the base, to ascertain if the warships had not been made ready to sail or had not sailed already. In principle, this action would be accomplished by a commission of workers, but at that moment the demonstrators saw an empty train going back to the base and boarded it. When this shouting crowd got into the base, Captain Huerta confronted it asking what were they trying to achieve. He behaved prudently and by acting in a conciliatory fashion managed to convince them that they were wrongly concerned. After some tense moments¹⁵¹ because: 'Any moment a shot from everywhere could be fired...'¹⁵², the situation was solved when part of the crew of the cruiser *Blanco Encalada* was sent ashore on leave. At this moment, the mob dispersed and went out of the Base requesting the Commander in Chief of the Naval District and Base to stay with them until they reached the base entrance. He agreed and he used the occasion to read them a telegram just arrived reporting that the negotiations were finished and the Navy would participate in a new Government Junta naming Rear Admiral Carlos Ward-Rodríguez for this purpose¹⁵³.

¹⁵⁰ Huerta, p. 10.

¹⁵¹ Accordingly to Monreal, p.204 the only officers staying at Huerta's side all the time in this period were commanders Ubilla [engineer] and Mendoza [supply corps]. No executive officer did the same.

¹⁵² Huerta, p. 14.

¹⁵³ Monreal, p.202-204 describes the situation in Talcahuano slightly differently from Captain Huerta. He was not present and, unfortunately, does not quote his sources.

It is worthwhile to cover two opinions regarding the attitude of the Communist Party in those days because later it will be claimed that one of the origins of the Naval Mutiny of 1931 is the support given to the mutineers by this group.

Ricardo Donoso says that the Executive Committee of this political party accused the Government Junta headed by general Altamirano of supporting the candidacy of Ladislao Errázuriz who, according to them: ‘Symbolizes tyranny, despotism and arrogance¹⁵⁴’. General Navarrete the Army Chief of Staff in those days writes:

‘The officers conspiring against General Altamirano’s government, who were no more that twenty, negotiated and obtained the support of the Communist Party, in exchange for the approval of laws favourable to the proletarians’ interests. To arrive to this result...they used Major Millán, an officer who had gained a considerable influence over the communist associations having being sent to those organizations by the September Revolution...For this reason, the leftist elements had an excuse for approaching the non-commissioned officers and slipping into their ears attractive and easy to attain offers if they organized soviet styled workers and soldiers committees at the first trace of anarchy¹⁵⁵’.

In the research of this Thesis no evidence of such approaches to naval petty officers had been found.

Although there was no blood shed, the Talcahuano events were particularly serious because a naval base was invaded by a mob and the use of force against it could have produced a tragedy. This did not happen due to Captain Huerta’s and the rest of the officers’ good judgment. Nevertheless, the unauthorized invasion of civilians and the wrong conduct of some officers and men created a bad precedent.

Six years later, in the 1931 Naval Mutiny, these same attitudes would be repeated and the bad example of the 1925 events was quoted as an excuse for the offences or crimes committed.

This section was devoted to a period when a real danger of civil war started due to diverging visions between the Navy senior officers and the Army younger officers led by Lieutenant Colonel Ibáñez who was supported by naval engineers. In addition, the weak support of the ChCP to this latter group of Army officers was evident. The outcome of this period period of political instability is covered in next section.

¹⁵⁴ Donoso, p. 399.

¹⁵⁵ Navarrete, p.150.

4. THE FINAL SETTLEMENT OF THE 1925 CRISIS AND ITS FAILURE TO LAST.

4.1 The meddling of Ibáñez in the Navy.

It is necessary to go back to Santiago and Valparaiso on the 26 and 27 January 1925 to explain the end of the period when the differences between the services was more evident¹⁵⁶. In these two days Agustín Edwards' mediation took place. It was unsuccessful initially because the Navy insisted that it opposed the return of Alessandri. Finally, a telephone conversation between Edwards and General Dartnell with Vice Admiral Valdés and a survey of the opinion of the naval officers by the latter made possible the acceptance of the President's return.

Meanwhile, Arturo Alessandri was in Italy at this time. On 23 January he was in Venice and he became aware of the events taking place in Santiago next day through a telephone call from the Chilean ambassador in Rome. On 26 January, Alessandri arrived at the Italian capital, where he met the Chilean diplomatic representatives in Italy and Germany and two other of his supporters. He analyzed the situation with them as well as the telegrams sent by Generals Ortiz-Vega and Dartnell plus several political organizations requesting his return to Chile to assume again the Presidency. As the astute politician he was, he answered to the two Generals holding the power at that time with a communication that would be known as the 'Telegrama de Roma' [the Rome Telegram¹⁵⁷].

¹⁵⁶ The evidence of the differences among the high ranked officers of both services is in the telegrams issued by General Dartnell and Admiral Valdés on 26 January 1925. It is in Monreal, p. 218-219. Meanwhile, the lower deck personnel from Talcahuano expressed its support to the new 'Junta de Gobierno' in a telegram sent to General Dartnell dated 27 January while *La Unión* wrote the same day that the military garrisons in northern Chile supported the high command of the Navy. Monreal, p. 222.

¹⁵⁷ Arturo Alessandri-Palma, *Recuerdos de Gobierno* (Santiago. Editorial Nascimento, 1967), v.2 p.41.

This long document was full of adjectives and expressions trying to explain the events and the author's motivations, as well as his wishes and aspirations. It can be summarized as follows, trying to stress those aspects implying a political agenda to be complied with by those inviting him to return to power:

1. He explains the reasons for leaving the presidency in September 1924 [avoid riots and enable political reforms].
2. He says that he appreciates the attitude of those high ranked officers recognizing him as President in their communications.
3. He hopes that the movement of 23 January would comply with the purposes of the September movement which were forgotten by the previous Junta.
4. He congratulates those who wrote him for their attitude of reinstating the Constitution and Law.
5. Regarding his return to office, he sets the following conditions:
 - a. The immediate organization of a civilian Government.
 - b. A constitutional reform made by means of a Constituent Assembly, empowered also to set the rules for electing a new President and Congress. He will hand over the presidency at the end of his constitutional period [23 December 1925] without accepting any extension of it.
 - d. The Armed Forces shall go back to their own duties.
6. Finally he says that he will return to office only if all the above conditions are accepted.

At the end of Edwards' mediation, the Navy named Rear Admiral Carlos Ward-Rodríguez to become a member of the Government Junta, whose president would be Emilio Bello-Codesido. The third member would be General Pedro Pablo Dartnell-Encina. When this Junta took office, Ibáñez asked Admiral Ward to solve the engineers' problems and the answer was that he must not meddle in naval internal affairs¹⁵⁸. The final arrangement between both services was recorded in a document quoted by General Navarrete. The Navy explained its acceptance in the following statement:

'After considering the serious present danger for the country and as suggested by the mediator Agustín Edwards, the arrangement proposal is

¹⁵⁸

Vial-Correa, v.III, 1988, p.507 and pp. 508-509.

accepted for the sole purpose of avoiding a civil war, as it has been always the objective of our service¹⁵⁹.

In the same context, Agustín Edwards sent a telegram to Alessandri stating that:

‘After great difficulties, an arrangement between the Navy and the Army has been reached avoiding a civil war. With the acceptance of this arrangement the honorific role assigned to me by the Navy and Army has ended. I return to my retirement... trusting that the patriotism of those who have the country’s destiny will lead to a policy of appeasement and concord¹⁶⁰.

It must be recalled that Edwards, the author of this document was strongly in favour of the absent President, and this explains why he wanted to report his role to him.

On the same day, 27 January, Admirals Nef and Gómez-Carreño were liberated from La Moneda and both went to their homes ending for ever their role in naval and political life. The new Junta took office the following day, being installed by the Revolutionary Committee that had overthrown the previous Government four days before. The new Government named its first Cabinet. Lieutenant Colonel Carlos Ibáñez del Campo became the Minister of War. There is no debate that he was the author of the sudden political change taking place in those days and that his ever rising political career had started. Rear Admiral Braulio Bahamondez-Montaña became Minister of the Navy.

No matter what already quoted telegrams stated, the lack of confidence between the different groups and political actors was evident. Indeed, the enmity between civilian elements and the Armed Forces continued influencing the following months and even up to the 1931 Naval Mutiny.

Arturo Alessandri wrote in a telegram sent to Agustín Edwards in those days that a Constituent Assembly was mandatory and that: ‘It was very dangerous that the national interests were being taken care of by arrangements between the Armed Forces without considering the popular sovereignty whose will cannot be disregarded¹⁶¹’. He insisted that he had already mentioned this in his ‘Telegrama de Roma’.

¹⁵⁹ Navarrete, p.181.

¹⁶⁰ Navarrete, p.63.

¹⁶¹ Navarrete, p. 188.

What was really the President's message from Europe? What did he fear? No doubt he was afraid of a new Naval and Military Junta, such as the one acting very notoriously between September and December 1924, or any other form of 'de facto' organization. Marmaduke Grove rushed to say in a letter published by *El Mercurio* that: 'It is not true that the Revolutionary Committee would keep acting until the arrival of President Alessandri nor that its members were those named by *Los Tiempos*¹⁶²'. This last newspaper belonged to the same owner as *La Nación* a strong partisan of Alessandri and a foe of the military's participation in politics. General Navarrete, a valuable witness because of his high position in the Army, writes that the lack of military intervention was not true and that there was an exclusive group of Army officers permanently in session in an office close to Ibanez's, acting as an illegal advisory organization. The General says that he mentioned this problem to the Minister of War and he responded that he could not abandon those who: 'Backed him risking their lives and tranquillity for the country'¹⁶³.

Immediately after the new Government Junta took office, the political coalition headed by the Conservative Party and its press, *El Diario Ilustrado* of Santiago and *La Unión* of Valparaíso, adopted a bellicose attitude towards the government and the Navy. There was an attempt to censor that newspaper published in Valparaíso by Colonel Enrique Bravo-Ortiz, a strong supporter of Alessandri but this matter was solved by the direct intervention of Vice Admiral Valdés who was the Governor. There were also rumours that the coalition Union Nacional [see Glossary] was conspiring and this was the cause of the imprisonment of several of its members who were deported later.

Within the military, there were still some tremors resulting from the big earthquake represented by the movement of the 23 January [if it is acceptable to make an analogy between politics and seismology]. Ibañez ordered Colonel Arturo Ahumada, a former member of the Naval and Military Junta, to be retired for issuing a statement that the Navy had been insincere in its approach to the Army in the days after 23 January. The naval officers said that the reality was that Ahumada had been on board the battleship *Latorre* to seek cooperation to reorganize the Army and to change Ibañez for a general. To solve this matter, a report from Captain Merino, the commanding officer of the battleship was requested and he delivered it to the Navy Board on 10 February. After that, Vice Admiral

¹⁶² Navarrete, p.203.

¹⁶³ Navarrete, p. 204.

Valdés, as well as Merino, went to Santiago to report the whole affair to the Cabinet and the Government Junta. As a summary, Merino¹⁶⁴ reported that the actions of Colonel Ahumada: ‘Had no links within the Navy and this service had no interest in a problem of purely military nature as was the stability of the Minister of War’. This is more evidence of the problems between the Armed Forces in that period.

One of them is given by General Navarrete. He concludes that no matter Agustín Edwards’ mediation:

‘There was an unpleasant feeling in the Navy regarding the coup on 23 January and this did not change with the arrangements on 27 January. This service signed the agreement only to avoid the shock of a civil war as it stated publicly. The Navy accepted the arrangement without being convinced that the coup of January 1925 was necessary. It left inside both services the germ of a deep revolt due to the attitude of the Coraceros Regiment of being closer to the Navy and that of the naval engineers attaching themselves to the junior military officers¹⁶⁵.

Navarrete also covers the influence that different groups had started upon the non-commissioned officers. He writes:

‘This undercover effort, also intended by the communists, was a cause of deep concern for the Government and the military. This originated several rumours, credible in some cases but false in other. According to these, the troops of certain units were contaminated by the subversive propaganda making possible the creation of committees of soldiers and workers¹⁶⁶.

Just such an incident occurred when the Valdivia Regiment rebelled on 28 February in Santiago¹⁶⁷. Meanwhile in Talcahuano, the engineers, supply and pilots presented a

¹⁶⁴ Merino-Saavedra, p.11.

¹⁶⁵ Navarrete, p.186. General Navarrete visited Valparaiso where he met senior and junior naval officers, reporting later his conclusions to the cabinet. The Navy issued a statement explaining the reasons for the agreement with the Army [Monreal 1929, p.262-263].

¹⁶⁶ Navarrete, pp. 186 & 289.

¹⁶⁷ This mutiny took place when a conservative group incited non commissioned officers of this unit to commit an offence severely punished by law. The bad example set by the officers was another ingredient of the men disobeying orders. While the above events were taking place, an officer shot a soldier thereby precipitating the mutiny. The troop gained access to the weapons, some even leaving the barracks. The commander and the rest of the officers, seeing that the situation was out of control, left the premises. The turmoil ended when Lieutenant

document to the new 'Junta de Gobierno' complaining about their situation and offering support to the new government¹⁶⁸.

These events moved the Government to declare the country under State of Siege, a condition where some constitutional rights were restrained. Also, the Valdivia Regiment was dissolved. The imprisonment of members or adherents of the Unión Nacional also took place in the following days.

As the crisis faded, a change took place in the Navy's leadership due to the new laws setting a limit for staying on active duty. Vice Admiral Valdés delivered his position as Director General to Rear Admiral Luis Langlois-Vidal on 2 March 1925 and as a retired officer, stayed as Governor of Valparaíso. The new director took office only as a substitute until the arrival of Vice Admiral Juan Schroeder-Peña from London where he was serving as head of the Chilean Naval Mission.

Vice Admiral Valdés told the last session of the Navy Board that he chaired how, under the political situation of his time, he was invited to overthrow the Government in 1919 by retired Rear Admiral Arturo Cuevas-Briones while he was the Commander in Chief of the Fleet. Valdés' statement disclosed the only episode between 1891 and 1924 of such type of unprofessional activity.

The change in command of the Fleet took place on 6 March. Rear Admiral Arturo Swett-Otaegui took this position while Rear Admiral Soffia retired, being clear by then that his foe, Arturo Alessandri, would be back to the Presidency.

General Navarrete¹⁶⁹ says that even in mid March the Revolutionary Committee was still active and as a proof, he publish in his book a statement that was printed by the newspapers. It was signed by Lieutenant Colonel Marmaduke Grove, Captains Amaro Pérez and Alejandro Lazo and Lieutenant Luis Alarcón setting the conditions under which Arturo Alessandri must perform his Government duties.

As a conclusion for this brief but turbulent period, it can be said that there was a rising group in Chilean politics whose role was becoming significant and the followers of Ibañez's leadership were members of it. This was the middle class seeking better political

Colonel Blanche, then Under Secretary of War, arrived at the barracks with two aides and convinced the seditious personnel to surrender.

¹⁶⁸ Monreal, p.206-209.

¹⁶⁹ Navarrete, p. 206.

and social conditions for itself. The Navy was clearly losing political prominence enjoyed since Admiral Montt's days [see section 2.2]. It had to accept the return of Arturo Alessandri urged by the forementioned group of Army officers, while the issue of the internal disagreements; due mainly to the engineers' problems was only delayed by the arrangement leading to the new Government Junta Bello-Ward-Dartnell.

As has been already discussed, Alessandri set conditions for his return to Chile in the 'Telegrama de Roma'. The Navy accepted his stipulations only to 'avoid a civil war' as it was stated in several documents already quoted. Rather than being a step widely accepted, it was something done to avoid a bigger harm.

Alessandri returned by ship and while he stopped in Rio de Janeiro he received the visit of one of his followers belonging to the 'execrable camarilla', the abominable clique as it was called by the military [see Glossary]. This was a group that the officers wanted to keep far from the President as he regained his political power. In the next port of call, Montevideo, he was welcomed by an official committee consisting of Rear Admiral Langlois, the acting Director General and General Navarrete now the Inspector General of the Army¹⁷⁰. After protocol events, there was a meeting in the hotel where Alessandri was staying. The two Armed Forces representatives already mentioned, a couple of ministers and two sons of the president attended. Unfortunately, there are only two versions of this meeting, Alessandri's¹⁷¹ written a long time after the events and General Navarrete's which will be analyzed later.

The President recorded that he received two letters in Montevideo. The first one was from Ibáñez which was written: 'in the right tone, respectful and without asking anything or making specific proposals'. On the other hand, the one sent by the Navy had¹⁷² had clear conditions about the orientation the President would need to follow and about the membership of a new Cabinet. Alessandri writes:

¹⁷⁰ The highest position in the Army was the Inspector General but it lacked the wider power of the Director General of the Navy

¹⁷¹ Alessandri, v.2 pp.122-124.

¹⁷² The letter has not been found. *La Nación* on 11 March 1925 publishes a naval statement dated on 7 March setting the aspirations of this service in the political phase to be initiated at the arrival of Alessandri to Chile. The newspaper adds that Admiral Langlois '...will report and deliver this statement...' to the President.

‘Reading such strange document really upset me. I threw it away in anger and energetically I told the Admiral that ...I rejected the Navy’s demands ...and would not even consider them. They were against the explicit ‘Telegrama de Roma’...I added that if the Navy did not withdraw its absurd suggestions, I would board the same ship and return back to Europe¹⁷³’.

Unfortunately he does not include in his book the Navy’s original document and we do not know the reason for this omission but we may suppose that, as a memoir writer, he is more interested in emphasizing his performance than setting the record straight.

Alessandri continues that he pressed general Navarrete to decide whom he would support. And the answer was that the Army had determined to follow the orders of the President. The Admiral said in this moment that he was only bringing a draft and that he had no doubts that his service would support the presidential decisions.

The Navy Board is the organization where this subject should have been discussed and it did hold sessions in February and also on 2 and 9 March. Although several contingent subjects were discussed, this one was not covered and if it was, there is no evidence in the minutes of the meetings.

Navarrete’s version¹⁷⁴ says that after he delivered Ibanez’s letter he did not receive any hint about the President’s reaction and he had no opportunity to ask. Moreover, he suspected that the Army’s letter did not please him due to his character and feelings. The General also assured Alessandri that his service respected him and that he could resume his duties confidently sticking to the ‘Telegrama de Roma’. At this moment, a minister with Admiral Langlois entered the room and the naval officer asked him if he had already read the letter from his service. Navarrete says that President’s mood changed violently saying:

‘I do not accept that the Navy meddles in Government matters that I should decide by myself. This is against what I said in the ‘Telegrama de Roma’. If the Navy insists, I have no other choice than returning to Europe, sending my resignation to Chile and then, it would have to assume the responsibility of this event¹⁷⁵’.

The Admiral tried to explain himself but the President gave him no opportunity and kept issuing severe comments about a letter which Navarrete had no knowledge of, even

¹⁷³ Alessandri, v.2 pp.134-135.

¹⁷⁴ Navarrete, pp. 224-227.

¹⁷⁵ Navarrete, p. 226.

though Santiago's newspapers had reported that this document would be sent through Langlois. The General used the opportunity to say that it was surely not the Navy's intention to meddle and probably the whole misunderstanding was due to the way the document had been drafted, as that service had publicly expressed its wish to avoid interfering in Government's matters. He added that it would be a good idea to listen to Admiral Langlois, but the acting Director General of the Navy limited himself to saying that his service wished to support the Government's actions and to stay out of politics, as it has always done.

It is very likely that this was the Navy's real position, since *La Unión* reported on 7 March, that is eight days before the meeting, that:

'The Navy would tell the President that it will retire from all governmental duties, once he is in charge of the nation again. This will be Admiral's Langlois mission in Montevideo¹⁷⁶.

To sustain this statement Valparaiso's conservative newspaper quoted Admiral Ward who said:

'Not being a classified mission'... [that of the acting Director General]. 'I can tell you he has no other mission than to tell ...[to Alessandri]... 'that the Navy's sole aspiration is that the country soon gets back to its constitutional life and the civilians will take care of ruling. Also, according to the supreme aspiration of all its senior and junior officers plus its crews, once the President assume the supreme command of the nation, the service will concentrate only in performing its routine professional duties¹⁷⁷.

Finally, the writer and attorney, Carlos Vicuña Fuentes gives a third version although he did not attend the Montevideo meetings. He writes that the very same day that Alessandri arrived at the Uruguayan capital the Army and Navy officers present told him that:

'The President was only called back to finish the revolutionary program and only by a special consideration of the legitimate authorities and to avoid a return to 'the old politicking'. If the President did not accept this program, he could not return to Chile¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷⁶ 'La Armada manifestará al Presidente de la República que se retirará de toda labor gubernativa', *La Unión*, 7 March 1925.

¹⁷⁷ 'La Armada manifestará al Presidente de la República que se retirará de toda labor gubernativa', *La Unión*, 7 March 1925.

¹⁷⁸ Carlos Vicuña-Fuentes, *La Tiranía en Chile*, (Santiago: LOM Editores. 2nd. Edition, 2002) pp. 302-303.

This author is not credible enough, as he wrote long after the events and he was not present in Montevideo. Furthermore, he does not give any sources and he is not very objective in his conclusions. The only merit of his work is that he knew personally many protagonists of that period and this enables him to provide a good description of those times and characters. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that he has an ideological bias and he is clearly against the Armed Forces of his generation.

It must be stressed again, that in this investigation no other evidence on this subject has been found, except for what is summarized above, and that the only witnesses were General Navarrete and Arturo Alessandri and both wrote years after the event. In spite of this, it can be said that it is very likely that even in March 1925 the Navy was still reluctant for Alessandri to return to the presidency and to his old political style. It is also possible that the President was also trying to divide the Armed Forces before taking back his post and that he did not trust the Navy due to this service opposition to his return.

Finally, Alessandri was back in office on 20 March 1925. Santiago gave him an unforgettable massive popular reception. He retained Ibáñez as Minister of War and Admiral Bahamondez as Minister of the Navy.

The Navy decided to pay tribute to him perhaps because of the events in Montevideo, and organized a Naval Review. This type of formal act is reserved for important occasions and in this case, it took place on 8 April. That day Alessandri and part of his Cabinet reviewed the fleet anchored in Valparaiso. Ibáñez stayed in Santiago and the rest of the Army officers were stationed on an auxiliary vessel without being invited to the flagship due to the events on 23 January. Captain Merino assisted by some officers made a presentation to the President reporting the Navy's participation in the events since September 1924¹⁷⁹.

The Navy also decided to host two additional social events, both at the Navy Club at Valparaiso. The first one, which occurred on 11 March, was in honour of President Alessandri. General Navarrete was one of those who attended and he stated that the intention was that 'The revolutionaries became convinced that Alessandri was not a

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Merino-Saavedra, p. 11, Navarrete, p.266 and Von Schroeders, p. 111.

'persona non-grata' to the Navy¹⁸⁰, a somewhat strange opinion since this act was celebrating his return to the Presidency after the Naval Review made for the same purpose. The second event, which occurred the following day, was in honour of the officers of the Coraceros Regiment, a unit that was in favour of the Navy during the coup of 23 January. They were in the process of being punished for their attitude by the Minister of War Ibáñez in spite of what had been agreed upon in the document signed at end the period of confrontation between both services.

In May, Vice Admiral Juan Schroeder-Peña, who was the senior member on the officers' roster, arrived in Chile from Europe, after a slow and long trip, to replace the acting Director General Rear Admiral Langlois. He enjoyed a high prestige and his first act in office, was to give the Navy Board a more active role in solving certain matters since from Admiral Montt's times it was only a consulting body, although it had a good deal of influence.

One of the most remarkable political actions during Alessandri's renewed first term in office was the approval of a new Constitution replacing that of 1833 which had been partially modified several times in order to give a quasi parliamentary characteristic to the political system. There are opinions that the old constitution was one of causes of the 1920s crisis. The President and his followers, including some Army officers, thought that the fundamental law must be replaced by a text drafted and approved by a Constituent Assembly, but the turn of events starting on 23 January, was the cause of Alessandri's choice of a broad commission to write a new constitution. Finally, the actual work was done by a smaller group with a strong personal participation of Alessandri. The President's decisions were influenced by the fact that the Congress was inactive since September 1924. Since the political parties were not enthusiastic about this reform, the President realized that if he did not intervene, the new Constitution would not be approved within his Presidential term.

The constitutional commission was nominated on 7 April 1925 and new members were added in three stages, arriving at a total of one hundred twenty two. Initially, two Army officers [General Navarrete and Major Fenner] were members. The vicissitudes of the process of drawing up the new law will not be covered in this thesis because it is out of its scope, but it is necessary to mention that during this process some political

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Navarrete, p. 266.

representatives abandoned the task while the discussions became stormy. This led the President to nominate other people to become part of the Commission. One of them was Vice Admiral Schroeder, a firm supporter of Alessandri's initiatives in this matter, as was General Navarrete¹⁸¹. The discussions came to a dead end in the session on 23 July 1925. The standstill was broken by the active participation of General Navarrete who pressed for a solution in a strong speech and this enabled Alessandri's constitutional ideas to prevail.

The new Constitution was approved in a plebiscite on 30 August 1925. Only half of the 302,304 registered electors actually voted. 123,382 votes¹⁸² were in favour of approval and the new fundamental law became effective on 30 September. As the political meddling of the Armed Forces had been criticized in this thesis, the constitutional reform supported by the services may be considered a positive action in the direction of the acceptance of the middle class aspirations which, until then, the oligarchy had stymied.

In the previous months, Major Carlos Millán-Iriarte continued making speeches to communist unions and writing articles on newspapers about social issues. When he was reprimanded by the Inspector General of the Army because he violated the order to avoid the publication of non-professional subjects, he answered that he had the Government's support adding that his activity was well known by the President and the Minister of the Interior. The General threatened to resign if Major Millán was not transferred to another garrison where he could not dedicate himself to those activities¹⁸³. In the end, he was sent to Europe but he would be back acting in matters related to the Navy and in a very decisive fashion, as it will be seen later.

While the important constitutional debate was taking place, another period of labour unrest occurred in the northern mines, particularly in the nitrate fields. The Navy was ordered to send warships to different ports to support the land forces in preventing possible riots. One of these was the destroyer *Williams*, sailing to Tocopilla under the command of captain Andonaegui who reported that:

‘In this northern port ‘Despertar’ a communist newspaper was edited. Its articles were very subversive keeping the workers very excited. For this reason, its closure and the imprisonment of the leaders were ordered. They

¹⁸¹ Donoso, p. 426.

¹⁸² Vial-Correa, v. III, 1988, p.848 and Donoso, p. 423.

¹⁸³ Navarrete, p.284.

were brought to my ship remaining on board several days under strict surveillance¹⁸⁴.

At the same time, Police and Army forces had a serious confrontation with the miners in Iquique's hinterland at La Coruña and Pontevedra nitrate fields. Several workers died on 4 July 1925 and the detainees were taken to the cruiser *Zenteno* anchored at Iquique, where they were charged in Court Martial, as the country was in State of Siege at the time. They were sentenced to be exiled to the southernmost part of the country, but later these punishments were commuted to other less rigorous terms by the Cabinet. While discussing this subject, there was a verbal incident between Alessandri and Ibáñez because this minister opposed this last decision.

What influence could these contacts between the lower deck personnel and the labour leaders imprisoned on board naval units have had in the Naval Mutiny of 1931? There is no strong evidence about this subject, but it can at least be stated that using Navy ships as detention sites for civilians was an anomalous situation.

At the end of August, an event demonstrates the influence that Ibáñez was having in naval matters and that the disciplinary problems were still present, in spite of the efforts of the Navy's high command to the contrary. Commander Julio Allard-Pinto, a witness of that period, gives the following description:

'Naming officers for important positions of high responsibility was something that the new Director General did employing exclusively members of his immediate personal circle. Such was the case of the Captain nominated to become Commander in Chief of the Naval District at Talcahuano...and this originated in that base a very active campaign to reorganize the Navy, following the wishes of the military. This is the birth of the so often called 'Luises'Affair' because it was coincident with the names of the four officers usually mentioned as being the ringleaders of the idea of removing from their positions Rear Admiral Bahamonde, the Minister of Navy, the Director General, Vice Admiral Schroeder, the Commander in Chief of the Naval District and Base, Captain Luis Díaz-Palacios and others who, according to their criteria, were not fit to remain in service. These four officers were commander Luis Escobar, the commanding officer of the reserve cruiser *Esmeralda*, Luis Caballero-Canobbio, the commander officer of the transport ship *Angamos*, Luis A. Concha, the director of the Torpedo and Mine School and Luis Lavín, the commander of the Coastal Artillery in that port¹⁸⁵.

¹⁸⁴ Andonaegui, p. 92.

¹⁸⁵ Julio Allard-Pinto, *Memorias* (Typewritten mss in possession of Captain Carlos Martin Fritz), n.d. p.20.

The same source reports that the objectives of the conspirators were to have a Navy Captain as Minister, to make Rear Admiral Arturo Swett-Otaegui the new Director General, and to have Captain Merino-Saavedra as Commander in Chief of the Fleet. This last officer writes in his book that another objective was to remove Captain Olegario Reyes del Río whom they considered: ‘Had become the owner of the Navy, developing a personal activity of gossiping and intrigues with the goal of giving good positions to personal friends and informers’¹⁸⁶. This last quotation is a demonstration of an unusual language, an excessive passion and a deep breach in of discipline.

The naval high command became aware of this movement on the arrival of the cruiser *Blanco Encalada* and the submarine flotilla from Talcahuano, as its officers commenting on what they had heard in the southern base. The news about the ‘Luises Affair’ also became public in September when the Government became involved and the newspaper front pages reported new evidence of naval indiscipline, such as the statement supporting the ‘Luises’, signed by a group of Talcahuano’s officers, refuted by those of the Naval Academy, who opposed that movement. Commander Luis Concha, one of the ‘Luises’, sent an open letter to the Director of the Naval Academy through a newspaper making different comments. Other ‘Luises’ supported this letter¹⁸⁷. These events are a demonstration that the lack of discipline among the officers was much extended.

The Navy high command reacted, naming Captain Merino-Saavedra as special prosecutor to investigate. He went to Talcahuano, launched an inquiry and then, in accordance with his criteria, recommended punishments to the Naval Board and later to the President.

The four officers who were the main protagonists were forced into retirement. Other participants received lesser punishments and some would become the commanding officers of naval units in the Naval Mutiny of 1931. One of the ‘Luises’, commander Luis Escobar would be recalled to service when Ibáñez completely dominated the political scene, and he reached the rank of Rear Admiral. The rest of the ‘Luises’ returned to the Navy as well, except commander Concha who died in 1926. This action of punishing and then undoing,

¹⁸⁶ Merino-Saavedra, p.13.

¹⁸⁷ ‘El mal ejemplo viene desde tiempo atrás y desde muy arriba’, *La Unión*, 7 September 1925.

accordingly to the vagaries of politics, is very typical of that period. Captain Merino adds another comment to his performance as prosecutor writing:

‘It was later demonstrated that this movement was directed by the Minister of War Colonel Ibáñez and Colonel Marmaduke Grove, who were slowly undermining the Navy’s discipline with their ambitions of seizing the Government of the Republic¹⁸⁸’.

He writes later that when Ibáñez became President in 1927 and named Commander Carlos Frödden-Lorenzen as Minister of the Navy, this last official considered:

‘These subversive actions ...’[the ‘Luises Affair] ...‘as acts of political character and he ordered all the participant officers to be recalled to active duty, giving them all kind of promotions, good positions and rewards. Some of them were commanding officers of destroyers when the 1931 mutiny of lower deck personnel took place. Then they demonstrated being better fitted as conspirators than men of action¹⁸⁹’.

These were very harsh words written by prosecutor Merino-Saavedra. They explain what happened later to the participants in ‘Luises Affair’, confirming Ibañez’s influence in naval matters and the consequences of the period 1924-1925 in the 1931 Naval Mutiny which is the main subject of this thesis.

At the beginning of spring in the southern hemisphere, the issue of the presidential succession agitated the political atmosphere, particularly because Alessandri’s term would finish in December 1925 and he had stated that he would not accept any extension of it. Then, a group of civilian raised Ibañez’s candidacy. In this context, a meeting of the Navy Board took place. Admiral Swett presided since the Director General Admiral Schroeder was that day in Santiago. Ibáñez suggested that, in order to avoid an intense political struggle he would accept this post only if he would be the sole candidate. He also informed the Navy of this fact too. At the Navy Board meeting there were opinions in favour of a unanimous civilian candidacy but finally that of Ibanez’s prevailed. ‘The Navy Board agreed to state that in accordance to the Navy’s general way of thinking, Colonel Ibanez’s candidacy had its support’¹⁹⁰.

¹⁸⁸ Merino-Saavedra, p.14.

¹⁸⁹ Merino-Saavedra, p.14.

¹⁹⁰ Navarrete, p. 388.

In this same month, the Prince of Wales visited Chile and he was honoured by Alessandri who was still angry at the naval service and who received a suggestion from the military to ask the Prince for a British Naval Mission to supervise the Chilean Navy. In the end, a mission with only an advisory role arrived. Captain Merino had a poor opinion of this mission but Commander von Schroeders saw it from a favourable perspective, showing the navy's diverging way of thinking.

Eight British naval officers with the rank of Commanders or Lieutenant Commanders performed their duties in Chile between 1926 and 1928. They gained importance as Ibáñez progressed politically because he thought that this mission would reform the conservative Navy as he wished. These advisors were replaced by another group of the same origin, a subject to be treated in a later chapter, due to its importance in the analysis of the 1931 Naval Mutiny¹⁹¹. The subject of Ibáñez's candidacy created a great political nuisance and it has been already covered that the way the Navy took part in this subject was clearly beyond its professional duties. The Cabinet, pressed by the President, stated that no minister could stay in office while being a candidate at the same time. Ibáñez himself had stated the same some time previously, when a civilian minister tried to campaign for the Presidency. Then, the whole Cabinet resigned expecting that the Minister of War would follow suit but this did not happen. Finally, Ibáñez wrote a letter to Alessandri, stating that he would not resign from the Cabinet to become a candidate since this was not a legal or a constitutional requirement. He added that he did not accept being morally disqualified as a member the Cabinet from being a candidate. He wrote as well that, as the head of the revolution, the position of Minister of War was assigned to him so he would not jeopardize the Army's discipline by resigning. He added a comment saying that since he was the only active minister, each presidential document should bear his signature as well as that of the President or otherwise it would have no value. Confronted with this situation, Alessandri named Luis Barros-Borgoño as vice president and left the presidency definitively on 1 October 1925.

When Alessandri left his post, there were several points of the 'Telegrama de Roma' left unfulfilled. He did not change the Constitution and the political institutionalism

¹⁹¹ 'A British Officer's view of the Chilean Navy. Interview with Commander W.L. Jackson, RN', *Chilean Review*, N° 26. London (1928).

by means of a Constituent Assembly¹⁹², as it was his explicit wish, but nevertheless, he achieved the goal of imposing a new constitutional text by other means. He didn't implement a civilian rule either due to Ibanez's and his military group's high influence nor did he finish his presidential period. Worse, he did not bring the Armed Forces back to their own duties.

Admiral Schroeder went to Santiago to meet General Navarrete on the day after Alessandri left the Presidency. He told the General that the Navy did not accept Armed Forces officers becoming candidates because this violated the 'Manifesto of 11 September'. It must be stressed that the Director General's position was different to that which was approved by the Navy Board under the presidency of Admiral Arturo Swett already mentioned, and this is a demonstration of the degree of confusion in the services at that period.

Schroeder said that the Navy did not only disapprove Ibañez's candidacy but also considered that the frequent mood changes of the Colonel were caused by the clique surrounding him. General Navarrete had the same opinion, as he had stated to *El Mercurio* on 29 September that the candidate should be a civilian. He gave this same opinion to the Minister of War before the announcement of his candidacy. Furthermore, he gave the newspaper article to Ibañez before its publication and the Minister agreed. After the above dialogue, the General proposed a visit to Ibañez to tell him the way of thinking of both services. Schroeder asked to wait until he could invite also the Minister of the Navy.

The meeting took place in Ibañez's office and it was attended by General Navarrete, Admirals Schroeder and Bahamondez, Major Fenner and others. The Director General of the Navy told the Minister of War that the candidate needed to be a civilian because of the promises made by the Armed Forces to the country. He said that ignoring this provision would discredit the Minister. He also charged him with being under the influence of a large and irresponsible clique. Ibañez requested the opinion of Navarrete as Inspector General of the Army and he answered that he already knew it and stressed that he was for a civilian

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The three Chilean Constitutions that lasted long periods were designed and approved by means of methods different from the Constituent Assembly. There are political groups keen for a Constituent Assembly but they did not succeed in Chile and this country had been ruled only under the 1833, 1925 and 1980 Constitutions with higher degree of political stability than other countries in Latin America.

candidate. Following this, an incident between Ibáñez and Navarrete took place. Both quoted their positions to each other and at the end, Ibáñez told Schroeder:

‘You may tell the Navy...that I have no interest in being a candidate...I had been obliged to accept a candidacy because the political parties did not arrive at an agreement to name a civilian for this purpose, in spite of the efforts made by the Government¹⁹³’.

After this statement, Schroeder told him that he was grateful for his patriotism, a somehow candid statement in the light of the following events.

While the above happened in Santiago, in Valparaiso Admiral Swett received a telegram from the Minister of War, requesting him to assume the position of Minister of the Navy. Swett was at this moment presiding over a meeting of the Navy Board, and he asked for time to give an answer, because of the previous agreement of this board to keep Admiral Bahamondez as Minister of the Navy, and since Schroeder was in Santiago. Swett says that he talked with Schroeder over the telephone and the Director General of the Navy informed him that no one in Santiago had consulted him about this change. Furthermore, he had agreed with Vice President Barros-Borgoño to keep Bahamondez as Minister, in accordance with the agreement of the Navy Board. Due to the above, Swett sent telegrams to the Vice President and to Ibáñez, asking to avoid a change in the Ministry of the Navy¹⁹⁴. In those days Captain Alejandro García-Castelblanco became Minister of Industry and Railroads. Up to then he was the Under Secretary of the Navy and he was accepted by the military officers surrounding Ibáñez. This group did not have a favourable opinion of Admiral Bahamondez and preferred Swett as Minister of the Navy but in the end, they accepted because this last officer had to finish his term as Commander in Chief of the Fleet.

All the above is evidence of Ibáñez’s methods, because without having constitutional authority to designate ministers, he manoeuvred without the knowledge of the Minister and the Director General of the Navy, to press for the nomination of an Admiral to a governmental position, thinking that he was nearer to his own political goals. It is also evidence of how this Army officer and his group had been gaining, slowly but consistently, influence in the Navy. This fact would undermine the hierarchical structure in this service and this would have an impact on the events of 1931. Unfortunately, those who

¹⁹³ Navarrete, p. 396.

¹⁹⁴ Proceedings of the Naval Board, 2 Oct 1925. Chilean Naval Archives.

commanded the Navy did not become aware of this military influence, probably due to the contradictory attitudes of colonel Ibáñez.

El Mercurio, in its edition on 3 October 1925, points out that from the day before Ibáñez had resigned to be a candidate, the political parties started negotiations to reach a consensus for a single nominee. The Colonel did not mention that his resignation, in order to be a candidate, was something that was requested of him by the highest authorities of the Army and Navy days before. Moreover, he said that he had the support of his service¹⁹⁵.

The reaction within the Navy to Ibañez's subsequent withdrawal of his candidacy and to the designation of a sole civilian candidate can be seen in a telegram to the Minister of the Navy:

‘The Navy Board expresses its satisfaction regarding the agreement between the Armed Forces and the political parties, accepting one of the desires of the services. It also expresses that it is pleased by the nomination of the eminent citizen Emiliano Figueroa Larraín ...’ [as a candidate]... ‘for the Presidency¹⁹⁶’.

This telegram was signed by Admiral Schroeder as Director General. General Navarrete ascribes a fundamental role to the Navy and its senior admiral, in Ibanez's resignation of his political ambitions to become a presidential candidate. This naval conduct would have upset Ibanez's staunch admirers [the ‘clique’], because they thought this enabled the politicians' ideas to prevail and this would make the political reforms, contemplated by the revolutionaries of September 1924, unachievable. Another attempt at stopping the presidential election would be tried by Ibañez's supporters. This happened when the Colonel stated openly that the election should be adjourned. The Navy Board's reaction was stated in a letter to the Minister of the Navy:

‘I beg that you tell the Vice-president that the Navy Board considers inconvenient the idea of postponing the Presidential election, because this measure would be against agreements that must be complied with to preserve the Government prestige inside the country and outside of it, while the important subject in the northern region¹⁹⁷ is solved. Moreover,

¹⁹⁵ Navarrete, p. 403.

¹⁹⁶ Proceedings of the Naval Board, 5 October 1925. Chilean Naval Archives.

¹⁹⁷ This is an allusion to the border dispute with Peru expected to be settled by a mediation of United States.

extending the present revolutionary state is dangerous for the internal order and would make it even more difficult the return to a normal government. It is not prudent to violate the country's wishes, already stated in the unanimous and patriotic agreement reached, favouring the nomination of a sole candidate. Lastly, postponing the date set in the Constitution would be a violation, erasing the fact that it had been approved recently by a very eloquent popular vote¹⁹⁸.

Again this communication was signed by Admiral Schroeder.

In the following month, an event revealing the character of Colonel Ibáñez took place when he kept manoeuvring to hold on to and even to increase his political and military power. On 2 November, he ordered as Minister of War, the replacement of General Navarrete as Commander of Santiago's Military Garrison. The General answered that, together with relinquishing this post, he would resign as Inspector General of the Army and retire from service. He attributes his conflict with Ibáñez to his opposition to the existence of the Government Junta nominated in September 1924 and his later rejection to the presidential candidacy of an Armed Force officer, coinciding in this position with that of the Navy. This same month, a protocol event meant to consolidate the civilian candidacy took place in the fleet. Vice President Barros-Borgoño and General Véliz, the Minister of the Interior, together with Emiliano Figueroa-Larraín, who had been elected as President, went on board the flagship where they were entertained by the naval authorities. The Minister of War Ibáñez once more excused himself from attending a Navy ship or shore establishment as he had been doing since the coup of 23 January. Captain Merino-Saavedra the commanding officer of the flagship described the fleet's mood as: 'Of confidence and calm, reflecting the country's mood ...' [and that Figueroa] ... 'would rule without the political parties' exasperating struggles¹⁹⁹.

Meanwhile, within the Navy, the pressure for reforms intended to improve the situation of the engineers, supply corps and pilot officers continued. Most of the engineers favoured Colonel Ibáñez because he was the first to become aware of their deplorable situation in spite of the efforts made by the Navy to give this group an excellent

¹⁹⁸ Proceedings of the Naval Board, 8 October 1925. Chilean Naval Archives and Navarrete, p. 462.

¹⁹⁹ Merino-Saavedra, p.16.

professional education. On 23 December, Emiliano Figueroa-Larraín became President and this political event caused some changes in the higher levels of Government. Rear Admiral Swett became Minister of the Navy, while Ibáñez remained as Minister of War. A possible speculation is that he somehow participated in the nomination of the former, due to Swett's sympathy with Ibáñez's political views as discussed above concerning the October crisis. Admiral Bahamondez replaced Swett in the command of the fleet. Later in May 1926, Captain Merino, now promoted to higher rank became the Navy Chief of Staff, moved to Santiago where he observed more closely the continuous political progression of Colonel Ibáñez.

4.2 Summary: the development of active participation by the Navy in Chilean politics and its significance for the 1931 Mutiny.

Before covering the subsequent presidential period of Carlos Ibáñez del Campo it is necessary to summarize the 1924-1925 period [covered in chapters 3 & 4], when the discipline of the Chilean Armed Forces collapsed and when certain events similar to those which would occur later in the 1931 Naval Mutiny, took place. This similarity is particularly the case of Talcahuano. Not only were the events alike. What is even more striking is the similarity of the attitudes, of the way in which the situation was handled. In short, there is a parallel in mentality.

In both instances, the commands gathered their personnel, requested their opinions and later rejected or approved political attitudes by means of telegrams. The officers gave conferences and speeches, published press articles, expressing ideas of clear political sense and turned down the government on three different opportunities and in one of them, with a direct threat of force. And all this was done while the Constitution of 1833, and later that of 1925, stated that the Armed Forces were obedient and not deliberating institutions.

In part, this way of acting was the heritage of the liberal and quasi parliamentary period succeeding the presidential and conservative period, which ended with the Civil War of 1891. Between 1891 and 1925 politics were characterized by numerous alliances, lobbying, never ending discussions and cabinet changes but control was always maintained by the highly placed sector of the Chilean society. All political discussions occurred within

that almost closed group, while the Armed Forces disregarded any political activity, except a frustrated minor seditious movement taking place in 1919. This period ended in the 1920s when the armed forces officers became important political actors.

5. THE FAILED SOLUTIONS OF 1925-1931.

5.1. The brief presidential period of Emiliano Figueroa-Larraín.

The 1920s were a decade of big change for Chile. The middle class did not enjoy political expression until the military started dismantling the existing political order in the way that has been described.

A transformation of this nature does not transpire in a short period. The new Constitution enacted in 1925 and the laws approved between September 1924 and the following year, plus the election of a new President, who became a candidate with the support of all political parties, gave the prospect that the country would return to a normal political life. The sudden changes in Chile's political life between 1924 and 1925 caused a succession of modifications in the higher levels in the Navy bringing a set of young officers to assume top responsibilities in the following years and this was an important factor in the coming events. It is possible that the events in Talcahuano in January 1925 did not leave any lessons or plans in order to handle the similar problems which became evident in 1931, due to the frequent changes in the high command of the Navy as a consequence of the political unrest of the period 1924-1925.

In spite of the feverish reformation plans, the task of changing the political institutions was not achieved at the end of 1925 and the desires of the emerging middle class were not entirely fulfilled, as the events that will be analyzed later will demonstrate. The 1931 Naval Mutiny took place precisely in this atmosphere.

In the previous pages Ibáñez's rise to power from anonymity to Director of the Cavalry School, and, ultimately, to Minister of War was discussed. His ascent through the ranks was the result of his participation in the coups of 5 September 1924 and 23 January 1925.

The following pages are devoted to this Army officer who became a destabilising force and who influenced the Navy deeply, becoming an important factor in the Naval Mutiny of 1931. But before analyzing his presidency the renewed intention to maintain civilian rule will be discussed. The participation of Emiliano Figueroa has been introduced in the previous pages. The subject of his election will be covered now.

It is necessary to recall that in the military coup of 1925, President Alessandri was reinstated only to finish the political reforms sought by Ibáñez and his group. As a new presidential election approached, Ibáñez influenced by his supporters, entered the race as a candidate. However, he encountered opposition from certain political groups and the Navy, as has been seen. As a result, Alessandri encouraged him to leave his Cabinet, arguing that it was inconvenient to be both a minister and a candidate at the same time. Ibáñez resisted because his post as Minister of War was the source of his influence. The President, not willing to share power with his powerful minister, resigned definitively just a few months before the end of his term. Upon his resignation, he named Luis Barros-Borgoño as Vice-president to rule until the president-elect could take power following the upcoming elections. Barros named two naval officers to his Cabinet: Rear Admiral Braulio Bahamondez-Montaño became Minister of the Navy and Captain Alejandro García-Castelblanco, Minister of Public Works, Commerce and Transport.

The political parties agreed to back Emiliano Figueroa-Larraín as the sole candidate in the elections because he lacked a strong political personality, and would therefore not adversely affect their interests. Facing a consolidated political environment and lacking support from the Navy and particular sectors of the Army, Ibáñez withdrew his candidacy²⁰⁰.

Figueroa won a large majority on 24 October 1925 elections. Without a functional Congress since the Military Coup of September 1924, Deputies and Senators were also selected in November. Once Emiliano Figueroa assumed the presidency, he abstained from changing his Cabinet, particularly the Minister of War, Ibáñez. The decision would impact on the fate of his presidency, because Ibáñez would increase his influence during his term. As Minister of the Navy, Rear Admiral Arturo Swett-Otaegui replaced Rear Admiral Bahamonde. There is evidence, as noted previously, that this replacement of the flag officer was favoured by Ibáñez and his followers. The inference is that President Figueroa made the change with the advice of his Minister of War. For Ibáñez, it was clear that within the high levels of command in the Navy, there was resistance to his methods. A similar feeling existed in part of the naval officers who had also a somehow optimistic view of the period,

²⁰⁰ Enrique Brahm-García, 'La Elección Presidencial de 1925. El Candidato Equivocado', in '*Camino a la Moneda. Las Elecciones Presidenciales en la Historia de Chile. 1920-2000*', ed. by Alejandro San Francisco and Ángel Soto (Santiago: Centro de Estudios Bicentenario, 2005) p.61.

as the result of the new presidency. They saw Figueroa as a conventional politician, from the old oligarchic Chile, which was being displaced by an emerging middle class. This mentality was captured by author Captain José Toribio Merino Saavedra:

‘By influence of Don Emiliano Figueroa as President and a Congress elected by popular vote, militarism with its ambitions and activities seemed to be quieted, although Colonel Ibañez retained the position of Minister of War; it seemed that the Republic was slowly being orientated to normality and that we would enjoy better times and well-being...²⁰¹’.

The first months of Figueroa’s term passed in harmony. The group of Army officers led by Ibañez, however, was not satisfied and wished to accelerate the political, social and economical reforms emerging from within the middle class. By November 1926, alarm and rumours spread that Ibañez was preparing another coup.

The British Minister in Chile, Sir Thomas Hohler, wrote in a report sent to the Foreign Office:

‘Wednesday the 17th November, Thursday the 18th and Friday the 19th were days of considerable anxiety as it was widely thought that this country was on the verge of a coup d’etat and, it might even be, a civil war. The latter fear arose from reports of antagonism between the Army and the Navy²⁰²’.

The Navy, although agreeing with Colonel Ibanez’s diagnosis of Chilean problems, disagreed strongly with his methods, particularly those that might lead to a military dictatorship. The fleet, conducting exercises in the southern region at the time, received orders to sail back to Valparaiso²⁰³.

The peril of another military coup was attenuated by a purely parliamentary procedure, the cabinet change, which occurred only after much lobbying and several unsuccessful negotiations detailed in Hohler’s report previously quoted. This is evidence that even after ratification of the presidentially orientated Constitution of 1925, the mentality and political custom of the 1891-1925 era still survived. While Ibañez and Swett remained in the new cabinet, Captain García-Castelblanco did not. Sir Thomas Holler

²⁰¹ Merino-Saavedra, p.17.

²⁰² Report from Sir Thomas Hohler to Foreign Office, 26 NOV 1926, p. 1, UK: National Archives (NA). Foreign Office (FO) 371/11127 No. 123.

²⁰³ Vial-Correa, v. IV, 1996, p. 99.

commented that the new cabinet: ‘has not liquidated the crisis but has merely brought a respite which may be brief²⁰⁴’.

The auspicious beginning of Figueroa’s administration changed over the course of 1926. An unfavourable milieu within the Navy would foment the conditions that triggered the Naval Mutiny of 1931.

On New Year’s Eve, 1927, the Director General of the Navy, Vice Admiral Juan Schroeder Peña, organized a lunch for all officers and wives in the Naval Country Club in Las Salinas, Valparaíso. José Toribio Merino-Saavedra, one of the attending officers, wrote the following narrative:

‘Despite the prevailing joy and harmony, abnormal symptoms were evident and there were veiled conversations about the proximity of better days for the Navy—for a period of freedom and liberty.....It was something morbid, undefined, floated in the environment and only those aware of the record could understand it²⁰⁵’.

Five days later, the Government requested that the Chamber of Deputies reduce the Army’s budget by \$15,500,000 and the Navy’s by \$10,000,000²⁰⁶. Given that a budget had already been discussed and approved only a few months prior, the reduction was evidence that, to some degree, the Government had lost control over its finances.

A few days later, the Navy Board met to analyze the budget reduction. *La Unión* polled officers regarding a possible reduction in salaries. They stated anonymously that:

‘The Navy is, in essence, an obedient institution that does not deliberate on decisions adopted by the Government.....If the Government believe a salary reduction as necessary, such decision is acceptable if done proportionately. Neither the officers nor the enlisted would resist salary reductions like those being suggested by certain Public Workers’ associations. There is negative talk of the hate towards the Armed Forces in light of the salary reduction proposals that target Army and Navy personnel exclusively. These proposals are dangerous and must not be adopted²⁰⁷’.

²⁰⁴ Report from Sir Thomas Hohler to Foreign Office, 26 NOV 1926, p. 10. NA, FO 371/11127 No. 123.

²⁰⁵ Merino-Saavedra, p. 19.

²⁰⁶ ‘La reducción de 10.000.000 de pesos en los presupuestos navales’ *La Unión*, 6 January 1927.

²⁰⁷ ‘Se han pedido nuevas economías a la Marina de Guerra’, *La Unión*, 15 January 1927.

Within this context, the General Secretary of the Navy made a public statement²⁰⁸ announcing that the battleship *Latorre* would not go to Europe to be refitted. This decision meant the cancellation of an important professional goal for this service.

This environment of concern probably forced Rear Admiral Swett, the Minister of the Navy, to meet the officers of the *Latorre* and the cruiser *Chacabuco*, the most significant units of the fleet, for lunch. Merino-Saavedra criticised the Minister:

‘The commanding and executive officers said to him that they noted among the officers symptoms of rapprochement and sympathy toward the Army, which if strengthened would bring unrest. Thus, they advised the Minister that it would be prudent to neutralize such an outcome by anticipating the events and adopting a policy of advancement and harmony with the Army. Unfortunately, the Minister did not heed their warning; rather, he became angry upon hearing such words. He considered the opinions traitorous to the naval mission. Thus, he showed his ineptitude at confronting the situation by demonstrating a lack of flexibility and foresight. In Santiago, the Minister fell in the same quagmire that devoured the old Admirals of the first Government Junta...’ ‘...the incense burnt by Santiago’s politicians and oligarchy at his ostentatious personal appearance enervated him. Fooled by a mirage of political strength, he did not prove his intellect. He did not react nor progress to a policy of rapprochement toward the militarism represented by Colonel Ibáñez, whom he scorned and repudiated²⁰⁹’.

Merino Saavedra continued his criticism of Swett by noting that his failure to resolve the outstanding issues with the army officers caused the members of this service to directly contact the naval officers and, as a result:

‘commanders headed a movement of rapprochement with the Army...displacing high positioned officers and precipitated their future fall. The commanders, upon assuming higher ranks and positions, were unable to keep discipline and traditions. They pushed the Navy towards mutiny²¹⁰’.

Merino’s criticism is slightly biased. First, Swett was appointed pursuant to Ibáñez’s recommendation, precisely because, as noted earlier, the Colonel thought that he shared an affinity for reform. Subsequently, however, his performance in the Ministry of the Navy

²⁰⁸ ‘El Latorre no irá a Europa’. *La Unión*, 20 January 1927.

²⁰⁹ Merino-Saavedra, p.18.

²¹⁰ Merino-Saavedra, p.19.

would prove that he did not cherish the same ideas. Second, it is not possible to assign responsibility to a single person or to the Navy commanders assuming high-level positions in the service for the crisis that would affect the service in 1931. Nevertheless, Merino validly observed that, in general, all the Admirals of that period failed to understand the political changes occurring in Chile in the 1920s, and to adjust the naval organization and rules to reflect this new reality [see section 2.2]. From the junior officers' perspective, their seniors seemed tied to the more conservative politicians, who happened to be the most fervent opponents to the reforms favoured by the Army officers close to Ibáñez.

By January 1927, rumours of a conspiracy by naval officers who were unhappy with the direction of the service had surfaced. Ibáñez ordered that military exercises be carried out in Concón, near Valparaíso and Viña del Mar, homeport of the fleet and site of several naval establishments. The Navy publicly stated that it would not participate. The Army massed units from several cities for the exercises, constituting a powerful concentration of forces, perhaps as a demonstration of strength. Some dissatisfied naval officers, among them Commander Joaquín Herrera-Aguirre and Lieutenant Commander Carlos Cortés, went to Concón. They met Colonel Anibal Parada, Lieutenant Colonel Luis Cabrera and Lieutenant Alejandro Lazo, all active members of the closest Ibáñez supporting group.

The Minister of War inspected the participating troops on 30 January 1927. The inspection was followed by a luncheon. Some naval and Coastal Artillery officers also attended. Merino writes:

‘One of the naval officers, acting on a preset plan, talked about aspirations within the Navy orientated at changing the service and at transitioning toward granting officers of intermediate ranks more power. They seek the collaboration of the Minister of War to take these ideas to the Government²¹¹’.

This was not the only outcome of the exercises in Concón. On 4 February, in a hotel in Viña del Mar, compromising documents were discovered in a room where Colonel Parada had been lodged. The papers revealed the existence of a plot organized in the Army to counteract a coup in the Navy. President Figueroa sent the documents to Manuel Rivas-Vicuña, the Minister of the Interior, for discussion with Ibáñez. According to Merino, the documents were abandoned with a purpose and, once discovered, were given to the

²¹¹ Merino-Saavedra, p. 20.

Director General of the Navy, who took them to the President. In his opinion, not delivering a copy to the press was a naval mistake

The meeting between Rivas and Ibáñez took place on 7 February. The Colonel grabbed the compromising documents from the Minister and did not return them. He refrained from commenting on them. Rather, he told Rivas that a group of junior naval officers wanted to oust the high command of the service. The group sought to replace the Minister of the Navy with a junior officer and to name an Admiral in whom they had confidence, namely Rear Admiral Merino, to the post of Director General of the Navy.

Swett sent a telegram to the Director General of the Navy on 9 February, saying:

‘The Minister of War has told the President that when in Valparaiso he received a petition signed by several junior officers, demanding that the President reorganize the Navy by removing superior officers, which in fact the Minister did so demand. The President of the Republic declared he would resign before adhering to the petition. The Minister of the Interior....[Rivas]adhered to this declaration²¹² .

The press also published²¹³ the quoted telegram.

Sir Thomas Hohler summarized the facts:

‘There appears to be no doubts as to the connivance of Ibáñez and his emissaries in the Mutiny- I think it can be described by no other word- in the Navy. He had found the Navy an invincible obstacle to his paths in November last and he- or his advisers- were resolved on removing it²¹⁴ .

In turn, Ibáñez made a strong public statement against politicians who:

‘incited hatred against the Army, hereby serving the interests of the anarchist, who were striving to bring about a social revolution and had organized to distribute propaganda against the Army and the Navy²¹⁵ .

The acts of the Minister of War and his followers led to a Cabinet crisis. In the Navy, the recent acts of indiscipline came to light because the Undersecretary of the Navy travelled from Santiago to visit Vice Admiral Schroeder, the Director General, who was

²¹² Annual Report 1927 of the British Embassy to Foreign Office NA. FO 371/12752 No. A1630/1630/9, 25 JAN 1928, p.21.

²¹³ La Unión, 11 FEB 1927.

²¹⁴ Sir Thomas Hohler to Foreign Office, 19 FEB 1926. NA.FO 371/11976 No. 50.

²¹⁵ Sir Thomas Hohler to Foreign Office, 25 JAN 1925, p.6. NA. FO 371/12752 No. A1630/1630/9.

accompanied in his home by Rear Admiral Merino. The Undersecretary confirmed on behalf of the Minister of the Navy that junior naval officers petitioned Colonel Ibáñez to intervene in favour of reorganizing the Navy.

Merino writes that the following measure was adopted: ‘as in other occasions, the fleet and shore establishment officers would sign a document rejecting and discrediting the petition²¹⁶’.

The measure reveals the period’s mentality. While, under the Military Code of Justice, these events constituted criminal conduct, the measure adopted is typical of those that might be adopted by a political party or a trade union, namely collective expressions of support, rather than those proper to the Armed Forces. Merino wrote in the next paragraph of his book that a trustworthy officer visited him. The officer told him that he had travelled to Santiago the night before in a locomotive dispatched for him by Ibáñez to meet with the Colonel and his group. According to the Annual Report of the British Legation in Santiago²¹⁷, the officer was Commander Joaquín Herrera, who upon returning, reported that the Army denied any intervention in the internal affairs of the Navy.

Merino relayed the Commander’s report to the Director General of the Navy, who, in turn, summoned the Navy Board. However, no resolution was adopted. On the other hand, the British Report stated that Vice Admiral Schroeder tendered his resignation as Director General; Rear Admiral Alfredo Searle-Lorca, the Commander in Chief of the Fleet temporarily assumed the post. According to Merino, Schroeder handed his resignation to the Undersecretary of the Navy while he was in Valparaiso telling him that he should go to Santiago and make it effective only if the situation worsened. Meanwhile, the Navy’s plan to procure the signatures of the officers in the statement denouncing the plot set forth by Ibáñez and his followers was not particularly successful. Merino recalls that while all the officers in the Naval Staff signed the statement, Commander Alejandro Yáñez-Cerda indicated that the document had no value because the Government had already received a petition from the junior executive officers, as well as the engineering and supply corp officers.

²¹⁶ Merino-Saavedra, p. 21.

²¹⁷ Annual Report 1927 of the British Embassy to Foreign Office NA. FO 371/12752 No. A1630/1630/9, 25 JAN 1928, p.22.

In other words, the course of events had quickly rendered the measure adopted by the high command of the Navy moot. The Admiralty appeared reactive, that is, only capable of confronting accomplished facts.

Under the above circumstances, and duly authorized by the Director General of the Navy and by Swett, who had already resigned from the Cabinet, Merino decided to travel to Santiago. He reported to the President on: ‘the situation in the Navy and the consequences that the appointment of a junior officer as Minister would have on the service²¹⁸’. He adds that he went to Santiago: ‘to defend the organization of the Navy, and under no circumstances, as an advocate for the interests of his colleagues in rank, or any other fanciful notion recently published by the *Diario Ilustrado*²¹⁹’.

The Navy thought, undoubtedly, that the President, vested with the powers granted by the recently approved presidentialist Constitution, would maintain the traditional naval organization. However, Emiliano Figueroa hailed from the Parliamentary era. He lacked a strong personality needed to oppose Ibáñez’s intentions. Moreover, he had already entrusted the Colonel with the task of organizing a new cabinet.

The events illustrate that a new step in the disintegration of naval discipline had been achieved, culminating with the nomination of a new Minister of the Navy and a new Director General. According to Merino, the junior naval officers elected Commander Joaquín Herrera as Minister at a gathering at the Navy Club in Valparaiso by sending a collection of signatures by telegram to Colonel Ibáñez. Photographs of the meeting appeared in newspapers the following day.

‘Simultaneously, in the alley between the Club and the Holy Ghost Church, Colonel Parada, chief of the cavalry units gathered in Concón, met Commander Carlos Frödden and pressed him to accept the position of Minister of the Navy, offered through him by Colonel Ibáñez. Frödden resisted, but accepted. If this officer, perhaps with a higher sprit de corps and patriotism, would have rejected this offer, the destiny of the country and the Navy would have followed another course, and this doomed service would not have collapsed four years later²²⁰’.

²¹⁸ Merino-Saavedra, p. 22.

²¹⁹ Merino-Saavedra, p. 22.

²²⁰ Merino-Saavedra, p. 22.

Later in his book, Merino blames the Commander in Chief of the Fleet, Rear Admiral Searle for not having implemented measures to suppress the lack of discipline. He notes that this flag officer ceased attending to his flagship, limiting himself to taking care of everyday matters at the headquarters in replacement of Vice Admiral Schroeder, who had previously resigned. Then:

‘Nothing stopped the lack of discipline and its overflow. The ships’ commanding officers, without guidance, ended up in a meeting in the battleship *Latorre* and, upon calling the rest of the officers, dispatched a radio message, via the Commandant of the Military Garrison of Valparaiso, to Colonel Ibáñez, which communicated their assent to Commander Frödden as Minister of the Navy’.....[and added].... ‘That in order to curb the incidence of indiscipline, Rear Admiral Merino should become Director General of the Navy²²¹’.

The British Legation 1927 Annual Report confirms these events.

Merino met Ibáñez on 9 February. By then, the Colonel wielded real power. Merino says that Ibáñez praised him for garnering the support of the quarrelling naval factions. The Colonel also told him that the rampant political and parliamentary anarchy required a strong and apolitical government. Ibáñez added that the Navy must:

‘not fear for its organization because a junior officer has been named as Minister, merely because of the precedent....of an Army Captain, mister Mora, who had been Minister of War. He shared that, while he had a commitment to appoint Captain Frödden, he had not yet responded²²²’.

Merino then argued to Ibáñez: ‘our Naval culture forbids us from accepting the appointment of a junior officer to Minister. This would provoke the retirement of Admirals and the most senior Captains, unhinging the service. I proposed an alternative plan to name Rear Admiral Ward as Minister’ ...a member of the Government Junta after 23 January 1925. But Ibáñez: ‘rejected this idea because he considered that Ward opposed his ideas, and because of disagreements they had had while he was a member of the Junta²²³’.

Ibáñez shared that he had also offered the position of Minister of the Navy to Captains Hipólito Marchant-Morales and Francisco Nieto-Gallegos, but his true candidate was Frödden.

²²¹ Merino-Saavedra, p.22.

²²² Merino-Saavedra, p.22.

²²³ Merino-Saavedra, p.23.

Merino adds that Ibáñez:

‘Asked him, with great warmth and interest, that he should assume the position of Director General of the Navy...’ ‘I thanked him for his thoughts, and told him that I would leave the service, together with my colleagues of the same rank, given the situation we face with the appointment of a Minister that destroyed the concept of hierarchy...²²⁴’.

On the same day Ibáñez and Merino met, Ibáñez delivered a public statement, which precipitated the cabinet crisis that had been looming. Swett, still a Minister, also delivered a statement that was too late to reveal: ‘certain intrigue oriented at breaking naval discipline has been taking place for some time²²⁵’. The statement was untimely, because, on the same day, President Figueroa had entrusted Ibáñez with the task of forming a new cabinet. The Navy limited itself to recognizing the President’s power to form a cabinet without parliamentary approval²²⁶. The statement, however, avoided expressing concern for the political importance Ibáñez had achieved by appointing a new cabinet. Naming Commander Carlos Frödden-Lorenzen as Minister of the Navy was a particularly sensitive problem for the service.

According to Merino²²⁷, on 10 February 1927, La Moneda received the message from the fleet officers accepting Frödden as Minister. The President, having already determined the new cabinet assembled by Ibáñez, summoned Merino to La Moneda to tell him that he intended to resign due to health problems, but the new cabinet rejected the idea given the negative internal and external consequences. In this context, Figueroa asked Merino to accept the position of Director General of the Navy. Merino cautioned the President: ‘about the infringement of the hierarchy inherent to the appointment of a junior officer as Minister²²⁸, ...of the Navy, and of his intention to retire from active duty. The President argued that retirement was a useless sacrifice. He added, considering Merino’s position as a link between the Government, the Army officers, and the junior naval officers,

²²⁴ Merino-Saavedra, p.23.

²²⁵ Vial-Correa, v. IV, 1996, p. 113.

²²⁶ ‘El momento histórico por el que atraviesa la Marina de Guerra’, *La Unión*, 12 FEB 1927.

²²⁷ Merino-Saavedra, pp. 23-25.

²²⁸ Merino-Saavedra, pp. 24.

that patriotism should lead him to accept the position and sacrifice his qualms, since no other Admiral had the same characteristics. Merino writes:

‘I accepted the position of Director General....under dark circumstances, convinced that it would be temporary, because I was familiar with Colonel Ibáñez scheme to do away with the post and the Navy Board—constant institutional impediments to his plans. I accepted due to the requests of President Figueroa and the Navy personnel and, from my side, due to the affection I had for my profession. Also, I had an interest in saving the service and delaying the chaos and indiscipline slowly progressing and reflecting the country’s ambient²²⁹.

It must be noted that we only have account of the designation of the Director General of the Navy from one source, Merino—precisely the appointed officer. Accordingly, his narrative may be biased.

The appointment of the new Director General of the Navy and, especially, the new Minister of the Navy prompted the immediate resignation of Rear Admirals Carlos Ward and Braulio Bahamondez²³⁰ and a couple of Navy Captains. Note that Vice Admiral Schroeder had left the Navy a few days earlier. In the following days, the Government ordered the retirement of Rear Admiral Olegario Reyes del Río, who, although junior to Merino, could have remained on active duty. Thus, the Navy lost an important group of senior and experienced officers. Moreover, Ibáñez achieved his goal of ridding himself of those who most strongly opposed his ideas in the Navy, knowing that the majority of junior officers supported him²³¹. This same source stresses that Captain José Manuel Montalva-Barrientos temporarily became Commander in Chief of the Fleet, while also commanding officer of battleship *Latorre*, site of the aforementioned deliberations. His polemical actions in 1924 and 1925 have been covered before [sections 3.1 and 3.2].

The appointment of captains to the higher posts of the Navy in a meeting in Valparaiso on 13 February 1927 between the Minister and the Director General of the Navy concluded the period of changes. Two of these officers, Abel Campos-Carvajal and Roberto

²²⁹ Merino-Saavedra, p.25.

²³⁰ ‘Nuestra Marina de Guerra pasa por un período de trascendental importancia’, *La Unión*, 11 FEB 1927, p.1.

²³¹ Annual Report 1927 of the British Embassy to Foreign Office NA. FO 371/12752 No. A1630/1630/9, 25 JAN 1928, p.6.

Chappuzzeau-Cienfuegos, promoted to Rear Admiral the following years, would face the Naval Mutiny of 1931, which involved units under their command.

Rear Admiral Merino's first order of business in his new position was to re-establish discipline, an objective shared by a Government that was practically headed by Colonel Ibáñez. He distributed a communication that attempted to mirror the ideals of the junior officers and engineers:

‘A new mentality is ruling the destiny of our service, in harmony with the progress experienced by our country. Public opinion enthusiastically accepts a military regime that would end the destructive politicking, organize an energetic government to reconstruct our nation, and to solve the international and internal problems....The Navy ...must have this new mentality, orientated to the future and not the past²³²’.

He added later that some recently retired Admirals criticized the above document because they felt that it condemned their performance when they were in the Navy. The note ended with a warning: ‘All activities of naval personnel.....involving deliberation, assembly, or subversive or anti-disciplinary acts shall be punished with expulsion from the service²³³’.

In addition to the appointment, two other important events took place on 13 February that indicated the course Colonel Ibáñez's de facto government would take. First, the deportation of leftist union leaders started. The Minister of the Interior stated: ‘From today there will be no communism or anarchism in Chile. Those with the audacity to change the national flag with a red rag shall not control the country²³⁴’. Second, the Navy Board, chaired by the Minister of the Navy, met. The Minister subsequently addressed the press²³⁵ with the following points—all related to the spirit of renewal pushed by Ibáñez:

- [a] New and clear rules.
- [b] Representation of the engineers, surgeons and supply corps officers on the Navy Board.

²³² Merino-Saavedra, 1932, p. 28.

²³³ Merino-Saavedra, 1932, p. 28.

²³⁴ Vial-Correa, v. IV, 1996, p. 127.

²³⁵ ‘Una circular de trascendencia histórica para la Armada’, *La Unión*, 15 FEB 1927, p.1.

[c] Unified academy for officers [fusion of Naval Academy and Engineers School].

[d] Rank promotions strictly by the rules. Use of star on cuffs as distinctive emblem among all officers.

Some of these measures are also referenced in the 1927 Annual Report of the British Embassy²³⁶.

Despite the new rules and warning issued by the Director General of the Navy, there were new acts of indiscipline among engineers in the Naval Base in Talcahuano in the following month. The authorities summarily punished the perpetrators²³⁷. While the offenders proffered their adherence to Ibáñez's ideals as an excuse for their wrongdoing, their punishment was strict given that the Colonel also wanted to restore discipline. Concerning Ibáñez, Carlos Sáez writes:

'the enormous responsibility that his revolutionary movement contributed to unravelling the discipline within the Armed Forces rested upon him...'[Ibáñez].... 'The Services have become the preferred target of tendentious demands. Re-establishing discipline obliged him to impose harsh punishment on his comrades, who considered themselves entitled to some say over the future course of the Government, and on civilians who sought to incite the spirit of insubordination²³⁸'.

5.2. Carlos Ibáñez finally becomes President of Chile.

Because of health problems, President Figueroa left his post on 8 April 1927. As Vice-president, Ibáñez exercised the powers of the Presidency. Frederick Nunn, an American historian, writes that something unbelievable ensued:

'Four hundred officers from the Armed Forces and Carabineros visited the candidate and Vice-president' ...[Ibáñez]... 'in his residence. Military bands played marches and the people's favourite melodies. The Minister of the Navy Frödden and General Juan Emilio Ortiz-Vega, the newly appointed Minister of War, toasted to the good health of the Vice-president. The event demonstrated, once again, that Ibáñez enjoyed considerable support

²³⁶ Annual Report 1927 of the British Embassy to Foreign Office, p.22, 25 JAN 1928. NA. FO 371/12752 No. A1630/1630/9.

²³⁷ 'La Dirección General de la Armada devuelve una nota al Director de Ingeniería', *La Unión*, 31 MAR 1927, p.1.

²³⁸ Sáez, v. II. p.140.

among members of the Armed Forces and Carabineros. Despite the restrictions imposed by the new fundamental law [as it happened with the old one] the Chilean Armed Forces had transformed into a collective body [but not a monolithic one], openly deliberative over three years²³⁹ ...’.

Unfortunately, Frederick Nunn provides the only source that documents this very serious political participation of a large congregation of officers of the Armed Forces. There are, however, signs that this influence was more widespread, as evidenced by news of subsequent social gatherings of naval officers in the Navy Club and at Las Salinas Naval Gardens amid a presidential campaign²⁴⁰.

Emiliano Figueroa definitively resigned on 4 May, in accordance with what he had told Merino in February. Eighteen days later, Ibáñez was elected President of the Republic. He defeated communist leader Elías Lafertte-Gaviño, who, while exiled to Easter Island, could not mount a campaign. With respect to the Mutiny of 1931, Lafertte is an important character. He was one of his party’s founders, a contributor to the turmoil of 1926, and an important factor in triggering significant political events that will be discussed *infra*. The new President was sworn in on 2 July 1927. He would continue to push for important reforms in the Navy that he promoted from his previous posts as Minister and Vice-president, the consequences of which will be the subject of our attention.

The Annual Report of the British Chargé d’Affairs in Santiago states that:

‘1927 will be regarded as a milestone in Chile’s history, for it has marked an important stage of its political development, that is, the emergence of the middle class²⁴¹’.

The new government would frenetically devote itself to transforming the institutions and to consolidating the reforms initiated by the several Governments of the 1920’s. The middle class desired these reforms, but the process was carried out in a disorderly manner due to the political turbulence described in this chapter.

²³⁹ Frederick M.Nunn, ‘Military Rule in Chile: The Revolution of September 5, 1924 and January 23, 1925’, *The Hispanic American Historical Review*; v.47, N°1 (1995) pp. 111.

²⁴⁰ Vial-Correa, v. IV, 1996, p. 164.

²⁴¹ Annual Report of the British Embassy to Foreign Office, p.1, 25 JAN 1928. NA. FO 371/12752 No. A 1630/1630/9.

As President of Chile and a newly promoted General, Ibáñez fervently devoted himself to realizing the reforms he initiated as Minister of War, Head of the Cabinet and Vice President. As Vice President and with the signature of the Minister of the Navy, Frödden, Ibáñez issued the ‘Decreto Supremo’ [equivalent to an Order of Council] to reorganize the High Command of the Navy²⁴². As will be discussed below, the hastily implemented reorganization would disrupt naval discipline anew.

That ‘Decreto Supremo’ ordered the Minister of the Navy to act as:

‘Director General of the Navy and Navy Council, exercising, consequently, the high command of the Navy. Naval forces at sea, ashore, or by air, as well as those commissioned abroad, shall be under his direct authority. In other words, all superior resolutions and executive orders came from the Minister of the Navy, whom, as a secretary of state, consolidated command of the service²⁴³’.

According to a contemporary publication²⁴⁴, during the second year of Ibanez’s presidency, the Minister of the Navy was in charge of: ‘reorganizing, creating, purging and renewing the Navy’. Organic changes in May of 1927, created the position of ‘Inspector General of the Navy’, whose duties included: ‘investigate, under the authority of the Government, all services within the Navy, and during times of peace, act as General Director of naval exercises in which a significant number of units participate’. Reformation included moving the offices of the ‘Inspector General of the Navy’, the Naval Staff, and other high-level bodies to Santiago. The reforms implemented in 1927 undoubtedly gave the President tight control of the Navy through a young Minister who, within headquarters in Santiago, wielded consolidated control over all service bodies. The most significant change was the abrogation of the Naval Council and the position of Director General of the Navy - institutions founded by the reforms implemented by Admiral Montt in 1898 [see section 2.1].

The reforms of 1927 were not popular among naval circles. Rear Admiral Merino-Saavedra, who became the last Director General of the Navy because of the reorganisation, heavily criticized the changes in his book, which has been previously cited. The

²⁴² Decreto Supremo (Act of Council) No. 1077, 14 MAY 1927.

²⁴³ Fuenzalida-Bade, v. IV. p.1157.

²⁴⁴ *Las Fuerzas Armada de Chile. Álbum Histórico* (Santiago: Empresa Editora Atenas, 1928), p.1036.

Government sought to arrest all failures of discipline like those of September 1924 and January 1925, among others. In addition, the Government completed other projects, like those previously announced by Frödden, including fusing both officers' schools ['Escuela Naval' and 'Escuela de Ingenieros'] in Valparaiso²⁴⁵. The Naval Academy ['Escuela Naval'] began operating in 1928 with engineering students arriving from Talcahuano.

Changes to the law on retirement improved the situation facing engineers, supply and medical corps officers. Promotions were hard to attain, causing them to reach older ages still in very low ranks. Also, rank denominations were modified among these officers to homogenize them with the ranks of executive officers.

In addition to procurement contracts signed by the previous administration, and even as new ships arrived, General Ibañez's government also pursued an aggressive policy of ship acquisition. Many of these ships would serve as a stage for the Naval Mutiny of 1931.

Six Serrano class destroyers were the first arrivals to be commissioned. The ships were named *Serrano*, *Orella*, *Riquelme*, *Hyatt*, *Videla* and *Aldea*. The Ibañez administration also commissioned the construction of three O class submarines, subsequently named *Thomson*, *Simpson* and *O'Brien*, a tender ship, the *Araucano*, and two oil tankers, *Maipo* and *Rancagua*, as well as some auxiliary ships. A significant number of aircraft were also purchased for naval purposes.

The Ibañez government's vast acquisition policy, which was principally achieved in Great Britain, exposed Chilean crews to the political turmoil within British ports. The battleship *Latorre* went for repairs and extensive refitting at the Devonport Naval Dockyard between June 1929 and March 1931. During this long period of twenty one months the crew of the ship lived together most of the time with the Royal Navy personnel at the base—an encounter that will be detailed further below. The acquisition policy required a very large financial investment. The modernization of the *Latorre* alone, consumed two thirds of the total allotment for Armed Forces purchases²⁴⁶.

²⁴⁵ Decreto Supremo (Act of Council), 23 MAR 1927.

²⁴⁶ Vial-Correa, v. IV, 1996, p. 304.

New ships plus the Navy's overall growth underscored the dearth of officers needed to cover all available positions, as noted by the British Legation Annual Report²⁴⁷. Given the extensive time required to train additional officers at the schools, this problem had no quick short-term solution. The effects of this would be felt in next year's mutiny, particularly, on those ships moored in Talcahuano Naval Base. Moreover, foreign loans, which funded the acquisition program, would exacerbate the economic crisis in the closing years of the 1920s.

The reasons for this expensive program was the still pending subjects with Perú and the South American version of navalism [see section 2.2] affecting mainly Argentina, Brazil and Chile. The final settlement with Perú will be explained later. Another reason for the acquisition of ships was the orientation that Ibáñez wanted to give to his term as President. He wanted to modernize the country as a whole. The Navy, with its Conservative organization and mentality was one of his main targets. Up dating a fleet until then having only ships built before Word War One would make his organizational transformations more acceptable for the naval officers.

In addition to the fundamental organizational changes discussed, several unpopular measures (from a disciplinary point of view) followed. For example, Rear Admiral Ward, who had experienced some frictions with Ibáñez in 1925 retired. Also, officers punished in the 'Luises'Affair', returned to active duty. According to Merino, who by then held only the position of Inspector General of the Navy, he cautioned President Ibáñez of the problems occasioned by the return to service of those officers and their political intrigues. Merino also suggested that Ibáñez appoint a more senior officer as Minister of the Navy. Merino would have caused Ibáñez to recognize the negative consequences of a young Under Secretary of the Navy, and that abrogating the position of Director General of the Navy was a mistake. In the end however, he dispatched Merino to Europe—a measure the President used when he wanted to rid himself of Navy or Army officers that, in his opinion,

²⁴⁷ Annual Report of the British Embassy to Foreign Office, 30 MAR 1931, p.18. NA, FO 371/15081 No. 3005/3005/9.

²⁴⁷ Peace and Friendship Treaty signed in Ancón, Perú, on 20 October 1883.

²⁴⁷ British Embassy report to Foreign Office, 16 AUG 1930, p.1. NA, FO 371/14216 No. A5574/2155/9.

were obstructing his will. At his farewell, Frödden hinted that Merino's departure from Chile was because he was suspected of heading an opposition movement against the President. In contrast to Merino's exit, Frödden would remain as one of Ibañez's most dependable supporters through the end of his government. Amid latent disciplinary problems, the foregoing illustrates the methods Ibañez employed to avoid them. .

Among the successes of Ibanez's presidency, Chile signed a treaty with Perú in Lima on 3 June 1929 that sealed matters pending since the end of the war between both countries, which broke out in 1879. The final destiny of the departments of Tacna and Arica was the most pressing issue pending. The countries agreed that the former would return to Peru, while the latter would remain under Chilean sovereignty. This treaty, and an additional protocol, established the definitive border between both countries. The Navy had contributed with its presence in northern harbours for decades preventing Peruvian attempts to recover territories that were under its sovereignty before the war.

The following year, the diplomatic missions of Chile in London and of Great Britain in Chile matured into embassies, reflecting the growing relationship between the countries.

The treaty with Peru and the new embassy in London represent important achievements of the Ibañez government. The agreement with Peru was especially important because it concluded a matter pending for decades. It had been left open by the treaty ending the war in 1883, which had ordered the determination of the final sovereignty of Tacna and Arica by means of a plebiscite to be held within one decade. The improvement in the diplomatic relationship between Chile and Great Britain was the fruit of the positive opinion that British diplomats held of Carlos Ibanez's government in their reports. One of these²⁴⁸ described the success of the government restoring order and stopping communism, which was beneficial for the British investments in Chile. The decision of the Chilean Government favouring British shipyards to build six destroyers, three submarines, a submarine tender, two oilers plus refitting battleship *Latorre* perhaps was also a reason for turning the diplomatic missions into embassies. Despite its achievements, however, the Ibañez presidency would end before its constitutional term, as will be explained below, because this event set the stage for the Naval Mutiny of 1931.

²⁴⁸

British Embassy report to Foreign Office, 16 AUG 1930, p.2. NA, FO 371/14216 No. A5574/2155/9.

There is a consensus among historians that economic crisis was a principal factor leading to Ibañez's fall. The government financed a vast array of reforms, the creation of new institutions and regulatory bodies, public works projects, and new acquisitions for the Armed Forces with loans that the executive branch expected to pay off with revenue derived from the resulting economic improvement. Tax reforms implemented and developed over the course of a decade were also expected to bolster revenue and ease the strain of loan repayment. While the economic crisis leading to the collapse of the Ibañez government is not within the analytical purview of this thesis, it is important to note that Chile had considerable debts when the New York Stock Exchange crashed on 29 October 1929. The ensuing worldwide economic crisis did not immediately affect Chile. Rather, problems arose the following year. International banks declined to issue new loans and the prices for Chilean exports consistently declined. Creditors would eventually demand payment of debts and create an unmanageable problem in Chile. Gonzalo Vial writes:

‘A later study by the League of Nations...stated that, of all countries of the world, Chile was the most affected by the Great Crisis²⁴⁹’.

Furthermore, the Ibañez Government claimed that Arturo Alessandri exacerbated the situation by frustrating the government's attempts to secure new loans which might alleviate the financial crisis.

As early as 1930, the government began reducing salaries for civil servants and members of the Armed Forces. After the ‘Red Aircraft Complot’ [discussed below], rumours of further reductions spread. While the Navy and Carabineros did not bemoan another salary reduction, complaints were voiced from the Army indicating the widespread dissatisfaction with Government²⁵⁰.

Economic problems were not the sole cause for the sudden end of Carlos Ibañez's presidency. Political problems also marred the presidency. Carlos Sáez, an Army officer who played a key role in events in 1924 and 1925, returned to Chile after a long commission in Europe. He was a limited supporter of the president. For this reason, his comments are particularly interesting:

²⁴⁹ Vial Correa, v. IV, 1996, p. 181.

²⁵⁰ British Embassy report to Foreign Office, 30 OCT 1939, p.1. NA, FO 371/14216 No. A7091.

‘When I left Chile, I left a country in anarchy, without government, compromised by capricious and unscrupulous statesmanship. Upon returning in early 1931, at the very least, I had to recognize that there was order, respect for authority, and labour discipline....but....where one sensed order, one feels manifest signs of rebellious ferment confined to particular sectors of public opinion. Great material progress: respect for authority, but a deaf malaise²⁵¹’.

A recessive economy, coupled with the social consequences of such, revived the Communist Party in Chile, which the government had strictly controlled in the past. Subversives, for example, attempted to detonate a bridge over the river Maipo while the President’s convoy crossed. The police frustrated the plot and arrested several participants. The British Embassy²⁵² bought the Government’s argument that communists had influenced the attack, adding that there was an: ‘elevated communist activity in most South American countries; for instance, the recent labour demonstrations in Talara and elsewhere in Peru’. Notwithstanding, the Embassy concluded that Ibáñez had reduced the communist problem in Chile since the Alessandri presidency. Ibáñez improved labour laws enacted by Alessandri, and adequately controlled communist activity through the recently created corps of Carabineros. According to the British Embassy, the depression had spawned the contemporary problems of that period.

The political problems in 1931 were faced by means of manoeuvres typical of a parliamentary regime, although this did not exist anymore in Chile since the new Constitution. The President changed his ministers several times. One of these changes took place in April 1931. Ibáñez appointed Rear Admiral Marchant as Minister of the Navy and General Pedro Charpin-Rival as Minister of War. A year after adopting a salary reduction, the cabinet proposed another. A political report from the British Embassy observes that while the Navy and the Army would accept the measure, the opposition of several generals precipitated the removal of three of them. The naval reaction consisted of an officers’ meeting on board the *Latorre*, which had just returned to Chile²⁵³. The results of the

²⁵¹ Sáez, t. II. p.143.

²⁵² British Embassy report to Foreign Office, 11 DEC 1930, p.2. NA, FO 371/15077; A300.

²⁵³ British Embassy report to Foreign Office, 30 APR 1931. NA, FO 371/15077.

meeting were not known by the Embassy²⁵⁴. Signs of indiscipline, like those experienced in 1924-1925, resurfaced.

Faced with one final crisis in the middle of 1931, Ibáñez attempted to mollify adversaries by appointing new ministers among prominent members of the opposition. By adopting drastic and unpopular measures to curb expenditures, the new cabinet compelled the President to revert to appointing ministers aligned with his ideology.

Amid these cabinet changes, the Navy, having strongly opposed Ibáñez's initiatives prior to 1927, now filled several important posts under his administration. Captain Carlos Frödden-Lorenzen²⁵⁵, who initially served as Minister of the Navy, was subsequently twice appointed Minister of the Interior, serving in the most critical stage of Ibáñez's presidency. Rear Admirals Hipólito Marchant-Morales and Edgardo von Schroeders-Sarratea served as Ministers of the Navy, while Rear Admiral Alejandro García-Castelblanco served as Minister of Economic Promotion. Additionally, several other naval officers, both in active duty and retired, served in variety of government positions. When Ibáñez fell from power, public opinion blamed the Navy for supporting him.

One of the measures considered to reduce expenditures included diminishing the size of the British Naval Mission serving since 1926, which consisted of approximately ten officers ranging in rank from Captain to Lieutenant Commander²⁵⁶. The presence of these officers enabled the British Embassy, among other things, to be very well apprised of Chilean Naval affairs, as evidenced by the reports sent to the Foreign Office.

Facing another possible round of salary reduction and the abrogation of government posts to palliate the economic crisis, Ventura Maturana expressed to the Minister of the Interior, Carlos Frödden, that:

'Being the case, they must constitute a cabinet composed exclusively by Military and Naval servicemen and declare a state of siege to face the tumult that has nearly come to fruition after the two previous reductions. If

²⁵⁴ This is the only source found about this meeting.

²⁵⁵ Commander Carlos Frödden-Lorenzen served as Minister of the Navy between 9 February 1927 and 5 August 1930 and later as Minister of the Interior from 6 August 1930 to 9 July 1931. He ended his participation in government as Captain.

²⁵⁶ British Embassy report to Foreign Office, 16 MAY 1931. NA, FO 371/15077.

not, the Government's enemies would surely take advantage of the opportunity to subvert the order²⁵⁷.

On 15 July 1931, several police chiefs greeted Juan Esteban Montero-Rodríguez, the new Minister of the Interior. He asked Ventura Maturana for his opinion on the situation. Maturana reflected and stated:

'In April of this year, when the Government attempted its first salary reduction, one could feel the first inklings of revolution. The second round of salary reductions the following May coincided with a second attempt at insurrection in Iquique; one can clearly deduce it from the summary I have laid on the table²⁵⁸.

The gravity of another salary reduction was clear. The stability of the government and the armed services were at stake. Yet, six weeks after the meeting between Montero and Maturana, a salary reduction would trigger the naval mutiny.

An intensifying economic crisis and social upheaval across the political spectrum sullied the final days of the Ibáñez Government. The Communist Party, which the Government had strongly repressed, recovered its vigour in 1931. Organized strikes especially targeted the transportation sectors in Santiago and Valparaiso. A very active group of university students further exacerbated the disorder. Their clashes with police brought casualties and deaths to both sides, as well as among innocent people. Moreover, funerals occasioned new clashes, which led to more death and property destruction²⁵⁹. A strike among doctors, lawyers and bank employees even further aggravated the situation, especially since these professionals constituted the middle class—traditionally a bastion of support for Ibáñez.

On 26 July 1931, Ibáñez resigned the presidency, tendering the post to Pedro Opazo Letelier who was the President of the Senate. In the morning of the following day, Ibáñez travelled to Argentina²⁶⁰. Juan Esteban Montero-Rodríguez headed Opazo's cabinet as Minister of the Interior. Pedro Blanquier became Minister of Finance; Rear Admiral Calixto Rogers-Cea became Minister of the Navy; and General Carlos Sáez Morales

²⁵⁷ Maturana, p.169.

²⁵⁸ Maturana, p.170.

²⁵⁹ British Embassy report to Foreign Office, 24 JUL 1931. NA, FO 371/15077; A4516/13/9.

²⁶⁰ Copy of The Times, London, 27 JUL 1931. FO 371/15077.

became Minister of War. A few days later however, Opazo resigned, leaving Montero as the new Vice President. Arturo Alessandri subsequently returned to Chile from the exile that Ibáñez had imposed on him.

The new government informed the British Embassy about the financial measures it was adopting to avoid a massive withdrawal of bank funds. Among these measures, the following were mentioned: ‘Mr. Pedro Blanquier has accepted to head the Ministry of Finance, while the Government has implemented a strict economic policy, a reduction of the Armed Forces, and a balanced budget²⁶¹’. It must be stressed again that the announced reduction of salaries triggered the Naval Mutiny.

The government also adopted another important measure, calling a presidential election. Vice President Montero accepted being a candidate, thus he resigned his position temporarily on 18 August 1931²⁶². Having been Minister of the Interior since 8 August, Manuel Trucco Franzani replaced Montero. This marked the third Head of State since Ibáñez fell showing the political instability preceding the Mutiny of 1931. The situation worsened when a disagreement with the Government prompted General Sáez to resign as Minister of War.

Before ending this section a summary of the fallen caudillo’s activities must be introduced.

The action Ibáñez took and the influence he exerted upon the Chilean Navy before and during his government appear contradictory.

His opinion was that the High Command of the Navy, over the period covered in these chapters, was essentially conservative. He considered that the High Command opposed his revolutionary ideology and the reforms sought by the junior officers, so he worked to force the most senior admirals into retirement. He exploited internal conflicts in the Navy, especially through the engineer’s corps, to promote indiscipline and controvert measures adopted by the High Command.

Once Ibáñez achieved full political power, and even before becoming president, he changed his disposition toward the Armed Forces, particularly the Navy. He tried to restore

²⁶¹ Chilean Government to British Embassy, 28 JUL 1931. NA, FO 371/15077; A4568/13/9.

²⁶² British Embassy report to Foreign Office, 18 AUG 1931. NA, FO 371/15077; A4921/13/9.

discipline and reformed the naval organization. By then, Ibáñez had practically eliminated its High Command by forcing several senior admirals into retirement and by naming a Commander on active duty to serve as Minister of the Navy. Soon thereafter, he eliminated the Navy Board and the position of Director General of the Navy. In conjunction, and contrary to Ibáñez's efforts, these changes deteriorated the state of discipline even further. The indiscipline would culminate in the Naval Mutiny of 1931.

Ibáñez also attempted to modernize the Navy. He implemented a vast package of reforms, and acquired new ships and aircraft while refitting older vessels. Ibáñez's vastly expansive initiatives were not limited to the Navy. Indeed, he financed several government projects through external loans.

The worldwide economic crisis strained Chile and the government's immense initiatives. The government had to adopt drastic measures to save financial resources and mobilise the Armed Forces and Carabineros to confront the contemporary social upheaval unleashed by the crisis.

In particular, the Navy collaborated by holding and transporting detainees on its ships. As in other antecedent periods of history however, this put the crews in contact with leftist groups and ideology.

The sudden end of Ibáñez's presidency on 26 July 1931, greatly affected political stability until 1 September the initial day of the Naval Mutiny. Three transient Heads of State briefly took power after Ibáñez, provoking instability and uncertainty in key Ministries. All the meanwhile, the government desperately battled the financial crisis amid public discontent with the Armed Forces stemming from its support of the deposed government. Within this context, another reduction in salaries was announced, sparking the Naval Mutiny.

6. THE IMMEDIATE ORIGINS OF THE MUTINY

6.1. Alessandri's plots against Ibáñez.

As previously noted [see section 2.2], Ibáñez did not enjoy universal support within the Armed Forces. The following narrative will disclose that it was not that solid within the Navy. Surprisingly however, sympathy for Ibáñez from the Navy grew despite an initial resistance to his methods. Nevertheless, as discussed below, an attempt at destabilization would have a peculiar influence on the Naval Mutiny of 1931.

Fearing social turmoil and upheaval, the politicians reluctantly accepted the Ibáñez government. Nevertheless, he faced strong opponents, the most important of whom was, undoubtedly, Arturo Alessandri Palma. As previously shown in this thesis, Ibáñez's direct intervention concluded Alessandri's presidency at the end of 1925.

General Ibáñez's government worked vigorously to keep its political enemies in check. The government relegated adversaries to distant corners of Chile or expelled them; among the latter was the former President Alessandri and his family. This, in turn, immediately triggered efforts to depose Ibáñez. These efforts became a ticking time bomb. To the chagrin of its creators, the bomb exploded at exactly the wrong moment after Ibáñez's fall, that is, during the Mutiny of 1931. As with politics, if Ibáñez sensed that an officer from the Armed Forces failed to support him or presented a danger to his regime, he would reassign the officer to a distant garrison, like Tacna, or, if the officer was particularly important, dispatch him to a foreign country, as with Rear Admiral Merino.

Conspiratorial activity started six months after Ibáñez became President. The Military Attaché in the Chilean Legation in London 1928, Colonel Marmaduke Grove-Vallejos, had been Ibáñez's conspiratorial partner between 1924 and 1927. Grove, however, had become disaffected from the General. Major Carlos Millán-Iriarte was another conspirator who had also been commissioned to Europe. According to General Enrique Bravo-Ortiz, who was a close follower of former President Alessandri, Millán visited Grove, and:

'...detailed what is happening in Chile....and... invited him as our representative, to travel to France for talks....This is how we met in Calais

on 16 January 1928, Arturo Alessandri, Marmaduke Grove, Carlos Millán and I. After signing the minutes of the meeting in Calais, we returned the same day; Grove to London and the three of us to Paris. I wrote to Grove days later, asking him to meet me alone to settle some matters still pending from the previous meeting. He responded that we should meet in Dover on 29 February because it was difficult for him to leave England. Thus, we booked two rooms at the Lord Warden Hotel, and met. I wanted to consult with Grove about the names of friends and companions-in-arms of confidence, who we could recruit for our conspiracy....The next day...Grove, accompanied me to the port from which I would return to France. Nearing the pier, Grove and I happened upon Arturo Alessandri and Agustín Edwards. I approached to greet them. Grove greeted only Don Arturo, and left immediately to take his train back to London²⁶³.

Ventura Maturana-Barahona, an attorney and police officer, closely observed these meetings and reported them to the Chilean Government since he had been commissioned to study criminal investigation techniques in Europe²⁶⁴. Major Carlos Sáez, also commissioned to Europe, wrote that:

‘a person whom had infiltrated the revolutionary committee acting in Paris’....reported that...‘Colonel Grove met with Alessandri and other enemies of General Ibáñez’ Government. The meeting had set forth a conspiracy²⁶⁵.

Consequently, upon returning from Europe, Major Millán and a non-commissioned army officer were detained after disembarking in Valparaíso on 7 March 1928. They had with them messages written by the conspirators. The press reported that ‘a communist conspiracy had been discovered’; this was the typical classification given to all conspiracies of that era. The discovery unleashed a harsh reaction from the government. The two detainees were dismissed from the Army. Alessandri’s sons and sons-in-law, among others, and other persons were arrested and scattered between Juan Fernandez Island and Easter Island on the transport *Angamos*²⁶⁶.

²⁶³ Wilfredo Mayorga, *Crónicas Políticas de Wilfredo Mayorga. Del Cielito Lindo a la Patria Joven*, (Santiago. RIL Editores, n.d), pp. 233-234.

²⁶⁴ Ventura Maturana-Barahona, *Mi Ruta, el Pasado, el Porvenir*, (Buenos Aires, no data, 1936), p.36.

²⁶⁵ Sáez, v. III. p. 58.

²⁶⁶ Vial-Correa, v. IV, 1996, p.229.

The Chilean Government seemed to be well informed of the covert activities of its Military Attaché in London. In November 1928, the Chilean Minister in London asked the British Government to authenticate a telegram sent by Colonel Grove from his home on 17 or 18 March of that year. To obtain the certification from the Foreign Office, the Chilean representative argued that: ‘evidence had been discovered showing that Colonel Grove had been engaged in subversive propaganda against his own government in concert with other disaffected subjects’²⁶⁷. In May of 1929, Marmaduke Grove having been dismissed from his position in London, moved to Buenos Aires — a site from which a committee acted in opposition to Ibáñez. The committee was comprised of exiles, among them, Jorge Grove-Vallejos, a dentist and Marmaduke’s brother.

On 8 September, another of Marmaduke Grove’s brothers, Surgeon Lieutenant Commander Eduardo Grove-Vallejos, was appointed to the Chilean Naval Commission in London²⁶⁸. As was common in those years, Eduardo Grove travelled through Buenos Aires, a necessary stop on the way to Europe. On 27 October 1930, he set off as crewmember for the battleship *Latorre* — being refitted in Devonport at the time. While there is no conclusive evidence that he participated in the conspiracy organized by his brothers, Marmaduke and Jorge, his subsequent conduct, however, suggests that he harboured an affinity for his brothers’ ideology. First, when the Mutiny of 1931 broke out on the battleship *Latorre*, it spread to other ships and he was on board the armoured cruiser *O’Higgins* from the day before as part of the ship company. His role in this will be discussed later. Second, on 25 August 1932, the Ministry of the Interior requested that the Navy reassign this medical corps officer to the distant city of Punta Arenas because he was caught engaging in unspecified subversive activities²⁶⁹. Third, the Commander in Chief of the Navy, having subsequently lost confidence in him, unsuccessfully called for his resignation. Fourth, in 1939, the Popular Front coalition government of President Pedro

²⁶⁷ Chilean Embassy, London to Foreign Office, 14 NOV 1928, p.1. NA. FO 371/12752 A7826.

²⁶⁸ Record of Lt Cdr Eduardo Grove-Vallejos. n.d. Officers Records. Bureau of Personnel, Chilean Navy.

²⁶⁹ Official note from Ministry of the Interior to Chilean Navy, 23 AUG 1932. In : Record of Lt Cdr Eduardo Grove-Vallejos. n.d. Officers Records. Bureau of Personnel, Chilean Navy.

Aguirre-Cerda appointed him to serve as Mayor in Viña del Mar²⁷⁰. The Popular Front was comprised of Communist, Socialist and Radical parties. Lastly, another Popular Front coalition government named him Ambassador to Canada, which prompted his retirement from the Navy in 1942. All these facts evince an ideological affinity between the three Grove brothers²⁷¹. Nevertheless, there is no conclusive proof that Eduardo participated in real acts of naval subversion, such as receiving instruction from the Committee for Alessandri in Europe to incite the crews of *Latorre* or *O'Higgins* to act against Ibañez's Government in 1930.

Returning to the narrative at hand, that is, chronicling attempts to destabilise the Ibañez regime, on 22 October 1929, a young miner attempted to assassinate the President. While he managed to fire his revolver, his gun misfired. Upon his arrest, authorities found communist literature in his home. The 1929 Annual Report of the British Embassy deemed the incident the isolated act of a temporarily insane person²⁷².

In 1930, two instances of subversion against the Ibañez Government involved the Navy. First anti-governmental pamphlets were discovered to have been printed at the Navy's Printing Works, located in Santiago at the time. As a result, criminal proceedings ensued. Jorge Grove-Vallejos, the dentist who was a brother of Marmaduke and Eduardo, had participated in the affair. Along with civilians and naval service members, a Naval Court condemned him to sixty days in prison. A higher court, however, absolved Jorge Grove on appeal. Later on, his fate would see him exiled to the distant Chilean town of Calbuco²⁷³. The fact that the Navy was not directly nor institutionally involved in the incident had propagandistic consequences: One of the pillars of governmental power, the Navy, harboured subversive activities without the knowledge of its command²⁷⁴.

²⁷⁰ Record of Lt Cdr Eduardo Grove-Vallejos. n.d. Officers Records. Bureau of Personnel, Chilean Navy.

²⁷¹ Marmaduke Grove-Vallejos was one of founders of the Chilean Socialist Party in 1933. Jorge Grove-Vallejos was part of the same activities as his brother. Both shared exile on Easter Island in the 1930s.

²⁷² Annual Report of the British Embassy to Foreign Office, 2 APR 1930, p.2. NA, FO 371/12752 No. A3453/3453/9.

²⁷³ Vial-Correa, v.IV, 1996, pp. 500-503.

²⁷⁴ Vial-Correa, v. IV, 1996, p.498.

The second incident might have had even greater consequences. On 21 September 1930, Alessandri's supporters attempted to stir an uprising among the men of the garrison in Concepción. Expecting to be greeted by a mixed group of military and naval personnel who had previously agreed to participate in the plan, General Bravo and Colonel Grove arrived on a special flight from Argentina to join them. The episode is known as the 'Complot del Avión Rojo' ('The Red Aircraft Conspiracy'). Nothing went according to plan. General Bravo and Colonel Grove were detained and held at Talcahuano Naval Base. In a demonstration of confidence in the Navy, the government ordered that the two prisoners be carried into exile on Easter Island on a naval transport. According to Ventura Maturana²⁷⁵ the 'Red Aircraft Complot' was the product of the Dover meeting. The British Embassy estimated that the coup against Ibanez's government failed because of the attitude of the most senior officer at the Talcahuano Naval Base. His name was not reported by the informant credited by the Embassy. That senior officer would have opposed the use of arms in any plot of this sort²⁷⁶. Who was then in charge of the Talcahuano Naval Base when the red Aircraft landed in nearby Concepción? Rear Admiral von Schroeders took this position in March 1930 but in August he became Minister of the Navy²⁷⁷, so he moved to Santiago and the senior officer at the base took this duty until the nomination of the next Commander in Chief. He was Rear Admiral Chappuzeau who took this position the day after the arrival of the Red Aircraft on 22 September 1931²⁷⁸. Researching the Navy List for 1930 the senior officer in Talcahuano Naval Base between August and 22 September 1930 probably was Captain José A. Goñi²⁷⁹. These three naval officers are important characters in the Mutiny of 1931.

²⁷⁵ Maturana, p.141.

²⁷⁶ British Embassy report to Foreign Office, 3 OCT 1930, p.1. NA. FO 371/14216 No. A7091.

²⁷⁷ Museo Naval y Marítimo de Valparaíso, *'Almirantes de la República'*, (Valparaíso: Museo Naval y Marítimo, 2009) v. 1, p.231.

²⁷⁸ Museo Naval, 'Almirantes...', v.I, p.216 and Record of RAdm. Roberto Chappuzeau-Cienfuegos, n.d. Officers Records. Bureau of Personnel, Chilean Navy.

²⁷⁹ Record of Captain José A. Goñi-Germain, n.d. Officers Records. Bureau of Personnel, Chilean Navy.

In this context, Maturana also insinuates²⁸⁰ that the conspirators made contact with the officers and sailors of the *Latorre* while this ship was in Devonport. Although he does not offer direct evidence, he firmly avers that:

‘a report from a reliable source indicated that since the conspirators in Paris had undermined the crew’s discipline, the crew would riot upon arriving in Chilean waters under the pretext that the ship’s refitting and repairs had not been paid. The situation was resolved in time; however, the seeds of demoralization had nevertheless been sown on the decks. They would bear their poisonous fruit on 1 September 1931²⁸¹’.

The lack of payment for the repairs does not seem like a plausible basis for the rebellion²⁸². The popularity that Alessandri’s supporters enjoyed among petty officers, and perhaps even among a few officers is a more plausible cause. The influence that Surgeon Lieutenant Commander Eduardo Grove Vallejos might have exerted after becoming part of the crew of the *Latorre* in October 1930, when the ship was moored in Devonport, cannot be discounted. Indeed, Rear Admiral Edgardo von Schroeders-Sarratea provides harder evidence regarding the conspirators influence. When the *Latorre* was in Devonport:

‘...the Revolutionary Committee in Paris sent aboard a special delegate who resolutely presented their cause while the battleship was undergoing repairs. Discontent precipitated by a reduction in allowance for those in foreign duty facilitated the delegate’s task. Given that I was the Minister of the Navy in 1930, I received 30 reports concerning the special delegate’s campaign at year’s end, which I put at the President’s disposition²⁸³’.

Immediately after the Mutiny of 1931 the British Ambassador sent an encrypted cable to his superiors:

‘Each day that passes seems to confirm that the mutiny was caused by small revolutionary committee assisted by communists. They probably received funding from the Chilean revolutionaries in Paris while the *Latorre* was in Plymouth and were aided by communists²⁸⁴’.

280 Maturana, p.141.

281 Maturana, p. 161.

282 Ventura Maturana was probably referring to the reduction in their personal allowances for serving abroad.

283 Von Schroeders, p. 114.

284 Cable from British Ambassador, Santiago to Foreign Office, 10 SEP 1931. NA. FO 371/15077.

This opinion regarding a particular factor that originated the mutiny can be found in other sources also, and will be discussed further below in this thesis.

6.2. Communist plots against political stability.

Thanks to Professor Olga Ulianova, a Russian historian now living in Chile, who has researched in the archives of the Russian Federation, we know something about the activity of the Chilean Communist Party [ChCP] in the 1920s and 1930s [her main publications in this context were mentioned in section 1.2]. To analyze what happened in the ChCP before and after the mutiny, it is necessary to understand this political organization's creation and evolution.

Labouring in the nitrate field was a taxing occupation leading the workers in the late nineteenth century to form organizations to defend their interests. In 1912, Luis Emilio Recabarren-Serrano, a typographer born in Valparaíso, was attracted to their cause. Although he started his political activities initially in Valparaíso, and then in Santiago, it was in northern Chile where he won widespread popular support leading to the creation of 'Partido Socialista Obrero' or Worker's Socialist Party [WSP] in Iquique, a port located in the nitrate producing zone. This political organization grew in particular during the crisis affecting the nitrate industry as a consequence of the steep fall in prices due to the introduction of artificial fertilizers and other factors after World War One.

Political activity in Chile often paid special attention to what was happening in Europe. The ideas and changes that originated in that continent ended up influencing Chile. Olga Ulianova writes: 'It is not a coincidence that all the national press belonging to different trends attach a strong importance and space to the Russian Revolution but almost nothing to the Mexican Revolution²⁸⁵'.

The Bolshevik Revolution caused huge interest and admiration in the WSP, enjoying the support of the nitrate and industrial workers. Luis Emilio Recabarren-Serrano became a candidate for President in 1920. Largely because Arturo Alessandri-Palma enjoyed great popularity among the workers, Recabarren did not fare well. Alessandri, then

²⁸⁵

Ulianova, 2008, p. 102.

a leftist and populist politician did vanquish the traditional rightist parties, while Recabarren became a deputy a year later.

Since its inception in 1889, the Second International remained united, but the international socialist movement was split in 1919. The most revolutionary elements, which formed the Third International, broke away from those belonging to a reformist wing [social democrats and labour]. The Third International started having world congresses. These gatherings formulated different goals for the local parties belonging to this international communist movement. The first convention, which was held in Moscow in 1919, formed the Third International. The Second Congress took place in Petrograd and Moscow in 1920 where the creation of Soviets was stressed. The conditions for local parties close to the communist ideas to become affiliated to the international movement were established in this meeting. The following year, the Third Congress, which was held in Moscow as well, approved the policy of 'United Fronts'. This tactic was stressed in the Fourth Congress held in the Soviet capital in 1922. It called for local communist parties to seek an alliance with workers only, avoiding agreements with the leadership of other parties. In the Fifth Congress [Moscow 1924] the bolshevization of the Communist International called for the various communist parties to adopt the methods and organization of the Soviet Communist Party. The Sixth Congress of 1928, emphasized the adoption of the class struggle. Between this congress and the next one, held in Moscow in 1935, political changes forced the Communist International to abandon the policy of 'United Front' for that of the 'Popular Front'. This last tactic called for the communists to form alliances with socialist, social democratic and labour parties in order to face the menace of fascism which had come to power in Italy and Germany. The consequences in Chile of the policies adopted in those congresses will be seen in the following pages.

In 1922 the members of the WSP held a congress and decided to affiliate to the international communist movement. Recabarren travelled to Moscow to participate in the congress of the Communist International while the WSP became the Chilean Communist Party. Its publications started calling the ChCP as the Chilean Section of the Communist International. Recabarren committed suicide on 19 December 1924, probably due to depression and dissatisfaction about the party's evolution.

The ChCP continued under the conduction of other leaders coming from the old tradition originated in the WSP and this produced some peculiar characteristics during the 1920s. First, the organization did not adopt immediately a cellular structure, violating the

'bolshevization' process. Also, there was a certain independence or autonomy in the way of thinking because: 'The ChCP was created differently from the European or American communist parties in the sense that it was founded without the participation or presence of emissaries of the International²⁸⁶'. Furthermore, the WSP's leaders, operating in a distant and peripheral country such as Chile, lacked a solid education about the Marxist doctrine. Coming from the old WSP they possessed a culture of alliances with groups sharing similar views to achieve the objectives desired by the people they represented and this violated the tactic of 'United Fronts' approved by Moscow.

Initially, the Communist International did not closely follow the events in South America thinking that a revolution would spread more easily to Asia or Africa than in this distant part of the world. As the 1920s progressed, this attitude changed due to the creation of the South American Bureau [or Secretariat] of the Communist International [SAIB] in Buenos Aires. It was initially led by European agents using Latin American communists as instructors or delegates in the local parties. Olga Ulianova saw this way of acting as follows:

'within the Cominternian culture, Eurocentric and messianic, sending delegates to different countries was considered essential to assure an adequate path towards a worldwide revolution. Without knowing many times the different national realities, but convinced of having a new revelation that would save the world, the delegates of the International thought that they were the protagonist of history with capital letters, a sort of new prophets²⁸⁷'.

Another purpose of supervising closely what was happening in the different countries was bringing the local communist parties to a cellular organization with an obedient conduct respecting the resolutions adopted in Moscow. In other words, the bolshevization process decided in Moscow on 1924. One of the delegates reported to his superiors that the ChCP in the mid 1920s was:

'the strongest party in the region, controlling the biggest assembly of unions in those days [FOCH]'.... [Federación Obrera de Chile]...'and having a strong parliamentary representation [eight deputies and two senators] obtained while participating in a wide coalition of the centre and

²⁸⁶ Ulianova, 2008, p. 103.

²⁸⁷ Ulianova, 2008, p. 103. Here the author uses the word Comintern meaning the organization created in the first congress of the Communist International in 1919.

left parties in the 1925 elections. At the same time, it lacked a strong leadership after Recabarren's death²⁸⁸.

This optimistic vision about the situation of the ChCP changed as Colonel Ibáñez began his rise to power in the Government, culminating with his election as President in May 1927. His vigorous repression of communism forced the party to operate clandestinely. Ibáñez's Government wooed the unions away from the ChCP influence, in part by adopting attractive measures for the workers, some of whom were later expelled from the ChCP due to their support for Ibáñez. The most prominent example was Senator Manuel Hidalgo-Plaza and some other members of parliament. Hidalgo was expelled because he was not strongly against Ibáñez and in the late 1920s he followed a Trotskyist trend.

The Ibáñez Government also exiled the leaders of the ChCP either to distant locations within the country, or in some cases, out of Chile. The repression shattered the ChCP's good organization.

In the period of Ibáñez's fall [July 1931] and the Naval Mutiny, the SAIB sent Paulino González-Alberdi, an Argentinean instructor, to Chile. He and fifteen party leaders were arrested in the last days of the General's Presidency. Rufino Rosas, who will be mentioned several times later, was also among the apprehended. After Ibáñez's fall, the newly freed communists devoted their efforts to the imminent presidential election campaign and the reconstruction of the party. Once Paulino González recovered his freedom, he complained about the SAIB's lack of diligence in handling the ChCP and that he and the local party leaders were abandoned. He also pointed to a lack of security in the internal communications between Montevideo and Chile.

When the Comintern organized SAIB, one of the tasks of this regional organism was to achieve the already described bolshevization of the local communist parties, ending their alliances with bourgeois parties or groups. Ulianova wrote about the concern of Paulino Gonzalez regarding the opposite trend of communist Chilean leaders accepting: 'joint actions with the Alessandrists'...coming... 'apparently from the autonomous past, before cominterianism²⁸⁹'. Speculating about this subject, it is possible to think that Alessandrist elements could have been conspiring together with certain communist Chilean

²⁸⁸ Ulianova, 2008, p. 108.

²⁸⁹ Ulianova, 2007, p.287.

leaders against Ibáñez while they were in exile, before the ChCP was under SAIB's control. During this period, contacts with the crewmembers of *Latorre* may have occurred. Nevertheless the research for this thesis did not find clues of this activity, except that these leaders associated with Alessandrist and civilists collaborated in Ibáñez' fall in July 1931.

The subject of the ChCP and SAIB's analysis after the mutiny will be covered later.

In the period when *Latorre* was in Devonport dockyard there were propaganda actions organized by the Communist Party. The archives of the British intelligence and counterintelligence organizations MI5 and MI6 indicate that there were probably other types of actions as well²⁹⁰. Once the Mutiny of 1931 took place in Chile, the Admiralty asked the Commander in Chief of the Naval Base at Devonport if in the barracks the crew of *Latorre* came in touch with communist elements²⁹¹. It was said in Chile, during the same period, that such influence had existed, but without any proof. Vice Admiral Hubert Brandt, answered that: 'The result, as far as the R.N. Barracks is concerned, is that there is no evidence to show that such propaganda was spread whilst the men were accommodated in that establishment²⁹²'. The report adds that respecting the dockyard in Devonport:

'there are several men in the Dockyard who are well known to hold communist views and the possibility of their having been in communication with the men of *Almirante Latorre* undoubtedly exists. No knowledge, of any other such activity in the dockyard is available, and it is thought unlikely that the dockyard would have been used for this purpose when much better facilities were obtainable outside. The following known communists were employed for varying periods on board *Almirante Latorre*: H.A.W. Lovejoy, J. Salisbury, C. Hill and their activities are now being investigated in connection to further communist agitation²⁹³'.

²⁹⁰ The main research done for this thesis on this subject was in the National Archives (NA, Kew, UK) under the sections KV2/595, KV2/2497 and KV3/311 as it will be referenced later.

²⁹¹ Admiralty to Commander in Chief of the Naval Base at Devonport, 25 NOV 1931. NA, KV2/2497 No. 1800/P.0275.

²⁹² Commander in Chief of the Naval Base at Devonport to Admiralty, 26 NOV 1931. KV 2/2497 No. 1800/P.0275.

²⁹³ Commander in Chief of the Naval Base at Devonport to Admiralty, 26 NOV 1931. KV 2/2497 No. 1800/P.0275.

The police services continued investigating the subject because, in addition to the Chilean mutiny, a few days later a great mutiny took place at Invergordon, Scotland, while the Atlantic Fleet was engaged in exercises in the area. The uprising affected ships that had Plymouth [Devonport] as a homeport as well as others from Portsmouth and Chatham. The result of those investigations shows several interesting aspects. The Police Chief in Plymouth wrote to the Head of the Counterintelligence Service sending several documents regarding communist workers belonging to H.M. Dockyard, Devonport, who were engaged in activism²⁹⁴. One of the documents is a report narrating the cause of the delay in the Chilean battleship *Almirante Latorre* leaving Devonport after refitting. It says that one of the crew members had sabotaged the ship while it was in the dockyard²⁹⁵. This document was inside the dossier of John Harold Salisbury whom an intelligence report indicates: ‘was employed on the Chilean battleship *Almirante Latorre* when she was undergoing refit...and came under suspicion in connection with the mutiny occurred in this ship on her return to Chile²⁹⁶. Was it is really possible that communists were acting to subvert discipline in naval forces in the UK and perhaps in other countries? An author studying the Invergordon Mutiny says²⁹⁷ that in March 1928 the Executive Board of the Young Communist International met in Moscow and decided that it was plausible and necessary to form revolutionary soldiers and sailors unions on a local scale. Later that same year the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International agreed to:

‘Make it a practice of inviting young workers not to refuse military service, but to join the Army and the Navy in order to learn, in the interest of the proletariat, the art of war, and to carry on disintegrating work there in the interest of Communism²⁹⁸’.

In the same Congress a prominent Communist said:

²⁹⁴ Police Chief in Plymouth to the Head of the Counterintelligence Service, 24 APR 1932. NA, KV 2/2497. Letter CID/WD.

²⁹⁵ Police Chief in Plymouth to the Head of the Counterintelligence Service, 11 DEC 1931. NA, KV 2/2497.

²⁹⁶ Police Chief in Plymouth to the Head of the Counterintelligence Service, 24 APR 1932. NA, KV 2/2497. Document re John Harold Salisbury. n.d.

²⁹⁷ Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*, (London: Putnam, 1937), p.87.

²⁹⁸ Edwards, p.87.

‘We must intensify our work in the Navy and do everything in our power to build Communist groups there, carrying our systematic agitation amongst the sailors to develop real ferment²⁹⁹’.

This same author writes that when the Royal Navy ships visited foreign ports, they were subjected to propaganda actions from the local Communist Party. Such was the case of HMS *Caradoc*, a cruiser visiting Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires and Montevideo. In this last port: ‘a large number of propaganda leaflets were left on board by visitors to the ship, and communist slogans were chalked on gun-shields and other parts of the ship³⁰⁰’. The organisation in charge of coordinating the actions of the Communist Parties in South America had its headquarters in Montevideo at that time. The events already discussed are evidence of the existence of a policy of subversion of naval forces in all countries.

Other evidence of communist participation is given by Edwards when he writes that Able Seaman Wincott, infamous for his participation in the Naval Mutiny of Invergordon and with a later activity in the British Communist Party:

‘was serving in HMS Norfolk.....HMS Norfolk was manned from Devonport , which was the home port to which she returned after every cruise. In 1931 the dockyard port of Devonport was the link between a number of events. It was in Devonport where the mutiny in HMS Lucia occurred. The later mutiny in the Chilean Navy has been proven to have been due to subversive and mutinous influences picked up by the crew of the Chilean battleship Almirante Latorre when, in 1931, she was being completed after an extensive refit in Devonport dockyard³⁰¹’.

During the investigation made in Chile about the local mutiny, no irrefutable proofs as those suggested by Edwards were found, but there is enough evidence that such influence occurred while the Chilean ship was in Devonport, as said previously and it will be discussed later. Regarding the specific situation of the Chilean Communist Party, it must be said that the Ibáñez government’s vigorous police actions had wrecked this organization. On top of that, the party was split into two antagonistic fractions, one headed by Manuel Hidalgo-Plaza and the other by Elías Lafertte-Gaviño. In addition, during the time of the mutiny of 1931, the party was more concerned about the next presidential election and

²⁹⁹ Edwards, p.88.

³⁰⁰ Edwards, p.88.

³⁰¹ Edwards, p.115.

Hidalgo's impending participation in it. He apparently opposed the political orientation that the South American Bureau of the Comintern [see Glossary] advocated. Olga Ulianova, writes extensively about this subject and her conclusion is that Jan Valtin's hypothesis has no basis in fact when he says that: 'the uprising of the sailors would have been the result of an action of the Communist International, in particular of its maritime unions'³⁰².

To demonstrate her point of view, she writes:

'The documents analyzed before, as well as all Comintern documentation referring to the subsequent analysis, do not confirm such a hypothesis. Nevertheless, it is not possible to disregard that during the trip of the battleship *Almirante Latorre* to Great Britain [1929-1931] members of the crew had become close with members of the English maritime unions who were tied to the International and that some ideas might have penetrated, but this does not mean that there was a political conduction from a Comintern level'³⁰³.

In opposition to what Valtin says, Olga Ulianova characterizes in this way the role of the Chilean Communist Party in the gestation of the Chilean Naval Mutiny of 1931:

'in general terms it is possible to conclude that the communists became aware at a certain distance that there was social unrest in the Navy perhaps by means of a former militant, sympathiser, friend or relative within the service. But as a party, they had no participation in the gestation of it. Moreover, the start of it surprised them because while the delegate of the International was thinking about how to interpret the signals arrived from Coquimbo, the insurrection had already started'³⁰⁴.

The communist leader Elías Lafertte writes in the following terms about the gestation of the mutiny:

'On 1 September, arrived to Santiago, sent by Rufino Rozas, who was in Coquimbo, a comrade whose name was Lobos, who asked to talk to me. He said, certainly in a very agitated way, that he had news that the sailors would rise up, imprison their officers and issue a manifesto to the country and a petition of an economic character to the Government. Some of this petition, in the way explained by this comrade, was not only oriented to the

³⁰² Jan Valtin was a German communist whose real name was Richard Krebs. He was a maritime and stevedore workers' union leader and a clandestine Comintern agent. At the end of the 1930s, he became disappointed with communism and he set up himself in the United States where he wrote his memoirs '*Out of the Night*' which mentions the Chilean Mutiny among other subjects.

³⁰³ Ulianova, 2001, p.85.

³⁰⁴ Ulianova, 2001, p.85.

alleviation of the sailors' lot but also would be beneficial for the whole country. I thought that the movement was extremely interesting and popular in its nature and that it deserved our support³⁰⁵.

Lafertte says that he took Lobos to the Party's Secretariat where he widened his explanations saying that: 'The Warrant Officers and seamen of all the fleet were secretly in agreement to rise up at an order that would come from battleship *Latorre* and that they would sustain the movement until achieving its points of view³⁰⁶.

The Communist party decided that Lobos should avoid publicity in order to keep the rebellion a secret, while they studied a way of supporting the mutiny. Lafertte adds: 'For unknown reasons to me, the mutineers anticipated their movement, and it broke out on 1 September...'. Regarding his personal participation or that of the Communist Party, he writes: 'I have no reason to ascribe to myself things that I have not done. Neither may I credit them to the party....We really helped after, as it will be seen, with the forces we had then...³⁰⁷. He says that other support during the days of the mutiny was the general strike stimulated by the Communist Party. It was obeyed mainly by the tramway workers. The communists in Coquimbo, Santiago and Valparaiso rallied the crowds in those cities expressing that the conditions were ripe for establishing a communist regime³⁰⁸. This shows that rather than organizing a mutiny, what the communists really did was to use it in an effort to achieve their own goals, once it started by its own dynamics.

Manuel Hidalgo also said that his party had no participation in the origin of the mutiny but he adds that it would have helped in establishing a communist regime³⁰⁹.

A US Intelligence Reports says that the Ministry of the Navy stated on September that:

³⁰⁵ Elías Lafertte-Gaviño, *La Vida de un Comunista [Páginas Autobiográficas]* (Santiago: Empresa Editorial Austral, 2 nd. edn, 1971). pp.231-233.

³⁰⁶ Lafertte, p.232.

³⁰⁷ Lafertte, p.232.

³⁰⁸ 'The Chilean Naval Mutiny' (Report) Office Naval Intelligence, October, 1931. The National Archives, USA (NAUSA).

³⁰⁹ Letter from the US Ambassador in Chile W.S. Culberston to the Acting Secretary of State William Castle, 5 September de 1931. NAUSA.

'The mutiny was the outcome of a proposed combined mutiny in all armed forces, planned and promoted by communists. This combined mutiny was to have taken place on 5 September. The reasons for the Navy mutiny beginning on September 1 are as follows: The communist leaders were finding difficulties in organizing the mutiny in the other services and for this reason decided to spring the naval mutiny ahead of the scheduled date....and encourage the other services to join in³¹⁰.

Lieutenant Donald Mc Intyre Griffiths was a student in the School of Telecommunications in 1931. He testified when the events were investigated that a recently retired Lieutenant, Arturo Frederick-Huerta, told him that he wrote a letter to Lieutenant Commander Arturo Young-Ward twenty four hours before the mutiny, reporting to him what was being organized. Frederick was aware of this because he was the owner of a print shop in Valparaíso where a communist newspaper was printed and because of this, he had a good relationship with members of that party without sharing their ideals³¹¹. This is an indirect witness and it is very vague. But it could indicate that in this port there was also some previous knowledge about the mutiny within the local Communists because they were probably contacted by naval personnel as it happened in Coquimbo, a subject covered before in this section.

The Chief Harbourmaster of Coquimbo reported³¹² after the mutiny that during it, some mutineers were seen in civilian clothes entering a place where communists lived. Admiral von Schroeders writes in his book that after his first meeting on board *Latorre* with the mutineers he had a meeting with prominent civilians who offered going to the battleship to talk to the rebels. Von Schroeders writes as well that after this group went on board a delegation of communists did the same and at their return ashore they reported to their followers: 'There is nothing for us on board, there are only "pancistas" [opportunists] on board³¹³, meaning that among the mutineers there were no communists but only people

³¹⁰ Office of Naval Intelligence. October 1931, p.2 and Attaché's Report 7 September 1931, NAUSA serial 138 File 901-200.

³¹¹ Statement: Lt Cdr Arturo Frederick, n.d., CM, v. 1 (V) (456M), pp. 85-99. BUPERS.

³¹² Report by Guillermo Valenzuela, Coquimbo's Chief Harbourmaster to Director of Maritime Affairs, Chilean Navy, 13 APR 1932. CM, v.22 (T), p. 57-58].

³¹³ Von Schroeders, p.28.

with no strong revolutionary convictions. Although the von Schroeders' report is not very clear about the source of this information, it is an element to consider in the evaluation of the involvement of the ChCP in the origin of the mutiny. It seems that the communists went on board and found no one willing to follow their orientation on 2 September.

The conclusion from the writings of Olga Ulianova, Elías Lafertte, Manuel Hidalgo, the Chief Harbourmaster and the Ministry of the Navy about the communist participation in the origin of the mutiny is that it is very likely that there was a relationship between some members of that party in Coquimbo and the crewmembers of the fleet but it is not fully clear what was the influence of this relationship in the origin of the subversion. The mutiny started earlier than the scheduled date, probably because the salary reduction and the *Latorre*'s Commanding Officer's reaction was the detonator needed by the leaders, as will be covered later [in section 7.2]. In those circumstances, the Communist party tried to gain control of the subversive movement only after it had started. Lafertte and Hidalgo, the communist national leaders, denied any personal or corporate involvement in the origin of the mutiny. On the other hand, the Ministry of the Navy maintains categorically that there was a clear communist participation, without giving any evidence and without orienting the investigations, as far as we know, to elucidate this crucial aspect. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the communists tried to take advantage of the mutiny to create a favourable climate for setting up a regime according to their ideas. It is also possible to admit that during the stay in Devonport the communist dockyard personnel working on board *Latorre* would have taken actions on board to attract Chilean crewmembers to their ideas.

Was it possible that there was certain collaboration between members of the CHCP and Alessandrists agents trying to subvert *Latorre*'s crewmembers against Ibáñez? To answer this question the orientation given by the Sixth Congress of the Communist International must be taken into account. It decided to set into action the policy of 'class against class'. As a consequence, the communist believed that the reformism of the Social Democrats would make capitalism more palatable and it would divert the working class from its revolutionary mission. The socialists, following this reasoning, were excoriated as 'social fascists'³¹⁴. The Alessandrists would be considered in this last category by the

³¹⁴ Paul Preston, 'The Great Civil War, European Politics 1914-1945' in *Oxford History of Modern Europe*, ed. By T.C.W Blanning, (Oxford: University Press), p.65.

communists although they never used the label of socialists for themselves. It is not plausible then that there was a plot organized jointly by Alessandrists and Communists due to the last group's policy established in 1928. Joint actions between Communists and Alessandri's followers in 1928 are not credible under the policy of 'class against class'.

6.3. The battleship *Latorre* in Devonport, UK.

In previous sections, the political context of 1931 and the terminal crisis of General Ibáñez government have been covered [see sections 6.1 and 6.2]. It was mentioned as well that the battleship *Latorre* was in Devonport Naval Base [Plymouth] being extensively transformed. In that period the ship was visited by agents belonging to a committee, organized by former President Arturo Alessandri in Paris, in charge of organizing a rebellion against the government.

Among the possible contacts of the Alessandrists exiles might have been Surgeon Lieutenant Commander Eduardo Grove-Vallejos, who in Court Martial stated that while in Europe, he visited Arturo Alessandri-Palma, Enrique Matta-Figueroa and other unidentified exiled Chileans who were his friends. He defended himself by saying that he discussed with them only personal subjects and that he never became aware of their activities against the government. He added that he was not approached for this purpose. He mentions that Matta visited Captain Abel Campos-Carvajal, the commanding officer of *Latorre*, while the ship was in Devonport³¹⁵. Eduardo Grove stated as well that from his arrival in Great Britain to serve on board *Latorre* until this ship returned to Chile, he was always considered suspect by Captain Campos.

An indirect witness is Raúl Rossi-Contreras who lived through the mutiny on board destroyer *Hyatt*. He later reached the rank of Rear Admiral and in his retirement years he gave conferences and was interviewed on this subject. In his opinion, Warrant Officer Ernesto González-Brión, who will appear later as one of the leaders of the mutiny, was less innocent about his contacts with Alessandri's committee than those described in his

³¹⁵

Statement: Lt Cdr Eduardo Grove, CM, v.5 (V), pp.384-385.

book³¹⁶. In one interview he said that Rafael Santibáñez-Escobar, who was Lieutenant Commander on board during the period from the refit in Devonport until the mutiny on board *Latorre*, told him years later that while the battleship was in the dockyard, several officers met with Alessandri's committee. Santibáñez also told him personally that: 'He attended two lunches with Alessandri and with Mr. Mathieu adding that due to his naval political naivety, he did not realize that those meetings had a certain purpose'. Santibáñez added as well that: 'some engineering officers also attended and made political contacts against Ibáñez...' and that ...'the enlisted personnel did the same and González was one who went most frequently'. Rossi added rather imprecisely that: 'There was an accusation against an engineering officer named Morales. It was said that he was a leftist³¹⁷'.

The above evidence seen as a whole, shows that while *Latorre* was in Great Britain, there were meetings between Alessandri's followers and officers and enlisted personnel and the objectives were not merely social. More evidence about this subject became known during the trials [see section 10.2].

Once the work in Devonport was finished, the battleship underwent extensive sea trials under the control of dockyard working parties, ending on 10 December 1930. The Chilean crew again was disembarked and lodged in the barracks. Petty officers and ratings stayed in Exmouth Block, Warrant Officers and Officers in the respective messes, while the dockyard personnel finished the work on board. This ship did not sail again until 11 February 1931³¹⁸. This shows that the Chilean crew was in the right place to become aware of the events taking place on board HMS *Lucia* that were widely described in Plymouth press.

The events on board that submarine support ship were as follows. HMS *Lucia* was scheduled to leave its berthing on 31 December to prepare to sail to Gibraltar but bad weather prevented the ship from departing until the next day, Thursday 1 January 1931. Consequently, the crew could not go ashore for the week end to say farewell to their

³¹⁶ Rossi refers to a book that will be quoted often in the following sections: Ernesto González-Brión, *El Parto de los Montes o la Sublevación de la Marinería*, (Santiago. Talleres Gráficos Cóndor, 1932).

³¹⁷ Raúl Rossi-Contreras, 'La Sublevación de la Marinería, 1 de septiembre de 1931. p.110. (Typewritten mss. Academia de Guerra Naval archive).

³¹⁸ *Latorre's Logbook*, p. 204. Chilean Naval Archives.

families but instead they had to make the ship ready. When this occurred, a group of about thirty seamen locked themselves in an interior department and did not obey when called to fall in and receive orders on Monday 4 January 1931. This group was isolated and taken to the barracks ashore as prisoners. They had to appear in a Court of Inquiry sitting in the Officer's Mess on 7 January 1931³¹⁹. An official statement issued by the Admiralty and published in *The Naval and Military Record* described the events as a 'breakage of discipline' without using the word mutiny. Probably the fears of using this term, as observed by Elihu Rose³²⁰ and by Bell and Elleman³²¹ were present [see section 1.3].

The investigation concluded that one of the crewmembers should be dismissed from the service and four others should appear in a Court Martial, where they were sentenced to six months of hard labour. Later, there were public complaints on how this case was handled and as a result, some officers were punished and at the same time the sentences imposed by the Court Martial were commuted, although the decision to dismiss one of the sailors stood³²². There is something very similar about this case with what happened in Chile, as will be mentioned later [see section 10.2].

It is not known what influence, if any, the HMS *Lucia* mutiny had on the Chilean crewmembers. It is possible that the leniency extended to the *Lucia* mutineers may have been an encouragement for insubordination of the Chilean sailors nine months later. Although in the later statements of the Chilean mutineers there are no references to those events, we know about the friendship between the Chilean and British crews in Devonport. The depth of this relationship is a mystery, but it was solid enough as the news of the Chilean mutiny had an impact on some sailors in the Royal Navy³²³.

³¹⁹ 'Admiralty Statment', *The Naval and Military Record*, 7 January 1931. p.30.

³²⁰ Rose, pp. 561-574.

³²¹ Bell&Elleman, p.3.

³²² Anthony Carew, *The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy 1900-1939: The Invergordon Mutiny in Perspective* (Manchester University Press, 1981), p.141. The following recent publication studies the aftermath of the HMS *Lucia* mutiny: Michael Farquarson-Roberts, 'The *Lucia* Mutiny, a failure of the Royal Navy's internal communications', *RUSI Journal*, April 2009, Vol. 154 No. 2 pp. 104–107.

³²³ Alan Ereira, *The Invergordon Mutiny*, (London: Routledge&Keegan Paul, 1981),p. 55.

At that time the ports of England's southwest suffered a deep economic depression and this may be the origin of the following press comment: 'At times nearly 2,000 men have been employed in the ship...*Latorre*...and the work of this character is specially welcome as so large a proportion of the total outlay is devoted to labour³²⁴'. We also know from general research done for this thesis that there were communist agitators at that time in the British naval bases and dockyards, as was discussed [see sections 5.2 and 6.2].

In January 1931 all Ship's Company positions were filled with personnel arrived from Chile to end the sea trials and to sail to Valparaíso. Until then, only a part of the crew stayed in Devonport while the battleship was under dockyard control.

The final weeks of the battleship's stay in Devonport was divided among sea trials and final preparations for the trip, including social acts of farewell with the local authorities. All this was covered by the press. The Lord Mayor of Plymouth presented a silver tray to the battleship stressing: 'the employment for two years given to 2,000 British workers and for the splendid behaviour observed by the ship's crew³²⁵'. This last quotation was closely related to the fact that unemployment had suddenly risen from one million workers in the 1920's to two and a half million at the end of 1930, representing 20% of the total national work force³²⁶. The Commander in Chief of the Naval Base also presented in the same ceremony a gift purchased by the workers of the dockyard for the crew of the battleship.

Latorre sailed to Chile via the Panama Canal under the command of Captain Abel Campos-Carvajal, arriving to Valparaíso on 12 April 1931. A few days later Captain Campos was promoted to Rear Admiral and replaced by Captain Alberto Hozven-Azola. On 8 May 1931 Admiral Campos took the position of Commander in Chief of the Active Fleet. His Flagship was the armoured cruiser *O'Higgins*. The recently arrived battleship was not part of this naval force but was the flagship of the 'Escuadra de Instrucción' [Training Squadron]. This remained the current organization of naval forces until the mutiny.

³²⁴ *The Naval and Military Record*, 28 January 1931, p. 30.

³²⁵ *Latorre's Logbook*, p. 205. Chilean Naval Archives.

³²⁶ Stephen Constantine, *Unemployment in Britain between Wars*, (London: Longman, 1980).

The battleship arrived with the following innovation in its organization which would have a consequence in the mutiny of 1931. The Royal Navy had adopted a new system of spare parts management called Central Stores. The people in charge of the system would be the supply specialists [store keepers] but in the Chilean Navy this type of personnel was only in charge of pantries and payment of salaries. Because of this change, the Bureau of Personnel selected civilians who had basic knowledge of accounting to become leading ratings. This new personnel was sent to *Latorre* for a training period on this subject³²⁷. Manuel Astica-Fuentes was one of these leading ratings. He was twenty five years old in 1931 and before he had been editor in chief of *El Día de Talca*, a local newspaper in a town in central Chile. He also collaborated in two newspapers in Valparaíso and was an active participant in social movements organised by the Catholic Church [see section 3.2].

Another prominent group of the future mutineers was the schoolmasters. These people were elementary school teachers who were in charge of instructing in reading and writing to illiterate crewmen. The schoolmasters were part of the crew in many ships and shore establishments and although some of them were very young, they were admitted in the Navy with the rank of chief petty officer.

Carlos Aguirre Vío lived that period on board the ships of the fleet as an officer. He says that the Bureau of Personnel was negligent in selecting these personnel and because of this, some of them: ‘were admitted without any military training and without checking their personal records³²⁸. A record verification would have revealed Astica’s extensive political activity before entering the Navy.

6.4. Before the mutiny in Chile: salary reductions.

The Government that followed that of General Ibáñez had to face an acute economic crisis. One of the measures adopted in the belief that it would attenuate the most acute problem of that period was a reduction of expenditures. One way to achieve this goal was to reduce salaries. The Ibáñez Government had used this tool in 1930 and tried to do the

³²⁷ Mayorga, pp. 350-351.

³²⁸ Carlos Aguirre-Vío ‘Mis recuerdos de la Escuadra en 1931’, *Revista de Marina*. N° 120/877; 6/2003, p.592.

same again in 1931, but it had no time to apply this measure before falling from power. The next Government tried to make a new salary reduction in July 1931 and the newspapers even announced it, reporting the percentages of reductions to be applied. Finally, the measure was postponed until the following month.

The Minister of Finance, Pedro Blanquier-Teyletche, checked in those days with the Minister of War, General Carlos Sáez, and with the Minister of the Navy, Rear Admiral Calixto Rogers-Cea, about the measures of closing the officers' schools and reducing the salaries in both services. Sáez says that he visited all Army units in Santiago trying to explain these ideas in hopes of making them acceptable³²⁹. The writings of this Army officer, plus a telegram sent by the Government to all the Embassies in Santiago on 15 August 1931, show that the Government was conscious that the reduction of the administrative expenditures could not be excessive if it was to avoid widespread public unrest³³⁰.

The newspapers in Santiago and La Serena published the statements of the Minister of Finance about the reductions that would be applied to the salaries in order to attenuate the deficit in the governmental accounts. Blanquier's statements had a confusing language and perhaps this exaggerated the fears of the affected personnel, since the La Serena newspaper was read on board the fleet anchored in nearby Coquimbo. He said initially that a reduction of 12% would be applied to the annual salaries below \$ 3,000 and 30% to the higher salaries. This first statement caused deep concern on board the ships since it affected even the lower ranks. The crews remembered very well the reduction of 10% already applied, as well as a reduction in the bonuses for specialists and for the different geographical areas where they performed their duties. *Latorre's* crew in particular, remembered that the government halved the 150% bonus given to crews serving abroad when they were still returning the monies received in advance before the trip to Devonport.

At the end of August, Blanquier finally cleared up this subject. *El Mercurio de Valparaíso* on 28 August 1931 published the instructions issued by the minister two days earlier. The salaries of this month would be paid with reductions: those below \$250 [equivalent to \$3,000 annual] would suffer a discount of 12%. The salaries higher than that

³²⁹ Sáez, v. III, p. 20.

³³⁰ Transcription of Telegram from Chilean Government to Embassies in Santiago, 13 NOV 1931. NA, FO 371/15080 No. A6703/544/9.

amount would also have a 12% discount up to \$250 and over that amount the reduction would be of 30%. Also, the amounts discounted might be used to pay up to 50% of housing loans.

The amounts discounted would be recorded in order to be returned later, without specifying a date. From the introduction of the idea of salary reductions in July there was concern in the naval personnel. One reaction to this is reported by Arturo Niño de Zepeda³³¹, an officer in the Arsenal of Valparaíso, who stated in Court Martial that a boatswain in the Communications Shop told him, regarding the 30% reduction, that if the officers would not defend the crews' interests they would defend the officers' interests. He reported all this to his commanding officer who recommended him to advise the men that they would have to endure this situation with patriotism.

Midshipman Carlos Aguirre a witness of that period on board a destroyer writes about Blanquiers's plans:

'This public news naturally arrived to Coquimbo and the unrest of the crews became evident; commanding officers and executive officers talked frankly to the crews and this was done in *Hyatt* while discipline was maintained normally³³².

In *O'Higgins*, Lieutenant Roberto Nieto von Seitz overheard Torpedo Leading Rating Pedro Salas-Robles talking to other crewmembers about the idea of refusing the reception of the reduced salary, and he reported this to the Executive Officer. This conversation took place during August gunnery exercises. The Lieutenant said that he was with another officer and he had the impression that the ratings wanted the officers to become aware of their conversation³³³.

Warrant Officer González writes in his book that the officers of *Latorre* asked the Commanding Officer, Captain Hozven, around mid August, to request that the Government avoid the salary reductions but he did nothing. He also writes that the officers of *O'Higgins* met on 24 and 25 August to analyse the situation and: 'they agreed to advise the crew that they should present a request in writing...to be submitted to the

³³¹ Statement. Lt Cdr Arturo Niño de Zepeda, 11 SEP 1931, CM, v.1(V) (456M), pp.121-124. BUPERS.

³³² Aguirre-Vío, p.254.

³³³ Statement: Lt Roberto Nieto, 2 NOV 1931, CM, v. 4(V) (456I), p.437. BUPERS.

Government³³⁴. Further, he writes that on board *Latorre*, on 26 August, the officers: ‘talked to the ratings advising them to submit by means of regular channels a written petition asking to suppress the reduction in salaries³³⁵, which was a legitimate way to present complaints in the Chilean Navy. In this way, this author insinuates that it was the officers who incited the crewmembers to complain when the reductions in salaries were announced, but his affirmations are not supported by his own statements or the statements of other witnesses in Court Martial. When he wrote his book he was already condemned because of his role in the mutiny and he needed a justification for his actions. For this reason, readers should view with suspicion these claims.

Accordingly to von Schroeders the last Government’s statement about the reductions: ‘recognized that that these had been exaggerated by the public. Unfortunately this...’[statement]...‘was dated 1 September...and did not arrive on time...’ because the mutiny had already started. He considered that due to this last reason, this statement was ‘late and the evil had been done already³³⁶. There is no doubt that the Government had been careless in the treatment of such a sensitive subject. It did not notify the affected group in a clear and precise way about the measures decided and when it tried to do so, it used press statements that were confusing and too late.

In the investigation made after the mutiny, it became clear that the Commander in Chief of the Active Fleet, Rear Admiral Abel Campos-Carvajal became aware about the reductions only after reading them in the press. He then asked the Undersecretary of the Navy on 29 August, to clarify the subject due to the confusion about the percentages and reach of the measures. He did not get an answer on time. This is an indication of the lack of organization and a careless attitude in the Government. There is clear evidence in the Court Martial proceedings that the officer in charge of paying the salaries in the Active Fleet sent several documents asking Valparaíso about this subject and he had no answer³³⁷. Rear Admiral Campos would state in Court Martial later that Captain Alberto Hozven-Azola told him before the mutiny that he was aware that his ship company would present him with a

³³⁴ González, p. 8.

³³⁵ González, p. 8.

³³⁶ Von Schroeders, p.9.

³³⁷ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (456I), p.3. BUPERS.

memorandum about the salaries but he was not going to accept it. Even with all this previous knowledge, very little was done to prevent such a serious event as a mutiny.

How the idea of submitting a complaint about the salary reductions by regular channels turned into a mutiny is the subject of next part of this thesis.

PART II: THE MUTINY

7. COQUIMBO.

7.1. Organizing a mutiny in Coquimbo, Chile.

As has been mentioned before, at the end of August 1931, two independent naval forces were anchored in Coquimbo. One was the Active Fleet with its flagship the armoured cruiser *O' Higgins*. The other was the Instruction Squadron with its flagship the battleship *Latorre*. The units of both forces at that time are set out in Appendix B below. The Active Squadron had recently arrived from exercise under the Command of Rear Admiral Abel Campos-Carvajal. The other force was under the command of Captain Alberto Hozven-Azola who was also the commanding officer of *Latorre* and it went to sea seldom due to the economic crisis of the period.

Three possible organizers of the mutiny will be analysed in this section: A former minister, the local Communist Party and the naval personnel on board the ships.

After the fall of General Ibáñez regime, his former Minister of Interior, Captain Carlos Frödden settled in Coquimbo. Because he had been an important minister in that Government, he was visited by two commanding officers of ships belonging to the Active Squadron. This action gave rise to the suspicion that he was organizing a coup to bring back Ibáñez to the Government. Consequently, Frödden sent a letter to Admiral Campos requesting him to order fleet officers to avoid making such visits and at the same time, he met the Governor of that province to dismiss these suspicions. The governor recommended him to leave Coquimbo and the same advice was repeated later by some of his naval visitors. This suggestion was reinforced when some popular anti- Frödden demonstrations erupted. Frödden finally decided to move away to another place in the countryside.

The investigation done after the mutiny demonstrated that Frödden's presence in Coquimbo had no influence on the events. Part of the suspicion arose from the fact that after leaving the Cabinet for the first time years ago he stated that he wanted to return to the

fleet. Such wishes were twisted by other people, who said that he really wanted to obtain the command of the fleet to place again General Ibáñez in the Government.

One of the investigative lines followed by the prosecutor after the mutiny was to research everyone who had visited Carlos Frödden and to discover what exactly they had discussed during such visits. This investigation concluded that there was no link between the former Minister and the mutiny³³⁸.

Lieutenant Commander Niño de Zepeda also stated³³⁹ that the officers of the cruiser *O'Higgins* told him while the ship was in this port, that communist pamphlets were distributed on board when the fleet had been in Coquimbo. Commander Samuel Ward-Rodríguez would state later in Court Martial:

‘the evidence about the communist feature of the mutiny is the distribution of pamphlets in Coquimbo some of them found on board *Latorre* and *Orella*. I reported this to the Commodore³⁴⁰, [Captain Hozven].

In section 6.2., the activities of the Chilean Communist Party during Ibáñez’s regime were covered. The conclusion was that this political party was not in position to organize a mutiny in the Armed Forces in August 1931. Placing pamphlets on board the ships in Coquimbo was probably an action initiated by local communists with contacts with crew members. Further analysis about communist participation is included in sections 11.1 and 12.4.

Now the actions of the crew members will be covered. Warrant Officer Class One Ordnance Mechanic Victoriano Zapata-Salinas, who would later play a prominent part in the mutiny, stated in Court Martial that the movement had been under way days before it erupted; he could not be precise in giving dates but in accordance to what he heard, the gunner and supply ratings assembled secretly and they had the support of all ships in the fleet. They also wrote letters to the ships in the southern region and to the Army regiment in La Serena, close to Coquimbo³⁴¹. This shows that the mutiny was not an action developed

³³⁸ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (456I), p.45. BUPERS.

³³⁹ Statement. Lt Cdr Arturo Niño de Zepeda, 11 SEP 1931, CM, v.1(V) (456M), pp.121-124. BUPERS.

³⁴⁰ Statement: Cdr Samuel Ward, n.d., CM, v.5 (V), p.37. BUPERS.

³⁴¹ Statement: Warrant Officer Victorino Zapata, 13 SEP 1931, CM, v.7(V) (456A), pp.54-58. BUPERS.

only on the afternoon of 31 August as some writers have stated. There is enough evidence presented in the last section that there were some ideas about opposing another salary reduction but when the press confirmed, on 28 August, the rumours started two weeks earlier, those ideas were transformed into plans.

Manuel Astica, the Supply Leading Rating recently contracted by the Navy, gave a somewhat different version about the immediate origin of the mutiny, decades after the events. He says that the warrant and petty officers of *Latorre* decided on the presentation of a written document asking that the salary reduction should not become effective and that Electrical Leading Rating Manuel Labra asked him that the recently contracted supply ratings help the warrant and petty officers in drafting it. Astica says:

‘we drafted a short text. It was very respectful, stressing that the salaries of the crews in those days were barely enough to sustain a very modest living. The petition started circulating simultaneously through *Latorre* and the rest of the units anchored in Coquimbo³⁴²’.

It is very likely that the warrant and chief petty officers had chosen to present a petition, while the ratings were in favour of a more radical action.

There is some evidence that on the last weekend of August 1931 [Saturday 29 and Sunday 30] crewmembers held secret meetings on board and ashore.

The Active Squadron had anchored in Coquimbo on Saturday 29 August after being at sea during the previous weeks. In those meetings, the ratings were the majority and of these the gunners were the most active. Boatswain rating Thomas Moore-Hodges says³⁴³ that the night before the mutiny there was a meeting of the *O’Higgins* crewmembers where they learned that on the next night, at 04:00, *Latorre* was going to give a signal to imprison its officers. The idea was to treat the prisoners well unless they resisted their imprisonment. It was decided to adopt different actions than petitioning to put pressure for the abolition of the reductions.

Some other crewmembers knew about the meetings but almost nobody reported them to their superiors. Steward Ordinary Rating Ramón León-Concha stated in Court Martial that:

‘I listened on the wharf to some sailors and they were saying that the crews were unhappy about the reductions and that they would protest. The next

³⁴² Mayorga, pp.266-280.

³⁴³ Statement. Rating Thomas Moore, n.d., CM, v.2 (V), p.189. BUPERS.

day was a Sunday and I did not see the Commanding Officer, but I told him this on Monday³⁴⁴, [31 August 1931].

In the investigation conducted after the mutiny there is enough evidence that on Monday 31 August and even before, some officers of both squadrons received some vague hints of demonstrations expressing dissatisfaction.

One of these officers was Lieutenant Arturo Fernandois-Sánchez of *Riquelme* who informed his Commanding Officer and Executive Officer of the plot. Something similar happened with Lieutenant Víctor Flores-Cammas of *Lynch* who also talked about this subject with Lieutenant Commander Arturo Valle-Fierro of *Latorre*. On the night of Sunday 30 August several officers met on the *O'Higgins* to have dinner. According to the statement of Lieutenant Commander Guillermo Martínez-Valdés, they commented on the rumours and about the lack of discipline demonstrated by the crews. Also attending that dinner was the Chief of Staff of the Active Squadron, Commander Emilio Daroch-Soto and the Commanding Officer of destroyer *Aldea*, Commander Luis Bahamondez-Torrejón. Martínez suggested that Daroch should report this situation to Admiral Campos³⁴⁵. Daroch stated³⁴⁶ that the day before one of his informants on board one of the ships of the Instruction Squadron stated that the crewmembers were planning 'to make a regular representation about the situation which they will be in after the reduction in their salaries' and he reported this information to Admiral Campos on the same day, on 29 August.

Lieutenant Luis Morales-Reyes was an engineer on board *Latorre*. He stated as well in court that on Sunday 30 August he heard rumours that the crews of the destroyers would protest about the salary reductions and the next day he assembled his personnel to ask them directly if they knew what was going on. When he arrived to the conclusion that the

³⁴⁴ Statement: Rating steward Ramón León-Concha, 19 NOV 1931, CM, v. 3 (V) (456C), pp.462-463. BUPERS.

³⁴⁵ Statement.Lt Cdr Guillermo Martínez, 30 OCT 1931, CM, v. 4(V) (456D), pp.198-199. BUPERS.

³⁴⁶ Statement: Cdr Emilio Daroch, 11 SEP 1931, CM, v. 2(V) (456D), pp.44-46. BUPERS.

rumours were credible, he reported to his superior officer and this is how the news arrived that morning to the Executive Officer and the Commanding officer of the battleship³⁴⁷.

Commander Julio Pinto-Farías and Lieutenant Commander Víctor Espejo-López of the Engineering Department of *Latorre*, also heard rumours which they relayed to Commander Alberto Obrecht-Herrera, the Executive Officer before 11:30 on 31 August, with the request that Captain Hozven should be informed. The defence attorneys of this Commanding Officer stated³⁴⁸ that Obrecht did not comply with this essential duty.

Warrant Officer Gonzalez adds in his book that the officers suggested that the enlisted personnel should name committees that would meet in *Latorre* and who would present their petitions at the same time, on 31 August at 14:00, but the committees of *O'Higgins* and *Videla* brought forward this action to 29 August. This procedure of acting collectively clearly contravened the naval discipline codes in Chile. It must be stressed that González's writings about the officers' support of the mutineers are not confirmed by the prosecutors reporting to the Court Martial.

When he was questioned about this specific point González's Court Martial testimony did not report any participation of officers. Not even when he presented his discharge through his attorney³⁴⁹. On the other hand, he said in Court Martial that the process, meaning the mutiny, was generated in the Ratings' Mess and that the most prominent participants were the gunner leading ratings Víctor Villalobos-Martínez, Juan Bravo-Quiñones, Eleodoro Labra-Salinas; the supply leading ratings Manuel Astica-Fuentes, Augusto Zagal-Anabalón and René Jara-Sandoval; the Electrical Ordinary Rating Luis Pérez-Barrientos and the Electrical Leading Rating Manuel Bastías. To this group it must be added Supply Petty Officer Lautaro Silva-Silva. González made these charges because these were the first ratings who went to talk to Ordnance Mechanic Warrant Officer Class One Victoriano Zapata-Salinas and Electrician Warrant Officer Class Two

³⁴⁷ Statement: Lt Luis Morales-Reyes, 21 DEC 1931, CM, v. 4 (V) (456D), p.462. BUPERS.

³⁴⁸ Statement: Defence Attorney of Capt. Hozven, n.d., CM, v. 6(V) (456D), p.83. BUPERS.

³⁴⁹ Statement: Warrant Officer Ernesto González, 12 SEP 1931, CM, v.7(V) (456A), pp. 357-362. BUPERS.

Juan Méndez-Urdero about submitting a written petition. Their objective was to gather the crew's opinions first, before starting the mutiny³⁵⁰.

Warrant Officer González stated³⁵¹ that Captain Hozven talked to him about the rumours of unrest on the morning 31 August and that he reported to him that 'it seemed that it was a matter of a representation that the crewmembers [including *Latorre*'s ship company] were going to submit'. He adds³⁵² that Captain Hozven told him that the Executive Officer had reported to him that the crews of *Riquelme* and *Videla* would refuse to be paid. These two ships did not belong to the force commanded by Hozven. González is telling the truth about this specific topic since Hozven's report about the mutiny, dated 9 September 1931, expresses his disillusionment about Gonzalez's loyalty writing that:

'this man was no less than my most trusted Warrant Officer who had in his hands the official documents. He was recommended by former officers; he was held in high esteem...he reported to me in a very loyal fashion and very confidentially the dissatisfaction of the crew about the salary reductions and the protest that would take place³⁵³'.

Another paragraph of Hozven's document confirmed that González informed him of the above on the morning of 31 August. That same morning an informant told Commander Daroch and Admiral Campos: 'that the demands of the crews were extending to other ships³⁵⁴'.

After receiving that information given by González, Hozven decided to summon the crew to fall in on the after deck of *Latorre* in the afternoon. He summoned as well a delegation of twenty men with the Commanding Officers and the Executive Officers from each destroyer of his force.

³⁵⁰ Statement: Warrant Officer Ernesto González, 12 SEP 1931, CM, v.7(V) (456A), pp. 357-362. BUPERS.

³⁵¹ González, p. 9.

³⁵² Statement: Defence Attorney of Capt. Hozven, 9 SEP 1931, CM, v.6 (V) (456D), p.82. BUPERS.

³⁵³ Narrative by Captain Hozven, 9 SEP 1931 p. 12. CM, v.1 (456A), p.11. BUPERS.

³⁵⁴ Statement: Cdr Emilio Daroch, 11SEP 1931, CM, v. 2(V) (456D), pp.44-46. BUPERS.

Meanwhile, Commander Obrecht told Lieutenant Commander Rafael Santibáñez that there were certain rumours that the crews intended to make a representation in which they would request, among other things, the resignation of the Minister of Finance. Santibáñez proposed that the Divisional Officers gather their personnel to discuss the subject in order to know their opinion about this matter. Obrecht agreed but said that due to the timing and to the instruction schedule these meetings could not be held, which is not credible. Obrecht also did not report this conversation to Hozven and worse, when the Commanding Officer called him to comment about what González had told him, the Executive Officer declared³⁵⁵ that he was ignorant about this subject.

These events show that there was a considerable failure to communicate among the officers and Commanding Officers of both squadrons and also between the Commanders in Chief. Although anchored in the same bay they did not share the reports nor the rumours which revealed that discipline was breaking down and that trouble was brewing.

Certain mutineers, and later the press, stated that they were encouraged by the officers to complain. There is no clear evidence to substantiate these statements. Instead it seems that they were mere excuses to get less rigorous sentences. Those who made this type of statement point to the three engineering officers, Pinto, Espejo and Morales on board *Latorre* already mentioned. Warrant Officer González mentions also Lieutenants Commanders Valle and Aurelio Labbé, Lieutenant Aníbal Rojas and Midshipman Víctor Normandín without offering any proof and without stating his allegation in the Court Martial. Lieutenant Commander Espejo stated³⁵⁶ that after midday on 31 August stoker Erasmo Jofré Olivares met him, warning that there was a petition about the reduction in salaries which would be presented and he answered: ‘you should only do that if it is going to be presented according to the rules’. This information was transmitted by Jofré to the members of the Ratings’ Mess³⁵⁷ and probably it was misinterpreted there and interpreted as a sign of support from the officers for a seditious action. It is possible that certain attitudes of the officers, as those already described, could have been interpreted by those

³⁵⁵ Statement: Defence Attorney of Capt. Hozven, 9 SEP 1931, CM, v.6 (V) (456D), p.83. BUPERS.

³⁵⁶ Statement: Lt Víctor Espejo, n.d., CM, v. 4(V) (456I), p.49-50. BUPERS.

³⁵⁷ González, p.11.

who were planning a mutiny, in a sense that there was a certain benevolence to the complaints. The officers' behaviour should be considered in the climate of economic problems affecting everybody. The prosecutors did not investigate this subject rigorously and every time they questioned the officers on this subject they received strong denials.

The assembly ordered by the Commander in Chief of the Instruction Squadron, Captain Hozven after the conversation with González described above, took place on the afterdeck of *Latorre* starting at 13:45. He writes: 'I made it as solemn as the occasion required. The officers attending wore swords and the crew was dressed in blue uniforms³⁵⁸'. The formality shows the importance given to this act and what it meant to face this situation. He adds that after the ceremony he drafted a note for the Ministry of the Navy that he had no time to post before the mutiny started. Not sending his information by radio of what was going on board shows that Hozven did not consider the situation as being very serious, because he knew that a note sent by mail took at least a couple of days to arrive to Santiago.

At the assembly, Captain Hozven read a speech he drafted earlier, stating that it had come to his knowledge that a group of crewmembers of the battleship were seeking adherents to request the dismissal of the Minister of Finance and to refuse to accept the reduced payments ordered by the Government. He criticized those who initiated these actions, characterizing them as anti patriotic characters and promising to punish them harshly. He did not consider it worthwhile to explain that the reductions were really a loan to the Government affecting mainly the higher paid ranks, that part of the amount reduced could be applied to pay home loans and that the government would repay the loan. Neither did he mention the possibility that those affected could present complaints according to the Navy's regulations and that these would be sent to the Ministry of the Navy in the quickest possible way. He limited himself to chastising his subordinates without indicating that he understood their situation.

In the final paragraphs of his speech he said:

'Finally I will state that patriotism does not mean to sing the national anthem or to honour the flag everyday. No! Patriotism has a much wider and higher meaning and it has other significance that you seem to be

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Narrative by Captain Hozven, 9 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (456A), p.5. BUPERS.

unaware of. The fatherland needs its sons not only in war but also now, in peace, to be saved from this crisis oppressing it³⁵⁹.

In the speech final line he called to dismiss the ceremony with the cry of: Viva Chile! [Long Live Chile!]: the usual way to end fall in at this time. This expression was answered very reluctantly by a majority of the attendance, but enthusiastically by some cadets who were in a training period on board the battleship.

Hozven's speech shows a rigid concept of discipline without trying to dissuade the crewmen from joining a mutiny. He did not try to explain that the High Command of the Navy and the Government were trying to attenuate the problems affecting the crewmembers. Also, his passivity in failing to adopt effective preventive measures when the uprising was imminent is noticeable. In his later acts he would prove himself to be a rigid officer, distrustful of his subordinates, in particular of his officers whom he would indirectly blame for the ensuing uprising.

A weekly magazine published an article a couple of weeks after the events reporting that after Hozven's speech some ratings went ashore and met members of leftist groups and received advice about future actions. The first manifesto [Appendix A.2] would have been drafted in that meeting. There is no other evidence about this meeting ashore³⁶⁰.

Upon observing the situation after his speech, Captain Hozven ordered Commander Obrecht, his second in command in *Latorre*, who was also the Chief of Staff in the Instruction Squadron, to go to report in person the situation to Rear Admiral Campos, the Commander in Chief of the Active Squadron. On this same occasion, he ordered that all officers should carry pistols. These two measures were deficiently complied with. Hozven had to repeat the order to Obrecht to have it obeyed. When this Commander finally arrived at the flagship of the other squadron, he did not meet the Admiral and decided to report to Commander Daroch, the Chief of Staff of that force, who reported later to Admiral Campos, as soon as he could and a few hours before the mutiny.

The arming of the officers of *Latorre* was not completed because there were not enough pistols or revolvers for everybody. Worse, the duty officer did not receive a handgun. Nothing was done in respect to the main weapon systems, nor with the rifles

³⁵⁹ Narrative by Captain Hozven, 9 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (456A), p.6. BUPERS.

³⁶⁰ ¿Está a Salvo el Honor de la Oficialidad de la Marina?, *Revista Sucesos*, 1 OCT 1931, p.24.

stored in the gun racks located outside the officers' cabins. The watch officer received orders to patrol the decks frequently and he complied by means of the midshipmen instead of doing it by himself. The midshipmen did not discover two clandestine meetings that occurred in the afternoon and the evening of 31 August.

According to Warrant Officer González, the first meeting took place at 16:00 on 31 August in the Hydraulics Machinery Department of *Latorre*. The fact that this meeting took place shows the critical failure of the Commanding Officer and the rest of the officers to react when they discovered the crew's hostility. In that meeting, the rebels decided to take control of the ship by agreeing to the following steps³⁶¹:

- a. Send delegates to all ships to convince the crews to imprison all officers and take control of the unit.
- b. Draft a manifesto explaining the objectives of the movement and obtain the signatures of all crewmembers. Also obtain the officers' signatures, but on a different page.
- d. Request a statement about the decision adopted by the crews from the warrant and petty officers immediately.
- e. Name a Staff and an Executive Committee to assume control of the fleet as soon as the movement acted. (The books of that period called *Crew's Staff* [Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones] this de facto, informal collective sort of organism. It had delegates from all ships and it made the political decisions. They used for themselves the word Staff probably because it was a prestigious word and they wanted to avoid unionism or political connotations and to avoid personal responsibilities. Due to this reason they never recognized single leadership of one individual.)
- f. Set a signals plan to communicate with all ships.
- g. Seize hand weapons, rifles, and ammunition and be ready to seize control at 04:00.

The above plan seems to be authentic since what happened later followed it precisely. Not only is it remarkable for its simplicity, but it indicates that the rebels must have decided their actions days before the mutiny because organizing such a plan demands time.

³⁶¹

González, p.11.

As stated by Warrant Officer Victorino Zapata³⁶² of the *Latorre* and discussed earlier in this thesis [in this section and in 6.4], some crew members had been plotting and trying to extend their ideas more widely for days before the mutiny began.

Another indication of the above is a letter sent from the cruiser *O'Higgins* by somebody named Mellado [who has not been fully identified in the research for this thesis] to Rating Manuel Neira-Neira who was on board *Condell* being repaired in Talcahuano Dockyard. The letter is dated on 31 August and postmarked in Talcahuano 3 September. It says:

‘Neira, tell me your situation in Talcahuano due to the infamous reduction of 30% in the salaries because, I tell you, tomorrow 1 September, we will present our first complaint and if we are not listened to, we will let you know, as you deserve to know. We all agreed in the Active and Instruction Squadrons that at 23:30 a signal will be raised in *Latorre* and in the rest of the ships: we will send a letter as well to those of Talcahuano and of the submarines, to strike with strength. I pray to God that we all prevail³⁶³’.

Zapata’s statements and Mellado’s letter are indications that the idea of extending the mutiny to Talcahuano and perhaps to other places, was present among the mutineers but sending letters was perhaps a last minute idea.

It will also be discussed later that the mutiny in Talcahuano started precisely on a ship belonging to the Active Fleet that was being repaired in that port’s dockyard. Also, the official investigations made later revealed an active participation of gunner and storekeeper ratings and this gives credibility to Zapata’s statement quoted above.

The personnel attending a boxing competition taking place in the afterdeck of *O'Higgins* disseminated the plan for the mutiny to the rest of the ships. Petty Officer José Basáez-Jiménez stated that at supper time on 31 August, a document arrived at *O'Higgins* from *Latorre* saying that it had decided to start the uprising. Ordinary Rating Mariano Vargas González, also a crewmember of the armoured cruiser, gives³⁶⁴ the additional piece

³⁶² Statement: Warrant Officer Victorino Zapata, n.d., CM, v.1(V) (456A), p. 84. BUPERS.

³⁶³ Letter from Mellado to Manuel Neira, 31 AUG 1931. CM, v.4 (T), pp. 2-7. BUPERS.

³⁶⁴ Statement: Rating Mariano Vargas, 12 SEP 1931, CM, v.2(V) (456E), p. 212. BUPERS.

of information that they heard about the start of the mutiny during the boxing competition that took place on *O'Higgins* which was watched by sportsmen from all of the other ships. He also says that in a meeting of petty officers and ratings held between 19:00 and 20:00 they decided to participate in the mutiny. Other statements claimed that this meeting took place actually in the musicians' room of the armoured cruiser. Meanwhile, the ships' officers were attending a social gathering in their ward room with civilians ending at 21:00. The *Latorre* was showing a movie which permitted the movements of small craft carrying the crewmembers of the destroyers to the battleship and this contributed to spreading the mutineers' plan.

When he heard the news about what happened on board *Latorre*, Admiral Campos summoned his officers for a meeting to take place the following day. Both he and his Chief of Staff concluded that the situation did not merit another action than that meeting. It must be considered that his sources were the press, the reports sent by the Commander in Chief of the Instruction Squadron and a meeting requested by *O'Higgins'* petty officers to the Executive Officer of that ship, Lieutenant Commander Eleodoro Muñoz-Toro³⁶⁵. They called the meeting to discuss the subject of the reductions, but it was postponed until the arrival of the official information requested by Admiral Campos. The extremely conservative reaction of this Admiral did not help prevent the mutiny.

The idea of the rebellion seems to have been adopted by the ratings of *Latorre* named previously. Warrant Officer González³⁶⁶ stated that the movement was born in the Ratings' Mess and the main participant names have been already given. He says that this group was the first to meet Warrant Officers Victorino Zapata and Juan Méndez with a list of collective grievances with the purpose of collecting the crew's opinions and setting the time of the mutiny's outbreak. González adds that he received an invitation from those two Warrant Officers at 23:00 on 31 August to attend a meeting in a compartment of the battleship located near the bow. He says that he did not report this meeting to the Commanding Officer because his intention was to find out what subjects would be covered in the gathering and report it later. This is a somewhat disingenuous excuse.

³⁶⁵ Narrative by Captain Hozven, 9 SEP 1931 p. 12. CM, v.1 (456A), p.6. BUPERS.

³⁶⁶ Statement: Warrant Officer Ernesto González, n.d., CM, v.1(V) (456A), pp. 54-55. BUPERS.

About one hundred and fifty crewmembers attended the meeting. There was a group deliberating and another dedicated to the opening of ammunition boxes to supply the mutineers. The most active of the plotters were ratings Bravo, Pérez, Villalobos and Zagal. They decided to seize the ship that night. González stated that he was sure that Rating Bravo had adopted all measures to achieve that end and when he left the meeting, he saw crewmembers with rifles. The mutiny, accordingly to this important participant was totally organized and agreed on the evening of 31 August by the ratings. The Warrant officers and petty officers invited did not strongly oppose it, as would have been expected due to their greater experience.

Storekeeper Rating Astica would state nearly forty years later:

‘I remember that I was lying in my berth and González approached proposing the rebellion’s delay. He was confident that by talking with the Commanding Officer the objective that the Government listen to the requests of the crewmembers would be achieved. I looked at my watch. It was 11:45. I said it was too late to call another meeting and this was the only way to implement what was agreed³⁶⁷.

Astica appears to be the only one who claimed that there was an attempt to delay the sedition, because González’s book as well as his court martial testimony does not confirm this. Furthermore, the mutiny did not start at midnight but at 04:00 which González stated the ratings had agreed upon. Neither González nor Astica are very credible witnesses since their memoirs were written after some time had elapsed and they might have wished to make their acts more important than they were in reality. Other evidence calling into question Astica's credibility is his charge that the only officer on board *Latorre* the night of the mutiny was the duty officer. This is not true since there are a number of statements in the proceedings of the Court Martial confirming that a large majority of the officers were sleeping in their cabins when the mutiny surprised them at 04:00 on 1 September 1931. The reason for this will be explained in the following paragraphs.

In the afternoon of 31 August there was liberty for officers, non-commissioned officers and ratings. Those who had their wives in the area could stay ashore until next morning. Some commanding officers, executive officers and senior officers serving on the destroyers and a few lieutenant commanders and warrant officers from the flagships used this authorization. This explains the presence of a few officers and warrant officers ashore

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Mayorga, pp. 349-356.

at the time the beginning of the mutiny. The Commanders in Chief and the Commanding Officers of the two flagships and almost all the rest of the officers were surprised by the rebellion while they were sleeping on board. Some crewmembers went ashore in the afternoon and came back before midnight. At Coquimbo's wharf, before embarking in the launches taking them back to their ships, they listened to rumours that a mutiny was under way but nobody reported this information upon their arrival.

The duty officer in *O'Higgins* was Lieutenant Horacio Vío-Valdivieso. He patrolled the ship at 19:30 as established in the Navy Rules but he did not see anything that called his attention. At 22:00 he patrolled the crew berthing again without noticing anything abnormal. Two hours later he was replaced by midshipman Eduardo Rawlins-Allan and four hours later, at 04:00, midshipman Guillermo Leighton-Leighton assumed this post. On the *Latorre*, Lieutenant Víctor Carrasco-Délano was the officer of the watch. This officer stayed usually on the afterdeck of the battleship because this was the best position to have better control of activities on board such a big ship. He trusted the duty of patrolling the lower decks and crew berthing to the adjunct midshipmen. Significantly, he did not carry out the 19:00 patrol because he was organizing the cinema session. He said that he put all his effort into this task because he was concerned about the mood of the ship company after the Commanding Officer speech. At midnight he was replaced by midshipman Ramón Barros-González.

The scenario was set for the mutiny.

7.2. The outbreak of mutiny in the flagships.

As mentioned above, the mutiny started early on the morning of 1 September 1931. Midshipman Barros, who was on duty in *Latorre* from 00:00 to 04:00, made three patrols through the lower decks on his watch, without noticing anything in particular and he lighted a searchlight as had been ordered. He turned his watch over to a petty officer diver because there were not enough midshipmen to cover all the night watches. A few moments later, when he was on his way to his cabin, he noticed some crewmembers carrying rifles with bayonets and he was surrounded by four men. He escaped and went to Lieutenant Juan Moraga-Ramos's cabin to get a weapon, but he did not find one. When he tried to go to

Lieutenant Teodoro Varas-Polanco's cabin, one of the mutineers ordered him to return to Moraga's cabin. He stayed there with the door open until a search party came looking for small weapons. Moraga denied having one. Barros agreed with his host to use a hidden weapon at the first opportunity but they were kept confined and closely watched³⁶⁸. At dusk on 1 September Barros, was moved to his cabin in the midshipmens' quarters.

Awakened by the noise, Captain Hozven was captured by the mutineers as he tried to leave his cabin. He attempted to dissuade the rebels and when he was not obeyed, he tried to use his pistol but it did not fire. Astica narrates the events in this way: 'Captain Hozven would have resisted but he was subdued by Gunner Rating Eleodoro Labra. From then on, he was kept in his cabin³⁶⁹'. Rating Labra was questioned by the prosecutors and he admitted having shot close to where Captain Hozven was and he said³⁷⁰ the he did this to scare those who were attacking the Commanding Officer, which is a somewhat childlike excuse. In subsequent investigations, Hozven would try to demonstrate unsuccessfully, that his pistol had been sabotaged, suggesting that the officer in charge of small weapons, Lieutenant Commander Roberto Valle-Fierro, was an ally of the rebels. This allegation was not proven in the trial^{371 372}. Valle stated that Captain Hozven did not know how to use firearms properly because he had suffered an accident that limited the movement of one of his arms³⁷³. Prosecutor Allard's conclusion regarding this subject is as follows:

'The attitude assumed by Captain Hozven, when apprehended in his cabin, was energetically courageous and determined and if the weapon had not failed, as he states, several mutineers would have died with him. Such attitude, in extreme circumstances as this, reveals his real character and temperament³⁷⁴.

³⁶⁸ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (V) (456I), p.21. BUPERS.

³⁶⁹ Mayorga, p. 306.

³⁷⁰ Statement: Rating Eleodoro Labra, 14 SEP 1931, CM, v.1(V) (456A), pp. 99-100. BUPERS.

³⁷¹ Narrative by Captain Hozven, 9 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (456A), p.6. BUPERS.

³⁷² Narrative by Captain Hozven, 9 SEP 1931 . CM, v.1 (456A), pp.6-7. BUPERS. CM, v. 3(V) (456I), pp.6-7. BUPERS.

³⁷³ Statement: Lt Cdr Roberto Valle, 19 DIC 1931, CM, v.4(V) (456C), p.369. BUPERS.

³⁷⁴ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (456I), p.17. BUPERS.

On the other hand, it may be argued that Hozven could have killed and wounded some of his captors initially and that attitude could have deterred them, stopping the mutiny. But it is also possible that, given the attackers superior numbers, Hozven's use of force would have caused his death and a radicalization of the conflict as well.

In any case, Hozven complied with his duties although rather late when he tried to defend himself. If not, he would have been prosecuted under articles 270 and 299 of the Chilean Code of Military Justice which punish those who do not actively oppose to a mutiny [see section 1.4].

The majority of the officers were detained in their cabins where they had been sleeping; some had small arms because Captain Hozven had ordered the issue of pistols the day before, an order that was only partially implemented. They could not use the weapons for different reasons: Some because they did not have the arms ready for use and because they were too sleepy to react when they were suddenly attacked. A small number of officers stated that the circumstances did not merit killings. The next morning the rebels completed their control apprehending those few officers staying ashore that night when they returned already knowing that there was a mutiny on board.

While these events happened in *Latorre*, Midshipman Leighton who was on duty in *O'Higgins* from 00:00 to 04:00 limited himself to remaining on deck, leaving the duty of patrolling to a petty officer who later was accused of being a leader of the mutiny. When another midshipman, who was ready to take the watch from Leighton saw that the crewmembers were breaking into the weapons cabinets, he ran to advise the Commander in Chief of the Active Squadron, Admiral Campos. Leighton went to his cabin and put on his sword. Using this largely ceremonial weapon, he tried to deter the mutineers but they fired at him, wounding him slightly in one of his legs. The Admiral, who did not have a weapon to defend himself, unsuccessfully tried to use his moral authority and presence of mind to make the men return to normality. The Commanding Officer of *O'Higgins*, Captain Héctor Díaz-Aburto, was sleeping in his cabin after returning from shore leave. He could not defend himself with his pistol because it was not loaded and because at the first moment he left his cabin quickly and without it to find out what was happening. Then he went back and once he had his firearm ready, he decided not to use it because nobody attacked him and

due the lack of other armed officers nearby. At that moment, he had already heard shots in the upper deck near the stern and in the after deck³⁷⁵.

The Executive Officer of *O'Higgins*, Lieutenant Commander Eleodoro Muñoz-Toro arrived on the main deck armed with his personal weapon but he did not use it. Later, he stated that the mutineers told him that they wanted to avoid bloodshed, and they sent him to his cabin. Meanwhile, the majority of the officers were apprehended inside their cabins by armed personnel while they were sleeping or when they were leaving their cabins to investigate what was happening. They did not have weapons and they were pressed to return to the cabins by rifle shots³⁷⁶.

Having won control of the flagships, the mutineers acted to spread their seditious message to the rest of the units anchored in Coquimbo.

7.3. The mutiny unleashing on board the destroyers.

While some of the destroyers were taken by their crews [*Orella, Lynch, Videla*], others [*Serrano, Aldea, Riquelme, Hyatt*] required the support of the *Latorre* and *O'Higgins* to start the sedition.

In the first group, there was a majority of ships belonging to the Instruction Squadron [*Orella* and *Lynch*] while in the second subset, there was a majority of destroyers belonging to the Active Squadron [*Aldea, Riquelme* and *Hyatt*]. It seems that the rebellious attitude was stronger in the former squadron having *Latorre* as flagship.

On those ships of the first group [*Orella, Lynch, Videla*] the mutiny started at the same time as the two flagships when armed personnel surprised all of their sleeping officers, except for the commanding and executive officers of the *Lynch* and *Videla*, who had gone ashore for the night.

Although some officers had personal weapons, they could not use them because they were caught sleeping³⁷⁷. Nevertheless one of them was able to go ashore looking for

³⁷⁵ Statement: Capt. Héctor Díaz, 10 SEP 1931,CM, v.2(V) (456E), p. 7. BUPERS.

³⁷⁶ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (456I), pp.12-66. BUPERS.

³⁷⁷ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (456I), p.27. BUPERS.

the commanding officer. He found Commander Samuel Ward Rodríguez in a hotel in Coquimbo. Ward passed the word to the commanding officer of another destroyer and requested his wife to do the same to a third commander who was ashore that night³⁷⁸. Their idea was to return to their ships and oppose the mutiny.

One of the crewmembers of *Lynch* was Chief Petty Officer Alejandro Caldera-Holm who, according to witnesses demonstrated an extremely seditious attitude. Later he moved to *Latorre* where he became a member of the so called ‘Crew’s Staff’. In this organization he stands out for his radical ideas and for the impassioned speeches he made. Boatswain Able Rating Thomas Moore Hodges stated³⁷⁹ later that Caldera wanted to raise a communist red flag but he deterred him with a pistol. He also stated that the petty officer wanted to segregate the entire northern region to establish a workers government in that area north of Coquimbo. Caldera, who was from the Chilean northern region, denied these accusations in his statements in Court Martial³⁸⁰.

In *Orella*, the officers were totally unarmed and they did not have a chance to grab their pistols since they were not allowed to rise from their beds. In *Videla* none of the officers who were sleeping became aware of the events until too late.

The case of destroyers *Serrano*, *Aldea*, *Riquelme* and *Hyatt* was different in that they were only taken by mutineers with the support of the flag ships.

In *Serrano* there was a boatswain petty officer second class on duty on the deck. He called the executive officer, Lieutenant Commander Luis Correa-Ball, reporting that the rest of the ships had red lights on and that something unusual was taking place. Correa ordered the rest of the ship’s company to general quarters. He asked the enlisted personnel and officers on the deck the meaning of what was happening but he did not get answers. Soon he discovered that a mutiny was taking place because he saw small craft from *O’Higgins* and *Latorre* carrying armed personnel to the destroyers. He informed the ship’s company that he would not turn the ship over to anybody except the Commanding Officer, who was ashore. He ordered the crew to close the condensers and to raise pressure in the

³⁷⁸ Statement: Lt Cdr Víctor Flores, 21 SEP 1931, CM, v.8(V) (456L), p.158. BUPERS.

³⁷⁹ Statement. Rating Thomas Moore, n.d., CM, v.2 (V), p.406. BUPERS.

³⁸⁰ Statement: Petty Officer Alejandro Caldera, n.d., CM, v.1(V) (456A), pp. 71-73. BUPERS.

boilers to get ready to sail. The men managed to obey the first order but not the second, because they said that they feared that the *Latorre*, seeing the smoke coming out of the stacks, might fire on them. Next, Correa sent a boat to request that the Commanding Officer, Pedro Gallardo-Lataste, should return to the ship. When the crew did not dare to raise pressure, he became aware that the ship's company was colluding with the other ships' crews but that they did not want to act openly against their officers. The Lieutenant Commander did not order any officer to bear weapons, but he and Lieutenant Raúl Searle-Bunster already had their own pistols hidden with them. Correa ordered Searle to take his weapon back to his cabin but this lieutenant initially disobeyed the order arguing that nobody knew that he was armed. Finally he complied. Afterwards, he was the only officer of this ship who refused to sign the list of complaints presented by the Crew's Staff. The rest of the officers, including the Commanding Officer, signed it later, stating that their signature had no legal value and that if they refused to sign, they would have been sent to *Latorre*. They added that they preferred to stay on board their ship, in hopes that they would convince the mutineers and recover control of the situation³⁸¹.

In *Aldea*, the Commanding Officer, Luis Bahamondez-Torrejón and the rest of the officers were advised by the Master Chief Petty Officer that he heard shots on board *Latorre* and *O'Higgins* and that it seemed that the fleet's crews had rebelled. The officers appeared on deck, most of them armed³⁸². The Commanding Officer then ordered locking the rest of the personal weapons and rifles in the officers' cabins and that the engines be readied to sail because red lights were observed being switched on at the top of the masts of the rest of the fleet without any clear reason. The Commanding Officer observed that launches from *O'Higgins* and *Latorre* were boarding *Riquelme*, so he ordered the crew to man combat stations to resist a similar action. Before the order could be implemented, the ship was assaulted in a quick action by about one hundred armed mutineers arriving in launches equipped with machine guns. The attackers took control of the bridge and the engine room and surrounded the officers who were scattered in different places. It was noticeable that at the beginning, the *Aldea's* ship's company was not involved in the mutiny since the men had readily locked up the weapons in the officers' cabins. The *Latorre*

³⁸¹ Report of Prosecutor Osvaldo Prieto, n.d., CM,v.5 (V), p.6.BUPERS.

³⁸² Statement: Cdr Luis Bahamonde, 12 NOV 1931, CM, v. 4 (456I), p.320. BUPERS.

crewmembers ordered the rest of the destroyer's ship's company to appear on deck where a Rating from the battleship, asking them if they agreed with the mutiny, received no answer. Due to this poor reaction, he talked to them saying that the movement consisted of a respectful note to be sent to the government but the guns of *Latorre* and *O'Higgins* were ready to be used. Part of the crewmembers declared themselves in favour of the mutiny but not the chief petty officer and the petty officers. Those who did not state their support of the mutiny after being questioned were sent to *Latorre* as prisoners. The mutineers wanted to take Commander Bahamondez to *Latorre* but the strong verbal opposition of the officers deterred them, and finally the mutineers took with them only the hand weapons. The officers of this destroyer were ordered to remain in their cabins and were free to talk to each other until lunch time that day³⁸³.

In *Riquelme*, the Commanding Officer, Commander Alejandro Yánquez-Cerda, and the rest of the officers were awakened by the personnel on duty who reported that they heard shots on board *O'Higgins*. The Executive Officer, Lieutenant Commander Gustavo Carvallo-Gundelach, ordered Lieutenant Jorge Barruel-Scheppler to have the officers' pistols ready in case of an emergency. Before these weapons could be distributed, the ship was boarded by armed personnel from *O'Higgins*. There was no opposition to this action since nobody knew what was happening and because of this, the Commanding Officer decided to keep the ship's company asleep. Resistance would have been pointless because the guns of *Latorre* and *O'Higgins* were aiming directly at this ship³⁸⁴.

The duty officer on the destroyer *Hyatt*, Lieutenant Raúl Arancibia-Aranciabia, heard shooting at 03:45 approximately while in his cabin and he went immediately to the main deck, calling the rest of the personnel on duty to fall in. After that the situation was calm, so he remained gathered and chatting with the rest of the officers present on board. He ordered the boatswain to take the personnel back to their living quarters, ordering them to remain in their hammocks. He was surprised, therefore, when several of the men returned to the stern deck without being called. One rating advanced and said that the battleship *Latorre* had signalled '*follow the movements of the flagship*'. He said that all the ship's company wanted to follow what was being done there. Arancibia promised to present

³⁸³ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto, n.d., CM, v.3 (456I), pp.13-14. BUPERS.

³⁸⁴ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto, n.d., CM, v.3 (456I), p.14. BUPERS.

their complaints according to the regulations. At the beginning, they seemed to agree but, as they went to their quarters, they grumbled that they wanted weapons to organize a boarding party. The duty officer rejected this request and went with another officer carrying pistols to keep the crewmembers away from the hand weapons lockers. He also ordered that the rest of the officers wake up and attend the main deck with their hand weapons. At that time, a launch from *Latorre* arrived with a chief petty officer in charge requesting the presence of a chief petty officers' delegation to go with him to a meeting with Rear Admiral Campos on board *O'Higgins*. Arancibia asked who wanted to participate in this meeting and an instructor chief petty officer answered positively. At the moment when the launch was leaving *Hyatt* the Chief Petty Officer in charge of it ordered Lieutenant Arancibia to turn over the ship to the senior non-commissioned officer and to hand the weapons to the enlisted personnel. He refused, ordering him to leave. Next, he ordered the engines prepare for departure and sent a launch to bring back the Commanding Officer, Commander *Manfredo Becerra-Saavedra*, and the Executive Officer, Lieutenant Commander *Hugo Julio-Aguirre*, who were still ashore. The crew refused his order. A small boat left *Hyatt* without his authorization and a little while later another launch from *Latorre* arrived without position lights, carrying armed personnel and a machine gun pointing at the officers who were astern. When this boarding party surrounded the officers without opposition from the ship's company the officers realized that they did not enjoy the support of their own personnel. A chief petty officer then told that *Latorre* was aiming its guns at the *Hyatt*. The officers agreed to turn this ship over to the senior chief petty officer but only if the personnel from *Latorre* returned to their ship. Then the officers were forced to stay in their cabins³⁸⁵.

An important fact is that in each destroyer there was a Commanding Officer, an Executive Officer and six or seven other officers. In some of these ships this number was diminished by those who were on commission elsewhere or were ashore on leave. Each destroyer carried approximately one hundred and forty non-commissioned officers, most of whom remained on board that night. The actions on board the auxiliary ships present in Coquimbo or nearby will not be described because it is not relevant.

By noon on 1 September 1931 the sequence of events in the mutiny had thus been as follows:

³⁸⁵

Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto, n.d., CM, v.3 (456I), p.9. BUPERS.

Between 04:00 and 05:00 seditious personnel captured all ships present at Coquimbo, starting this action in the two flagships and following with seven destroyers and other auxiliary ships.

The majority of the officers, including the two flag officers, were surprised while sleeping. They were locked in their cabins as 1 September went by.

A few officers were on the main deck or were able to reach it but were unable to control the situation.

Another minority group of senior officers, including three commanding officers and executive officers of destroyers, were ashore with their families and when they returned voluntarily to their ships, they were captured and locked in their cabins as was done with the rest of the officers.

7.4. First days of the mutiny in Coquimbo.

Once the mutineers gained control of the ships, they started organizing themselves. Generally, they named or elected a committee of six men of different ranks. In several ships, the most senior non-commissioned crewmember was part of this group and he took control of the ship in some cases. In *Latorre* this committee was widened and became what the seditious personnel called the ‘Estado Mayor de la Tripulaciones’ [or the ‘Crew’s General Staff’]. This group became dominant instantly and started issuing orders to the rest of the ships belonging to both squadrons and those who would subsequently arrive from Talcahuano. The name adopted by the mutineers for this ‘de facto’ organization is very odd but there is no doubt that nobody wanted to show himself as heading an unlawful organization. The debates within this group were chaired by Warrant Officer González, but actually ratings Zagal and Astica were the ones that dominated the situation³⁸⁶. They were

³⁸⁶ von Schroeders, pp.39-41.

the real leaders who took over a movement initiated among the gunner ratings in the days previous to the mutiny.

When the ships needed to be moved from one berth to another or to sail and no one in the committee was able to take control, some petty officers and even some ratings took charge of the manoeuvring. On the *Latorre*, Boatswain Chief Petty Officer Moreno³⁸⁷ assumed this role.

The 1st September was used by the mutineers to get organized, as seen, and also to raise the first list of complaints in the form of a draft. They sent a committee to the different ships trying to obtain the signatures of the officers. The autographs enscribed very unwisely by some of them is the origin of some authors such as González and the press claiming later that the naval officers agreed with the mutineers. Afterwards, the officers would explain that they had been misunderstood, adding that that they were forced to sign the draft. This claim has a certain veracity since their signatures were requested by armed personnel, often belonging to *Latorre* or *O'Higgins* who had promised that they would regain liberty once they signed, a promise not honoured.

Commander Samuel Ward-Rodríguez, the Commanding officer of *Lynch*, a destroyer belonging to the Instruction Squadron, was summoned by the 'Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones'. He agreed to attend because this gave him the opportunity to talk to Warrant Officer González. He had a high opinion of this man since he had had him under his orders in the past. Once in *Latorre*, Ward was imprisoned and taken to the Executive Officer's cabin where he was pressed for a signature on the statement. He accepted after they promised him that he would be sent back to his ship and this they did but without placing him in command of *Lynch* again.

The commissions sent out to other ships obtained mixed results. The two commanders in chief and the chiefs of staff refused to sign. The same happened with the majority of the commanding officers. But on other ships, all officers signed after seeing the signature of the commanding officer. There were also ships where some officers signed and the rest refused. The officers who signed would argue later that that they did so knowing that their signature has no legal value since it was obtained when they were imprisoned and

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Very little is known about this person (even his full name has not been discovered during the research). This thesis is the first to give names of those who manouvered the ships during the mutiny.

pressed by armed personnel. In the destroyer *Videla* the document was not signed by a majority of the officers but the Commanding Officer, Commander Humberto Aylwin-Tasso, appended his signature adding the following statement: ‘although the ideas are good, the procedure used negated their value³⁸⁸’. Engineer Lieutenant Roberto Campos-Durán also signed, adding the following note: ‘good ideas but the procedure followed is shameful³⁸⁹’. The Executive Officer, Lieutenant Commander Athos Valenzuela-Bastías, signed as well stating: ‘With the remarks of the two previous pages; A shameful and unacceptable procedure³⁹⁰’. In those pages he refutes every subject raised by the mutineers except the petition about food allowances and about bringing back to the Navy a Captain who had been forced into retirement by the Government³⁹¹.

Destroyer *Aldea* is an extreme case. No officer signed. González writes that convincing what he calls: ‘the supportive officers’ to sign the first manifesto, was an action ending only at 16:00 ‘because many of them wanted to sign adding remarks oriented to modify or to widen some points, in accordance to their own ideas³⁹², and this delayed this process. A message from the mutineers to all ships states: ‘Those officers who did not sign the manifesto will be kept in their cabins under strict surveillance³⁹³’.

An officer in *Aldea*, while imprisoned wrote that at the attempt of forcing them to sign the manifesto, they:

‘recorded in writing that their rank had been taken away and that they have lost all moral influence with respect to the personnel formerly under their

³⁸⁸ Statement by Cdr Humberto Aylwin, 18 November 1931 CM, v. 5(V) (456D), pp. 429-430. BUPERS.

³⁸⁹ Statement by Lt Roberto Campos, 10 November 1931 CM, v. 5(V) (456D), pp. 315-317. BUPERS.

³⁹⁰ Document signed by Lt Cdr Athos Valenzuela, 3 SEP 1931, CM, v. 4(V) (456I), pp. 178-180. BUPERS.

³⁹¹ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (V) (456I), p.11. BUPERS.

³⁹² González, p.18.

³⁹³ Message from Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones to all ships, n.d. (probably 2 SEP 1931). CM, V.22(T), p.12. BUPERS.

orders. After the humiliation they had suffered, they could not give any opinion³⁹⁴.

Meanwhile, the Chief Harbourmaster in Coquimbo, who was a retired naval officer, observed strange actions on that morning of 1 September. He did nothing regarding the transmittal of news to his superiors or to the other local authorities. In a later report, he states that he sent a ciphered message to the Ministry of the Navy saying: 'I have knowledge that serious acts are taking place in the fleet. It has been impossible to contact any officer. The launches are carrying only petty officers. They do not give any information³⁹⁵, but no evidence had been found that this message arrived.

That day, at 16:55, Rear Admiral Calixto Rogers-Cea, the Minister of the Navy, received the first manifesto with several demands by a radio message from the mutineers. This was the first concrete information about the mutiny that reached the Government and this is a demonstration that the local authorities in Coquimbo were negligent of their duty. The document, in synthesis, demanded that:

- a. Salaries should not be reduced
- b. The people responsible for the financial situation should be extradited in order to hand them to the justice system³⁹⁶.
- c. Hostility directed against the Armed Forces should cease.
- d. The two fleets should remain in Coquimbo.

They requested a response to these demands within forty eight hours. In addition, the mutineers stated that they would not use their weapons against any of the people and that they were not influenced by anarchist ideas [see this document in Appendix A.2].

Facing this new reality, the Minister of the Navy convened the Consultive Board of the Navy [a euphemistic name given to the Navy Board suppressed by Ibáñez] composed of the flag officers residing in Santiago. This deliberative body, at the beginning, had the idea of applying harsh punishments but later the debate was concentrated in the following items:

³⁹⁴ Letter from an unidentified author on board destroyer Orella, 2 September de 1931. Chilean Naval Archives. File: Manuscripts. ACHM MC 133.

³⁹⁵ Report by Chief Harbour Master to Director of Maritime Affairs, n.d., (September 1931). CM, v.22 (T), pp.104-114. BUPERS.

³⁹⁶ This paragraph deals with the people who were in charge of financial matters and who had left the country in particular after Ibáñez's fall.

- a. Avoid a hasty use of force without knowing the loyalty of the naval and other forces, because an initial failure would have irremediable consequences.
- b. Advise that the ships affected by subversion should be sunk only as a last resource due to their importance for Chilean defence.

In conclusion, diplomacy should be used before employing force³⁹⁷.

The analysis above is a summary of the situation appraisal made by Rear Admiral Edgardo von Schroeders-Sarratea in his book³⁹⁸. He was one of the participants of that meeting [see Appendix A].

Between 17:30 and 18:30 the authorities of the Ministry of the Navy started their first of several communications with the Base Commanders making them aware of the mutiny. They used the telephone to contact Valparaíso and Talcahuano. No evidence was found about Punta Arenas, in the Strait of Magellan but nothing happened in that far distant base related to the main subject of this thesis.

That night's deliberations between the national and the naval authorities urged the Government to adopt a moderate course of action. Rear Admiral von Schroeders was selected as the Government's delegate to travel to Coquimbo to meet the leaders of the mutiny and to seek a solution. It seems that the mutineers were also deliberating that same night on 1 September, because at midnight the Government received a second manifesto with more political demands such as:

- a. Suspending the payment of the external debt.
- b. Agrarian reform.
- c. Measures to create employment.
- d. Lowering the interest rate on deposits over \$10,000 in money lent to the Government.

It also stated other demands [see Appendix A] having a more self interested nature such as:

- a. Closure of naval schools to save financial resources.
- b. Free uniforms.

³⁹⁷ Document: Situation Appraisal, 1 SEP 1931, 22:30. CM, v 22 (T), p.102. BUPERS.

³⁹⁸ von Schroeders , p. 77.

- c. Improvements in the naval ration [the food allowance for each man in the Navy].
- d. Retirement payment after twenty years in service.
- e. Improvement in the system of promotions to higher ranks.
- f. Salary taxation to be set at the level existing on 31 July.
- g. Return of Captain del Solar to service in the Navy.

Neither González nor Astica publicly stated the reasons for the rebels' radicalizing the demands between the first and second manifestoes. This may be seen also in later mutineers' statements. Astica recognizes³⁹⁹ only his participation in the first manifesto. González supports him saying that it was this rating who drafted and typed it directly on a machine, without consulting any further draft. This fact demonstrates that Astica was familiar with this activity, probably from his past as union agitator and this led some people to raise the hypothesis that he was a communist. The Christian Socialist ideas of Astica in the years before the mutiny have already been explained in another chapter [see chapter 3].

Rear Admiral von Schroeders⁴⁰⁰ was a highly regarded officer who had held many commands at sea and ashore, and who had served as Minister of the Navy at the end of the Ibáñez Government. To comply with the new mission given by the Government, he chose as his aides Captain Luis Muñoz-Artigas and Lieutenant Rogelio Huidobro-Santander. They flew to Coquimbo arriving at noon on 2 September⁴⁰¹. The Government had instructed the Admiral to meet the mutineers only ashore, so he summoned them to be at Coquimbo's Chief Harbourmaster's Office at 14:00. The mutineers' delegates responded that the meeting should take place on board *Latorre* and promised that they would facilitate Admiral. Von Schroeders' access and render him all the honours due him as a flag officer. Realizing that he would not achieve anything unless the government permitted him to go on board, he sent numerous telegrams and called Santiago in order to obtain the authorization. These manoeuvres consumed almost an entire day.

³⁹⁹ Mayorga, p. 352.

⁴⁰⁰ Von Schroeders wrote important sources for the research of the mutiny. The first one is a secret report addressed to the Minister of the Navy on 10 de September de 1931 [CM. t. 23, pp. 61-68]. He extended this report in a book already quoted.

⁴⁰¹ Report by RAdm. von Schroeders to Minister of the Navy, 10 SEP 1931. CM, v. 22 (T), pp. 115-129.

The following day, 3 September, the news that the Vice-President Manuel Trucco-Franzani had accepted the resignation of the Cabinet became known and that he named retired Captain Enrique Spoerer-Jardel as Minister of the Navy and General Carlos Vergara-Montero as Minister of War, who received the power of Commander in Chief of the Armed forces. Arturo Prat-Carvajal was named Minister of Finance. He was the son of Arturo Prat-Chacón the most prominent Chilean naval hero.

The Government then authorized von Schroeders to meet the rebels on board *Latorre* and ordered the Minister of Finance to pay August's salaries without the reductions.

The first meeting of the Government's delegate and his aides with the 'Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones' took place in the midshipmen's mess on board *Latorre* on 3 September. The rebels' de facto organization was chaired by Warrant Petty Officer González. Around him there were the other members of this committee as well as fifty to sixty other naval personnel. To his right, was seated Leading Rating Zagal who would subsequently emerge as the rebels' most intriguing leader. At a nearby small table sat Leading Rating Astica who would serve as the mutineers' secretary. Later he would appear as one of the most intransigent and vehement of the leaders. After four hours of conversation, the participants seemed to have reached a resolution of the mutiny when radio messages reported that the Talcahuano Naval Base and in Valparaíso, the School of Communications and the Quintero Air Base had rebelled that day. Nevertheless, the mutineers gave an additional period of twenty four hours to the Government to respond to their demands⁴⁰². Once he was back ashore, von Schroeders received a telegram from the Government expressing support to all the agreements achieved until then⁴⁰³.

In the second meeting on board the *Latorre*, the mutineers widened their demands, seeking immunity and that the government would not take reprisals. They also added a clause which made an agreement extremely difficult. They demanded that the act of agreement should be signed only after the arrival of Talcahuano's seditious ships that had already set out for Coquimbo⁴⁰⁴. Von Schroeders was optimistic after the first day of

⁴⁰² González, p. 28.

⁴⁰³ von Schroeders, pp. 37-48.

⁴⁰⁴ von Schroeders , p. 57.

negotiations, but he warned the Government that the demand of the mutineers for awaiting the arrival of the ships from Talcahuano was a postponing manoeuvre⁴⁰⁵.

Meanwhile the situation of the officers on board the ships anchored in Coquimbo was unchanged. The Commanding Officers were imprisoned in their cabins, and the rest in their living quarters. Sentries guarded them but they were treated correctly with a few exceptions. Those officers who evinced strong or vehement opposition against the mutineers were taken to *Latorre* and placed in detention cells. Another similar example of that is the attitude of the *O'Higgins*' midshipmen acting with the vigour of youth. They wanted to recapture the ship. On one occasion Admiral Campos had to recommend that they remain calm since the 'Crews Staff' reported to him about the verbal aggressiveness of the midshipmen against the guards. The Admiral was concerned that these events would frustrate the previously described negotiations.

At that time in Santiago, there was concern about the officers' fate and this was the reason for adopting initially a conciliatory attitude, avoiding the use of force. Von Schroeders' negotiations allowed for the hope that nothing harsh would take place, but this government mood was hardening in the face of the mutineers' demands.

Von Schroeders' negotiations arrived at a decisive point on 4 September. That day was spent discussing with the 'Crew's Staff' a project to end the conflict. The Admiral had hoped that the government would accept it. By the time the project was returned from Santiago, its content was fundamentally changed, perhaps in part because the Government had now decided to use force. When von Schroeders read the Moneda's document, he thought that the rebels would reject it. He then made an unsuccessful effort to persuade his superiors in Santiago to accept the text agreed before with the mutineers. He proved prescient because the 'Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones' did in fact reject the Government's proposal. They knew that the ships sailing from Talcahuano would arrive in Coquimbo the next day. The document drafted in Santiago only committed the Government to study the measures requested by the mutineers, regardless of the delegate's warning that a document worded that way would be rejected. Given the impasse the meetings on board

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Telegram from von Schroeders to Government, 3 SEP 193, 21:30. CM, v. 22(T), pp. 30-32. BUPERS.

Latorre ended at midnight 4 September⁴⁰⁶. The main reason for the rejection was that the Government did not commit itself to solving any of the rebel's complaints.

Von Schroeders returned to Santiago on 5 September reporting his negotiations and that he had observed symptoms of a conflict among the mutineers. His opinion was based on the contacts he had with some warrant and petty officers acting outside the 'Crews Staff' and the reports delivered to him by *Latorre's* Chaplain and a Paraguayan officer who was initially on board a destroyer. Those two were the only officers allowed to come ashore. Later a medical officer was allowed to go to Coquimbo's hospital to perform surgery on one of the crewmembers.

Admiral von Schroeders' performance was positive in the sense that he was close to achieving an agreement but it was frustrated by the lack of an accommodating attitude by both parties. His presence on board *Latorre* and ashore in Coquimbo enabled the Government to have a better assessment of the situation by means of telegrams and telephone calls from the port where the mutiny started and through the final report handed in upon at his arrival to Santiago.

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von Schroeders, pp. 71-72 and González 1932, pp. 35-36.

8. TALCAHUANO

8.1. Organizing a mutiny in Talcahuano.

The Talcahuano Naval Base was the most important of the Chilean Navy. It had several shore logistic establishments, schools, and directly dependent ships to perform duties in the southern area. In addition, it had reserve naval units and ships undergoing repairs belonging to other commands. It acted as the base for submarines, and these ships were relatively independent from the Naval Area Command because like all active naval forces, the Submarine Squadron received orders directly from the Ministry of the Navy [see: Appendix C. Ships and Shore Establishments of Talcahuano].

The Commander in Chief of the Naval Base in Talcahuano was Rear Admiral Roberto Chappuzeau-Cienfuegos. He received the information of the mutiny by a telephone call from the Ministry of the Navy. On 1 September, he summoned a meeting of all Commanding Officers of ships and Shore Establishments to disseminate the news and adopt the first measures. It was agreed that each Commanding Officer would talk to the crew the next day explaining what happened and to exhort them to maintain discipline.

Chappuzeau suggested initially that the Commander of the Submarine Flotilla, Captain Luis Muñoz-Valdez, should put to sea with the submarines and submarine tender but this officer did not consider it convenient to do so at that moment. He wanted to avoid raising adverse attitudes in the submarine crews since he considered that they were very loyal. He reasoned that the crews would consider that they were not trusted if the submarines went to sea at that moment. Muñoz also believed that those submarines at sea at that time should first return to Talcahuano to load ammunition and torpedoes in case they had to engage the rebel squadrons⁴⁰⁷.

The subordinate officers informed their crews about the Coquimbo mutiny but in the *Condell*, a destroyer belonging to the Active Squadron, a singular event occurred. The Executive Officer, Lieutenant Adolfo Novoa-Carabantes, would state later that:

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Statement: Capt. Muñoz-Valdés, 12 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), pp. 61-62. BUPERS.

'in the presentation made by the Commanding Officer, it called to our attention and to the rest of the officers, the manner in which he talked to the crew, with no military manners and in a inappropriate way for his rank⁴⁰⁸'.

It must be noted again that *Condell* belonged to one of the two squadrons anchored in Coquimbo but it was being repaired in the dockyard and that one of his crew members, Rating Manuel Neira-Neira, received the letter⁴⁰⁹ signed by Mellado [see it in section 7.1] communicating the starting date of the mutiny if their petition regarding the salary reduction was not accepted. Mellado added that there was an agreement between the crews of both squadrons to act by striking with energy.

The author of the letter also wrote that similar communications were sent to surface ships and submarines whose home port was Talcahuano, demonstrating that there were attempts to coordinate actions between the organizers in Coquimbo and the rest of the ships in that southern base.

The letter was dated 31 August 1931 on board cruiser *O'Higgins* anchored at Coquimbo and had a post seal dated in Talcahuano 3 September, when the mutiny had been occurring for three days, showing that it was late in communicating the news.

Mid morning on 2 September the Commanding Officers attended Rear Admiral Chappuzeau's office and reported the results of the call to quarters. On that occasion they told their crews about the events in Coquimbo and afterwards they observed that the men stayed calm and disciplined. Because of this, it was agreed that the following text for a message to the Minister of the Navy should be sent: 'The Admiral, senior officers, officers and enlisted personnel of the Naval Base Talcahuano condemn the Squadrons' crews attitudes⁴¹⁰'. In addition the Admiral requested the Commanding Officers to check with their crews the following telegram to be sent to the mutineers:

'Senior officers, officers and enlisted personnel of the Naval Base Talcahuano invite the Squadrons' crews to think that due to the lack of patriotism and discipline it has placed the National Navy in a sad situation before the country's and world's public opinion. This attitude has caused a

⁴⁰⁸ Statement: Lt. Novoa, 14 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), p.110. BUPERS.

⁴⁰⁹ Letter from Mellado to Manuel Neira, 31 AUG 1931. CM, v.4 (T), pp. 2-7. BUPERS.

⁴¹⁰ Draft of Radio Message from Naval Base Talcahuano to Ministry of the Navy, 2 SEP 1931. CM, v.21 (T), p.12 BUPERS.

difficult period for the nation in a testing moment when a major collective sacrifice is needed from all Chileans. Our Navy from its birth, has shown to the country and the world its heroism and discipline and it is not possible to accept that a century of glorious traditions will be erased by a moment of obfuscation⁴¹¹.

The initiative to send this telegram unleashed an outbreak of indiscipline in this naval base and in its naval units and Coastal Defence forces. Admiral Chappuzeau says⁴¹² that he decided on this controversial measure because in this way: ‘one could know more deeply if there was any connection between the squadron and the people of the Naval Base’ and this idea received the support of all Commanding Officers, as stated during the later investigations by Captain Luis Muñoz-Valdes⁴¹³ and Captain José Goñi-Germain⁴¹⁴ who attended this meeting.

As an example of the consequences of the above measure, the events in one ship and one Shore Establishment will be narrated. The opinion of the *Condell's* Executive Officer has been recorded already. In this ship, the Commanding Officer, Commander Víctor Ramm-Siebt requested the crew's opinion about the text of the proposed telegram. The ship's company showed itself divided and asked authorization to go to the living quarters to deliberate, a request which Ramm accepted. The Executive Officer argued then that: ‘he could not be held responsible for discipline since the right to deliberation had been awarded to the crew⁴¹⁵’. This is a strong criticism of Ramm's behaviour.

In Fort Borgoño, the Commanding Officer of the Coastal Artillery Group, Commander Fidel Alviña-Vergara, gathered all the personnel to analyze the text of the telegram. One gunner told him: ‘that they would not fire on their workmates of the squadrons⁴¹⁶’. The Commander concluded, after listening to the personnel, that they did not

⁴¹¹ Report by Capt. Muñoz-Valdés, 11 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), p.67. BUPERS.

⁴¹² Letter from Radm Chappuzeau to Prosecutor, 4 MAY 1932, CM, v14(T), p.333. CM, v.13 (T), p.67, BUPERS and statment: Radm. Roberto Chappuzeau, 10 SEP 1931, CM, v.1 (T), p.20. BUPERS.

⁴¹³ Report by Capt. Muñoz-Valdés, 11 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), p.67. BUPERS.

⁴¹⁴ Report by acting Commander in Chief Naval Base Talcahuano to Minister of the Navy, N° 221, 10 SEP 1931. , v.19 (T), p21. BUPERS.

⁴¹⁵ Statement: Lt. Novoa, 14 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), p.110. BUPERS.

⁴¹⁶ Report by Sub-Lieutenant Berndt, n.d. CM, v.1 (T), pp.174-180. BUPERS.

agree with the way in which the events of Coquimbo happened but that they agreed with its deeper content. Alviña subsequently reported to the Admiral that: ‘he estimated that there was a discipline problem from the moment when the personnel deliberated about the telegram’s convenience⁴¹⁷’.

The Commanding Officers started arriving at the Admiral’s office around 16:00 and reporting that, in general, the crews did not agree with the methods employed by the Coquimbo mutineers, but at the same time, they expressed their hostility toward the economic measures adopted by the Government and with this it became evident that there was a beginning of a rebellious mood.

On that same afternoon the Admiral ordered that the enlisted personnel receive liberty while their officers remain on board and in the Shore Establishments. This was done to disperse the enlisted personnel because it was appreciated that the men were unsettled and to allow the officers to secure the rifles’ mechanisms and ammunition. Also the duty officers would be reinforced.

Two examples of how these orders were complied with are the following. In the cruiser *Blanco* the rifle mechanisms were taken out by the officers only after the first shooting was heard on 3 September⁴¹⁸. In the ‘*Escuela de Máquinas*’ [School of Machinists] the authorities locked the rifle ammunition in the accountant’s safe. The Executive Officer of this school, Engineer Lieutenant Commander René Cortez-Magnan, would explain later that this happened because: ‘the dominant idea was that they expected the authorities would resolve the squadrons’ problem, so we believed that adopting measures of that nature...[reinforcing the officers on duty]...would indicate a lack of confidence in the crew⁴¹⁹’.

Meanwhile, Admiral Chappuzeau, lacking a real staff, decided to keep the Commanding Officers of ships and shore establishments in an almost permanent meeting on 2 and 3 September. Close to sunset on 2 September, the *Araucano*’s Executive

⁴¹⁷ Statement: Cdr. Fidel Alviña. 13 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), p.95. BUPERS.

⁴¹⁸ Prosecutor Report, n.d. CM, v.1 (T), pp 314-315. BUPERS.

⁴¹⁹ Statement: Lt Cdr. René Cortés, 15 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), p.133. BUPERS.

Officer⁴²⁰, Commander Alberto Consiglo-Rébora, told the assembled officers that the *Araucano's* officers, and those of the submarine fleet, unanimously suggested that they should sail at once to demonstrate their loyalty to the Government, a request that the meeting endorsed. The same meeting also ordered that those midshipmen studying in 'Escuela de Torpedos' [Torpedo School] and those who served on board *Blanco Encalada*, would be transferred to the naval units to reinforce the duty officers. This order started to be complied with immediately. The Chief of Staff of the Naval Base, Captain Silvestre Calderón-Navarro informed⁴²¹ the Base Duty Officer, Lieutenant Commander Danilo Bassi-Galleguillos, that in 'Batería Rodríguez' [Rodríguez Battery] and in 'Escuela de Artillería' [Gunnery School] barracks there were naval and Coastal Artillery land forces available and that he must keep close surveillance on the situation.

At 21:30 the Commander of a Company of Coastal Artillery, Sub-lieutenant Humberto Berndt-Vivanco, who remained in the Gunnery School, became aware that Admiral Chappuzeau doubted the personnel's loyalty and that the Government had suggested requesting support from the Army but Chappuzeau was also doubtful about the loyalty of those troops. The Sub-lieutenant had previously questioned his company's personnel who stated that they would remain loyal no matter the attitude of the rest of the troop at Fort Borgoño. Upon hearing a fire alarm out of the base, he sent personnel from his unit to collaborate in extinguishing it and when the company returned to the base it was sent to sleep⁴²².

Coastal Artillery Gunner Valentín Marín-Marín was on duty at the entrance of the Arsenal. Close to his post and in a basin, there were several ships and submarines moored. He later averred that at 21:00 several petty officers came by his post saying that *Araucano* and the submarines would that night join the mutiny and sail to Coquimbo. When he said that he would go to report to the Duty Officer he was arrested by four or five sailors, but released later. At 23:00 Signals Corps Chief Petty Officer Orlando Robles-Osses came by saying that a searchlight would illuminate from the horizon to the sky signalling that the

⁴²⁰ *Araucano* was a submarine tender. Its Commanding Officer was the Commander in Chief of the Submarine Squadron as well and the Executive Officer acted as Chief of Staff.

⁴²¹ Statement: Lt Cdr. Danilo Bassi, 17 SEP 1931CM, v.1 (T), p.196. BUPERS.

⁴²² Report by Sub-Lieutenant Berndt, n.d. CM, v.1 (T), pp. 174-180. BUPERS.

crews of the *Condell*, *Uribe* and *Chacabuco* should seize the *Araucano*. Marin finished duty at 24:00 and reported⁴²³ to the Duty Officer, Lieutenant Commander Danilo Bassi-Galleguillos who decided to order the Coastal Defence Company, then at the Gunnery School, to come to the Arsenal.

Petty Officer Robles was one of the main mutiny organizers in Talcahuano. Later investigations demonstrated that he organized at least one meeting in the home of Miss Eloísa Maldonado-Leighton in 71 Caupolicán Street, Talcahuano⁴²⁴ on 2 September⁴²⁵. She said that the Petty Officer asked her to permit a meeting at her home with some friends and that about twenty Navy men attended arriving in groups of four or five. Eloísa Maldonado was not present in the meeting taking place inside a room⁴²⁶. Robles identified later gunnery Rating Benito Ampuero-Ruiz and supply Rating Leandro Farías-Bueno as attending that meeting which hoped to coordinate the support for the mutiny⁴²⁷. The resolution adopted in this meeting was drafted into a document that was subsequently read on board *Araucano* and later destroyed. Apparently another person present at the meeting was Seaman Apprentice José de la Cerda Gatica from the School of Machinists. He later became the secretary of a committee created in this tender ship in which he embarked voluntarily⁴²⁸. He is the author of a book narrating the mutiny. Commander Fidel Alviña would state during the investigations that:

‘I would like to say for the record...that from my personal investigation and from the administrative proceedings that some Coastal Defence Gunners participated in a meeting taking place in Colón Street between

⁴²³ Statement: Gunner V. Marín, n.d. CM, v.7 (T), p.165. BUPERS.

⁴²⁴ Statement: Petty Officer M. Gómez, n.d. CM, v.7 (T), pp.120-121. BUPERS.

⁴²⁵ Statement: Petty Officer O. Robles (within statement M. Gómez) , n.d. CM, v.7 (T), pp.120-121. BUPERS.

⁴²⁶ Statement: Eloisa Maldonado, n.d. CM, v.7 (T), p.132. BUPERS.

⁴²⁷ Statement: Petty Officer Orlando Robles, n.d. CM, v.7 (T), pp.38-40. BUPERS.

⁴²⁸ Statement: Seaman Apprentice José Manuel de la Cerda, n.d. CM, v.7 (T), p.137. BUPERS and José Manuel de la Cerda, *Relación histórica de la Revolución de la Armada de Chile*, (Concepción: Sociedad Litografía Concepción, 1934).

crew members and civilians. In this meeting, the presence of communist elements, such as E. Sepúlveda⁴²⁹ and others should be noted⁴³⁰.

Commander Fidel Alviña is probably referring to two typographers who made announcements in the Gunnery School Press with the objective that the Army soldiers avoid using force to clear the Naval Base of mutineers. Their family name was Sepúlveda and one of them, Eliseo, who was a civilian naval worker, was regarded as communist by some witnesses. The man in charge of the Gunnery School Press wrote in a letter after the mutiny charging that the Sepúlveda brothers were ‘well known communists having a print shop in Balmaceda Street⁴³¹’.

In his statement Alviña does not relate this meeting with the other taking place in Caupolicán Street described earlier neither to another reported by one of his officers⁴³² although he stated that he made a personal investigation about the behaviour of the personnel under his command.

Another mentionable encounter oriented to organizing the mutiny is the statement of Rating Eusebio Morales who belonged to the Arsenal. He said that on 29 August at 17:30. ‘I met with five other...’ [people] ... ‘in Pedro Letelier’s home to prepare the assault⁴³³’.

The subject of these preparatory meetings of the mutiny was not well researched by the prosecutor of the Court Martial. Most probably, the purpose of these encounters was organizing the beginning and the implementation of the mutiny, and this explains the

⁴²⁹ Commander Fidel Alviña is probably referring to two typographers who made announcements in the Gunnery School Press with the objective that the Army soldiers avoid using force to clear the Naval Base of mutineers.

⁴³⁰ Report by Cdr. Fidel Alviña, 22 APR 1932. CM, v.19 (T), p.192. BUPERS.

⁴³¹ Letter from Benítez to Cdr Gastón Nef Videau, 9 Septiembre 1931. CM, v.4 (T), pp.8-10. BUPERS.

⁴³² A coastal artillery officer, Lieutenant Commander Guillermo Córdova-Lizardi, also testified in court that one of his men reported after the mutiny that during August a gunner rating who was drunk in a Concepción’s bar had asked if the coastal artillery would shoot on the ships in case of rebellion. The man reporting this and Córdova himself assigned no importance to this information due to the gunner’s drunkenness [Statement: Lt Cdr Guillermo Córdova, CM v.14 (T); 456G, file 7, p.259]. This statement has only a relative significance because this officer is not a direct witness.

⁴³³ Statement: Rating E. Morales, n.d. CM, v.6 (T), p.35. BUPERS.

decision to light up a search light as a signal. The investigation shortcoming shows that it was oriented to a quick end and punishment of the naval mutineers but not the civilian instigators. The evidence gathered during the sessions of the Court Martial is the only available material about this subject and is presented for the first time in this thesis.

8.2. The mutiny erupts in Talcahuano.

The *Araucano's* Commanding Officer, Captain Luis Muñoz-Valdés, who was also the Commander in Chief of the Submarine Squadron, returned to his ship from the 2 September meeting of all Commanding Officers with Rear Admiral Chappuzeau. He was met by Commander Consiglio and all officers who were preparing the ship to sail. They were armed with their pistols. Until then the crew complied with orders and had been awakened to prepare the ship to weigh anchor. It was 3 September 00:30 a few hours after Petty Officer Robles had the meeting to coordinate the mutiny in Miss Maldonado's home.

Fifteen minutes later, a Midshipman on board the destroyer *Condell* warned Commander Ramm that the crew was arming themselves. Due to this fact the officers appeared on the deck carrying their hand guns. Three Midshipmen tried to use their pistols but Commander Ramm stopped them because: 'he considered that this was a useless action against the large number of mutineers, about one hundred men'⁴³⁴. The Commanding Officer tried dissuading the mutineers but they went ashore, going towards *Araucano*. Before that a Lieutenant and two Midshipmen tried to go to the bow sector intending to persuade the rebels but they were stopped by a sentry who dissuaded them with a shot. The Commanding Officer would state later that they had followed the order of extracting the rifle mechanisms and collecting the ammunition which they stored in a magazine room because the hand weapons room was being painted⁴³⁵. This temporary storage facility, however, was accessible through the crew's living spaces and the padlock securing the access to it was broken, indicating that the Commanding Officer was careless in complying with the Base Commander instructions. It must be mentioned that in other ships and shore

⁴³⁴ Statement: Cdr. Víctor Ramm, 12 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), pp.73-74. BUPERS.

⁴³⁵ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (456I), p.73. BUPERS.

establishments, the officers stored the weapons in a safe or in the Commanding Officer's cabin.

A few moments later the Duty Officer in the School of Machinists, Lieutenant Tomás Marsh-Órdenes was awakened by a rating reporting to him that the students had risen from their berths without being ordered. When he left his bedroom unarmed he was imprisoned by four armed men. Something similar happened with another officer who was sleeping in this shore establishment⁴³⁶.

The mutinous personnel belonging to *Condell* arrived on the *Araucano's* deck demanding the ship's surrender. On the deck, the submarine tender's Commanding Officer, Captain Muñoz Valdés, was in company with some officers. He faced the mutineers and, after convincing them not to act, he took away their arms and sent them ashore. The leader of this group was Gunnery Rating Salvador Martínez-Guerra⁴³⁷. One of *Condell's* Midshipmen, upon passing by *Araucano* observed personnel from his ship on the after deck of the Submarine Tender Ship and he also went on board to take the weapons from them. He observed that they carried ammunition in their cartridge belts and also in bags showing that they were ready for action.

Once ashore, the personnel who tried to seize *Araucano* were returning to the *Condell* but when passing by School of Machinists, an anonymous individual persuaded them to rejoin the rebellion, handing them weapons and ammunition. This group, together with those from that school numbered around two hundred men. They started shooting at *Araucano* in hopes of preventing it from sailing. The Commanding Officer of the Submarine Tender directed to return the fire with two Lewis machine guns which he had ordered removed from the submarines. These weapons did not work because they had been sabotaged⁴³⁸. Then the ship officers started answering the fire with their pistols. Meanwhile *Araucano's* crew tried to reach the deck using the gangway but were contained by an officer.

Captain Muñoz-Valdés went to the stern living quarters where the ship's company stood to warn them to remain loyal. He asked if the ship's company would support him and

⁴³⁶ Statement: Lt Tomás Marsh, n.d., CM, v.20 (T), pp. 134-136. BUPERS.

⁴³⁷ Statement: Seaman Apprentice de la Cerda, n.d. CM, v.7 (T), p.137. BUPERS.

⁴³⁸ Report by Capt. Muñoz-Valdés, 11 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), p.69. BUPERS.

nobody answered. Then Petty Officer Orlando Robles stepped forward and pressed the ship's company for a negative answer to the question asked by the Commanding Officer. Soon after, this Petty Officer would become the leader of the ship sailing off from Talcahuano. At this moment, Muñoz-Valdés was told that Admiral Chappuzeau had arrived on the ship. The shooting had ceased for a while and many rebel personnel went on board following the Admiral. The Coastal Artillery Company commanded by Sub-lieutenant Berndt had gathered next to *Araucano's* berth and the School of Machinists and was already deployed. This officer saw and heard what Rear Admiral Chappuzeau was saying to the men on the after deck of *Araucano*. He decided to send his second in command to tell him that he was awaiting orders and remained in that attitude for ten minutes. The officer sent by Berndt arrived to the shore side of the tender ship gangway where he found Captain Calderón, the Base Chief of Staff. He reported to him Berndt's message and was ordered to tell the Coastal Artillery Company to abandon the dock since the brawl had ended and the Admiral was talking on board with the mutineers.

The men who were on the deck, responded to the Admiral's speech with insolence and jeers. One of the mutineers said something more rational:

'The officers made the revolution before without asking the crews about their ideals; now we, the crews, are the ones that are doing this for ourselves and we have to follow our mates in the squadrons starting 04:00'.

Another said: 'the officers in no way took care of us, they do not know the suffering of the crews and they care less about our complaints...⁴³⁹'.

One of the most active in this verbal interchange was Supply Rating Rogelio Valdivia-Ochoa of the submarine *Thomson*, a man distinguished by several witnesses as having extremist ideas⁴⁴⁰. Other speakers blamed the officers' indifference and lack of concern about the enlisted men's situation. The mutineers said that they were only interested in having the *Araucano* sail to Coquimbo in order to join the rebel squadrons. One of them said that the officers should accompany the crews. The Admiral decided that this would be shameful, responding that if the officers gave the crew the right to go to

⁴³⁹ Statement: Radm. Roberto Chappuzeau, 10 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), pp. 19-31. BUPERS.

⁴⁴⁰ Statement: Stoker R. Valdivia, n.d. CM, v.7 (T), pp.163-164. BUPERS.

northern Chile the officers should be given the right to remain in Talcahuano⁴⁴¹. Probably he was afraid that the officers would be taken as prisoners as happened in Coquimbo. The above conversation is confirmed in a general report by the British Embassy in Santiago⁴⁴² and in a US intelligence report⁴⁴³. The School of Gunnery Executive Officer, Lieutenant Commander Raimundo Fajardo Rodríguez, who was present all the time, would state⁴⁴⁴ later that the general tone of the Admiral's words while he was on board *Araucano*: 'was inconvenient' ...and the mutineers showed themselves.... 'exited and insolent'.

Rear Admiral Chappuzeau retired from the scene considering that subversives had taken over the situation. He left *Araucano* to talk to the Commanding Officers and to report to the Ministry of the Navy⁴⁴⁵ from his office ashore⁴⁴⁶. After coming ashore he ordered the Commanding Officer of the Coastal Artillery Company to take away his troop back to the barracks. Sub-lieutenant Berndt would state later to the Administrative Inquiry prosecutor:

'I have the absolute conviction that if the Admiral had ordered an attack on the rebels, we would have been successful, because I had them surrounded, they were in disorder, gathered without any leadership; my troop was awaiting only the order to act decisively⁴⁴⁷'.

The officers started abandoning all ships, sometime pressed by the mutineers and in some other cases following their superiors. An amazing case is the following. In that morning on 3 September, in destroyer *Riveros*, staying inside a dry dock, there was no

⁴⁴¹ Statement: Radm. Roberto Chappuzeau, 10 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), pp.19-31. BUPERS.

⁴⁴² Report from British Embassy in Santiago to Foreign Office. NA, FO 371/15080 No.06305.

⁴⁴³ Office of Naval Intelligence Report October 1931, p.3. NAUSA.

⁴⁴⁴ Statement: Lt Cdr. Fajardo, 4 APR 1932. CM, v.13 (T), p.306. BUPERS.

⁴⁴⁵ Letter from Under Secretary of the Navy to Prosecutor, 24 MAR 1932. CM, v.21 (T), p.21. BUPERS.

⁴⁴⁶ Report by Capt. Calderón to Minister of the Navy, 10 SEP 1931. CM, v.21(T), p.24. BUPERS; Statement: Radm. Roberto Chappuzeau, 10 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), p. 24. BUPERS; Statement: Lt Cdr. Fajardo, 4 APR 1932. CM, v.13(T), p.306. BUPERS.

⁴⁴⁷ Report by Sub-Lieutenant Berndt, n.d. CM, v.1 (T), pp.174-180. CM, v.1 (T), pp.174-180. BUPERS

abnormal situation, no matter that it was known that a rebellion had started in other ships. *Riveros's* Commanding Officer, Commander Guillermo Troncoso Palacios, who was at the same time the Director of the School of Seaman Apprentices, located in Quiriquina Island⁴⁴⁸ went to the office of the Commander in Chief. There, Rear Admiral Chappuzeau instructed him to avoid using violence and to keep his position while he retained the crew's loyalty. When he returned to his ship, he decided with his officers that the situation could be interpreted as that they were supporting the mutineers, while there were symptoms that the destroyer would be attacked by mutineers from other ships. He called the crew to fall in to explain the above, saying that he would exit with his officers. The crew gave him the name of a petty officer to take care of the ship⁴⁴⁹. The destroyer was taken out from the dock by the mutineers and a few days later would take action against Army troops.

The case of one of the Shore Establishments is illustrative as well. In the Arsenal Fourth Section its head, Commander Antonio Alviña-Vergara, observed that the personnel started abandoning their workplaces and embarking in different ships. He reported this to his superior who instructed him, that in accord with the Admiral's instructions, to let them do what they wanted because they had no means to make the crews obedient⁴⁵⁰.

In the Coastal Artillery barracks the situation was no better. When Fort Borgoño's Lieutenant Solón Aranda-Blummer addressed his troop about the situation he received a hostile reaction. His Commanding Officer, Commander Fidel Alviña-Vergara stated⁴⁵¹ later that Aranda had not followed his orders when he addressed his troop. The Lieutenant would state⁴⁵² later that he decided to talk to his battery troop and in fact nobody expressed support for the officers when he requested their support. In that moment he abandoned the barracks in civilian clothes feeling dishonoured. He then returned to Fort Borgoño but he

⁴⁴⁸ This island is inside Concepción Bay where the Talcahuano Naval Base is also located. The School of Seaman Apprentices is about five nautical miles away from the Naval Base.

⁴⁴⁹ Statement: Cdr. Troncoso, 17 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), pp.202-203. BUPERS.

⁴⁵⁰ Statement: Cdr. Antonio Alviña, 16 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), pp.146-153. BUPERS.

⁴⁵¹ Report by Cdr. Fidel Alviña, 22 APR 1932. CM, v. 19 (T), p.193. BUPERS.

⁴⁵² Report by Commandant Coastal Artillery, n.d. CM, v. 19 (T), p.144. BUPERS.

left it again after seeing that Commander Alviña turned his command over to a petty officer. Alviña had the opinion that he would be able to control this petty officer and another who was called by him from another fort under his command. At the end this was not true since this last petty officer acted as a leader although somewhat deviously.

An illustrative case is what happened in the School of Seaman Apprentices, one of the educational establishments attached to the Talcahuano Naval Base. The Executive Officer was Lieutenant Commander René Berisso-Monsalve who decided to check the opinion of the crew [excluding the students] because these people showed themselves very nervous due to the events and because of the fact that Commander Troncoso was on board *Riveros* where he had the position of Commanding Office as a collateral duty. The warrant and petty officers told him that they agreed with the mutiny. Berisso asked that they name a commission to whom to turn over the command of the school and recommended them to avoid involving the students. There were the Seaman Apprentices and the Cadets on board frigate *Lautaro*, a pontoon anchored close to the school where Merchant Marine officers were educated by the Navy. At that moment Commander Troncoso arrived and Berisso reported to him. The Director or Commanding Officer decided then that the officers should go to their homes on the island. Later he ordered them to abandon the island taking their families with them. This was achieved at 21:30 on 3 September 1931⁴⁵³.

In summary, all ships in Talcahuano as well as the shore establishments were in the hands of the rebels on 3 September and in this way the mutiny was carried out in this base.

On that same day, the initial committee taking charge of the Base was organized with the following members: A radio operator petty officer from the Radio Station, a machinist warrant officer from the destroyer *Williams*, a boiler fitter worker from the Arsenal, a torpedo machinist petty officer from the Weapons Depot, a torpedo machinist petty officer from the Submarine Depot, a worker from the Arsenal, a machinist petty officer from the Arsenal and a schoolmaster from School of Torpedoes. This shows that the rebels wanted a board representing most of the ranks, ships and shore establishments.

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Statement: Lt Cdr. Berisso, n.d. CM, v.5 (T), pp.273-276. BUPERS.

9. VALPARAÍSO AND THE END OF THE REBELLION.

9.1. The mutiny in Valparaíso.

Valparaíso lived through shocking days when President Ibáñez fell. This port was more important politically, demographically, and in commercial and industrial development than Talcahuano. It was also the seat of some shore establishments and Navy schools scattered through the city and the neighbouring Viña del Mar⁴⁵⁴ [see Appendix D. Ships and shore establishments in Valparaíso].

The Valparaíso Naval Base was under the command of Rear Admiral Francisco Nieto Gallegos, who was advised by a complete staff, which was not true of Talcahuano.

The *Rancagua*, an oiler belonging to this base, had left Coquimbo sailing for Valparaíso on 31 August. While at sea a delegation of crew members asked for a meeting with the Executive Officer who agreed. In that meeting the sailors requested respectfully that their August salaries should be paid without the 30% discount. This petition was submitted in writing to the Base Commander in Chief upon the *Rancagua's* arrival to Valparaíso on Tuesday 1 September. On the afternoon of the same day, Admiral Nieto received the information about the mutiny from the Ministry of the Navy at almost the same time as the Admiral in Talcahuano. He ordered immediately that officers and men stay in the barracks or on board accordingly to the Base's defence plans⁴⁵⁵.

In the 'Escuela Naval' [Naval Academy] once the news about the mutiny in the squadrons and the order to stay in the barracks arrived, it was ordered to remove the mechanisms of the weapons and to place the ammunition in a safe place, leaving ready only enough arms for the officers and the cadets who were students in the advanced class. As the situation worsened, weapons were readied to equip two infantry companies made up of

⁴⁵⁴ Viña del Mar is twenty kilometres away from Valparaíso in the same bay and from those years is considered as almost a neighbourhood of it. Quintero, where the Air Force Base is located, is forty kilometres north from Viña del Mar and sixty from Valparaíso.

⁴⁵⁵ Statement: Radm. Francisco Nieto CM, v. 4(V) (456I), p.258. BUPERS.

cadets. They stayed ready to act at all times⁴⁵⁶. The next day the ship and shore establishment Commanding Officers reported to headquarters that the crews remained loyal and condemned the attitude of the Coquimbo mutineers.

Until 2 September, nothing indicated that a behaviour against discipline would happen in ships or shore establishments of the Navy or in the barracks and bases of the Army and Air Force in the area of Valparaíso, regardless of the fact that the news about the mutiny was already known and several unions were on strike. But this initial calm changed dramatically on the next day.

At noon on 3 September, Admiral Nieto ordered the filling of *Rancagua's* oil tanks with water in order to render useless the three hundred tons of fuel the ship carried on board as well as to prevent the ship leaving the harbour. The Admiral acted this way because *Rancagua's* Commanding Officer, Commander Miguel Bahamondez-Torrejón, had told the Flag Officer that he doubted the loyalty of the crew as well as the ability of the ship going to sea in that condition of discipline. The Admiral also ordered the removal of the *Galvarino's*⁴⁵⁷ main steam valve⁴⁵⁸. The *Rancagua's* Commanding Officer ordered his men to disconnect the radio antennas and to take the hand weapons of his ship to the officers' living spaces⁴⁵⁹.

On 3 September the first symptoms of insubordination were perceived in the 'Escuela de Telecomunicaciones' [School of Telecommunications] when the enlisted personnel, without the authorisation of the Commanding Officer, Commander Emilio Merino-Lemus, sent a radio message of support to *Latorre*⁴⁶⁰. This officer had tried to maintain discipline, gathering the warrant and petty officers as well as the seaman

⁴⁵⁶ Statement: Cdr Guillermo del Campo, n.d., CM, v.7(V) (456A), pp.291-298. BUPERS.

⁴⁵⁷ *Galvarino* was a small fleet support vessel.

⁴⁵⁸ Statement: Cdr Miguel Bahamonde, n.d., CM, v.7(V) (456A), p.150. BUPERS.

⁴⁵⁹ Statement: Cdr Miguel Bahamonde, n.d., CM, v.7(V) (456A), pp. 155-160. BUPERS.

⁴⁶⁰ Message from Escuela de Comunicaciones to Araucano and Fleet, 03 SEP 1931, 13:18. CM, v.22, pp.29-30. BUPERS.

apprentices [students] exhorting them to fulfil their duties and remain loyal. By that afternoon the crew showed itself openly rebellious⁴⁶¹.

Nearby the School of Telecommunications were Las Salinas Radio Station and a Telecommunications Equipment Depot. Both shore establishments joined the mutiny, in particular the Radio Station which was manned by school personnel. As a precaution, the Naval Base Command ordered two lieutenants, who were students at the School of Telecommunications, to take control of the Playa Ancha Radio Station⁴⁶² because it had no officers and its Commanding Officer was a member of the staff of the base. The Commanding Officer spent most of the time at the headquarters and not performing this collateral duty. The two junior officers managed to impose discipline on that shore establishment except when a message of moral support was transmitted to *Latorre*⁴⁶³. The rebels managed to send the message by claiming that the Base Chief of Staff and the Radio Station Commanding Officer had authorized this act.

When the School of Telecommunications joined the mutiny at 14:00 on 3 September Admiral Nieto immediately informed Santiago, as well as requesting that it send an Army Regiment from the capital's garrison to occupy the school since he did not trust the loyalty of the Valparaiso troops. After some consideration and debate the Government decided to avoid the use of force in order not to interfere with the conciliatory commission being held at that time by Rear Admiral von Schroeders in Coquimbo. This order was communicated to the Commanding Officer of that school and he was recommended to maintain the situation in a pacific way, acting tactfully⁴⁶⁴.

The mutiny in that establishment of naval education started when the Commanding Officer of a Students' Company, who was a Lieutenant belonging to the Chilean Air Force, ordered the disarming of the personnel who had just arrive from an exercise held outside the barracks. Instead of complying, a group of seaman apprentices went to a gathering of petty officers who had organized the sedition. Once this mutiny took place, the Executive Officer, Lieutenant Commander Armando Parker-Lara, asked permission of the

⁴⁶¹ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (V) (456I), p.24. BUPERS.

⁴⁶² Playa Ancha is in the southern end of Valparaíso Bay.

⁴⁶³ Message from Radio Station Valparaíso to Latorre, 3 SEP 1931, 17:40. CM, v.22 (T). pp 29-30. BUPERS and report by RAdm Francisco Nieto to Minister of the Navy, n.d. September 1931, CM, v.7(V) (456A), p.5. BUPERS.

Commanding Officer to abandon the school with the rest of the officers. Commander Merino decided that the officers would exit the premises on a pass with instructions to attend next day at the Base headquarters in Valparaíso⁴⁶⁵. He remained on the premises with two Air Force lieutenants who were students at the school until the establishment was recovered two days later.

When the squadrons and the School of Telecommunications mutinies became known, the garrison of the ‘Cuartel N° 1 *Silva Palma*’ [*Silva Palma Barracks N° 1*]⁴⁶⁶ began acting in a frankly rebellious way on 3 and 4 September. Due to the fact that the same instructions given to the School of Telecommunications had been given by Admiral Nieto to the Commanding Officer of the Barracks, Lieutenant Commander Fernando Aranda-Osorio, the initial attitude of Aranda was tolerant, trying to contain the mutineers with reasons and calls to keep order. Nevertheless, discipline in this place remained deficient even though a loyal Coastal Artillery Company was lodged there as well. This troop contributed to contain a first mutiny intent but Lieutenant Commander Aranda’s orders were not fully complied with and some men were seen carrying guns even though Aranda had assured the Commanding Officer of the Coastal Artillery Company that all hand weapons had been put into storage and that he had the key⁴⁶⁷. Finally Aranda maintained this unstable control until Carabineros troops occupied the barracks⁴⁶⁸.

Rancagua’s crew joined the squadrons’ mutiny sending a message by means of Radio Station Las Salinas on the night on 3 September. A few hours earlier Air Force Base Quintero⁴⁶⁹ had also joined the mutiny⁴⁷⁰. After this first action, the mutineers in this base

⁴⁶⁵ Statement: Lt Cdr Armando Parker, 10 SEP 1931, CM, v.7(V) (456A), p.65. BUPERS.

⁴⁶⁶ Silva Palma Barracks N° 1 was an establishment located in the Playa Ancha neighbourhood of Valparaíso. Its mission was serving as a lodging place for in-transit personnel. Also, there was a Naval Prison on the premises.

⁴⁶⁷ Statement: Lt Cdr Fernando Aranda, 12 SEP 1931, CM, v.7(V) (456A), pp. 134-141. BUPERS.

⁴⁶⁸ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (V) (456I), p.32. BUPERS.

⁴⁶⁹ This was formerly Quintero Naval Air Station a shore establishment handled over by the Navy to the Chilean Air Force when this service was created on 21 March 1930.

gained full control on the morning of the next day⁴⁷¹. Admiral Nieto requested again a Santiago regiment to seize the Air Force Base urging that this measure must be adopted at once since the situation was worsening⁴⁷². Meanwhile, the Commanding Officer of the Valparaiso Arsenal, Captain Juan Gerken Mahn, thwarted the School of Telecommunications mutineers in their efforts to send by hand a message to the oil tanker *Rancagua*. This ship was moored close to the Arsenal and the message ordered this ship to weigh anchor and sail to Coquimbo at the request of the mutinous crews there. To achieve this, Gerken took the weapons away from two enlisted men who arrived at his shore establishment and took them as prisoners to the Base headquarters⁴⁷³.

The Coquimbo mutineers had sent the destroyer *Aldea* to sail to Valparaíso to meet the ships coming from Talcahuano. At a request from the mutineers of Air Base Quintero, this ship was ordered to make noticeable its presence near the base without engaging in any action to avoid spoiling the advancement of the talks with Admiral von Schroeders⁴⁷⁴. The mutineers of the School of Telecommunications also⁴⁷⁵ sent a message⁴⁷⁶ but the rebels in Coquimbo decided against sending a ship in order to: ‘avoid dispersing our force’.

Oil tanker *Rancagua*’s crew manifested their hostility by disobeying orders. When the Commander in Chief of the Valparaiso Naval Base learned of this, he requested troops to seize the ship but the Government refused to authorize the use of force. On 4 September

⁴⁷⁰ Message from Air Base Quintero to ‘Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones’, 3 SEP 1931. 12:30. CM, v.22 (T), p.34. BUPERS.

⁴⁷¹ Message from Air Base Quintero to ‘Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones’, 4 SEP 1931. 03:20. CM, v.22 (T), p.33. BUPERS.

⁴⁷² Report by Radm Francisco Nieto to Minister of the Navy, n.d. September 1931CM, v.7 (V) (456A), p. 6. BUPERS.

⁴⁷³ Report by Capt Juan Gerken, 10 SEP 1931, CM, v.7(V) (456A), p. 249. BUPERS.

⁴⁷⁴ Message from ‘Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones’ to *Aldea*, 04 SEP 1931, 10:00. CM, v.22 (T), p.36. BUPERS.

⁴⁷⁵ Both that school and the Air Base were close to the sea.

⁴⁷⁶ Messages from ‘Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones’ to Escuela de Comunicaciones, 04 SEP 1931, 10:30. CM, v.22 (T), pp.38-44. BUPERS and from ‘Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones’ to Minister of the Navy, 04 SEP 1931, 21:15. CM, v.22 (T), pp.38-44. BUPERS.

the *Rancagua*'s commanding officer assembled his crew and authorized it to go ashore on leave. The sailors, however, refused⁴⁷⁷.

The officers belonging to School of Telecommunications who left that educational establishment the day before met their Commanding Officer in Valparaíso's Naval Club and agreed to resign their commissions. They asked then for permission to do so to the Commander in Chief of the Naval Base. The Admiral requested them not to take this step because it would place an additional burden on the Government, adding that they must wait until the situation calmed down. The officers then requested the creation of an infantry company composed of themselves and other naval officers but the Admiral answered that they must place themselves under the orders of the Naval Base Chief of Staff because there was considerable work to do in the headquarters⁴⁷⁸.

In the afternoon of 4 September, Radio Station Playa Ancha received a message signed by several Sergeants belonging to 'Regimiento Maipo' [Maipo Regiment] stating that they joined the mutiny. The Commander in Chief of the Valparaíso Naval Base ordered that the message must not be transmitted and that instead it should be turned over to the Commanding Officer of that Regiment showing good judgement in this action. With the evidence that military personnel were supporting the mutiny, the Army decided to occupy the barracks using the troops of the 'Escuela de Infantería' [Infantry School] brought from the town of San Bernardo, forty kilometres south from Santiago. It also decided to move the troops of Maipo Regiment out of Playa Ancha, Valparaíso, to another garrison. This transfer, which required the use of buses and trucks, took place on 6 September. During this last event, shooting between the cadets of the nearby Naval Academy and the guards on board the trucks and buses took place, probably due to lack of coordination. Fortunately nobody was hurt⁴⁷⁹.

As explained [in section 7.4] a new cabinet assumed in Santiago and initiated negotiations with the mutineers in Coquimbo through Admiral von Schroeders on 3

⁴⁷⁷ Report by Cdr Miguel Bahamonde, n.d., CM, v.7(V) (456A), pp. 155-160. BUPERS.

⁴⁷⁸ Report by Lt Cdr Armando Parker, 10 SEP 1931, CM, v.7 (V) (456A), p. 66. BUPERS.

⁴⁷⁹ Report by Radm Francisco Nieto, n.d. SEP 1931CM, v.7(V) (456A), p. 8. BUPERS.

September. At the same time, General Carlos Vergara-Montero was named as Minister of War and empowered as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. He took some measures to be explained in following sections to face the possibility that the dealings in Coquimbo failed. This outcome became more evident the afternoon of 4 September so the proof that the mutiny might be extended into the Army, offered by the Sergeants' message, was another factor to adopt the decision of using force.

By midnight September 4, when the mutiny was still unfolding in Talcahuano's ships and shore establishments, it became known that the negotiations in Coquimbo had failed. The breakdown and the possible extension of the rebellion to the rest of the Armed Forces moved the Government to embrace the possibility of using force. This decision would cause the mutineers' defeat, after a few days.

9.2. The final events in Valparaíso, Talcahuano and Coquimbo.

As noted earlier [see section 7.4], Rear Admiral von Schroeders realized that divisions had occurred among the mutineers and that various rebels began to indicate that the mutiny was not going anywhere. When the rebels at Coquimbo learned that there were troop movements near Talcahuano they sent a radio message⁴⁸⁰ to the Government to desist from these actions. This communication was sent before the conversations with the governmental delegate had broken down. Von Schroeders, upon his arrival in the capital the next day reported the results of his mission and observed that the Government had already decided to use force everywhere against the mutineers⁴⁸¹.

At 04:00 on 5 September Carabineros seized *Silva Palma* Barracks N° 1 in Valparaíso. Four hours later a mountain infantry regiment captured the School of Telecommunications in Viña del Mar and forty minutes later a cavalry regiment did the same in Quintero Air Base.

The Commanding Officer of the oil tanker *Rancagua*, who had observed hostile attitudes in his crew on 4 September ordered his officers to carry their hand weapons and

⁴⁸⁰ Message from 'Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones' to Minister of the Navy, 04 SEP 1931, 21:15. CM, v.22 (T), p.44. BUPERS.

⁴⁸¹ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (V) (456I), p.3. BUPERS.

called again for his crew to assemble on the deck. He asked again if the crew backed him only to learn that the enlisted men agreed with their comrades in the squadrons. Then the Commanding Officer, together with his officers, all holding their hand guns ordered the crew to disembark, an order which was obeyed. News of this event was reported to the Valparaiso Naval Base Commander in Chief and Garrison Commander⁴⁸².

At the same time, Admiral Nieto inspected Fort Valdivia and Fort Vergara⁴⁸³ and talked with warrant officers and petty officers urging them to fulfil their duties and asking for a statement in favour of the Government and they accepted.

Meanwhile, very important events of the rebellions happened in the Concepción and Talcahuano areas on 5 September. The day before, the rebels from Talcahuano communicated to their comrades at Coquimbo that they counted on: ‘the whole support of Concepción and Talcahuano civilists⁴⁸⁴ elements’⁴⁸⁵.

The mutineers, knowing that an Army attack would take place at any time, and having full control of the Naval Base had designated a Gunnery Warrant Officer as Chief of the Land Forces. Probably he had reassuring news because he ordered by phone at 02:30 that everybody should leave their weapons and go to sleep. This new man in charge was against what had been decided earlier by the committee headed by a Radio Operator Warrant Officer and this is an indication of the disunity within the mutineers at that time. This order was not obeyed in general and again, a new ‘Junta’ was created in the School of Gunnery and it called itself the Action Committee, being the third body in charge of the rebellion in Talcahuano.

Meantime, in the School of Torpedoes a split took place when the news of an Army attack arrived: the crew members, who did not want to leave their weapons in order to be

⁴⁸² Report by Cdr Miguel Bahamonde, n.d., CM, v.7(V) (456A), p. 159. BUPERS.

⁴⁸³ The Coastal Artillery, a branch of the Navy, had several forts in Valparaíso bay in those years. Forts Valdivia and Vergara were important in the defensive system.

⁴⁸⁴ Civilists [or civilistas in Spanish] mean a person versed in civil law. But in Chile at that time this word was used to mean those who were opposed to the supposedly military regimen of general Ibáñez. They were mainly the Alessandristas. Paradoxically the Ibáñez Government did not exist anymore.

⁴⁸⁵ Message from Blanco to Latorre, 4 SEP 1931, 03:50. CM, v. 22(T), p.35. BUPERS.

ready to fight the Army, were headed by a schoolmaster and a torpedo machinist rating. This group insulted those who wanted to leave their arms and surrender to the military troops. Perhaps this also happened in other shore establishments because the order to leave their weapons was issued to everybody. The new Committee directing the rebellion in the Naval Base was headed by a machinist petty officer and delegates of School of Torpedoes. One of these said that this last establishment was not under arms against the Army but to combat the communists, which is not very credible. He was then arrested and sent to the cells for prisoners on board *Prat*. The same happened the day before when a diver petty officer of that school stated his opposition to the mutiny. These events clearly show the internal divisions within the mutineers⁴⁸⁶.

In the communications sent from Talcahuano to Coquimbo on 5 September at dawn it is possible to recognize that the mutineers in this Naval Base knew that they would be attacked and for this reason they were adopting last minute defence measures without being very organized⁴⁸⁷. Ten minutes later the ‘Crew’s Staff’ instructed Talcahuano’s rebels: ‘you cannot keep negotiating while the Government does not accept the reforms as a whole and positively. In case of violence in the Naval Base, we would decide adopting measures for reciprocity⁴⁸⁸’. A few moments later the ‘Crews Staff’ attempted to calm down the Talcahuano’s mutineers by telling them⁴⁸⁹ that they should not fear an attack due to the current negotiations, which was not really true since they ceased on the midnight of 4 September after von Schroeders had told them a few hours earlier that he was returning to Santiago due to the failure to reach an agreement.

A Commander who was not aware that he must go to join the Army at Concepción and who stayed the whole night at home in the Naval Base was awakened at 06:30 on 5 September by the dry-dock siren. He could see then the arrival of a train: ‘full of civilians; among them I noticed that there were many that had nothing to do with the dock workers.

⁴⁸⁶ Report: Lt Cdr Fajardo, n.d. CM, v.19 (T), pp. 121-122.

⁴⁸⁷ Message from Talcahuano to ‘Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones’, 5 SEP 1931, 03:40. CM, v. 22(T), p.50. BUPERS.

⁴⁸⁸ Message from ‘Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones’ to Talcahuano, 5 SEP 1931, 03:50. CM, v.22 (T), p.51. BUPERS.

⁴⁸⁹ Message from ‘Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones’ to Talcahuano, 5 SEP 1931, 04:45. CM, v.22 (T), pp.51-52. BUPERS.

They ran in all directions and returned armed with rifles and carbines⁴⁹⁰. At the same time about fifty men in the charge of a petty officer belonging to the School of Torpedoes who were really decided to fight went to the committee and they were sent to the tennis court located near the base entrance.

At 09:30 Coastal Artillery Warrant Officer Juan Zapata-Pinto, who was in charge of Fort Borgoño informed Commander Alviña that the Army would attack the Naval Base through the Tumbes Peninsula and he sought advice about the attitude that they should adopt. We must remember that Alviña was the Commanding Officer before the mutiny. He answered him that they should let those forces enter the base without resisting. Alviña stayed the rest of the time at home trusting that his former subordinates would return him to his command since they were asking for advice. Nevertheless, this did not happen and this Commander would be put back in his post only when the Army succeeded in taking the weapons away from the mutineers⁴⁹¹.

At the same time, several civilian employees' families, who lived in Navy houses, sought refuge in the School of Torpedoes, far away from the Naval Base entrance, while several officers remaining inside it for different reasons, were imprisoned and sent to one of the rebel ships.

Immediately after midnight on 4 September, the majority of the Naval Base's officers appeared at the Army's regiments in Concepción asking to be admitted in the units that would assault the rebels. General Guillermo Novoa-Sepúlveda, the Commander in Chief of those forces integrated them, forming an infantry company under the command of Commander Luis Muñoz-Valdés, *Araucano's* Commanding Officer. All these naval officers carried weapons like infantry soldiers. Another group was sent to the staff and to the military units to serve as advisors, guides, and soldiers. The General had concentrated the following forces in Concepción: the Chacabuco and O'Higgins Infantry Regiments, Artillery Regiment Silva Renard and Cavalry Regiments Guías and Húsares⁴⁹². His idea

⁴⁹⁰ Statement: Cdr. Antonio Alviña. 16 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), p. 152. BUPERS.CM, v.12 (T), p.66. BUPERS.

⁴⁹¹ Statement: Cdr. Fidel Alviña. 13 SEP 1931. CM, v.1 (T), pp. 94-102. BUPERS.

⁴⁹² Regiment O'Higgins had its barracks in Chillán, 120 kilometres east from Concepción while Regiment Húsares had headquarters in Angol, a town located 150 kilometres south of Concepción.

was to seize first Fort El Morro to enable the Artillery Regiment, with some naval officers, to direct their field guns against the Naval Base. Meanwhile the infantry company composed of naval officers together with the Regiment Chacabuco would attack the naval base from the back through the hills of the Tumbes Peninsula. Also, the base would be assaulted through the main entrance with the rest of the military units.

General Novoa notified⁴⁹³ the mutineers of his intentions early on 5 September. ‘I have orders to seize Talcahuano. In order to avoid blood shed, the rebels are invited to leave their arms and to yield unconditionally within a one hour period’. He also told them that if they do not obey, they would have to accept the consequences.

The Government’s intention of using force, plus the announcement made by the Quintero Air Base that it was being attacked by Army troops at 08:40 on 5 September⁴⁹⁴, and Talcahuano’s report that the military forces did not accept any other attitude than that of unconditional surrender⁴⁹⁵ were a clear demonstration that the situation was changing dramatically. But these facts did no prevent the ‘Crew’s Staff’ on board *Latorre* from still believing that it was in a strong position since it unwisely insisted to the mutineers in the southern base that they should resist⁴⁹⁶. Next, the mutiny leaders invited the Government to halt the troop movements and at the same time issued a veiled threat of using force against La Serena⁴⁹⁷.

There were several conciliation attempts when the troops were already deployed and several successive postponements were granted until the Chacabuco Regiment seized Fort El Morro without resistance at 14:30. A gun battery belonging to Regiment Silva Renard and some machine guns were installed there and fifteen minutes later all these

⁴⁹³ From General G. Novoa to Talcahuano (followed to *Latorre*), 5 SEP 1931, 07:00. CM, v. 22(T), p.52. BUPERS.

⁴⁹⁴ Message from Air Base Quintero to *Latorre*, 5 SEP 1931, 08:40. CM, v. 22(T), p.54. BUPERS.

⁴⁹⁵ Message from Talcahuano to ‘Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones’, 5 SEP 1931, 09:05. CM, v. 22(T), p.54. BUPERS.

⁴⁹⁶ Message from ‘Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones’ to Talcahuano, 5 SEP 1931, 09:35. CM, v.22 (T), p.54. BUPERS.

⁴⁹⁷ Message from ‘Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones’ to Vice President , 5 SEP 1931, 09:50. CM, v.22 (T), p.54. BUPERS.

weapons manned by the naval officers attached to the Army started firing on land and naval targets. The destroyer *Riveros*, the most active rebel ship, was damaged by the action of weapons placed in Fort El Morro. Afterwards, this ship withdrew to Quiriquina Island. There it embarked some fugitives. Then it went to Mocha Island, under the command of a torpedo operator petty officer, arriving the next day with four men dead and eighteen wounded⁴⁹⁸.

Meanwhile the mutineers ashore became more disorganized. At 14:10 on 5 September, in the face of an imminent attack, Schoolmaster Pedro Pacheco-Pérez asked the Coquimbo mutineers if they had sent any ship in support to Talcahuano. More than one hour later he reported that since no one was commanding the rebels he had decided to assume this role, naming Petty Officer José Ravest-Ravest to direct the defensive actions⁴⁹⁹. According to the Naval Base Radio Station, the most violent events in Talcahuano took place between 16:00 and 18:00. While under control of the mutineers, it kept reporting to the ships at Coquimbo by means of several radio messages about the actions until the station was captured⁵⁰⁰.

After taking Fort El Morro, the Chacabuco Regiment continued to advance towards Talcahuano. The Naval Officers Infantry Company climbed along the road to Tumbes Peninsula and supported by that Army unit, took positions at the rear of the Naval Base Headquarters. When it tried an attack it came under machine gun and rifle fire from the woods. This regiment and the naval officers were also attacked from Battery Rodríguez and a train mounted battery placed inside the Base⁵⁰¹.

Despite this opposition, the company advanced toward the Base Headquarters. There, the Commanding Officer of this unit [and of *Araucano*] Commander Muñoz Valdés,

⁴⁹⁸ Message from 'Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones' to Vice President , 5 SEP 1931, 21:30. CM, v.22 (T), p.62. BUPERS.

⁴⁹⁹ Message from School Master P. Pacheco to Blanco, 5 SEP 1931, 14:10. CM, v.22 (T), p.58. BUPERS and message from School Master P.Pacheco to Orompello, 5 SEP 1931, 15:33. CM, v.22 (T), p.58. BUPERS.

⁵⁰⁰ Messages interchanged between Radio Station Talcahuano and Latorre, 5 SEP 1931, 16:25, 16:45, 16:55, 17:10, 17:18, 17:40, 17:57, 17:58. CM, v.22 (T), pp.60-62. BUPERS.

⁵⁰¹ Report by Commanding Officer Submarine Force (Captain Muñoz-Valdés), 13 SEP 1931, CM, v.19(T), p.81. BUPERS.

yelled to the leaders of the Committee ordering that they should vacate the nearby School of Gunnery and the Gunnery Depot. The rebel personnel complied, assembling, as ordered, on the tennis court. Eventually the firing from the roofs of the shore establishments and from the Officers' Mess stopped. Then the *Araucano's* Commanding Officer ordered that the mutineers open the Base's main entrance [The Lion's Gate]⁵⁰² to allow the loyal forces to enter the compound and to clear that school and depot of resistance. Schoolmaster Pacheco, the mutineers' leader at that moment was apprehended and he was pressed to call the rest of the ship and shore establishments ordering the end of any resistance and that all the personnel should go to the tennis court⁵⁰³.

The assaulting troops advanced to the interior of the Naval Base headed by naval officers carrying the Schoolmaster as a hostage. Because they came under fire from the Movie Theatre and the Bakery it was necessary to check every house for rebel activity. A similar procedure was followed in the Arsenal and the ships.

The Commanding Officer of the Torpedoes School reported⁵⁰⁴ about the mutineers' gunnery skills. He stated that in addition to the two 120 mm guns train mounted, the following naval units also shot: armoured cruiser *Prat*, with its 120 mm cannons; protected cruiser *Chacabuco*, with one 120 mm gun and one 200 mm gun; destroyers *Condell*, *Williams* and *Uribe* with all their guns⁵⁰⁵. He also said that the shooting of all the above weapons was very bad since the aiming sight was used in disagreement with the projectile load and as a result, all the shots fell outside of the targets. In addition to the naval artillery the mutineers set demolition charges close to the Base Main Entrance which were deactivated by a lieutenant belonging to the School of Torpedoes. The report⁵⁰⁶ also states

⁵⁰² The base main gate is still called Puerta Los Leones [The Lion's Gate] since it has two sculptures of these animals as ornament.

⁵⁰³ Report by Commanding Officer Submarine Force (Captain Muñoz-Valdés), 13 SEP 1931, CM, v.19(T), p.82. BUPERS.

⁵⁰⁴ Report by Commanding Officer Submarine Force (Captain Muñoz-Valdés), n.d. CM, v.19 (T), pp.118-119. BUPERS.

⁵⁰⁵ These ships had the following main guns. *Prat* had four 240 mm [9.4"] guns. eight 120 mm; *Chacabuco* had six 6" [152 mm] guns and two 8" [200 mm] ; *Condell* and *Uribe* had six 4" [101 mm] guns; *Williams* had two 120 mm [4.7 mm] guns.

⁵⁰⁶ Report by Commanding Officer Submarine Force (Captain Muñoz-Valdés), n.d. CM, v.19 (T), p.116. BUPERS.

that the rebel ships were hit by shots from government guns placed in the Harbourmaster Headquarters⁵⁰⁷. Some shots from these guns aimed against the rebel's train mounted battery fell on the roof of the Naval Hospital.

After the situation was mostly dominated by the Army troops, intermittent shooting continued in the hills close to School of Torpedoes and Fort Borgoño until the Cavalry Regiment Húsares captured the rebels and their weapons. The army unit stayed in that educational establishment sending out patrols for several days searching for the last mutineers.

During the operations at Talcahuano, the Government's forces had the support of aircraft belonging to the Temuco Air Base. These Air Force elements patrolled the area particularly after the recovery of the Naval Base, due to the flight of several ships under rebel control. Recovering these units was a slow process but finally all returned to Talcahuano under the control of Government forces.

The casualties were not high: six dead and two wounded among the Army troops and seventeen dead and thirty wounded in the Navy according to a report⁵⁰⁸ of General Novoa [these numbers include the dead and wounded on board *Riveros*]. It is possible that these figures changed in the following days because some of the wounded died. Novoa also noted that the loyalist forces had captured 1,010 rebels on 5 September and 620 in the following two days. To these numbers should be added those who were imprisoned at the arrival of *Araucano*, *Blanco Encalada* and submarines at Valparaíso from Coquimbo making a total of 3,200 prisoners. This figure gives an idea of the magnitude of the insurrection in the Talcahuano Naval Base and its ships. Those one thousand men captured on 5 September were undoubtedly the most active mutineers remaining ashore, since they fired artillery and small arms against the Government forces for several hours. The rest of Talcahuano's personnel went on board the ships and sailed to Coquimbo. The magnitude of the rebellion becomes clear when you realize that 8,600 enlisted personnel [including men in uniform and those in civilian clothing] served in the Navy at that time.

⁵⁰⁷ Located closer to the Naval Base than Fuerte El Morro.

⁵⁰⁸ Report by General Guillermo Novoa to Prosecutor, N° 123C, 19 SEP 1931. CM, v9(T), pp.8-9. BUPERS.

The ‘Crews Staff’ reaction on board *Latorre* is in a radio message addressed to the Government after becoming aware of the Talcahuano attack: ‘where many victims occurred’. With little political realism the message’s author adds:

‘we give you a time until today at 24:00 to cease all hostilities as well as the aircraft movements and to cancel the order prohibiting the delivery of provisions...in case of not agreeing, we will act the same way with the officers we have under our control⁵⁰⁹’.

A few hours later the Government answered with this message signed by Vice-president Trucco⁵¹⁰ and all his cabinet:

‘Having exhausted all conciliatory methods and started use of force operations, the Government demands now unconditional surrender. The crews must disembark unarmed at once and submit themselves to the orders of the Garrison’s Commanders. If this is done, the Government would not impose the most rigorous punishmentson the other hand it will apply all the strength of Martial Law. The Government gives you one hour...or it will act following the indicated measures⁵¹¹’.

The ships sailing from Talcahuano to Coquimbo were north of Valparaiso’s latitude on the same day that the Government recovered that southern base (5 September). The Government tried to prevent their advance northwards, arguing that their home Naval Base was practically under the control of its forces. This was denied by the Talcahuano mutineers. The Executive also argued that it had recovered the Quintero Air Base, which was true. As a reaction, *Araucano* issued the following statement:

‘To the people of Chile and our comrades of the Army, Air Force and Carabineros: This is the moment of sealing in a fraternal embrace the union of the workers of the sword and the gun with their brothers of the muscle and the brain, marching closely united to win progress, justice and liberty⁵¹²’.

⁵⁰⁹ Message from ‘Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones’ to Vice President, 5 SEP 1931, 21:30. CM, v.22 (T), p.62. BUPERS.

⁵¹⁰ He was the acting President as explained in a previous chapter.

⁵¹¹ Message from Vice President to ‘Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones’, 6 SEP 1931, 01:00. CM, v.22 (T), p.63. BUPERS.

⁵¹² Message from Araucano to all units, 5 NOV 1931, no further data. CM, t.22(T),p.56. BUPERS.

In the following message *Araucano* notified the Government that it would keep travelling to Coquimbo, it would not use force unless challenged and that it would defend itself if it were attacked. For the first time a communication was signed by a real person. This one was signed by Petty Officer Orlando Robles Osses⁵¹³.

The news about the events that occurred in Talcahuano and Valparaíso on 5 September lowered the morale of the crews in Coquimbo. The lack of fuel and provisions also affected them, although these logistics deficiencies were attenuated by means of an act of piracy, seizing the steamship *Flora* and taking the food cargo from this vessel dedicated to the coastal trade with northern ports. Also they transferred fuel between the different units demonstrating that the mutineers could implement some complex operations.

The government's harsh use of force provoked anger among some of the crewmen as evidenced by the menace of shooting against La Serena and Coquimbo and acting against the imprisoned officers stated in radio messages addressed to the Government⁵¹⁴.

The most evident participation of Coquimbo's communists happened once the negotiations between the Government's Delegate, Admiral von Schroeders and the rebels ceased. The Port Master said that in the night on 5 September some mutineers in civilian clothes entered the home of prominent local communists in Virgilio's Alley⁵¹⁵. Also the mutineers ordered a company of sixty armed men to go ashore and a commission went to talk with the Port Master menacing that they would no stay responsible for the officers' and La Serena's fate⁵¹⁶. He answered with the Government's ultimatum and told them that all measures against them had been already adopted⁵¹⁷.

⁵¹³ Message from Araucano to Commander in Chief Armed Forces, 5 SEP 1931, 12:17. CG, v.22 (T), p. 56. BUPERS.

⁵¹⁴ Statement: Petty Officer Manuel Ceura, n.d., CM, v.8 (V), p. 156. BUPERS and message from Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones to Vice President (and other national authorities), 5 SEP 1931, 21:30.CM, v.22 (T), p. 62. BUPERS.

⁵¹⁵ Report by Chief Harbour Master to Director of Maritime Affairs, n.d., (September 1931). CM, v.22(T), p.110. BUPERS.

⁵¹⁶ Message from Government Palace to Ministry of the Navy, 6 SEP 1931, 05:25. CM, v.22 (T), p.64. BUPERS.

⁵¹⁷ Message from Port Master Coquimbo to Commander of Armed Forces, 6 SEP 1931, 07:30. CM, v.22(T) p. 66. BUPERS.

One man eagerly pressing for the bombardment of La Serena was Radio Operator Petty Officer Alejandro Caldera-Holm, who belonged to the destroyer *Lynch* but who stayed always on board the armoured cruiser *O'Higgins*⁵¹⁸. Some crew members even said that Caldera was a communist who tried to raise a red flag an act which a majority of mutineers opposed⁵¹⁹. Those naming Caldera as a communist, even giving details about his acts are: Torpedo Operator Rating Pedro Salas⁵²⁰, Storekeeper Petty Officer Héctor Gaete⁵²¹, Electrician Warrant Officer Manuel López Segura⁵²², and Musician Warrant Officer Luis Cerda-Leighton⁵²³. Also, the *Blanco Encalada* mutineers headed by Storekeeper Petty Officer Carlos Cuevas Gallardo, wanted to do the same thing, although this man denied being the author of the idea. Another reaction by the mutineers to the Government's ultimatum was to order the rebel fleet to sail south from Coquimbo to meet the units arriving from Talcahuano. They also sent the following message:

‘We state in front of the country’s consciencethat the crews, observing the Government’s anti patriotic intransigence and considering that the only remedy to the situation is changing the social regime have decided to support the people’s aspirations. We sail with a commission of workers representing the feelings of the nation’s proletariat, from the Worker’s Federation and the Communist Party. The civil struggle induced by the Government turns into a civil revolution from this moment⁵²⁴’.

This is the mutineers’ clearest mention of communism and its aspirations to initiate revolutionary changes, as in other mutinies that occurred in other countries. This sometime happened in a few mutinies as covered by Bell and Elleman⁵²⁵ and this was summarized in

⁵¹⁸ Statement: Rating Juan Lagos, n.d., CG, v.2 (V), p. 198. BUPERS.

⁵¹⁹ Statement: Rating Thomas Moore, n.d., CG, v.2 (V), p. 406. BUPERS.

⁵²⁰ Statement: Rating Pedro Salas, n.d., CM, v.2 (V), pp.187-188. BUPERS.

⁵²¹ Statement: Rating Héctor Gaete, n.d., CM, v.2 (V), pp. 209-210. BUPERS.

⁵²² Statement: Warrant Officer Manuel López, n.d., CM, v.2 (V), pp. 324-328. BUPERS.

⁵²³ Statement: Warrant Officer Luis Cerda, n.d., CM, v.2 (V), pp. 328-331. BUPERS.

⁵²⁴ Messages from Latorre (Estado Mayor) to Government, 6 SEP 1931, CM, t.2 (V), pp. 36-41. BUPERS and from Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones to the Governemnt, 6 SEP 1931, 07:20. CM, v.22(T), p.66.BUPERS.

⁵²⁵ Bell&Elleman, p.266.

another chapter [see section 1.3]. But in the Chilean case, this went no further than a menace because in that period the Chilean Communist Party did not have the strength and organization to attempt such a process, as will be discussed later [in section 11.1]. On 6 September the naval bases in Valparaíso and Talcahuano were under Government's control. The Government's reaction would be experienced soon by the ships in Coquimbo.

The revolutionary message quoted above carried the names of various representatives from the different ships as well as that of: 'Domingo Solar, Luis Jofré Barraza and Tobías Solar representing the Worker's Federation and the Communist Party'⁵²⁶. Domingo Solar was the author of articles in the newspaper '*La Semana Comunista*' [*Communist Weekly*] that was published by Chilean Worker's Federation in Coquimbo. One of these essays, entitled the 'Social Revolution', appeared in the March 1925 issue and referred to the indiscipline and other events that happened in Talcahuano that year and covered in another chapter of this thesis [see section 3.2]. This is an indication that the communist interest about naval subjects came from the period of unrest between 1924 and 1925 and the opportunity of influencing naval affairs came with the mutiny. One of La Serena's newspapers published a few days after the mutiny that: 'On board of one of the surrendered ships in Valparaíso were found two Coquimbo communists named Rojas and Del Solar. They contributed with their lectures to the submissiveness of the crew members to the leaders of the revolt'⁵²⁷. This is one of the few hints of the communist activity on board.

And yet, in the research done for this thesis using the courts martial and administrative court proceedings no evidence about these members of the Communist Party arriving at Valparaíso was found. This shows lack of diligence from the prosecutors.

As they made a sortie to sea on 6 September, the mutineers addressed the following menacing message to the Government: 'if by 14:00 on this Sunday the hidden military forces at La Serena do not surrender unconditionally, I will destroy this city'⁵²⁸.

⁵²⁶ Message from Estado Mayor de las Tripulaciones to the Governemnt, 6 SEP 1931, 07:20. CM, v.22(T), p.66. BUPERS.

⁵²⁷ 'Dos Comunistas', *El Diario*, La Serena, 10 September de 1931, p.2.

⁵²⁸ Message from Commander in Chief Fleet to Minister of Defense, 6 SEP 1931, 11:50. CM, v.22 (T), p.70. BUPERS.

The most judicious crew members, who were a majority, refused to obey the orders to fire on two undefended cities or hurt the imprisoned officers. Nevertheless, they performed a few acts more symbolic than effective; when the ships went to sea at 07:00 on 6 September they shelled the airfield where they believed the Government's aircraft landed. But this base was located at Ovalle, too far for the range of the squadron's guns. This action took place at 10:00 and the ships shooting were *Latorre*, *O'Higgins* and *Blanco Encalada*⁵²⁹.

The final failure of the mutiny affecting the two squadrons in Coquimbo was due to the disagreements among the mutineers resulting from the threat of bombarding the harmless cities of Coquimbo and La Serena, the logistics problems and the communists' presence⁵³⁰. Perhaps for this reason they sent a slightly more conciliatory message: 'At a request of the ladies of Coquimbo, the bombardment of La Serena has been postponed. We reserve for ourselves to retaliate for the bloody Talcahuano events⁵³¹'.

The mutineers knew that the Government would use air power against them. It had shown its determination when it ordered the aircraft to locate the ships sailing from Talcahuano to Coquimbo in a slow voyage between 3 and 5 September and when it ordered the attack at Talcahuano.

Before enduring an aerial assault, the seditious personnel asked the *Latorre's* Gunnery Officer, Lieutenant Commander Luis Roberto Valle-Ferro, how they should oppose the aerial threat. This officer used the occasion to contact personnel he knew supported him noting the crew's inability to use the anti aircraft fire control system⁵³² and hence, the inability to combat more than three aircraft at the same time. He made them aware that since the Government would send thirty aircraft, they would all die. He used the opportunity to tell them that they should rebel themselves against the ten or twelve people who were manipulating them. Lieutenant Commander Valle stated later that a Gunnery

⁵²⁹ Report by Chief Harbour Master to Director of Maritime Affairs, n.d., (September 1931). CM, v.22 (T), p.59. BUPERS.

⁵³⁰ Statement: Rating Pedro Salas, n.d., CM, v.2 (V),p. 187. BUPERS.

⁵³¹ Message from Commander in Chief Fleet to Minister of Defence, 6 SEP 1931, 15:00. CM, v.22(T), p.70. BUPERS.

⁵³² Installed on board in Devonport Dockyard while the battleship was being refitted there.

Chief Petty Officer stayed always loyal to him and was effective in provoking the fall of the mutineers' committee after the aerial attack, instructing the gunners placed throughout the ship to convince the rest of the crew to rebel against that organism. The activities of this officer to oppose the 'Crews Staff' were supported by the statements made in court by this petty officer and four gunners⁵³³.

At 17:25 on 6 September⁵³⁴ and following reconnaissance flights made at noon, the Chilean Air Force attacked the fleet in Coquimbo. A heterogeneous formation of twenty one aircraft flew at a relatively low altitude and followed a course that diminished the ships' ability to aim their anti aircraft guns against the sunlight⁵³⁵.

The ships' defences utilized anti aircraft artillery manually operated. Those units not possessing this type of weapon used hand guns [that is the cruiser *Blanco Encalada* and auxiliary vessels]. Some submarines shot with machine guns and then dived to avoid the bombs. Then they emerged to shoot again. The defence was at least enthusiastic and damaged several aircraft, one of which had to make an emergency landing⁵³⁶. None of the bombs hit the target. The Chief Harbourmaster, who was observing the action, says that the destroyer *Videla* shot with its bow gun against an aircraft flying close the hills surrounding the bay and the shell fortunately did not hit the houses but fell near Tortuga Lighthouse. The aircraft went out of sight at 18:00⁵³⁷.

⁵³³ Statement: Petty Officer Manuel Soto, n.d, CG, v. 4 (V), p.454. BUPERS.

⁵³⁴ Report by Chief Harbour Master to Director of Maritime Affairs, n.d., (September 1931). CM, v.22(T), pp.104-114. BUPERS.

⁵³⁵ Ramón Vergara Montero, *Por Rutas Extraviadas*, (Santiago: Imprenta Universitaria, 2 nd. Edition, 1933), pp. 56-65 and Military Intelligence Division (M.I.D), Intelligence Summary, 9 October 1931, Latin America, p. 13520. NAUSA.

⁵³⁶ Vergara, p.26.

⁵³⁷ Report by Chief Harbour Master to Director of Maritime Affairs, n.d., (September 1931). CM, v.22(T), pp.104-114. BUPERS and report by Guillermo Valenzuela, Coquimbo's Chief Harbourmaster to Director of Maritime Affairs, Chilean Navy, 13 APR 1932. CM, v.22 (T), p. 57-58]

Next day Surgeon Lieutenant Commander Eduardo Grove-Vallejos, who remained in Coquimbo, informed⁵³⁸ the Government about the casualties inflicted by the Air Force. One of the crew members of submarine *Quidora* was dead and another was wounded. Three crew members of other ships were interned in the port hospital due to different illnesses not related to the combat.

The mutineers' first reaction after the previous day combat was by:

'menacing bombarding La Serena and stating the adoption of an openly revolutionary attitude; the purpose would be causing a change in the social regime with the personal help of a Communist Party delegation if the Government does not give way to reach an agreement with us⁵³⁹'.

González says that the Government's radio response was quite simple: 'To end the conflict there is no other way than surrendering unconditionally⁵⁴⁰'.

The complete and true Government ultimatum is:

'The Government does not accept any other attitude than a complete surrender. The crewmembers shall go ashore without weapons and remain under the orders of La Serena's Garrison Commanding Officer who has instructions. If not, the Government would keep proceeding with even more energy⁵⁴¹'.

As a consequence of the aerial bombardment and the Government's reply, the enthusiasm for maintaining the mutiny declined considerably. Another reason was the undesired growing influence of the communists⁵⁴². The first specific result of this demoralization was a meeting convened by the 'Crews Staff' on board *Latorre* to which Rear Admiral Campos, the Commander in Chief of the Active Squadron and several destroyers' Commanding Officers were invited. The Admiral became aware that the mutineers' idea was to ask him to intercede with the Government on their behalf. He only attended the meeting after receiving the positive written opinion of the officers of the

⁵³⁸ Message from Doctor Grove to Minister of the Navy, 7 SEP 1931, 16:10. CM, v.22(T), p.94. BUPERS.

⁵³⁹ González, p.60.

⁵⁴⁰ González, p.60.

⁵⁴¹ Message from Minister of Defence to Latorre, 6 SEP 1931, 22:50. CM, v.22(T), p.76. BUPERS.

⁵⁴² Statement: Rating Pedro Salas, n.d., CG, v.2 (V). p. 188. BUPERS.

O'Higgins, his flagship. The meeting with the mutineers was attended as well by the Commanding Officers of destroyers *Orella*, *Serrano* and *Lynch* plus the battleship's Executive Officer. In this meeting, Admiral Campos agreed to mediate and sent a telegram⁵⁴³ to the government to report the situation on board at that moment. He also accepted the idea of travelling to Santiago with the *Serrano's* Commanding Officer. He stated on board that his idea was to report the seriousness of the situation in hopes of influencing the Government to end the hostilities and arrive at an arrangement with the mutineers. His real purpose, though, was to recommend measures to subdue the mutineers and save the ships, because he feared that the government would launch a new and more accurate aerial attack⁵⁴⁴. At Admiral Campos' arrival in the capital city, he found the Government supporting the Minister of War General Carlos Vergara in its use of force and his offer of mediating was not accepted.

While imprisoned, Commander Yánquez and the rest of *Riquelme's* officers convinced the crew members to return to normality on Sunday 6 September at 18:00. This ship escaped at 20:00, in the darkness, to submit to the Government control⁵⁴⁵. The authorities in Santiago learned of this from a radio message from this unit announcing its return to Valparaíso⁵⁴⁶.

The *Serrano's* Commanding Officer, Commander Pedro Gallardo-Lataste, returned to his ship after the *Latorre* meeting to learn from his Executive Officer that the ship's company was ready to capitulate. Nevertheless, Gallardo decided to leave his command since he would go ashore to comply with the mission requested by the 'Crews Staff' joining Admiral Campos to mediate the end of the mutiny with the Government⁵⁴⁷.

Also at 22:00 on Sunday 6 September, the *Hyatt's* officers convinced the crew to abandon the mutiny and return to Valparaíso to place themselves under the Government's

⁵⁴³ Message from Admiral Campos to President, 7 SEP 1931, 02:50. CM, v.22 (T), p.80. BUPERS.

⁵⁴⁴ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (456I), p.3. BUPERS.

⁵⁴⁵ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (456I), p.33. BUPERS.

⁵⁴⁶ Message from Riquelme to Minister of the Navy, 6 SEP 1931,22:00. CM, (T), p.76. BUPERS.

⁵⁴⁷ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (456I), p.33. BUPERS.

control⁵⁴⁸. Two hours later the *Orella's* Commanding Officer and the rest of the officers also convinced that crew to abandon the mutiny⁵⁴⁹. Meanwhile, Commander Samuel Ward-Rodríguez, the *Lynch's* Commanding Officer, returning from the meeting on board *Latorre* recovered the control of his ship but the crew did not release the rest of the officers until ten hours later⁵⁵⁰. The *Aldea's* Commanding Officer did not attend the meeting on the night of 6 September, because he had already obtained the crew's support and was awaiting the opportunity to escape, which he did at 03:45 Monday 7 September⁵⁵¹.

Latorre ordered to weigh anchor on 7 September at 04:00 to face the expected new aerial attack. *Orella* used the opportunity to run away later. The same happened afterwards with *Lynch* and *Hyatt*.

The battleship sailed still rebellious with three destroyers plus the cruiser *O'Higgins* and the ships that had arrived from Talcahuano. At 07:00 on Monday 7 September *Latorre's* crew liberated the Executive Officer and gave him command of the ship. Commander Obrecht reported⁵⁵² to the Ministry of the Navy that the rebels had freed him after intercepting a Government's message suspending a new aerial attack. He ordered the release of the communications and navigation officers so they could attend to their duties and at 13:00, having the situation under better control⁵⁵³, he called for the freeing of all the remaining officers who collected those weapons still in the crew's hands. Also, a guard was stationed in front of the ship's magazines. Obrecht subsequently ordered the flooding of the ammunition because he was informed that some rebels intended to blow up the ship⁵⁵⁴. The

⁵⁴⁸ Message from Cdr Becerra to Ministry of the Navy, 7 September 1931, 02:00. CM, v.22 (T), p.78. BUPERS.

⁵⁴⁹ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (456I), p.25. BUPERS.

⁵⁵⁰ Report by Cdr Samuel Ward to Minister of the Navy, n.d., CG, v.4 (V), p.122. BUPERS.

⁵⁵¹ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (456I), p.12. BUPERS.

⁵⁵² Message from Cdr Obrecht to Ministry of the Navy, 7 SEP 1931, 09:50. CM, v.22 (T), p.86. BUPERS.

⁵⁵³ Message from Cdr Obrecht to Ministry of the Navy, 7 SEP 1931, 13:57. CM, v.22 (T), p.88. BUPERS.

⁵⁵⁴ In the Court Martial proceedings there are several testimonies of this subject as in statements. Some witnesses point to Leading Rating Astica, Petty Officer Caldera

most forceful statement about this sabotage attempt was that of Midshipman José Duarte-Villaroel who says⁵⁵⁵: ‘There were at least fifteen charges ready to explode. They were found by the torpedist petty officer. I saw them personally⁵⁵⁶’.

Obrecht, fearing for Hozven's safety, did not liberate him, until the ship arrived to Quintero on the next day because he felt that the situation on board was still uncertain⁵⁵⁷.

Lynch, sailing with its Commanding Officer at the bridge, but with a still rebellious crew, intercepted a message from *Latorre* at noon on 7 September reporting the crew's surrender. The knowledge of this fact by the destroyer's crew enabled the return of that ship to the control of the officers. But the former mutineers, before turning the ship back, stipulated that that the officers must sign a document testifying that they were well treated and that the crew acted under *Latorre's* pressure. This they hoped would mitigate any future punishments. The Commanding Officer, aware of the delicate situation and knowing that statements had no legal value, accepted their demands. His agreement calmed the crew and enabled the recovery of this ship. Then he set course to Valparaíso, while ordering that the crew surrender their weapons. He would reach that port on 8 September at 08:00⁵⁵⁸.

At the same date, *Latorre* called at Quintero where its Commanding Officer, Captain Hozven, was finally liberated. The rebellion in this capital ship definitively ended after thirty hours of this hazardous trip. The suicide of Schoolmaster Juan Bautista Riveros Araya, who played a prominent role in the mutiny, became known on arrival.

On board the cruiser *O'Higgins* the Commanding Officer and the rest of the officers assumed control of the ship after departing the port at dawn on 7 September. This ship went back and anchored in Coquimbo again due to lack of fuel to sail to Valparaíso. *Blanco*, one of Talcahuano's ships arriving two days before at Coquimbo, weighed anchor very early on

Holm, Petty Officer Lautaro Silva, Leading Rating Bastías and Schoolmaster Riveros as authors of this idea. See: CM, v.1 (V), p, 9, 92, 93 and 95.

⁵⁵⁵ Statement: Midshipman José Duarte, n.d., CM, v.5 (V), p. 483. BUPERS.

⁵⁵⁶ Duarte does not give the name of this Petty Officer in his statement.

⁵⁵⁷ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (456I), p.16. BUPERS.

⁵⁵⁸ Report of Prosecutor Julio Allard Pinto. CM, v.3 (456I), p.26. BUPERS.

7 September communicating⁵⁵⁹ its surrender at 15:00 and asking instructions to return to Valparaíso or its home port. *Araucano* did the same at 21:30, reporting⁵⁶⁰ as well its concern about the submarines *Thomson* and *Simpson* which dived when located by aircraft. These two submarines finally surfaced and surrendered.

Blanco, *Araucano* and the submarines finally arrived on 8 September at Valparaíso and adjacent ports under the command of mutineers since the officers were left in Talcahuano. Finally, these units returned in the following days to their home base and under Government control.

Meanwhile in Talcahuano and since 5 September, the first task was isolating the mutineers and restoring the base's most essential functions. The most prominent rebels were imprisoned in regional public jails and submitted to war time military courts.

The security inside the base in Talcahuano was kept by the same military units that participated in the assault. Later the Army was replaced gradually by Carabineros. After a few months the security of the premises returned to the Coastal Artillery. This last force had concentrated itself in a few forts not participating in the mutiny with the purpose of keeping some guns in a high level of readiness. The rest of the forts were closed temporarily.

As a consequence of the mutiny, a new Commander in Chief of the Naval Base and Commanding Officers for ships and shore establishments were named. They were chosen from among naval officers who were serving in places where there was no rebellion. At the same time, the trials in Courts Martial and administrative investigations were started.

The Talcahuano base returned to normality twelve months after the mutiny in the sense that the investigations ended, the penalties were notified and the administrative separation of involved personnel [including corresponding appeals] was finished.

In Valparaíso the mutiny affected only one Shore Establishment [Escuela de Telecomunicaciones] and one ship [*Rancagua*] so it returned to normality sooner than Talcahuano.

⁵⁵⁹ Commanding Officer Blanco to Ministry of the Navy, 7 SEP 1931, 15:30. CM, v.22 (T), p.90. BUPERS.

⁵⁶⁰ From *Araucano* to Ministry of the Navy, 7 SEP 1931, 21:30. CM, v.22 (T), p.96. BUPERS.

Nevertheless, the city was shaken because it was the home port of the squadrons where the mutiny started, the area where the surrendered ships arrived and the region where the most important trials took place.

First of all, troops loyal to the Government not only occupied Shore Establishments but also the Maipo Regiment's barracks and Quintero Air Base because both had sided with the rebels. The military forces also took control of ships as they called at ports except the cruiser *O'Higgins* remaining in Coquimbo where it was occupied by La Serena's regiment without any resistance.

The presence of military forces on board was adopted for several reasons. First to assure that the rebels were effectively disarmed and taken to prison until their trials. Then it was necessary to enable the new Commanding Officers to take up their positions while the old ones were sent ashore to be tried. And lastly, security had to be maintained while the ships were operated in port by a reduced naval crew.

After a brief period the naval authorities decided on a reduction in the active forces, concentrating in a small number of destroyers and submarines the crews not contaminated with the mutiny. The rest of the units were sent with a minimum crew to Talcahuano.

The investigations conducted by the prosecutors made it possible to convene a Martial Court in La Serena to try the crew members of *O'Higgins*, in San Felipe for the men of the *Latorre* and in Valparaíso for the rest of the ships and Shore Establishments of this base.

Another separate Court Martial was convened in Valparaíso for Quintero Air Station mutineers and in San Bernardo for the Maipo Regiment's troops. Talcahuano ships' and Shore Establishment personnel were tried in that base. Due to public opinion pressures the officers underwent trial by a Court Martial convened in the School of Telecommunications in Viña del Mar [Las Salinas] and in Talcahuano.

After hearing the prosecution's charges and the statements of the witnesses, defendants and the defence attorneys, the Court Martial condemned in the first instance one hundred and twenty six enlisted men and this is 1.6% of a total of 8,326 men belonging to the Navy at that time⁵⁶¹. The trials took no longer than a week and this rush explains the omissions and defects evident on reading the proceedings.

⁵⁶¹ Memoria del Ministerio de Marina 1930 (Ministry of the Navy Annual Report). Imprenta de la Armada. 1931. p. 1138.

The harsh penalties applied by these wartime naval courts, including death penalties for some, and long periods of imprisonment for the rest and the unstable institutional and political situation in Chile at that moment determined that the interim Government started delaying the executions programmed for 18 September 1931⁵⁶². The delay evolved in a very peculiar way. Admiral von Schroeders would write in 1932:

‘These crewmembers ruining the impeccable naval tradition with an unforgivable disgrace were pardoned by Vice President Trucco Government’s; that of President Montero released them from jail; the socialist regime of Mr Carlos Dávila let them use La Moneda’s balcony to make speeches to the people; Mr Oyanedel’s gave a retirement pension to those who had been dismissed from the service and the Constitutional government starting in December 1932 ruled this also for those penally convicted, even given an important governmental post to the mutineers’ leader Schoolmaster González⁵⁶³.

The initial investigations within the administrative and legal processes showed that the participation of crewmembers in the mutiny was massive both in ships and in Shore Establishments. On top of this, a strong impression was made by these events on the society of that period and in particular on the Government. There was a perception that not all the participants in the mutiny would be punished due to the formalities of the processes and the short period allowed to complete them. As a reaction, the Executive Branch dictated the Ministry Order Number 64 on 22 September 1931⁵⁶⁴ using temporarily power given to General Vergara as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. The Commanding Officers empowered by this order created Administrative Commissions in every unit in the three services. The task to be achieved by these commissions was to classify all the enlisted personnel in four categories. In the first one would be placed all personnel to be expelled either because they were condemned by Courts Martial or due to a decision of these

⁵⁶² 18 September is the Independence Day in Chile and a Cabinet member argued than nobody should be executed in such occasion.

⁵⁶³ Von Schroeders, p. 26. Here this author is mentioning the successive governments ruling Chile from the mutiny until the end of 1932. He made a mistake in writing that González was a Schoolmaster and unfortunately this error was propagated in other writings. He was a Writer Warrant Officer Class 2.

⁵⁶⁴ Ministry Order Nr. 64, 22 September 1931. Boletín Oficial de la Armada N° 2, 24 September 1931, pp. 12-14.

Administrative Commissions. The second group would include personnel who would be temporarily discharged for two years. The third list consists of personnel being discharged with a retirement pension and the fourth by those not being charged administratively. These commissions were integrated by the Executive Officer and a couple of other officers of each ship or shore establishment. They made quick investigations hearing witnesses and defendants to get those lists ready and have them endorsed by the Commanding Officer before sending them to the Bureau of Personnel with the rest of the files to apply the administrative punishments. There were appeals to that Bureau but very few were accepted so the overall following numbers could be taken as final.

EXPELLED WITHOUT RETIREMENT PAYMENT	EXPELLED TEMPORARILY FOR TWO YEARS	RETIRED WITH PENSION	NOT AFFECTED BY ADMINISTRATIVE CHARGES	TOTAL
1,202	592	175	173	2,142

The Navy at that time had 8,326 non-commissioned personnel. Then the nearly two thousand men affected by penalties imposed by courts and administrative commissions (those in the first three rows of the above table) are equivalent to 23 % of the all the enlisted personnel in service in 1931.

As a result of the above procedures and the final decision made by the Bureau of Personnel, a considerable number of naval personnel left the service. This created a social problem since there was a considerable unemployment and misery at that time as a consequence of the world crisis. In subsequent months new appeals and bitter complains against the Navy occurred.

The press representing various political trends began publishing the Court Martial proceedings which were open to the public. Also, they published statements of the prosecuted who were interviewed between the sessions or in the jails. This started turning the public opinion against the Navy hierarchy and particularly the officers. The prosecuted convinced the public that the officers agreed with the initial demand for eliminating the salary reduction. Several political parties in the political instability of 1931-1932 pressed for the government to study the offices' behaviour, leading to the convening of a Court Martial. The prosecutor charged twenty six officers in this court sitting in Las Salinas,

Viña del Mar, to judge those belonging to both squadrons and the Valparaiso Naval Base. Two of them were condemned and many others were punished with various administrative sanctions including expulsion and retirement.

In Talcahuano, almost all the three hundred officers belonging to the Naval Base or the Submarine Command appeared before a Court Martial or an Administrative Court, or both. The prosecutors charged four with committing crimes penalized by the Military Justice Code and in the case of another thirty, requested an administrative sanction. This affected in practice all officers who were Commanding Officers on ships and shore establishments during the mutiny. In addition, other officers were punished for breaking discipline.

As a summary, the Navy had at that time six hundred thirty seven officers. Only six [1%] were condemned in first instance to short prison terms and about two hundred [30%] receive administrative punishments such as expulsion, early retirement, remaining without post for several months and other minor sanctions. All ship and shore establishment Commanding Officers lost their commands. The same happened with the Commanders in Chief of both squadrons and of the Talcahuano Naval Base, all of whom retired a few months after the mutiny.

The penalties applied to enlisted personnel were for crimes punished by the Military Justice Code⁵⁶⁵ to those promoting, organizing and committing mutinies. The penalties applied were harsh due to the State of Siege⁵⁶⁶ declared a couple of days after the initiation of mutiny⁵⁶⁷. Some officers were charged under article number 247 of the above code because it was assumed that they did not employ all means at their disposal to contain the crime of sedition and due to evident negligence to combat it, specially in Talcahuano. Those on board the ships at Coquimbo who signed some of the seditious documents, adding their own comments or who did not comply with their duties as Commanding Officers in the face of these events were also charged.

⁵⁶⁵ This was analyzed in another chapter [Section 1.4].

⁵⁶⁶ The State of Siege permitted the trials to be handled in wartime courts and the applications of more severe penalties.

⁵⁶⁷ 'Estado de Sitio', *El Diario*, La Serena, 5 de September 1931, p.1.

As a result of all the above and due to the precipitation in the processes followed in Court Martial [started on 10 September and ended five days later in the case of *Latorre's* crewmembers] the successive Governments took actions to attenuate or even eliminate the punishment of enlisted personnel.

Regarding officers punished in first instance, their appeals were later accepted by higher courts and some of them stayed in the Navy, but only briefly. The administrative punishments have already been described. In addition, the Navy Board ordered the retirement during the normal annual process of some of the officers not punished administratively. The officers who were involved in the events but who were not punished in any way were not awarded commands during 1932.

9.3. Final comments.

This chapter was oriented mainly to the description of the events but it is possible to sum up its course, outline the reasons for its failure, and anticipate some conclusions.

The Mutiny of 1931 is without doubt the most serious and transcendental event related to discipline in Chilean Navy history. During one week, most of the naval ships and its main logistical base were under control of mutinied enlisted personnel. In ships at Coquimbo, the officers remained imprisoned in their cabins. In Talcahuano, they were allowed to go ashore and join the base's officers. Most of them were able to go to the Army barracks in Concepción to collaborate in the recovery of the naval base.

During this period, the mutineers made different demands to the Government but only one was accepted and that was cancelling the measures ordered at the end of August regarding salaries that was the event which triggered the mutiny. Other demands made in the mutineers' manifestos had clear political meanings and this unleashed suspicion about Communist Party participation.

It was demonstrated that there were previous contacts with communist elements and a delegation of this party was seen on board *Latorre* during the mutiny. They enscribed their signatures in one of the most radical manifestos issued by the mutineers and perhaps were the authors of the draft due to the expressions used. It seems that this participation was limited to local members of the party at Coquimbo because the central directory was surprised by the events. Nevertheless, the communist party tried to take control of the

situation by ordering a general strike that had a limited success. We should note that British communist workers, duly identified in official documents, agitated on board *Latorre* while it was undergoing extensive transformations in Devonport's naval dockyard. The crew was also the target of subversive activity of Alessandrist exiles in Europe against Ibañez's government. Despite this contact, no direct causal effect relationship has been found indicating that the communists or Alessandrists originated the mutiny.

The thorough account in Section I.2.4 and in Part II, allows including some conclusions about the beginning and rapid ending of the mutiny.

The sedition was initiated on board the battleship *Latorre* due to the following reasons:

- The nearly two-year- stay of the battleship in Great Britain brought her crew into contact with new ways to protest that had recently appeared in the British naval service (the HMS *Lucia* case) or were being concocted in an atmosphere that was about to give rise to a greater mutiny (the Invergordon case occurred during the second week of September, 1931).
- The unsettling influence of *Alessandrist* groups over *Latorre*'s crew that stayed in Great Britain with the aim that, once back to Chile, they could begin a destabilizing action against Ibañez's Government.
- The reduction of the personal allowance of the battleship's crew while in foreign waters. This was in addition to the general reductions in salaries affecting all armed forces personnel between 1930 and 1931.
- Contacts between enlisted personnel and some communist representatives in Coquimbo.
- The particular way of exerting command by the *Latorre*'s Commanding Officer and his misguidedly reaction to press news at the end of August about a new and misunderstood salary reduction.
- The above immediate causes must be added to the more distant ones depicted in Part I. In those chapters, it was concluded that the changes causing the middle class gaining political dominance were not properly perceived by the senior naval officers and this led them to ignore what was happening in some sectors within this service while they became involved in politicking with a conservative orientation. The empowerment of mesocratic elements, with Arturo Alessandri and later with Carlos Ibáñez as leaders, ultimately led to major changes within the Navy destabilizing its

officer corps and leading to acts of indiscipline. This happened as well because these two caudillos improperly influenced some members of Navy, facilitating disciplinary breakdowns by dissatisfied middle class junior officers, all of which provided both an example and an opportunity for independent action by the lower ranks.

The mutiny was then initiated in *Latorre*, the most powerful warship of its age in the Chilean Navy and having the most numerous crew. The importance of being part of the ship's company of this dreadnaught allowed those who prepared the mutiny to convey it to other ships and shore facilities in Valparaiso and Talcahuano, employing previous contacts and the excellent communications systems recently installed in the battleship. Additionally, some destroyers' crew members, who had been in Great Britain during the construction of these ships during 1926-1928, had lived the social turmoil climate of previous years in which the general strike in 1926 was the paramount expression.

Even though the Chilean Government decided to modify temporarily the salaries of the whole public sector (civil and military) again in August 1931, the mutiny did not extend considerably to the other branches of the armed forces and Carabineros mostly due to the following reasons:

- Dispersal (or lack of concentration) of the Army, Air Force and Police units across the country with no adequate communications systems. The best and fastest national communication network to convey news and orders was the radio links of the Navy.
- Delays, lack of coordination and faint attempts to contact external adherents in the Army, Air Force and Carabineros by the mutineers.
- Quick and effective reaction from the Army's and Air Force's authorities to suppress the only real attempt of adhesion coming from sergeants and corporals of the Maipo Regiment and Quintero Air Base.
- Lack of support to, and in some cases direct disapproval towards the mutiny in the mass media as a whole, while the danger of a social outbreak was present.
- Inaction of the public sector employees in facing the salary reduction. The strike that the Communist party tried to organize had a limited echo. Most of the participants were trade unionists not affected by the economic measures but obedient to the Party instructions.

The reasons for the quick ending of the mutiny are varied and can be summarized as follow:

- The withdrawal of the governmental measures of reducing August salaries was adopted two days after the beginning of the mutiny and while negotiations were being carried out on board *Latorre*. Some of the other vindications (that might be called ‘unionists’) were accepted by the Government as well. The same did not happen with ‘political’ petitions. These were introduced by the more radicalized mutineers under external influence.
- The less radicalized mutineers – who were the majority – reacted against those more radicalized because of the actions taken or planned by these (shooting against civilian populations, for example).
- The growing logistic problems shown by the act of piracy against steamship *Flora* in order to obtain supplies. Another example is the cruiser *O’Higgins* running out of fuel on 7 September.
- The lack of effective political or social support after the governmental resolution to use the force once the negotiations failed (4 September).
- The arrival of ships to Coquimbo coming from Talcahuano (5 September) reinforced the posture of mutineers in this port, but weakened those left in Talcahuano, leading to the recovery of this port by the Army.
- The reasonable use of force by the Government to recover the shore establishments in Valparaíso and later in Talcahuano was a decisive strike at the mutineers on board the ships stationed in Coquimbo because they lost any possibility of logistic support.
- The air attack against the ships stationed in Coquimbo on 6 September, made evident to mutineers the governmental willingness to use force, generating a massive desertion and subsequently the handing over of the ships to their officers that night.

The mutiny’s short term consequences have already been discussed. It must be added that in the following years, there was a loss of combat readiness; a loss of credibility of the Navy in the eyes of the civil society; living conditions inside the service became harder and public recriminations between former naval officers occurred. These were the long term consequences of the mutiny. And all this happened in addition to the great austerity needed during Alessandri’s second term as President [1932-1938] to solve the economy crisis of the 1929-1931 period. All this could explain the extreme weakness of the Chilean Navy at the beginning of World War Two.

PART III: THE AFTERMATH

10. THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE NAVY.

10.1. Introduction to this part.

This chapter is devoted to the events after the mutiny and also to the immediate consequences of this historical event. The influence over the way of thinking of the Chilean left and the rise of this political trend will be analyzed together with the idea of imposing a closer State control of the economy as a reaction to the crisis started in 1929. Also, the Navy's weakening process, as a defence institution and its abandonment of any involvement in politics will be covered.

10.2. Consequences of the mutiny.

As has been shown above, the mutiny took place in a climate of instability following the fall of the authoritarian presidency of General Carlos Ibáñez del Campo. This abrupt political change happened while an acute economic crisis mainly of external origin was taking place and was propelled by a movement called 'civilism' at that time. The latter was a movement opposed to the militarism represented by Ibáñez and was hostile to the existing political parties because many of their members had supported the General. Independent professionals, such as doctors, attorneys and engineers, plus university students constituted the backbone of the civilist movement and was hostile to the existing political parties. In addition to these individuals, some politicians belonging to different parties that did not participate in the Ibáñez government also favoured the civilists. By means of strikes and demonstrations these forces precipitated a crisis overturning the Ibáñez presidency while leaving a political vacuum which the civilists, due to lack of a coherent organization, could not fill. Due to this factor, it is not surprising that they flocked to the candidacy of Juan Esteban Montero-Rodríguez, a lawyer and professor who,

although a member of the Radical Party⁵⁶⁸, was not a seasoned politician, but a serious professional without political ambition. Montero represented an antithesis with respect to populist caudillos such as Alessandri. He was named as head of the Cabinet by Ibáñez in the last weeks of his presidency precisely because he was not one of his followers. When Montero tried to rectify the course of the fading presidency, Ibáñez did not support him and in this way Montero became a leader of those who provoked the General's fall⁵⁶⁹.

The presidential election occurred on 4 October 1931, a few weeks after the mutiny and at the same time that the government was trying the mutineers. The main opponent to Montero was Arturo Alessandri Palma. The communists, beset by factionalism, presented two candidates, Elías Lafertte and Manuel Hidalgo. The election outcome as follows:

CANDIDATE	VOTES	
Montero	182,177	63.96%
Alessandri	99,075	34.78%
Hidalgo	2,344	0.82%
Lafertte	1,226	0.43%

Source: Vial-Correa, v. V, p. 81.

The election turnout showed that civilism had attracted two thirds of the vote, even though the movement was not very well articulated and supported a candidate who only reluctantly participated in the elections. The electoral results indicated that the electors wanted an alternative to the two caudillos of that time, Ibáñez and Alessandri. It also shows that the public strongly opposed the intervention of the Armed Forces in politics that had occurred since 1924.

10.3. The presidency of Juan Esteban Montero-Rodríguez: the civilist reaction.

⁵⁶⁸ Despite its name, the Radical Party was the most important social democrat political organization in Chile during that period.

⁵⁶⁹ The last days of Ibáñez as President and the participation of the civilistas and Montero on that period is covered by Collier and Sater, pp. 222-223 and by Vial-Correa, v. V, Chapter 1, pp.13-51.

Montero took office on 4 December 1931⁵⁷⁰ although he had been ruling the country as Vice-President since Ibáñez's fall in July. He had to turn over power to another temporary vice president, Manuel Trucco, for the duration of the campaign. The mutiny took place precisely during this period. Nevertheless, every important decision dealing with the rebellion was taken with his approval.

Resolving the economic crisis and undoing the most negative effects of Ibáñez's administration constituted the new government's major task. The first steps were removing those Ibáñez supporters who still held positions in Government and to avoid destabilizing military movements. But Montero did not call for elections to purge the Senate and Chamber of Deputies whose submissive members had been nominated by Ibáñez without a competitive election⁵⁷¹. Nor did he deal with COSACH, an organization with a wretched reputation, created by Ibáñez to regulate the production and sale all nitrate produced in Chile. Both the composition of the congress and COSACH's existence were very important questions. Unfortunately, Montero's inability to resolve these two issues, plus his lack of decision to solve the other pressing problem, undermined his government's reputation.

The civilists tried to blame the Armed Forces for the mistakes made in Ibáñez's administration once they controlled the country. This started a period of unrest in these services. It must be remembered that one of the points included by the mutineers in their first statement was:

'The Government, in compliance with its duties of watching over the sacred rights of all citizens [civilian, military and naval] and defending liberty, must avoid by all means the creation in the conscience of masses of a hostile attitude towards the Armed Forces' [see Appendix A].

One of the new Government's first steps was to reorganize the Navy or more precisely, return this service to its pre Ibáñez table of organization, including reviving the position of Director General of the Navy and also the Navy Board, and moving the

⁵⁷⁰ The Presidency of Juan Esteban Montro is the subject of one chapter in: Vial-Correa, v. V, Chapter 1, pp.13-51.

⁵⁷¹ This Congress was nominated by Ibáñez after he convinced the political parties to avoid an election. He selected the names of the Senators and Deputies in Chillán Thermal Springs located 500 kilometers south from Santiago. For this reason this parliament is known in Chilean History as the Thermal Congress.

headquarters from Santiago to Valparaíso. Montero's first cabinet after his election as President kept Captain Enrique Spoerer as his Minister of the Navy. Spoerer was originally named in this post by Trucco in the second day of the mutiny. He was selected through being a retired officer, due to the civilists' distrust of those high rank officers serving under Ibáñez.

The civilists' anti military feelings⁵⁷² and public pressure pushed the Government to prosecute in Courts Martial the officers of both squadrons and naval bases where the mutiny took place. This decision was also influenced by the idea that mutinies happened due to failures in the chain of command, as mentioned by Elihu Rose and analyzed in a past chapter [see section 1.3]. The trial took place in 'Escuela de Telecomunicaciones' between 14 December 1931 and 17 February 1932. A similar trial against the officers took place in Talcahuano.

In this period, reproachful statements were issued between several officers attending as witnesses and defendants, showing the atmosphere of discord and demoralization inside the Navy. An example of this is a statement of Rear Admiral Abel Campos Carvajal blaming the mutiny on:

'the undisciplined actions of some officers showing that while'...[Latorre was in]...'England a propaganda campaign against the previous Government took place⁵⁷³ by means of secret visits made on board⁵⁷⁴ .

Unfortunately Campos does not confirm who were the visitors and who were the officers being visited but in a former chapter the efforts made by Alessandrist elements in Europe to topple Ibáñez's government were covered [see section 6.1], including possible meetings with *Latorre* crewmembers.

Admiral Campos, was commanding the *Latorre* during the period it was finishing its refit in Devonport dockyard and he probably knew more than he stated to *La Unión* above. An indirect testimony of this period is that of Midshipman Miguel Álvarez-Torres who was on board *Latorre* in the first weeks of its stay at Devonport. Years later he told his son, Miguel Álvarez-Ebner that political exiles visited the crewmembers and the officers

⁵⁷² This subject is covered in: Vial-Correa, v. V, pp.24-27.

⁵⁷³ He refers to Ibáñez' Government.

⁵⁷⁴ 'Declaración del contralmirante Campos ante el Consejo de Guerra' *La Unión*, 14 DIC 1931, p.3.

did nothing against this illegal activity. Álvarez-Ebner communicated this piece of information to the author of this thesis⁵⁷⁵.

Another example of the blaming statements made in the same period is that of Commander Samuel Ward Rodríguez, the Commanding Officer of the destroyer *Lynch*. He said that:

‘he had the intimate conviction that the movement was of communist character’...because...‘days before the outbreak, subversive pamphlets were handed out at Coquimbo and some reached Latorre and other ships’...[and he]... ‘reported this at the time to the Navy’s higher levels⁵⁷⁶’.

The Commanding Officer of *Latorre* and the rest of the officers of this ship did not report the same before or after the mutiny as was their duty in such a serious situation and Ward’s statements were not investigated deeply.

The trials against the mutineers had only just begun when petitions for clemency started. Arturo Alessandri used this idea as his own, in a speech made on 19 September 1931 during his campaign as a presidential candidate. In this instance he said:

‘The crimes committed by the sailors had been very serious and the country’s conscience had already judged them. This is enough punishment for avoiding the recurrence of similar acts in the future. But to be fair, it is necessary to study the origin of this process⁵⁷⁷’.

Then he went on, trying to explain what is a dictatorship, meaning no doubt, Ibáñez’s:

‘This country lived for five years under a regime of tyranny, outside of legal and constitutional rule; the man governing the country did not respect the authorities’...‘and there is nothing more serious than the bad example given by the higher authorities’ ...‘The venom of insubordination and anarchy had been fed to the lower decks. Those in high positions also committed serious crimes. We have seen that in a critical period the old admirals ruling the fleet were expelled from their positions to put the Navy at the service of mean ambitions to expel Mr Figueroa from government and in this way to have access to power⁵⁷⁸’.

⁵⁷⁵ Interview of Miguel Álvarez Ebner by author in Viña del Mar and Valparaíso, 29-30 OCT 2009.

⁵⁷⁶ ‘Declaración Reveladoras sobre el Origen del Movimiento’, *El Mercurio de Valparaíso*, 20 DIC 1931.p.3.

⁵⁷⁷ Donoso, v.II, p.68.

⁵⁷⁸ Donoso, v.II, p.68.

We must recall that this process of removing senior naval officers was initiated by Ibáñez, as covered in other chapters [see 4.1, 5.1 and 5.2]. Alessandri continued his speech stating:

‘If all had sinned, if all had given a bad example, there is no reason to assign all the penalties exclusively to the lower deck members, especially when those most guilty of committing of moral and material indiscipline affecting the country remain unpunished⁵⁷⁹’.

Later in his speech, Alessandri requested a pardon for the mutineers.

Regardless of the imprecision of a speech made amidst a political campaign, Alessandri argued that the authorities should excuse the mutineers because of the bad example set by the higher levels during Ibáñez’s dictatorship. Nor did he mention his attempts while in exile in Europe, to use his contacts with *Latorre’s* crewmembers in Devonport to destabilize that Government [see section 6.1]. The idea that the bad example came from the officers is accepted as his own by Warrant Officer Class 2 Ernesto González in his book. Beginning in December 1931, the anti-Montero and leftist *Crónica* serialized Gonzalez’s book⁵⁸⁰. This newspaper was financed partially by Alessandri through Waldo Palma-Miranda, who was one of his close followers and who was the director of this publication. This fact might indicate that González, far from being a communist, was probably an Alessandrist and might have been one of the crewmembers whom the past president had contacted in Devonport in order to agitate against Ibáñez. Further details about his probable link to Alessandrism will be covered later.

During this same time when the officers’ trials were taking place, those crewmembers being tried or already sentenced and imprisoned began a hunger strike in December 1931 issuing also a manifesto signed by the main participants in the mutiny, among others, Ernesto González, Carlos Cuevas and Augusto Zagal. They stated:

‘the burden of punishment fell but was not consistent with the clear rule of law and the naval officers, the sole responsible group of the September

⁵⁷⁹ Donoso, v.II, p.69.

⁵⁸⁰ Donoso, v. II, p.76.

events, have evaded and circumvented the military codes and Constitution right in front of the eyes of the people⁵⁸¹.

This attitude adopted by the prisoners was stimulated by a campaign to bring disrepute on the officers. It received a wide support from the press and the Communist Party.

The Chilean Attorney's Bar announced a few days later that it would request a pardon for the condemned crewmembers thereby unleashing a movement to pardon the main participants in the sedition. The campaign favouring the mutineers happened amidst a climate of social unrest culminating in a general strike on January 1932. The strike did not have the successful outcome expected by the organizers, mainly the Communist Party.

Among the various changes in the Navy's organization instituted as part of the efforts to eliminate Ibáñez's influence and mitigate the economic problems faced by Montero's Government were included a twenty percent reduction of officers and the retirement of several admirals, some of whom served as ministers in Ibáñez's regime. Among the latter were Rear Admirals Hipólito Marchant-Morales and Alejandro García-Castelblanco⁵⁸².

By this time, the trials of the officers mentioned above had finished. The conservative newspaper '*La Unión de Valparaíso*'⁵⁸³ stated in its editorial page its satisfaction because the trials of the naval officers did not prove their complicity either in starting the mutiny or in aiding the mutineers. The article noted that the court convicted only two officers for dereliction of duty, penalties that were overturned on appeal.

At the beginning of March, two other admirals promoted by Ibáñez's Government retired from the Navy and it was announced that Rear Admiral Carlos Jouanne de la Motte du Portail would be nominated as Director General of the Navy, the newly revived position that the former Government had eliminated. Jouanne was an officer placed on the retirement list by Ibáñez's Government⁵⁸⁴, who was called back again to active duty by

⁵⁸¹ 'Declaraciones de Carlos Cuevas, Ernesto González y Augusto Zagal', *La Unión*, 14 DIC 1931, p.5.

⁵⁸² Office of Naval Intelligence, 23 FEB 1932. NAUSA, serial 17 File 901-105.

⁵⁸³ 'Editorial', *La Unión*, 18 FEB 1933.p.3.

⁵⁸⁴ Probably because he tried to end the participation in politics of a group of young Army officers led by Ibáñez in 1924-1925 [see section 2.2]

President Montero. It is clear that the civilist movement, fearing that Ibanez wanted to return to power, initiated these changes in the high command of the Navy in order to erase any chance of success of the former dictator's supporters wanting to regain control of the political leadership.

On 6 April 1932 the recently reinstalled Navy Board met to analyze a document prepared by the Naval General Staff containing a political situation appraisal⁵⁸⁵. This document was transcribed in a book written by Carlos Charlín⁵⁸⁶. Although it seems to be incomplete, still it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that once again the Navy was facing an institutional crisis and a period of further instability.

The document blamed the overthrow of Ibáñez's government on the civilists' action as well as the mismanagement of the public treasury. It also stated that although the civilists consolidated their control of Government by means of an election, after a few months of administration the stability was threatened by:

'The professional politicians, the bad elements and those who fell from power with the old regime....' [Ibáñez]. 'In this way, resistance groups against the present Government inside public opinion had been forming slowly'... 'and they may have found sympathy among Armed Forces personnel. This attitude of sympathy is possible within our Armed Forces as a consequence of their disgraceful participation in Government changes or in the Government itself pressed by circumstances and by the pressure exerted by dissatisfied civilians⁵⁸⁷.

The document concluded with the admission of the possibility that a political movement against Montero's government might take place and in this event the situation of indiscipline existing in the Armed Forces during the last eight months must be taken into account, the September mutiny being the clearest evidence of this. The disciplinary situation and the mutiny were:

'a demonstration of the revolutionary and restless spirit in the lower ranks. This way of thinking cannot be eliminated by force at once, because it is caused by the country's general situation and it is not exclusive to the

585 Proceedings of the Naval Board, 6 April 1932. Chilean Naval Archives.

586 Carlos Charlín-Ojeda, *Del avión rojo a la República Socialista*, (Santiago de Chile: Quimantú, 1972), pp. 592-595.

587 Charlín, p.593.

service personnel. For this reason, it should not astonish us while it is present. We should count on it as a disgraceful but inevitable fact⁵⁸⁸.

The Naval General Staff did not think that the Armed Forces would try to overthrow the Government due to their spirit of discipline or because such action, without public acceptance, would not have any chance of success. This organism considered that the danger for the Government lay with:

‘the dissatisfied civilians’... from the left or mainly the Ibáñez supporters....They might try to overthrow the Government, taking advantage of the moral situation of the Armed Forces personnel previously expressed⁵⁸⁹.

The document stated that such a destabilizing event might gain support from only one part of the Armed Forces, for example from Santiago’s military garrison, while the rest of the services remain in a passive mood awaiting the outcome. Then the document focuses on the Navy, writing that this service:

‘cannot adopt a [political] position with the same certainty as the other branches because it is far from the political centres and due to the character of its personnel who, instinctively repudiate any participation in struggles or political movements⁵⁹⁰.

In short, the authors of the report seem to accept the idea that the rebellion which had happened seven months before in the Navy was only a mutiny of promotion of interests and not a political mutiny. These two types of rebellions were explained in a previous chapter [see section 1.3]

The document analyzed then the state of weakness of the service, with its naval forces reduced to a destroyer and a submarine flotilla, its coastal defence forts only partially manned and its shore establishments without sufficient men to act in the self-defence role. Due to this:

‘The Navy isolated and without the support of land forces, does not represent a material force capable of presenting a serious resistance against a determined movement of opinion [such as the left]. This ability is even

⁵⁸⁸ Charlín, p. 593.

⁵⁸⁹ Charlín, p. 594.

⁵⁹⁰ Charlín, p. 594.

lessened if forces belonging to the Army, the Air Force and Carabineros supported such a movement⁵⁹¹.

The conclusion of the Naval General Staff after that pessimistic view was:

'The Navy's attitude in principle must be of loyalty towards the Government. But in case the Government is overthrown by other forces, the Navy should consider its material weakness relative to the other forces already mentioned and proceed in any case in accordance with them with the objective of avoiding greater damage to the country. Also and with the aim of avoiding lack of unity in the way of thinking within the service and the influence of political or social agents on naval personnel during the beginning of any actions, it is advisable to keep the naval units away from the centres of propaganda and to prevent communications between crewmembers and people ashore⁵⁹².

This analysis indicates that the Navy feared at the beginning of 1932 the action from leftist parties and movements, the Communist Party and various socialist groups. There was fear that they would subvert the crewmembers, using them to overthrow the government and implement the programs articulated in the last manifestoes during the mutiny of September 1931.

Two days after the Navy Board analyzed the document, the Government requested the Congress to authorize a declaration of state of siege to face the menace of a rebellion. The opposition to Montero consisted of three groups: the leftist parties supporting Alessandri who had failed to win the last presidential election. Included among them, were some socialists associations still not unified in a single political party. Ibáñez's supporters were the second group. The third group was that of the Communists. As was stated before, these were divided into two movements, one of which had joined the Third Communist International and had a strong influence from the South American Section of the International Communist Bureau [SAIB]⁵⁹³. Alessandri's followers and the Communists had already organized the assault on a regimental barracks in Copiapó⁵⁹⁴ on Christmas Eve

⁵⁹¹ Charlín, p. 594.

⁵⁹² Charlín, pp. 594-595.

⁵⁹³ SAIB was located in Buenos Aires and afterwards in Montevideo, once the dictatorship of General José Félix Iriburu took control of Argentina in September 1930.

⁵⁹⁴ Copiapó is a city located 800 kilometres north of Santiago while Vallenar is a smaller town located 660 kilometres north from the capital

1931⁵⁹⁵. This assault did not achieve a revolutionary outcome and did not spread sedition in other cities. Unfortunately the assault so infuriated Vallenar's police detachment that it killed twenty ChCP members. Although this attempt failed, it was feared that other future mutinies could seriously destabilize the nation politically.

Regarding the Naval General Staff claim that Ibáñez or his supporters were also interested in destabilizing the Government, a recent monograph says:

‘No matter his reputation as a coup organizer, the personal documentation of Carlos Ibáñez disclosed and reviewed so far, do not imply in any way facts of that order in this period⁵⁹⁶ [1931-1937].

The above does not mean that Colonel Ibáñez was an active organizer of coups between 1924 and 1927.

At the end of April 1932 the imprisoned naval mutineers started a new hunger strike lasting until the first days of May. *Crónica* and other anti Montero newspapers started an active campaign to pardon the convicted rebels. Their objective was also to discredit the government for precipitating the Naval Mutiny first by reducing salaries and then using harsh measures to crush it. That newspaper was clearly for Alessandri. As an example of the campaign against Montero's Government it published in the first page of its editions between 29 April and 14 May news about the strike and relative to the support offered by unions and other organizations to the strikers. On 14 May it published the news about the eight Peruvian sailors executed due to their participation in a mutiny which occurred in that country, perhaps meaning that initially a group of Chilean rebels were condemned to the same penalty and then pardoned by pressures against Montero's Government⁵⁹⁷.

⁵⁹⁵ Vial-Correa, v. V, pp.95-98.

⁵⁹⁶ Manuel Salas-Fernández, ‘El Exilio de Carlos Ibáñez del Campo visto a través de su archivo (1931-1937)’, *Boletín de la Academia Chilena de Historia*, año LXXV-nº 118-2009. p.186.

⁵⁹⁷ The Peruvian political problems of this period are the subject of a book written in a journalistic style: Guillermo Throndyke, *El Año de la Barbarie. Perú 1932*, (Lima: Editorial Nueva América, 1969)

The Peruvian mutiny of 1932, following a recent article⁵⁹⁸, had its origin in naval personnel linked to the Aprista Party who rose in arms aiming to impose its party ideals. This paper does not link the origin of this subversive movement to the Chilean events the previous year.

During the Chilean hunger strike, Arturo Alessandri visited the striking imprisoned sailors. His attitude raises the question whether he visited the strikers because he considered that they had been excessively punished or he acted out of a sense of guilt for inciting the *Latorre* crewmembers to raise against Ibáñez's regime, while he was an exile in Europe and this ship was in Devonport [see section 6.1], and later when his followers supported the mutiny in Concepción and Talcahuano.

Amid the increasing difficulties of the weak Montero Government and after the campaign described above, measures oriented to favour the condemned mutineers were adopted. The first measure adopted was to change the conditions of imprisonment for Ernesto González, Aníbal Marfán and Pedro Sanhueza. They were banished to distant places starting 4 May 1932 instead of remaining in jail. It is not known what were the criteria used by the Government which singled out just these three participants in the naval mutiny.

A document elaborated by the SAIB⁵⁹⁹ on 4 December 1931 will be analyzed below because it shares the pessimistic view of the Naval General Staff that a rebellion against the Government was possible. The ChCP published this document because it was considered as an important tool for the political struggle in which this party was involved.

The Central Committee of the ChCP stated in the introduction that after the naval mutiny the party must fight to prevent the influence of the bourgeois and petit bourgeoisie on the masses 'to deviate them from the path to revolution'... 'Only with a fierce and open struggle against them, will the party conquer the vanguard position it deserves....⁶⁰⁰'. There is no doubt the document is referring to Ibáñez's and Alessandri's supporters when

⁵⁹⁸ Jorge Ortiz-Sotelo, 'Las Rebeliones Navales del Callao', *Apuntes 45*, Lima, Universidad del Pacífico, II semestre 1999, pp. 83-95.

⁵⁹⁹ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, ed. by. Buró Sudamericano de la Internacional Comunista, (Santiago: Editorial Marx-Lenin, 1931), p.4.

⁶⁰⁰ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, pp.16-19.

mentioning bourgeois groups. Then the introduction to the document underlines the meaning for the party of the recent events in the Navy and the necessity of taking a leading role in the approaching struggles.

It is clear that the 1931 Naval Mutiny played an enormous role in the evolution of Communism in Chile and this might explain why authors of this political trend had assigned to this rebellion greatly more importance, exaggerating sometime the events.

The SAIB also assigned an important role to this event when it wrote: ‘the great mass struggle taking place in Chile is the greatest in Latin America since the Mexican revolution’. For this reason, it instructed the ChCP to:

‘be ready to direct the approaching struggles, organizing its liaisons with the exploited large masses in cities and countryside, creating a just tactic and fighting against deviations to the left or right⁶⁰¹’.

To achieve this goal, the SAIB ordered its members to follow these tactics:

‘The vast activity made by the party in support of the rebel sailors must be transformed into an organic influence among the crewmembers’.... [ship cells, fort cells]. ‘It must transform the thousands of sailors participating in that movement, who had been expelled from service, as propaganda agents and organizers of a revolutionary movement among the peasants and workers, in particular among the unemployed, as they are part of this group. The party must establish a strong liaison with those sailors who were expelled from service and those who remain in the ships. Party commissions with the youth must be created to work with the sailors, to have meetings and organize sailor’s committees. Through these organizations, literature about our party may be handed to the sailors to analyze the mutiny, without hiding our own mistakes. A great number of these sailors must be incorporated into our party. At the present time the party enjoys a great friendship and relationships with the petty officers directing the mutiny. This is a good achievement but it is totally insufficient. Directly and by means of these petty officers the party must establish close ties with the sailors themselves. Five hundred sailors among those expelled or those remaining must be convinced to join the party⁶⁰²’.

The ChCP took a long time to implement these goals. For the parliamentary elections scheduled to occur at the end of 1931, or the beginning of 1932, that was to replace the controversial ‘Thermal Springs Congress’, the party nominated Petty Officer

⁶⁰¹ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, p.5.

⁶⁰² *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, p.33.

Alejandro Caldera Holm as a candidate in Valparaíso⁶⁰³. We must recall that he was an important figure in the rebellion on board the ships in Coquimbo. Something similar happened with Warrant Officer Class 2 Ernesto González Brión. We must recall that both of them were tried for their role as leaders of the mutiny and found guilty. It seems that the ChCP did not ask them, at least not the Warrant Officer, before nominating them as candidates because:

‘González protested by means of Valparaíso’s newspapers about this nomination. He claims that he would not permit his name to be used by communism since he does not have any relation with them and he does not share extremist and dissociate ideas, opposed to law and order and individual liberty’⁶⁰⁴.

In the end the expected elections did not take place at that time.

Because of a lack of reliable data, it is difficult to assess if the communists had much success recruiting the mutinous crewmen. At least, Astica became a member of the ChCP apparently in the years following the mutiny. There is no proof that González or Caldera did the same. Ernesto González won amnesty and later the nomination for governmental jobs in the second Alessandri presidency [1932-1938], demonstrating certain affinity with this political trend as will be discussed later. Schoolmaster Petty Officer Pedro Pacheco Pérez, one of the mutiny leaders in Talcahuano definitively joined the ChCP. In 1933 he was a delegate attending a congress in Montevideo⁶⁰⁵ and was named as Mayor of Valparaíso⁶⁰⁶ in 1939, at the beginning of presidential term of Pedro Aguirre Cerda⁶⁰⁷. This President was supported by a coalition including the ChCP. Nothing indicates if Pacheco had ties to the ChCP before the mutiny. Another figure distinguished by a government nomination at that time was a retired naval medical officer contemporary of Pacheco,

⁶⁰³ ‘Un candidato condenado a muerte’, *El Diario de La Serena*, 27 SEP 1931, p.3.

⁶⁰⁴ ‘Protesta’, *El Diario de La Serena*, 18 OCT 1931, p. 2.

⁶⁰⁵ Vial-Correa, v. V, p. 372.

⁶⁰⁶ At that time, Mayors of large Chilean cities were named by the President.

⁶⁰⁷ José Miguel Varas, *Neruda: el chileno más universal*, (Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2004), p.7 and ‘Pedro Pacheco, Alcalde de Valparaíso’, *La Unión*, 3 ENE 1939, p.3.

Eduardo Grove Vallejos. He became Mayor of Viña del Mar⁶⁰⁸. We mentioned in another chapter [see section 6.1] his arrival to *Latorre* in Devonport and his actions in Coquimbo during the mutiny.

Those who led the mutiny found another field of action in journalism. As mentioned before, in 1932 the two newspapers that strongly opposed Montero's Government generally favoured Alessandri or Ibáñez. *Crónica* was one of those journals which carried González's articles. Astica had his writings published in *La Opinión* and later he started a collaboration with *Frente Popular*, a communist newspaper created at the end of the 1930s⁶⁰⁹.

Crónica and *La Opinión* anti government editorials plus the dramatic economic and social situation disenchanted the public about the capacity of Montero's Government to handle the situation. They also helped foment new military conspiracies which finally overthrew the government.

⁶⁰⁸ 'Jura nuevo alcalde Pedro Pacheco' *La Unión*, 3 ENE 1939,p.4.

⁶⁰⁹ Vial-Correa, v. V, 2001, pp. 92-100; 448.

11. POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES.

11.1. The Chilean Communist Party after the mutiny.

The ChCP's attention immediately after the mutiny was centred on the presidential election to be held on 4 October 1931 already mentioned. When the results were known, favouring Juan Esteban Montero and showing scarce popular support for the two Communist candidates Lafertte and Hidalgo, the party turned its energy to taking advantage politically from the mutiny.

Olga Ulianova based on a letter from the ChCP to SAIB on 24 October 1931, stated that the party was:

'trying to radicalize even more the movement, raising for the first time in Chile the slogan of an immediate agrarian and anti imperialist revolution, as it has been called by the International, and calling for the creation of soviets in the popular neighbourhoods as well as the creation of self defence detachments. The presentation of all these slogans and the efforts made are indicative of the possibility that an immediate revolution was been taken seriously by the local communists and their cominterian advisor⁶¹⁰.

Such revolutionary optimism was inconsistent with the immediate reality, although unemployment and other effects of the serious economical crisis perhaps encouraged the communists' fantasies. The ChCP was not the only political group competing to attract the sympathy of the most affected people by the great depression. The Alessandrists were doing the same; different socialist and social democrat groups used the same language of the communists and they also enjoyed the sympathy of some members of the Armed Forces. Marmaduke Grove is perhaps the most remarkable example of this. During 1932 these circumstances would be the origin of new sudden changes of government as will be covered later.

The SAIB sent to Chile a document on 4 December 1931, already quoted, called 'South American Bureau of the Communist International thesis about the grand struggle of the Chilean proletariat' [see section 10.2]. It analyzed the naval mutiny and other important

⁶¹⁰ Ulianova, 2007, pp. 305-306.

subjects. It was circulated by the party as a printed pamphlet, adding its own commentaries such as the following:

‘The sailor’s rebellion marks a high point in the history of the crewmembers in Latin America even though it was defeated. It will be a source of prolific lessons for the worker’s and peasant masses in this hemisphere. They will apply these teachings in the approaching great class struggles. The most valuable lesson coming out from these events is that even when the objective factors are mature, the peasant and worker’ revolution cannot be successful without a strong Communist Party schooled in Marxist Leninist doctrine and strongly bound to the great proletarian masses in cities and in the countryside⁶¹¹.

Since then, the ChCP and its writers, journalists and historians had used the mutiny to perform a pedagogic effort, many times without sticking too much to the reality of the events. Instead of interpreting the events as a mutiny originated in a salary reduction they tried to convince their followers that it was a true revolution. In the following chapter this subject will be covered deeply.

This trend was probably started by the SAIB when it wrote that the period when the mutiny took place was that: ‘of great Chilean masses’ struggles’...[and they were]...‘the most important taking place in Latin America after the Mexican Revolution⁶¹²’. In our opinion, this is an exaggerated point of view since that revolution started important political changes in México while this did not happen in Chile.

A few lines later, the quoted report stated that the existing economic crisis produced:

‘an intensification of the capitalism world crisis and an accelerated socialist construction in the Soviet Union as an integral part of the strong process of radicalization of the working class in all Latin American masses⁶¹³’.

An analysis of Ibáñez’s presidency then followed in the SAIB document. It stated that this Government managed to escape the crisis for a while and repressed strongly the ChCP-influenced workers’ movement. It states that once the civilists took control in Chile:

‘the masses’ dissatisfaction with the policy of hunger following Ibáñez’s fall violently expressed itself by means of the sailor’s rebellion preceded by

⁶¹¹ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, p.4.

⁶¹² *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, p.5.

⁶¹³ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, p.6.

a general strike in Valparaíso...’ [on 24 August]...‘and supported by solidarity strikes in the cities and by a beginning of solidarity from Army non-commissioned officers...⁶¹⁴, [in the Maipo Regiment].

Again, the point of view of SAIB seems exaggerated, considering the reality of the events. The solidarity strikes were not so important and the rebellion in the Maipo Regiment was aborted before it started. The real success of the ChCP was moving the Chilean public opinion in favour of moderating or even rejecting the sentences applied by the courts to the mutineers by putting the whole of the blame on the officers. In these actions, it had the support of socialists, social democrats and Alessandrists groups.

These last three groups were the competitors of the ChCP for popular support in the political struggles of 1931 and 1932. The election on 4 October 1931 was one of the occasions in which these political forces faced each other. The SAIB states that Juan Esteban Montero’s triumph over Alessandri was attributable to the mutineers’ defeat by the Armed Forces under the direction of the civilists’ Government.

The report then analyzed the mutiny in depth and more realistically stating:

‘the Chilean sailor’s movement no matter its support through the whole fleet, the solidarity from the proletariat and the hints of support from the Army was not a politically conscious movement nor did it become a revolution of all working masses in Chile⁶¹⁵’.

Here SAIB does not share the ChCP view stated in the introduction of this document and quoted above.

Then the SAIB’s report continued analyzing the attitudes and actions of the mutineers:

‘the risen sailors did not have a sense of the deeply political character the mutiny was achieving and of its enormous importance as part of a revolutionary action of the big masses because it was spontaneous and lacked coordination with the Communist Party. This was caused by the lack of communist organizations within the Navy and of previous propaganda by the party. It is evident that the sailors, by themselves, could not have any notion, in such circumstances, about Communist Party importance as a decisive factor in the development of the revolutionary movement in Chile⁶¹⁶’.

⁶¹⁴ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, p.14.

⁶¹⁵ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, p.15.

⁶¹⁶ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, p.15.

In this last paragraph it is possible to perceive SAIB's criticism with respect to the ChCP performance on those days. The document then goes to describe the strength factors that would transform the mutiny into a true revolution and that the events were insufficiently exploited by the ChCP due to tactical failures and its weak organization. Among those strength factors the report mentions the Government's initial lack of decision and its fear of using the Armed Forces because they were contaminated by Ibañism. The ChCP and FOCH did not truly take advantage of these weaknesses.

The actual events demonstrate that the Government initially abstained from using force because it preferred to negotiate through Admiral von Schroeders, advised by the Navy but, at the same time, it started organizing the use of this resource and it set it into action a few hours after the cessation of the negotiations.

The following factor mentioned by SAIB's report is the wide range of dissatisfaction about the political and economic situation which the CHCP did not capitalize upon;

The enumeration of factors is completed in the report with the following:

'The decision of the fighting mass, its resistance to Government menaces and the attempts in transforming this rebellion into a revolution. This sailors' spirit moved them to launch their manifesto....., stating the social revolution had started but they issued it when their demoralization had already started. Among Valparaiso's workers and in other places there was a favourable spirit for starting an armed struggle but it lacked the organization. This is one of the most important factors. With a proper strategy it could have turned itself into an important driving force of the movement⁶¹⁷.

Again, a criticism from SAIB of the ChCP may be found in the above paragraph. In the opinion of the author of this thesis, there is no conclusive evidence that the statement in favour of a social revolution was issued by the mutineers themselves. When it was communicated, several delegations had been already on board including that of the FOCH and the Coquimbo communists and perhaps these external supporters pressed for such action, convincing the most radical mutineers.

The strongest SAIB criticism of the ChCP is the following:

⁶¹⁷ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, pp.16-19

‘The lack of party influence among the mutineers resulted in the movement being directed only by the petty officers. Most of these men were selfless, courageous and sincere but, because of their class origins, they subordinated themselves to the bourgeoisie. These elements...’[the petty officers] ...‘demonstrated less decision than the sailors [the ratings]. They slowed down the movement and ended up betraying its goals with non-revolutionary solutions⁶¹⁸’.

The authors of the paragraph quoted above are partially right because the majority of the petty officers seemed to be Ibañez or Alessandri sympathizers. But among them there were some with very radical points of view like Alejandro Caldera-Holm, Carlos Cuevas-Gallardo and Orlando Robles-Osses. The same is applicable to the schoolmasters like Pedro Pacheco-Pérez, Juan Riveros, Luis Henríquez-Acevedo and Ramiro Parada-Contreras holding the same rank of petty officer and mentioned in other chapters [see section 6.3 and chapters 8 and 9].

The SAIB’s report criticized the mutineers, stating:

‘The mutineers did not use the possibilities created to impose their demands on the Government and to block the mobilization of Ibañist armed forces against the revolutionary movement. In Talcahuano they permitted the officers to go ashore instead of keeping them under custody and using them as hostages. This revealed to the Government all the movement’s weaknesses and transformed itself in a force against it. For each sailor killed by the Government they should have made the Government responsible for the killing of ten officers by the mutineers⁶¹⁹’.

The first criticism is not realistic: What could have been done by the mutineers in the ships at Coquimbo or locked inside the Naval Base at Talcahuano to avoid the Air Force and Army attack on the areas under the mutineer’s control? The Talcahuano’s mutineers allowed the officers to leave the ships because the Commander in Chief negotiated their liberty in exchange for giving the mutineers control of the vessels to sail to Coquimbo where they could manifest their support of the squadrons' crewmembers. When the negotiations took place the mutineers had no complaints about the officers and nobody had been killed yet. The wish of the mutineers at that stage was only to avoid a reduction in salaries.

⁶¹⁸ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, pp.16-19.

⁶¹⁹ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, pp.16-19.

Killing prisoners, the second idea expressed in SAIB's quoted report, did not happen in both conflicting factions. It seems that only the ChCP party delegate sent to Talcahuano, Galo González, had this idea. The only violence that happened in the first days of mutiny were a few shots fired when Captain Hozven and Midshipman Leighton were taken into custody with no serious consequences. But there were mutineers with radical ideas. For example, a witness stated⁶²⁰ in Court Martial that Petty Officer Alejandro Caldera Holm belonging to *Lynch* went to the cruiser *O'Higgins* and made a speech inciting the crewmembers to kill the officers, but nobody followed him. At the end, those dead and wounded, which occurred in Coquimbo and Talcahuano, were few considering the total number involved and were the result of combat actions.

In the following paragraphs, SAIB adds more criticisms to other groups:

'The manoeuvres of the petit bourgeoisie parties (Hidalgo, Ugalde and others⁶²¹) creating the illusion of the possibility of a peaceful arrangement and Alessandri's position against the movement may have created within the mutineers (without communication with big cities) the idea that they were repudiated by the popular masses. The officers' influence on the mutiny's leaders and the great number of largely hesitating petit bourgeois elements in the leadership of the movement diminished its independence and the possibility of the sailors' victory. They thought that the government, once the agreement was reached without blood shed, would arrange the problem. Due to this, they did not organize the mutiny's defence (especially in Talcahuano) and this cost hundreds of sailor lives...⁶²².

Several statements are backed by facts in the above paragraph. The officers, although held in custody in their cabins, still could influence on the crews, in particular on the destroyers. This became more evident when the situation started to deteriorate from the mutineers' perspective. The leaderless elements in Talcahuano acted chaotically and their resistance against the Army's attack did not last too long. Still, both sides sustained casualties as a result of the combat.

⁶²⁰ Statement: Rating Manuel Zurita, n.d., CM, v. 2(V) , p.334. BUPERS.

⁶²¹ The document is naming Manuel Hidalgo who created a dissident group of Trotskyist trend within the ChCP. Pedro León Ugalde-Naranjo was a member of Congress having very radical ideas shared with Marmaduque Grove-Vallejos.

⁶²² *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, pp.16-19.

But in the above quotation there are also statements not sustained by the facts. For example, the mutineers did not lack communications with the big cities. Indeed, they sent and received many communications, copies of which were in the files of the later investigations. Another exaggeration is the number of sailors who lost their lives. They are not hundreds. In all there were about twenty dead people divided in equal parts between both of the fighting sides. These casualties occurred because the talks between the Government and the mutineers were broken off. If these dealings had been successful probably no one would have been killed.

The SAIB criticizes the lack of coordination between the mutineers in the Navy with those in the Army or in Carabineros [affected by the same salary reduction] and with industrial and farming workers, concluding that:

‘Due to deficiencies already named, the rebel sailors, far from taking their struggle for their demands ashore, disembarking forces to meet the workers masses, going to Valparaíso, to follow the struggle together with those masses, never even attempted even a resistance. This gave the enemy the opportunity to gather its forces while the sailors hesitated and awaited, as it was demonstrated when they liberated Admiral Campos and other officers to act as mediators with the Government, once von Schroeders broke off negotiations enabling the Government to assume the offensive⁶²³.

The above criticism must be analyzed recalling some facts already covered in previous chapters [see chapters 7 and 9]. The government did not unilaterally break off negotiations made through von Schroeders. When both sides made unacceptable demands the negotiations failed, no matter the warnings made to both parties by von Schroeders. It was not only the government’s fault. Nor could the mutineers sail to Valparaíso and other ports because the ships were short of fuel and food. Furthermore, disembarking mutineers in the face of opposition from the pro Government forces was not an easy task and needed discipline and good organization in the rebels. But they did not have it.

SAIB insisted that the ChCP acted in accordance to the Comintern’s policy when it supported the mutiny and tried to spread it to the urban and rural workers and thus prevent the Government from destroying the movement. But it added the following criticism:

‘The important role of the Chilean party in the recent events, has demonstrated clearly its organic weakness and its insufficient ties with the proletariat in big industries⁶²⁴.

⁶²³ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, pp.16-19.

⁶²⁴ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, p.31.

Also it criticized the party's:

'total lack of organization in the copper mines and its relative lack of organization in the nitrate and coal mines. It had little influence on the workers in those areas⁶²⁵'.

The analyzed document adds that something similar happened in the big cities' industrial sectors and in the countryside, but the most serious problem was: 'the inability of the party to bind itself to the sailors during the events'..... 'showing that the lack of work among the soldiers and sailors is a great failure of the party's job'.

Once the critical analysis is finished, SAIB made recommendations to the ChCP:

'The vast solidarity activity done by the party in favour of the mutinying sailors must be transformed into an organic influence on the crewmembers (ship cells, fort cells). The ChCP must transform the thousand of sailors participant in the movement and expelled from the Navy into propaganda agents and activist of the revolutionary movement of workers and peasants. This should be done in particular with the jobless. Strong liaison should be made with sailors either expelled or remaining on board and we have to create youth's party commissions to work with the sailors having meetings and integrating them into those commissions. We have to feed them with our literature and we have to hold self-criticism meetings without hiding our own mistakes. A great number of these sailors should be recruited by our party. At present the party enjoys a great sympathy among the petty officers who led the mutiny. This is good but insufficient. Either directly or by means of these petty officers the party should form a close tie with the sailors. Five hundred expelled sailors or those remaining in the Navy should be attracted as party members⁶²⁶'.

The ChCP tried to accomplish this programme but it suffered strong competition from other parties also trying to affiliate the former mutineers. These were the Alessandrists and the different socialist groups. There is no reliable data about the former crewmembers attracted by each different political organization. It is only known that Manuel Astica joined the ChCP and that Ernesto González enjoyed several different positions in the second Government headed by Arturo Alessandri [1932-1938]. The schoolmaster Pedro Pacheco Pérez appeared after the mutiny openly as a communist as has been mentioned.

⁶²⁵ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, p.31.

⁶²⁶ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, p.33.

One of the last SAIB's report paragraphs is more precise in explaining the ChCP participation in the 1931 Naval Mutiny, stating:

'in the sailors' rebellion, the party's weakness became even more evident. This weakness being determined resulted in the movement's spontaneous initiation. And it was not organized by the party, no matter the fundamental party role in provoking it by means of general propaganda actions against the fascist dictatorship and hunger⁶²⁷.

When SAIB mentions a fascist dictatorship, it is referring to Ibáñez's Government opposed by the Alessandrists and a big majority of the communists. It is clear that the propaganda actions of this last group were oriented mainly to overthrow the Government that had caused the division of the ChCP and pressed it into clandestine life. But there is no evidence that this party had a policy to organize a mutiny. Nevertheless, and following a Comintern policy, once the rebellion began, the party decided to use it as a template for the future.

11.2. Anther period of political instability in Chile.

Juan Esteban Montero's Government encountered increasing difficulties during the first months of 1932. These problems in part resulted because the President's personality was better suited for the academic life or for working as an attorney, than providing dynamic political leadership. To the above, the ambitions of different groups to grab power must be added, weakening his performance as a ruler.

The Alessandrists, defeated in the elections held on 4 October 1931 but still ambitious to grab power after Ibáñez's fall, still constituted a powerful political force. Nor did Ibáñez's followers accept his sudden fall and his exile. In addition to the above there were Marxist organizations trying to overthrow the Government. The first one was the ChCP now acting openly. The communists detested Alessandri as well because he used the same rhetoric and some of their methods like influencing the worker's unions. SAIB stated that Alessandri:

'On accepting his complete agreement with the present social order...cannot offer any solution to the present crisis...but due to his demagogic position, he is extremely dangerous since he intends to use the

⁶²⁷ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, p.43.

masses either as a method of pressing for a compromise with Montero or even overthrowing him⁶²⁸.

An emerging group but still divided was that of the socialists who opposed Montero's Government.

The ChCP had to attract the workers who favoured Alessandri or Ibáñez or who belonged to socialists and social democrat groups, following the 'United Front' policy adopted by the last congresses of the Communist International and accepting the criticisms made by the SAIB after the Naval Mutiny. The 1932 Annual Report of the British Embassy at Santiago underlines the:

'atmosphere of discontent and disappointment arising from the failure of the newly-installed Montero administration to achieve any progress whatever in stemming the remorseless advance of the economic depression, the force of which was by that time beginning to make itself seriously felt on all sides⁶²⁹.

Montero's' overthrow occurred as a result of the alliance between socialist elements, among them Colonel Marmaduke Grove-Vallejos, the Air Force chief, the Ibañists and various officers belonging to Santiago's military garrison. In addition to this coalition's opposition, the centre and rightist political parties did very little to defend the government which lacked the material resources to oppose a military movement.

On 4 June 1932, Colonel Grove initiated a subversive movement when the Government dismissed him after having proofs that he was conspiring while being in charge of the Air Force. Some Army members joined the movement. Alessandri offered himself to mediate in the conflict. He did this not because he supported Montero but due to his fear that a military caudillo such as Ibáñez or Grove might grab the presidency. His role as mediator had no success. General Carlos Vergara, commanding the Army, did not obtain the support of his subordinates to overcome Grove's subversive movement. In face of this situation Montero resigned. The Navy had no relevant role in Montero's fall. Before this event it had only stated a weak support to the Government, expressing that it lacked the material resources to oppose a military movement, as has been analyzed before in this thesis [see section 10.3].

⁶²⁸ *Tesis sobre las grandes luchas del proletariado chileno*, pp.14-15.

⁶²⁹ Annual Report of the British Embassy to Foreign Office, p.3, 6 MAR 1933. NA. FO 371/16569 No. A3128/1071/9.

A Government Junta headed by retired General Arturo Puga-Osorio took power. The other members were Carlos Dávila-Espinoza, an Ibañist and Eugenio Matte-Hurtado, a socialist. Colonel Grove reserved for himself the position of Minister of Defence. The majority of the new Government members belonged to Marxist groups which a year later fused to become the Partido Socialista de Chile [Chilean Socialist Party]. Its main difference with the ChCP was that it admitted members of different social classes. Several future important actors in Chilean politics, such as Salvador Allende-Gossens, became members of the Socialist Party along with Grove and Matte.

The ChCP did not support the Government which replaced that of Montero because it considered that the new regime was militaristic and because the 'United Front' tactic approved by the last congresses of the Communist International did not allow for such alliances between parties.

The new Government stated that a Socialist Republic has been established without defining it. It nonetheless adopted several populist measures. One was a broad amnesty benefiting the condemned participants in the Naval Mutiny. One of them, Manuel Astica, visited Carlos Dávila in La Moneda and the press underlined this fact. *Sucesos* magazine published a photograph with the caption:

'Manuel Astica-Fuentes a condemned sailor from last Septembers events, talks with Carlos Dávila at the Presidential Offices after obtaining his liberty, in accordance to the amnesty law dictated by the Junta de Gobierno to benefit the political convicted⁶³⁰.

Von Schroeders stated⁶³¹ that one of the first measures of the new Government was releasing those condemned for their participation in the mutiny and these people organized a demonstration in front of the Ministry of the Navy. Among other things they requested the creation of a single school unifying the *Escuela Naval* and the *Escuela de Grumetes* [the schools for officers and seaman apprentices].

A US intelligence report stated that strong social and political pressure forced the government to amnesty the mutineers and that:

⁶³⁰ 'Manifestaciones del sentir popular ante la implantación de la república Socialista'. *Revista El Nuevo Sucesos*, No.1565 10 JUN 1932.

⁶³¹ Von Schroeders, p. 150.

'The pardoning of these men occurred at approximately the same time as the mutiny in Perú which resulted in the quick suppression by the Peruvian authorities and execution of the leaders. This action of the Peruvian Government apparently astounded a large number of the Chileans. Various comments have been heard pertaining to this action....The socialist and radical elements do not hesitate to express utter condemnation of the action of the Peruvian authorities. Even members of the conservative and more stable elements of the Chilean society apparently feel that the action of the Peruvian Government in executing these men was rather strong⁶³².

TIME, the US magazine, devoted an article to the new Government quoting the following statement by Grove. This Colonel was concerned because he was characterized as a communist by his opponents, so he explained that: 'We will use a steel hand in putting down Communist actions designed to create a substitute for . . . the present Government⁶³³.

The ChCP again tried to achieve its political goals using the social turmoil after the frustrated opportunity of September 1931. It issued a manifesto published by the press on 6 June 1932 requesting: 'unemployment benefits, salary increases, reduction of working hours, dismissal of the police section in charge of political affairs, and providing weapons to the proletarians'. It stated also that: 'only by pressing for ever increasing demands will the revolutionary process gain momentum leading to an anti-imperialist agrarian revolution⁶³⁴'. One of the socialist factions existing at that time had stated two days before: 'We the socialists, do not want a superficial change in Government; we want and we shall obtain a transformation of the economy and the mode of production⁶³⁵.

The above statements, although being difficult to be translated into actions, created a strong reaction among sectors opposed to the Socialist Republic and the effects would be perceived soon after.

⁶³² Report by US Military Attaché. War Department, No. 6300-C, 21 JUN 1932. NAUSA.

⁶³³ 'Progressive Socialism', *TIME*, 20 JUN 1932.

⁶³⁴ Sáez, v.III. p.191.

⁶³⁵ Sáez, v.III. p.191. The statement use of the Marxist concept of 'mode of production' is noticeable meaning something about the origin of this party.

Admiral Jouanne, the Navy's Director General went to greet the new Minister of Defence in order to resign. Marmaduke Grove asked Jouanne to remain a few days in active duty: 'until the bustle of the beginning days had faded'⁶³⁶.

Two visions coexisted in the so-called Socialist Republic. One was more moderate, defined by Dávila one month before arriving to power. Vial Correa synthesized it as follows:

' in face of a private economy broken or at least without credit or buyers, national or foreign, we must substitute private activity or at least complement it by establishing a state run economy at a big scale'⁶³⁷.

Another more radical proposal was that of Alfredo Lagarrigue, the Minister of Finance who was a follower of Matte and Grove. He issued a plan which called for forty measures. A rejection of economic liberalism and the avoidance of the foreign capital participation in the national economy were among them. He assigned the State the role of organizing and directing the productive forces. The plan also called for state control of credit and the internal and external trade. It considered also the organization of state run enterprises as well as taxes on big fortunes and income.

The populist policies called for by the so-called Socialist Republic caused concern, especially regarding the role of Eugenio Matte and Colonel Grove, both socialists, while the other members of the *Junta de Gobierno* were more favourable to Ibañism and were less radical. Carlos Dávila wanted to separate himself from his socialist colleagues because he had his own ambitions.

One of the *junta's* proposed measures, that obliged the foreign owned banks to transfer all deposits in foreign currency to the Central Bank, disturbed foreigners.

The political instability moved the British Chargé d'Affaires in Santiago to propose⁶³⁸ to his Government to send a Royal Navy warship to Chilean waters as a precaution against future events. The British Government accepted and sent HMS *Durban*,

⁶³⁶ Jorge Grove-Vallejos, *Descorriendo el velo. Episodio de los doce días de la República Socialista*, (Valparaíso: Editorial Aurora de Chile, 1933), p.23.

⁶³⁷ Vial-Correa, v. V, 2001, p. 162.

⁶³⁸ Letter from British Chargé d'Affaires, Santiago, to Foreign Office. 6 MAR 1933. NA. FO 371/16659 No. A3128/1071/9.pp 11-12.

a cruiser, from Bermuda to Callao, where it arrived on 14 June 1932. The Annual Report of the British Embassy in Santiago stated:

‘To what extent the presence of HMS Durban at Callao affected the policy of the Chilean authorities cannot be stated with certainty, but it is believed it was not inconsiderable. HMS Durban remained in Peruvian waters until the middle of September’ ... of 1932 ... ‘by which time it was agreed that the political situation was sufficiently quiet to permit of her proceeding south, calling at a few Chilean ports...⁶³⁹.

Jorge Grove takes care of the criticism about the extreme ideas of his brother Marmaduke Grove stating that the Minister of Defence was not a communist. Nevertheless, he accepted that some of his brother’s political actions aroused suspicion which his enemies used. He gave as an example his brother’s idea of erasing from the exit records of the punished Navy personnel the statement that they had taken part in a mutiny. He ordered as well the Employment Office to help them find a new job, given the high unemployment and misery of that period. ‘These measures of simple humanity resulted that the Minister’ ... [Marmaduke Grove] ... ‘was calumniated by his enemies classifying him as a communist’⁶⁴⁰.

Any measure favouring the mutineers was seen as suspicious, viewed with displeasure, or attributed to manoeuvres of the ChCP. The latter may contain some truth given the orientation given to the ChCP by SAIB analyzed before. But in reality there was a sort of competition between Alessandrists, socialists and communists about which group won more benefits to those condemned for their participation in the Mutiny. Furthermore, within the new Government there was disagreement between the socialists and the Ibañists and this led to a crisis.

The populist and radical policies of the Socialist Republic soon caused a strong rejection. Given the Navy's traditional opposition to the left, Grove tried to impose his authority on this service by accepting the resignation offered before by Admiral Jouanne to become effective on 16 June, when the crisis in Government was evident.

Grove then offered this position to Admiral von Schroeders but he refused. The two next senior officers in the Navy List were Admirals Chappuzzeau and Merino-Benítez. The

⁶³⁹ Annual Report of the British Embassy to Foreign Office, p.32, 6 MAR 1933. NA. FO 371/16569 No. A3128/1071/9.

⁶⁴⁰ Jorge Grove, pp. 41-44.

first one was discredited due to his behaviour during the Mutiny and the second one was the brother of Colonel Arturo Merino Benítez, an active conspirator favouring Ibáñez and a political enemy of the Minister of Defence. Finally, Marmaduke Grove selected Admiral Calixto Rogers-Cea. He was directed to travel by train from Talcahuano to Santiago but while on board he received the news about the fall of the *Junta de Gobierno* and Grove. Then Rogers was directed by Jouanne to return to his office as Commander in Chief of Talcahuano Naval Base.

The Socialist Republic had a short life since it ended on 16 June 1932 when the *Junta de Gobierno* was toppled after being in power for only twelve days. The only action of the Navy in this event was the meeting held by Admiral Jouanne who took with him Admiral Julio Merino-Benítez and Captain Vicente Merino-Bielich. The three naval officers went to a meeting with the two socialists Eugenio Matte and Marmaduke Grove asking for their resignation: ‘due to their extremely advanced ideas and their lack of control of the popular masses⁶⁴¹’.

Admiral Jouanne issued the following day a statement as the Navy head explaining its conduct. He said that the Navy kept itself away from movements changing government in certain periods. He stated that the Navy was not against: ‘new ideological social trends offering welfare to the people’. But now it was impossible to remain impartial against: ‘anarchy, the loss of the principle of authority in the Republic and the weak attitude of the former *Junta de Gobierno* to fighting communism’. Then he added that the Navy agreed with the Army in eliminating this situation without changing the social principles supported by the former *Junta de Gobierno*. Jouanne states that this had been done to: ‘save the country’s prestige and the tranquillity of all its inhabitants⁶⁴²’.

The deposed *Junta de Gobierno* was replaced with a new one containing Arturo Puga and Carlos Dávila as members. The replacement of socialist Arturo Matte as third member was by successive minor characters close to Dávila. No matter the changes of the *Junta de Gobierno* third member, Dávila stayed always as in the prominent position, becoming the strongman.

⁶⁴¹ Sáez, v.III. p.298.

⁶⁴² *La Nación*, 17 JUN 1932.

The socialists who worked in the previous Government or those who supported the former *Junta de Gobierno*, such as Eugenio Matte and the two Grove brothers, Marmaduke and Jorge, were sent as internal exiles to Easter Island on board a Navy ship. The new *Junta de Gobierno* confirmed Admiral Jouanne in his post just as socialists and communists provoked riots in some cities. This unrest forced the fleet to sail to Valparaíso to disembark troops in support of the governmental forces⁶⁴³. This naval force had been reorganized and put under the command of Admiral von Schroeders to quell the political instability. Also to defend the new regime, Congress approved the law '*For the Defence of the Republic*', that Vice President Trucco presented to Congress almost one year before⁶⁴⁴. When the period of greatest danger ended, the Fleet was disbanded and the ships remaining in service were organized into two flotillas.

On 8 July 1932 Carlos Dávila finally succeeded in displacing the other two members of the *Junta de Gobierno* to become the sole ruler of Chile under the title of Provisional President. One of his first actions was to nominate Rear Admiral Francisco Nieto-Gallegos as Minister of the Navy. This Ministry had been fused with the War Ministry in the past. Its recreation opened a debate in the Navy Board⁶⁴⁵ about the continuity of the office of the Director General of the Navy or to return to the organization set in the period of President Ibáñez [1927-1931] when this command was eliminated. Admiral Jouanne resigned again, probably due to the above debate, but he later retracted his resignation when his post was maintained⁶⁴⁶.

On 26 August 1932 an amnesty was given to the officers condemned by Court Martial. There were none in the Navy since Lieutenant Commanders Beytía and Valle, the two officers who had been convicted for dereliction of duty were absolved by a higher court. The law then benefited only Army officers condemned for their actions in the Maipo Regiment.

Dávila started having difficulties with the Armed Forces and with the Navy in particular. Both services preferred that he ended his Government because he ruled without

⁶⁴³ 'En la madrugada entró a puerto la Escuadra', *La Unión*, 22 JUN 1932, p.3.

⁶⁴⁴ Vial-Correa, v. IV, 1996, p.197.

⁶⁴⁵ Proceedings of the Naval Board, July 1932. Chilean Naval Archive.

⁶⁴⁶ 'Almirante Jouanne retira su renuncia', *La Unión*, 14 JUL 1932,p.5.

the balance of a parliament. The Armed Forces wanted the President of the Supreme Court to become President to call for a general election⁶⁴⁷, taking the country back to a constitutional normality.

Dávila then resigned, handing over his position to General Bartolomé Blanche-Espejo, his Minister of Interior on 13 September 1932. Blanche named Rear Admiral José Manuel Montalva-Barrientos as Minister of the Navy. Again, Admiral Jouanne thought that it was convenient to explain the Navy's position by means a public statement. The desire to return to constitutional normality after successive changes in the State leadership since June 1932 may be observed in the following quotation:

'The Navy had tried by all means to keep the social peace, with high patriotic spirit, remaining silent and even with temporary loss of its public prestige. When Davila's Government was toppled, it expressed the idea of naming the Minister of the Interior as Chief of State in order to observe the constitutional rules. This process named Bartolomé Blanche as Minister of the Interior and disregarding his rank, he became Provisional President. Facing the present events, the Navy insists and publicly proclaims this solemn statement. It will support the constitutional and civil rule which is in the process of being established again even using the force of its weapons⁶⁴⁸.

Despite the fond hope of returning to normal government, a few days after Blanche became Provisional President a rebellion erupted in the Air Force and soon after in Antofagasta's military garrison, forcing the Navy to organize again a naval force and put a squadron under the command of Real Admiral von Schroeders to prevent future disruptions.

During the rebellion in Antofagasta pressure was placed on the Fleet to join that movement but its Commander in Chief refused, stating:

'If on this occasion I do not carry out my duty of loyalty to my superiors....I am sure that this would lead to the most ill fated consequences, not only the breakdown of discipline by disobeying the Director General of the Navy, but also because it would incline the Navy to one of the political factions when the Fleet had just gone through an extremely delicate period⁶⁴⁹, [meaning the Naval Mutiny].

⁶⁴⁷ Vial-Correa, v. IV, 1996, pp. 220-222.

⁶⁴⁸ 'Declaraciones del Director General de la Armada', *La Unión*, 15 SEP 1932,p.1.

⁶⁴⁹ Von Schroeders, p.189.

Blanche, who never wanted to run the nation decided to turn control over to the President of the Supreme Court of Justice, Abraham Oyanedel-Urrutia on 2 October 1932.

With Chile having endured enormous instability, the Navy decided to move its headquarters to Valparaíso in order to remove its officers from the intense political environment of the capital city. It must be recalled that the headquarters were moved to Santiago at the beginning of Ibáñez Government. The British Naval Mission advised against the movement to Valparaíso but it took place anyway at the end of 1932 due to the strong will of most of the Admirals⁶⁵⁰.

The new government named retired Rear Admiral Arturo Swett-Otaegui⁶⁵¹ as Minister of the Navy, who rapidly retired Admirals von Schroeders and Merino-Benítez, naming Rear Admiral Julio Allard-Pinto as Commander in Chief of the Fleet. Later, the retirement of Admiral Jouanne was announced. He was replaced as Director General of the Navy by Rear Admiral Calixto Rogers-Cea. Von Schroeders publicly criticized the Minister of the Navy for forcing him to retire⁶⁵². Von Schroeder's public statements and the retirement of other Admirals were ascribed to disagreement of the members of the Navy Board with the Minister in a British diplomatic report⁶⁵³.

During the final days of Oyanedel's Government a projected law was sent to Congress to award retirement pay to the crewmembers expelled from the Navy. This project was supported by the following Government and finally was approved demonstrating that there was a majority in favour of improving the mutineers' situation even against the Navy's opinion.

⁶⁵⁰ British Embassy, Santiago, Annual Report 1932, NA, UK., FO 371/16569 No. A3128/1071/9, 6 MAR 1933, p.29.

⁶⁵¹ Admiral Swett was the Minister of the Navy between December 1925 and February 1927 until he had conflicting views with Ibáñez and retired, as was covered in a previous chapter.

⁶⁵² 'Carta del almirante von Schroeders', *La Unión*, 10 NOV 1932, p.3 and Von Schroeders, 1933, p.190.

⁶⁵³ Annual Report of the British Embassy to Foreign Office, 6 MAR 1933, p.31. NA, UK., FO 371/16569 No. A3128/1071/9.

11.3. Towards political stability. The end of an era.

The presidential and congressional elections took place on 30 October 1932. The results were the following:

CANDIDATE	VOTES	PERCENTAGE
Alessandri	187,914	54.8
Grove	60,858	17.7
Rodríguez de la Sotta	47,207	13.8
Zañartu	42,885	12.5
Lafertte	4,128	1.2

Source: Vial v. V, p 243.

Arturo Alessandri Palma, supported mainly by the liberal and radicals, again became Chief of State. The big surprise of the balloting was the high number of votes obtained by Marmaduke Grove who could not actively campaign because he was in internal exile on Easter Island arriving in Valparaíso only on the Election Day. Héctor Rodríguez de la Sotta was a candidate of the Conservative Party and Enrique Zañartu-Prieto was the choice of another Liberal fraction. Elias Lafertte, a communist, did not win many votes showing that the popular vote mainly supported Grove, encouraging him and other socialist to create the Socialist Party of Chile in the following year. The new party drew on the same social base as the ChCP as well as the middle class. The 'United Front' policy of the Third Communist International was not successful in Chile [see section 6.2].

Arturo Alessandri was in 1932 a more moderate politician than in 1920 when he became President for the first time. The initial actions of his second term as Head of State demonstrate this.

Alessandri's strong electoral victory showed that the electors had tired of so much political instability, especially during the Naval Mutiny of 1931 and which became more acute in 1932. In this period several Governments some lasting a few weeks or even a few days, followed one another. Alessandri's victory represented a return to the traditional politics, ending the Socialist Republic experiment. Despite this defeat, socialism, somewhat diffused until then, had become part of the Chilean politics.

On 20 December 1932, Alessandri, who would take over the Government a few days later and wanting to head a stable Government, called out of retirement Rear Admiral

Olegario Reyes del Río to offer him the position of Director General of the Navy. Reyes del Río held that position during all Alessandri's period as President 1932-1938 leaving behind the period of sudden changes in the higher positions in the Navy.

Another demonstration that the extreme political instability suffered by Chile had finished is that during Alessandri's second administration the position of Minister of Defence was held only by Emilio Bello-Codesido. Also during the whole of Alessandri's second term in office the War and Navy departments were kept under a single ministry. This stability does not mean that during this administration there was no political unrest but the Armed Forces were not involved in these troubles.

The most visible effects of the Naval Mutiny of 1931 and the political instability of 1932 started to fade away during Alessandri's second Government. Still, from time to time, doubts arose that the Armed Forces might become political. Those who fear that the military might intervene in politics founded the '*Milicia Republicana*'. The creators belonged to different parties [except ChCP] sharing a personal view against militarism. It was a white guard composed of civilian volunteers supplied with weapons belonging to the Army and supported by President Alessandri. The existence of this organization caused uneasiness within the Army. Nevertheless, the Director General of the Navy seemed favourably disposed:

'The Navy and Army experience had been hard, no matter our sincere wishes of avoiding intervention in politics forever and dedicating ourselves to the improvement of our services, the public opinion still distrusts our intentions. There is doubt that the political virus had been totally banished from the minds of these services...This Director General, due to considerations that had been made regarding the Republican Militias, states: The National Navy considers that the formation of the '*Milicia Republicana*' helps to maintain the health of the Republic.....considering them as a cooperative body in keeping social peace and internal tranquillity, enabling the President developing his work of national reconstruction⁶⁵⁴.

The idea of creating a militia oriented to counteracting militarism was not new in Chilean history. One hundred years before in another unstable period the same type of organization had been used under the name of National Guard.

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'Declaración del Director General de la Armada, contralmirante Olegario Reyes del Río', *La Unión*, 19 MAY 1933, p.3.

An interesting event related to the Naval Mutiny was the support given to Warrant Officer Ernesto González by Alessandri's Government. We must recall that this leader became a writer in *Crónica*, a newspaper financed by Alessandri as a candidate and devoted to destabilizing Montero's Government [see section 10.3]. On reading González's book it might be inferred that the idea of blaming the officers for the lack of discipline, culminating with the rebellion, may have been inspired by the speech made by Alessandri as a candidate on 19 September 1931. Although the reasons for the support of Gonzalez throughout Alessandri's second Government cannot be totally confirmed, there are strong clues showing a privileged relationship between González and Alessandri described below. The relationship among them could have been started in Devonport as mentioned before in this thesis [see sections 6.1. and 6.3]. After the mutiny, of all the condemned men Ernesto González was the one most favoured by governmental decisions. Alessandri's second administration awarded him a pension payment on 31 October 1933. One year later Alessandri favoured Gonzalez again sending him commissioned to Mexico with a Government salary in foreign currency to study how agricultural schools worked in that country. It is possible to question González's qualifications to serve in this position. Upon his return he was named as an agent in the Police, without any knowledge of investigative work. He was promoted to the rank of Police Inspector in Antofagasta a few days before the end of Alessandri's Government on 30 April 1938. He stayed in service during President Aguirre Cerda's Government and retired in 1941. It must be said that Alessandri's second term in office was supported by the right wing parties and for a period by the Radical Party [of social democrat trend]. During this presidential period the ChCP was clearly in the opposition. González left his post in the Police in the next Government supported by the 'Popular Front' political alliance created by the ChCP following the orientation adopted by the Congress of the Communist International held in 1935. This shows that González far from being a communist as mentioned by some authors was an Alessandrist and enjoyed public positions during Alessandri's second term in office. This did not happen with any other mutineer.

As a consequence of the deep economic crisis of the 1930s which forced a drastic reduction in naval personnel as well the mutineers' dismissal, the Navy clearly declined in its operative capacity. This situation improved as time elapsed but when naval power was possible to be increased because the Chilean economic situation was better, the Second World War started and it was impossible to order new ships and weapons abroad.

This acute weakening of the Navy is one of the consequences of the period of indiscipline which occurred in the Chilean Armed Forces between 1924 and 1932. The Naval Mutiny of 1931 is no doubt the most serious event within it. The rebellion also influenced the strong success of Montero in the 1931 presidential election because he, as a candidate, guided the Government behind the scenes in its struggle against the mutineers, avoiding the danger of a violent revolution feared by the majority of the electors.

In a wider context, the big changes occurring in Chile at the beginning of the 1930s were⁶⁵⁵: ‘the definite birth of a new cultural and political pole in the country and this was the left with a Marxist orientation’. The Naval Mutiny of 1931 is related to this important event in Chilean politics because it was used to promote and consolidate this new cultural political force.

The introduction of socialist ideas in Chile, the achievements of the first term of Alessandri in office and those of Ibáñez’s presidency, plus the influence of Armed Forces officers participating in the political movements of the 1920s initiated a strong role of the State in the economy. This was also provoked as a reaction to the deep crisis started at the end of the 1920s and resulted in the end of the liberal economic principles prevailing in Chile during the whole nineteenth century⁶⁵⁶. ‘In international economy policies, this meant stressing nationalism or the development ‘towards the inside’ as it was called in Latin America later. This orientation in the Chilean economic development remained until the 1970s.

⁶⁵⁵ Joaquín Ferrandois Huerta, *Mundo y Fin de Mundo. Chile en la Política Mundial 1900-2004*, (Santiago: Ediciones Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 2005), p.112.

⁶⁵⁶ Ferrandois, p. 112.

AN INTERPRETATION

12. THE CHILEAN NAVAL MUTINY OF 1931: A REASSESSMENT.

12.1. Background.

In section 1.2 a discussion about the literature covering the Chilean 1931 mutiny was introduced. In consequence of the analysis undertaken during this thesis a reassessment of earlier studies and interpretations is necessary.

William Sater⁶⁵⁷ does not support the idea that Alessandri was plotting a naval mutiny while he was in exile in Europe.

The evaluation of the information gathered during the research for this thesis enables the present author to differ from this interpretation due to the following. Admittedly Alessandri was not plotting a naval mutiny against the administration of Montero and Trucco because this Government had a provisional character and a Presidential election was scheduled. Then Alessandri could recover power without organizing a subversive movement. His candidacy competing with Montero for the presidency is a proof that he wanted to regain power by legitimate methods.

Nevertheless the evidence cannot be completely disregarded that shows that an Alessandrist plot did seek to subvert *Latorre* and the rest of the Navy to topple the Ibáñez Government. The plotters could not anticipate that Ibáñez would fall due to other reasons. It is possible that once this conspiracy was under way it developed its own dynamic and finally erupted when the Ibáñez regime suddenly collapsed and when the issue of reducing the salaries was announced by the new authorities. Thus, Trucco's [or Montero's] administration suffered the consequences of an action originally initiated by Alessandri to destabilize Ibáñez's Government.

Regarding Carlos López' opinion⁶⁵⁸ that storekeeper ratings Manuel Astica-Fuentes and Augusto Zagal-Anabalón were the leaders of the mutiny, the evidence shows that these

⁶⁵⁷ Sater, 1980, p. 267.

⁶⁵⁸ Carlos López-Urrutia, 'The Chilean Naval Mutiny of 1931', *Revista Derroteros de la Mar del Sur* n.d.

individuals, while important at the time of drafting the first subversive manifestoes, cannot be the main factors in causing the mutiny since they entered the Navy only a few weeks before it began: this was too short a time to permit them gain enough influence over the rest of the crews to initiate an event of such magnitude.

The author believes, after the research done, that the mutiny was more a consequence of the political and economical situation than the result of actions of individuals like Astica, Zagal or even Warrant Officer González, no matter what was written by the press during the trials focusing the causes in individuals rather than in historical processes. The reason for this is understandable. Criminal trials are meant to punish individuals, not groups, and for journalists it is preferable to illustrate a story with the actions of certain characters rather than boring the public with the analysis of the deep root of the events.

A discussion of the explanations of the mutiny by authors of the Marxist trend is mentioned in section 1.2 and will be further expanded in section 12.4. It is based in the evidence gathered and described during this thesis and mainly in sections 6.2 and 11.1.

12.2. The author's opinion.

In the author's opinion, non-Chilean elements also influenced the mutiny's origin. First, it is proven that while *Latorre's* modernization was taking place in Devonport Naval Dockyard, British communist workers went on board to perform their duties while they were under surveillance from the British security services. But there is no evidence of direct contact with the crew members who remained in Plymouth with the battleship. Of course there was a language barrier, but it must be taken into account as well the long stay of the ship in that naval base and the fact that officers and enlisted personnel had to be lodged ashore, in messes and barracks, living together with the British personnel of the same rank. This influence may have also occurred when the Chileans observed the events related to the HMS *Lucia* mutiny. This rebellion happened while *Latorre* and HMS *Lucia*

were in Devonport. The investigative proceedings were carried on in the Officers' Mess at the Naval Base and were widely covered by the local newspapers.

Before *Latorre's* stay, many officers and enlisted men belonging to the Chilean Navy were in Great Britain because Scottish and English shipyards built six destroyers, three submarines, a submarine tender and two oilers between 1927 and 1929. This contact with the British happened immediately after the general strike which paralysed almost the whole country for ten days on May 1926. The strike began as a strictly labour dispute of the coal miners but it escalated when other unions, mainly the stevedores and transport workers, joined. Some argue that this movement had a revolutionary purpose but probably its importance, like that of the Chilean Naval Mutiny, was exaggerated for propaganda reasons and this may have impressed the Chilean crews of those ships when they were in Great Britain.

Various non-Chilean sources have clarified the role of international communism in the organization of the mutiny. These sources, used in conjunction with the Chilean materials, provided a clearer view about the participation of the ChCP in the mutiny's closer origins.

Also the Chilean and non-Chilean sources analyzed as whole enabled a better knowledge of the activities of the Chilean exiles in Europe who had the purpose of destabilizing Ibáñez's Government, an action having unforeseen later effects when that Government had already ended.

12.3. Similarities and differences between the Chilean naval mutiny and the Invergordon mutiny.

As was mentioned in sections 1.2 & 6.2, a few days after the Chilean Naval Mutiny a similar event transpired in the British Atlantic Fleet while it was moored at the Scottish town of Invergordon⁶⁵⁹.

⁶⁵⁹ The following material has been researched to write about the Invergordon Mutiny: Bell and Elleman, 'The Invergordon Mutiny', *Naval Mutinies of the Twentieth Century. An International Perspective*, ed. by Christopher Bell and Bruce Elleman (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Report by Atlantic Fleet, A.F. 00145, 9 NOV 1931, p.4. NA. ADM 178/129; Anthony Carew, *The lower deck of the*

The most important similarity is that the Invergordon Mutiny happened when Great Britain was also suffering from the same economic crisis as Chile. The British Government also ordered a salary reduction but this order was not disseminated through the regular channels due to a problem with the official mail. For this reason the crews only learned of this news by means of the press when the ships arrived at port for a break. After the news published by the newspapers was disseminated, a communication from the Admiralty arrived. It had some irritating phrases leading the naval personnel to think that the high command was doing nothing to correct the problem. A report from that time states:

‘Influenced possibly by the example and success of the direct action by Trades Union ashore, the Men decided to draw attention to their case seizing the opportunity for the dramatic refusal of duty which was presented by the sailing of the fleet on the following morning⁶⁶⁰’.

The above reasoning is useful to understand the type of mutiny that happened at Invergordon. It was a sit-in [or tools down] strike, when the workers refuse to fulfil their duties but nonetheless stay in their working places. Such type of behaviour was not really a mutiny in the sense described by Bell and Ellerman⁶⁶¹. Several union tactics were involved in the Chilean case, but the mutineers scaled up the conflict to a higher level than in the British case by taking the officers into custody and locking them on board the ships in Coquimbo. In ships and shore establishments in Talcahuano and in Valparaíso they acted by seizing certain units and schools without imprisoning the officers.

In the Chilean and British cases, the influence of the industrial workers procedures is evident upon the conduct of the crew members. Professor Geoffrey Till states that since crewmembers came from an industrialized working class, they were by no means immune to the views and expectations of their former colleagues ashore and for this reason they adopted similar behaviour⁶⁶². The Valparaiso general strike on 24 August, may have

Royal Navy, 1900-1939: the Invergordon mutiny in perspective (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981); Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon* (London: Putnam, 1937); Allan Coles & Ted Briggs, *Flagship Hood. The Fate of Britain's Mightiest Ship*, (London: Robert Hale Ltd, 1990).

⁶⁶⁰ Report by Atlantic Fleet, A.F. 00145, 9 NOV 1931, p.4. NA. ADM 178/129.

⁶⁶¹ Bell&Elleman, p.3.

⁶⁶² Geoffrey Till in: Bell&Elleman, p. xvii.

influenced the mutineers in the sense mentioned by Till. It occurred one month after Ibáñez's fall. His Government suppressed this type of social expression of dissatisfaction during 1927-1931[see section 11.1].

It is also convenient to add a comment about the use of tactics belonging to labour disputes at the time of the mutiny. There are two chapters in this thesis entirely devoted to the pre 1931 political turmoil in Chile and its impact on the Armed Forces [section 2.2 and Chapters 3&4]. In this troubled period officers belonging to the services participated in political issues in a clear violation of the law. They created committees and 'Juntas' [boards] to press their superiors to adopt political reforms and participated in meetings to remove or name authorities. On certain occasions, the officers expressed opinions collectively by means of letters and telegrams. The enlisted men participating in the mutiny claimed that they only followed the example given by the officer's illegal way of acting. And they used this argument in court and through the press as an extenuating circumstance or an excuse for their own seditious behaviour.

The British report said that one of the factors that facilitated the mutiny in the Royal Navy was the concentration of ships at Invergordon: no mutiny happened in other fleets because they were dispersed among different ports. The Mediterranean fleet is an example even though it too endured a salary reduction. In Coquimbo and Talcahuano the concentration facilitated the development of the rebellion, but in Valparaíso probably the dispersion was a reason that fewer ships and shore establishments joined the mutiny.

Another similarity between both mutinies is the possible external influence, not fully proven in this thesis in the Chilean case. The British report noted:

'There is a wide difference of opinion as to whether any outside organization actually controlled the outbreak, but, so far, no direct evidence of this is forthcoming. In any case, inside the Fleet an organization quickly became effective among a large number of discontented men in all ships. The absence of outside interests at Invergordon and the opportunities for subversive meetings undoubtedly helped the growth of this organization⁶⁶³'.

In both cases there were earlier symptoms of discontent which the officers and the Commanding Officers failed to discern. In the British case, however, a shorter time elapsed

⁶⁶³ Report by Atlantic Fleet, A.F. 00145, 9 NOV 1931, p.5. NA. ADM 178/129.

between the surfacing of the symptoms and the mutiny. In short, the symptoms were clearer in Invergordon than in Coquimbo.

An important difference between both mutinies is that in the British case the Senior Officer in the Atlantic Fleet⁶⁶⁴ sent a message to all ships stating that he understood the problems affecting the crewmembers with the salary reductions and that he would present this situation to the Admiralty. He also noted that he would send his Chief of Staff to London to report the results of the research being done by the Commanding Officers about the hardships caused by the salary reductions. In the Chilean case, the Commander in Chief of the Active Squadron requested his higher command for precise information about the extent of the reductions but he did not tell his subordinates about the actions he had started when he received the initial news about the salary cuts. In the Instruction Squadron, the Commander in Chief would have written a letter to his higher command but he did not communicate to his subordinates any of the actions by which he was attempting to minimize the problem. On the contrary, when he lectured his men, he told them about the necessity of accepting the reduction of salaries to help the country in its financial problems.

The British report states that early information about the reduction's extension and an investigation of the deprivations that the measure would cause to the crewmembers was necessary. Then the presentation of the results to the Admiralty might have prevented the men's participation in indiscipline. But this did not happen according to the First Sea Lord because the Cabinet forbade an early circulation of the news about the salary reductions until the decision to make it public. In the Chilean case, there was no such prohibition but instead there was an erroneous dissemination of the real scope of the reductions and there was no official communication to the Armed Forces commands by the Government. These measures would have prevented the Chilean crewmembers learning of the reductions by reading the confusing and imprecise newspaper reports.

Another interesting subject covered in the British report is the influence of naval schoolmasters:

'through whose hands are passed all ratings from boys to Leading Seamen. Their opportunities for good or bad influences are enormous and it is

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The Commander in Chief of the Atlantic Fleet Admiral Michael Hodges was sick in a hospital since this force left the home bases located in Southern England to perform exercises in Scotland.

regrettable that some, if not many of these Schoolmasters are frequently of a type which is frankly socialist in outlook⁶⁶⁵.

In the Chilean case, the schoolmasters had an important participation influencing the mutineers, particularly in Talcahuano, as was explained in a previous chapter [see sections 8.1&8.2]. Even being very young and having joined the Navy not long before the rebellion, their influence was notorious because they were teaching young sailors. Schoolmaster Pedro Pacheco-Pérez is a significant example. He worked in the Talcahuano Naval Base School of Seaman Apprentices. He took a significant leadership position during the mutiny. Years later he was named Mayor of Valparaíso as a member of the ChCP as explained in another chapter [see section 10.2].

The British document also described the difficulties in finding the proper way of representing grievances within the disciplinary system. It stated that the failure of enlisted men to present their grievances or demands, forced them to use union methods which allowed extremists to become the group's spokesmen. This observation applies also to the Chilean case where the crewmembers made no formal demands before the mutiny although the reduction in salaries caused great concern. The only exception was that of *O'Higgins* petty officers who told the Executive Officer of this ship that it was necessary to meet the Commanding Officer to analyze the salary reductions. As said in a previous chapter [see section 7.1], this meeting was postponed until the reception on board of official news about the salary problem. But the mutiny erupted while the arrival of the official information was still expected.

González states⁶⁶⁶ that the officers expressed their concerns about the salary reductions to Captain Hozven but that the Commanding Officer did nothing to address this subject to his superiors, regardless of an earlier promise to do so. If true, his failure to act was not investigated by the Court Martial.

The main difference between the British and the Chilean example is how the crisis was handled. In Great Britain the mutiny did not increase because the Admiralty and the Government rapidly addressed the cause of the unrest. And since Commanding Officers and officers remained free, they could still influence the mutineers by letting them know

⁶⁶⁵ Report by Atlantic Fleet, A.F. 00145, 9 NOV 1931, p.14. NA. ADM 178/129.

⁶⁶⁶ González, p.7.

that their grievances would be taken into account. In some units, the mutineers only refused to take the ships out of harbour. Two capital ships went to sea without suffering any act of indiscipline. In the rest of the ships, Commanding Officers assisted by other officers finished the preparations for sailing. Christopher M. Bell write:

‘These displays of determination, combined with further assurances that the men’s grievances would be heard and the sight of other ships preparing for sea, had the desired effect. Around 9:30 p.m., the ships of the Atlantic Fleet began sailing out of the Cromarty Firth⁶⁶⁷’.

In the Chilean case, the officers on board the ships at Coquimbo could exert little influence over the mutineers once they were overwhelmed and locked in their cabins, although they tried to overcome this situation by trying to contact certain loyal crewmembers. The attempt made by the Commander in Chief of the Talcahuano Naval Base to dissuade the mutineers failed and when the Commanding Officers of ships and shore establishments became aware of this failure they did not attempt to convince their crews to remain obedient. They rather dedicated their efforts to delivering their commands in an orderly way and abandoning ships and units with the rest of the officers, without further attempt to change the mutineers’ minds. The mutiny ended in Chile because the Government, after several days, decided to use force. Additionally, the logistical problems on board caused problems for the crew, creating a dispute among the rebels.

Another difference between the two mutinies was that the Admiralty launched an investigation to understand the reasons producing the indiscipline in order to prevent a repetition of these events. During this investigation, according to Bell and Elleman: ‘No evidence surfaced to link the mutiny to subversive activities by the British Communist Party, which had apparently been taken completely by surprise⁶⁶⁸’. In Chile, the investigation was done very rapidly and mainly oriented to punishing the participants, thinking only of the dissuasive effect of sanctions. Awkwardly no one sought to discover the root causes of the rebellion. Moreover, until the research done for this thesis, the Navy never opened its archives in the more than the seventy five years that have elapsed since the mutiny. This refusal facilitated the publication of stories containing serious factual mistakes and exaggerations and prevented the use of this material as a case study.

⁶⁶⁷ Bell&Elleman, p.183.

⁶⁶⁸ Bell&Elleman, p.183.

The conclusion of the author of this thesis is that in Chile, besides avoiding the investigation of the deep causes of the mutiny only a feeble consideration was given to the participation of civilians as instigators and accomplices, although there were strong clues deserving a more accurate investigation by the prosecutors.

This occurred because penal processes were immediately started oriented to the determination of individual responsibilities of those committing crimes with the purpose of inflicting penalties. The case deserved another type of investigation, such as the one done in UK by order of the Board of the Admiralty mentioned before. The consequence of this inadequate procedure in such a serious event is that no clear idea of the deep roots of the mutiny remained in the historical memory of the Chilean Navy. The lesson that could have been obtained from a serious study of this case could have prevented or facilitated the handling of other episodes of collective indiscipline that occurred in the following years. The most remarkable cases took place in 1963 in the School of Engineering and more seriously in 1973 when a group of the Fleet crewmembers were organizing the seizure of the ships claiming that they wanted to avoid an officers' movement against Allendes's Government⁶⁶⁹.

12.4 Author's interpretation of this thesis

This thesis has tried to investigate beyond the conclusions reached by other authors. To achieve this goal, the author has studied Chilean and non-Chilean primary sources in order to analyse the role of naval officers in politics, a topic which existing literature has tended to ignore [see section 1.2].

Employing these materials, we can write better informed narrative of the political events of the 1920-1931 period [see Chapters 3 to 6] which leads to the conclusion that the active political participation of the Navy's officers was one of the causes of the Naval Mutiny of 1931. Studying these materials made it possible to set the record straight, disregarding stories unsupported by the facts but used instead to advance political interests.

⁶⁶⁹ This mutiny is the main subject of Jorge Magasich's book [*Los que Dijeron No*]. Another author is one of the mutineers: Patricio Barroilhet, *Memorias de un Marino Constitucionalista*, (Santiago: Editorial Mosquito Comunicaciones. Santiago.2005).

The study of these years also showed the negative influence of the political caudillos of the 1920s. There is substantial evidence that Alessandri, or his followers, met the *Latorre's* officers and probably petty officers while it was docked in Devonport, in hopes of plotting a revolt against Ibáñez. Nor did Ibáñez hesitate to manipulate the Navy's leadership or attract dissatisfied groups within this service, such as the engineers, to achieve his political goals. In short, both politicians substantially weakened the discipline of this service. Certainly this was an unforeseen effect. Surprisingly, the mutiny occurred when both caudillos were out of power. As a result of the rebellion, the Chilean population, and the Navy in particular, suffered from the misguided actions of both important men.

Using the criteria of Elihu Rose⁶⁷⁰, and of Christopher Bell and Bruce Elleman [see section 1.3], the events which happened in Chile during the first week of September 1931 were clearly a mutiny since:

- a. All phases of such type of phenomenon took place in Chile during September 1931. The catalytic event was a salary reduction badly communicated by the Government.
- b. Other pre-requisites enabling qualifying this event as a naval mutiny of promotion of interests occurred as well. Nevertheless, the events have also some characteristics of a political mutiny following those author's criteria because in addition of seeking an improvement in their problems, the participants' second manifesto to the Government tried to force political changes.
- c. Contrary to Patricio Manns's allegations, the 1931 mutiny did not seek to seize power or to produce long term revolutionary changes. There is only one phrase in the mutineers' manifestoes indicating that they sought a social revolution⁶⁷². And this phrase was promulgated after the Government threatened that it would use force against the rebels. This menace of violence radicalized the mutineers, forcing them to state that they would launch

⁶⁷⁰ Rose, pp. 561-574.

⁶⁷¹ Bell&Elleman, p.266.

⁶⁷² Message from Latorre (Estado Mayor) to Government, 6 SEP 1931. CG, v.2 (V), p. 30. BUPERS.

revolutionary acts. But by that time they lacked the means of fulfilling their threat and very few crewmembers were willing to follow their orders.

- d. The mutiny's strong emotional impact and the coverage it received in the press for several months, influenced national politics, such as blaming Montero's regime for the maltreatment of the mutineers. Another indirect result was a spurt in the popularity of the non-communist Marxist groups [several socialists groups] and a split in the conservative party, leading to the formation of a Christian Socialist faction which, while opposed to economic liberalism, was also deeply anti-communist. Later, a group of young men belonging to this sector created a Christian Democrat Party that began to support a more socially aware form of conservative politics. Bernardo Leighton-Guzmán, who was a young leader of the Association of Catholic Students in 1931, together with other students belonging to the civilist movement, travelled to Coquimbo to convince the mutineers to avoid violence and to urge the port's people to oppose the mutineers. For this reason, he met Admiral von Schroeders and once the officer returned to Santiago, Leighton sent a letter to the mutineers and went on board *Latorre* to talk to them. There is no evidence that Leighton helped end the mutiny [he used the term Revolution⁶⁷³]. Leighton subsequently became an important politician after the creation of the Christian Democrat Party, serving as a Member of Parliament and Minister of the Interior [1964]. During his long political life he never mentioned the mutiny as a direct influence in his political thought.
- e. Courts Martial tried and convicted most of the mutineers. Higher courts confirmed most of the original sentences but they did commute the death penalties. Within a few days of the trial and during his unsuccessful 1931 campaign, Arturo Alessandri Palma became one of the first politicians requesting an amnesty for them. Later and during his second presidency [1932-1938] he named the former Warrant Officer Ernesto González-Brion

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Otto Boye, *Hermano Bernardo: Cincuenta años de vida política vistos por Bernardo Leighton*, (Santiago de Chile: Andros, 2006), ch. IV. Also in: <http://hermanobernardo-o.boyeblogspot/2006/08/capitulo-iv.html>.

to various government's positions. By 1935, the Comintern supported the policy of the 'Popular Front' including collaboration between Alessandri's followers and the communists. Alessandri's generosity toward González leads one to think that both men may have become involved while *Latorre* stayed in Devonport and Alessandri was plotting against Ibáñez, but it is unlikely that at that time the communists supported this action because the policy adopted by the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928 of 'class against class' was effective and it did not allow joint actions between the ChCP and other political groups. This last reasoning disregards the idea of a communist participation in the origin of the mutiny. But in 1932 and later, when fascism became a threat to the communists, it is plausible that they supported all measures in favour of the condemned mutineers, acting in this sense together with the Alessandrists and socialists, when the policy of the 'Popular Front' was closer to being adopted by Comintern, enabling joint actions with political parties not affiliated to this international organization.

Why then do some authors insist in calling this event in Chilean history a Revolution? Why today, after eighty years, is this term still used in common language to characterize those events? ⁶⁷⁴. One of the reasons is the similarity between the Coquimbo mutiny and that which occurred on board the Russian battleship *Potemkin* publicized by the 1925 film of Sergei Eisenstein produced to extol the Bolshevik Revolution. It is unknown if this classic film, outstanding for its artistic innovations, was shown in Chile before the

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The first author using this term was the already quoted José Manuel de la Cerda in his 1934 book. The most recent uses of the word revolution to characterize the Naval Mutiny of 1931 are in three books quoted in this thesis: Manns, *La Revolución de la Escuadra* edited in 1972 and 2002, Magasich, *Los Que Dijeron No*, 2008, and Bravo-Valdivieso, *La Sublevación de la Escuadra y el Período Revolucionario 1924-1932*, edited in 2000, 2001, 2004, 2006 and 2010.

The term also is used in that sense in newspapers and magazines. A few examples are: 'La Revolución de la Escuadra de 1931', *La Nación*, 6 April 2008, and '¿Nunca más un golpe en Chile?', *Punto Final*, 21 November to 4 December 2006.

Several articles published mainly in Internet do the same. For example: 'A propósito de los héroes y la Armada: La Revolución de la Escuadra de 1931', *Piensa Chile*, www.piensachile.com/content/view/7125/6/ accessed 4 AUG 2010 and 'A propósito de los héroes y la Armada, la Revolución de la Escuadra de 1931. Luis Emilio Recabarren', www.luisemiliorecabarren.cl/?q=node/2107, accessed 4 August 2010.

Naval Mutiny of 1931 but it has been since. Robert Zabrosky in a detailed analysis of this subject wrote:

‘The Potemkin case has been kept alive in modern memory by filmmakers, poets, artist and composers.....Western historians have treated the Potemkin mutiny as an isolated incident that does not warrant closer examination. By contrast, the mutiny was widely documented and celebrated in Soviet historiography’.

Another widely celebrated example was that of the cruiser *Aurora*, a survivor of the battle of Tsushima. This ship, on 25 October 1917, opened fire thus starting the assault on the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg. This event began the October Revolution. Olga Ulianova⁶⁷⁶ writes: ‘The Russian Revolution was quite popular in Chile, especially among the members of the Chilean Worker’s Socialist Party that affiliated with the Third Communist International, thus transforming itself into the ChCP in 1922’.

Various authors, such as Manns, use the naval mutiny of 1931 to create the ethos of the Chilean communism. In dealing with the Naval Mutiny of 1931, as Manns does, left wing authors [see section 1.2] use: ‘History as a way of legitimating actions and as a base for the coherence of a group’⁶⁷⁷. The cover of the first edition of Manns's book closely resembled the posters advertising the *Potemkin* film. Olga Ulianova writes: ‘The burden of the symbols has an influence in using the word Soviet in the same manner as the movement in the Navy was denominated by some of the media as the Chilean *Potemkin*⁶⁷⁸’.

El Siglo, the ChCP newspaper also published a commentary⁶⁷⁹ in May 1961, signed by Luis Enrique Délano, praising Sergei Einsestein’s movie and saying how important this film was for the leftist intellectuals. By that time, the enlisted personnel of the Naval School of Engineering were involved in acts of indiscipline and some of them were being prosecuted. The ChCP used similar arguments to advocate their release as those used with the imprisoned mutineers thirty years before. *El Siglo* was widely used in this new

⁶⁷⁵ Robert Zabrosky in: Bell&Elleman, p. 9.

⁶⁷⁶ Ulianova, 2007, p.321.

⁶⁷⁷ Eric Ranger Terence Hobsbawm, *The Inventing of the Tradition*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.13.

⁶⁷⁸ Ulianova, 2007, p.321.

⁶⁷⁹ ‘Potemkin’, *El Siglo*, 25 May 1961, p. 3.

campaign. Marxist oriented parties were very important by that time in Chilean politics. In 1961 the ChCP and the Socialist Party, plus other leftist political allies increased their percentage of the balloting in consecutive elections. They captured 22.1% of the electorate in 1961⁶⁸⁰ and they thought that electing a president in the future was not impossible. This goal was achieved by this coalition almost ten years later with the election of Salvador Allende-Gossens in 1970 with 36.3% of the votes⁶⁸¹.

In 1961, as well, *El Siglo* published a commemorative article covering a whole page, and signed by Manuel Astica which concluded:

‘No matter that the rebellion of the enlisted men in the Navy [in which I had the honour to participate as the Secretary of the Staff] was repressed, the movement of the working class, on the contrary, found a stimulus in it to build its unity for struggling and creating a more humane and fair society⁶⁸²’.

This author believes that the behaviour of the ChCP and its writers and journalists demonstrates that they were using the mutiny to create a left wing ethos and this is a conclusion as a result of the research done.

Because the 1931 naval mutiny served as a tool of propaganda, it may also explain why it became the object of exaggerations and unsubstantiated interpretations. The mutiny’s participants did not intend to start a revolution. Their aim was to convince the authorities to eliminate the unpopular measure of reducing the salaries at a time of serious economic crisis. The Government and the naval authorities performed poorly their duty of informing the men in detail about the extension and applicability of the reductions, leading to profound uncertainties and fears in the ship companies before the mutiny. In this atmosphere, collective acts of indiscipline were one of the options available for the lower deck personnel. Possibly, there was a minority of the mutineers who exploited these fears to achieve revolutionary goals. But the events proved that they were not a majority and that the rebellion did not lead to a revolution.

⁶⁸⁰ Collier & Sater, p.308.

⁶⁸¹ Collier & Sater, p.333.

⁶⁸² Manuel Astica, ‘30 años de la insurrección de la Armada’, *El Siglo*, 10 SEP 1961, p.3.

In the Chilean case, what really happened was that the ChCP and SAIB estimated that the country was undergoing an increasing political and social crisis between July 1931 and October 1932. They believed that this crisis could end in a revolution and due to this, they saw a similarity between the Chilean Mutiny and the rebellion of the cruiser *Aurora* in 1917. But these two events were only superficially alike. The 1932 election results, although showing an increase in popularity of socialism, also demonstrated that the liberal and social democratic parties were still powerful, leading to a second Alessandri administration [1932-1938] and that the revolution dreamed by the communists was not feasible at that time. This election also showed stagnation in the number of communist electors, if it is compared with the 1931 election. It seems that revolution envisaged by the communists was not an event to be achieved shortly and this path was soon abandoned. Both the Socialist and Communist parties later joined the Radical Party in a centre left democratic government during the 1938-1946 period, when the policy of 'United Front' was advocated by Comintern.

The conservative sectors of the Chilean society during the 1930s saw a clear communist influence in the Naval Mutiny of 1931. Their newspapers and writers stated consistently that the rebellion was initiated by the communists and that some of their leaders were members of this party before the mutiny. The sources demonstrate that this is not true. The conservative belief about the communist participation was enhanced by the fact the successive Governments of that period enacted several measures in favour of the mutineers to mitigate or even cancel the penalties, yielding to a campaign magnified by the ChCP. For the conservatives, the communist campaign was a demonstration that they were the mutiny's instigators. And in these efforts, the communists were supported by persons like the Minister of Defence Marmaduke Grove whom the conservatives considered a communist. Another fact opening the way for suspecting communist participation was that some mutineers joined leftist parties including the ChCP. But this last action was the result of a communist policy of recruiting new members for the future, members who could influence the Armed Forces' personnel if the political situation would evolve towards a revolution. The sources demonstrate that they joined the ChCP after the mutiny and not before.

The fact that the mutiny spread from Coquimbo to far distant bases encouraged some people to believe that it benefited from detailed planning. This thesis does not support this idea. If there was any plotting before the insubordination, it was ill structured and some

actions were really improvised. The rebellion spread very fast due to a reason different from good planning. *Latorre* had advanced communication systems (installed in Devonport) permitting a speedy dissemination of instructions and slogans. Thus, the authorities could not effectively stop the rebels from sending manifestoes to their supporters in the Naval Bases of Valparaíso or Talcahuano. A better control of the radio stations ashore would have prevented the use of this important resource by the mutineers.

Another characteristic of this mutiny that does not confirm a careful previous planning is the treatment given to the officers by the rebels. Only in the ships anchored in Coquimbo were the officers surprised asleep and locked inside their cabins. On board the ships in Talcahuano, the officers abandoned their units after becoming aware of the attitude of the Commander in Chief of that Base following a vain attempt of this Admiral to convince the rebellious personnel to obey orders. The rebels took no action to retain the officers on board and sailed with the ships towards Coquimbo. In the shore establishments of Talcahuano and Valparaíso, the officers went away without any opposition from the mutineers. The way the mutineers handled the officer's destiny demonstrates that they did not have a coordinated command structure, a fact strongly criticized by the SAIB after the events.

The rebellion in the Chilean Navy on 1931 culminated a period of insubordination in the Armed Forces which started in 1924 when military and naval officers assumed a role in the political leadership in the coup which brought down the parliamentary regime. Although naval officers were less involved in the coup than the Army, they nevertheless did participate over a long period in politics. Their behaviour more closely resembled those of politicians or union members rather than officers of an armed forces service. In that hectic period there were collective representations, telegrams of support or rejection, meetings devoted to political analysis, lobbying in favour of nominating certain authorities, and other types of actions. This validates the lower deck's argument that they followed the bad example set by the officers.

Part I of this thesis covers this subject in detail supporting the above conclusion by means of sources such as published and unpublished memoirs written by witnesses of that period and British Embassy reports, never used before for this purpose. This research proves that the mutineers' claim that they followed the bad example set by the officers is sustainable and not only an excuse to avoid harsh punishment when prosecuted in Court Martial for their wrongdoings. The space devoted in later chapters to the subject of political

factors (such as the participation of the ChCP) in the origin of the mutiny must not diminish the importance of the bad state of discipline affecting the armed services at the end of the Ibañez Government as a relevant cause of this sedition.

Since 1931, the Navy has not suffered from such an extreme act of indiscipline. Mutinies, as Bell and Elleman argue, are a type of collective indiscipline caused by sailors' wretched living conditions or poor educational level as happened eighty years ago in Chile and elsewhere. The author believes that it is unlikely that a similar phenomenon may occur in a state with sound institutions, within the constitutional normality ruling the Chilean political environment nowadays, where grievances may be adjudicated more easily.

Nevertheless, it must be taken into account that societies change and new type of conflict or other expression of uneasiness may occur, existing characteristics of social behaviour that are permanent such as wrath after a badly communicated reduction of benefits.

Due to the last considerations, the study of mutinies, such as that of 1931 may be enlightening for naval leaders and politicians, although it happened in a distant past, when Chile was under very different political and social conditions.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS.

A1. Evaluation of the situation made by the consulting board [Navy Board] on the night of 1/ 2 September 1931.

‘Considering the factual situation already produced on board, it is considered that:

1. A solution should be sought that, preserving Government’s authority and the return to discipline, would settle the matter with the Navy’s crews.
2. It is recommended to adopt a calm solution, avoiding leading the crews to violent acts difficult to evaluate in its future implications.
3. The above is recommended because the country’s condition is favourable for other services to adopt the same behaviour as the crews’.
4. By all means, avoid using force against force because the consequences may not be foreseen’.

Source: [Von Schroeders, 1933, p.17]

A2. First mutineers’ manifesto.

The Navy crewmembers’ manifesto

On the night of 31 August to 1 September 1931, the Navy’s Crews, until now essentially obedient and never deliberating no matter the changes in political passions, had observed that all these manoeuvres had driven the country every day more deeply into disorganization, discredit and insolvency. The mentioned manoeuvres were being considered as toys in political passions and being used for raising and overthrowing governments.

Today, the Navy's Crews inspired in the noblest and most wholesome purposes of national good, driven by an irrepressible fervour, without disregarding their peacetime duties and their obligation to defending the fatherland in case of external war, are using its sacred right of thinking and state in front of the country the following agreements, after the above statements:

The crews do not rise against their officers who are respected, nor against discipline that would be maintained with iron will, nor against the country who must trust the crews, but against the present lack of capacity and the political and fratricide passions close to going beyond control.

Making the above preamble, we consider:

1. It is a patriotic duty forced the Navy's Crews to avoid accepting squandering and depreciations in the country's Treasury, due to the present Government's incapacity and the lack of honesty of the previous administrations.

2. That the present government had only used the same policy of their predecessors, with an absolute lack of initiative and understanding to solve economic problems. For these reasons we agree on:

First: Not accepting for any reason that the government in charge of the administration and country's peace should force the less affluent to suffer cuts and sacrifice in their already modest life to balance situations created by bad governing people and to cover a deficit created by constant errors and lack of probity in the ruling classes.

Second: The empowered authorities will request the extradition of the absent politicians to be tried under the Law in order to establish responsibilities.

Third: The Government, in compliance with its duties of watching over the sacred rights of all citizens [civilian, military and naval] and for the in defence of the liberty, must avoid by all means the creation in the conscience of masses of an attitude hostile to the Armed Forces.

Fourth: The Navy's Crews, in their firm purpose that their rights and aspirations are considered, demand that both squadrons remain anchored in this bay until there is a satisfactory resolution regarding the problems presented to the Government's consideration.

Fifth: While a single crewmember stays on board a Chilean warship, its guns will never be aimed against the brothers within the people.

Sixth: With the purpose of allowing the country to resolve its problems, the Navy's Crews concede a period of forty eight hours to answer satisfactorily the demands contained in this document.

Seventh: At the same time, we wish to state that we have not been influenced by anarchists' ideas and that we would not tolerate anything threatening to plunge the country into the abyss of social disintegration. We are not solely defending ourselves, but we also wish to help our fellow citizens suffering at present from deprivation caused by governmental incapacity.

Coquimbo, 1 September 1931.

Date and time of radio message transmission: 01 SEP 1931. 16:30.

Reception time : 16:55

Source: von Schroeders, pp. 6-8.

A2. Second mutineers' manifesto.

Second radio message sent by the Crews received in Santiago almost at midnight 1 September 1931.

What is needed by the navy's crews?

Resources favourable to the people:

While until now the Government had limited itself to reduce expenditures by cutting public servants' salaries and abolishing employment and public posts, no action had been attempted demonstrating any interest in changing the present financial situation. We suggest the following ideas:

1. Set a prudent period in which the government would cease paying the external debt for the sole purpose of establishing the internal financial order of the country during that period.

2. To subdivide the productive land with the purpose of creating more producers and national owners.
3. Gathering a capital of three hundred million pesos or more within the Credit Agencies, Government Agencies and Army and Navy Benefit Associations to invest in productive industries to provide work to the unemployed. Among such activities, should be mentioned building homes for workers, enlarging factories, etcetera. To avoid excessive imports of foreign articles, we make a patriotic call to all Chilean millionaires to supply funds to the Government, in the form of a loan, to enable organizing job creating industries.
4. Economies. Closing the following schools for two years: Seaman Apprentices, Torpedo, Telecommunications, Naval Gunnery and Machinists'. Eliminate from the Navy the auxiliary officers and the Arsenal guards. This last group could be replaced by Petty Officers who had remained long periods at sea. Reduce the compulsory military service or draft to one year. Tax heavier, in proportion to the area, the land not cultivated. Demand that the Government Agency in charge of regulating banking reduces the interest rate of capital deposited in banks to 2% for deposits of more than \$10.000, to make this capital be invested in productive activities. Free clothing: the naval personnel should be given free uniforms as in the Army.
5. Food supplies: reduce milk; reduce fat by 20%; increase tea by 2 grams, and more sugar to every man's food allowance. In the rest of articles, return to the allowance valid on 31 August.
6. Retirement Law. Delete the last Orders of Council keeping valid only table 4 of Order of Council number 3743 dated on 23 December 1927. This document set the salary scale based on retirement after serving twenty years or voluntarily retirement after serving fifteen years.
7. Promotion and Navy Lists. Promotions shall be made in accordance to the former Regulation number four, personnel at present having stayed in excess in their ranks, shall be promoted at once.
8. Salaries. We accept income tax current until 31 July. The reason for this is that our personnel have higher expenses because they have to stay far from home due to their type of career and life is becoming more expensive.

9. Return to service. Captain Arístides del Solar Morel shall be returned to active duty from retirement.

Source: von Schroeders, pp. 14-16.

APPENDIX B: SHIPS AT COQUIMBO ON 1 SEPTEMBER 1931

ACTIVE SQUADRON				R.Adm Campos
Chief of Staff				Cdr. Daroch
TYPE	NAME		CLASS	COMMANDING OFFICER
Cruiser	<i>O'Higgins</i>	Flag Ship	Elswick	Capt. Díaz
Destroyer	<i>Hyatt</i>		Serrano	Cdr. Becerra
Destroyer	<i>Videla</i>		Serrano	Cdr. Aylwin
Destroyer	<i>Aldea</i>		Serrano	Cdr. Bahamondez
Destroyer	<i>Riquelme</i>		Serrano	Cdr. Yánquez
Tug	<i>Gálvez</i>			
Tug	<i>Artillero</i>			

INSTRUCTION SQUADRON				Capt. Hozven
Chief of Staff				Cdr. Obrecht
TYPE	NAME		CLASS	COMMANDING OFFICER
Battleship	<i>Latorre</i>	Flag Ship	Dreadnought	Capt Hozven
Destroyer	<i>Serrano</i>		Serrano	Cdr. Gallardo
Destroyer	<i>Orella</i>		Serrano	Cdr. Huber
Destroyer	<i>Lynch</i>		1914 destroyer	Cdr. Ward

APPENDIX C: SHIP AND SHORE ESTABLISHMENTS IN TALCAHUANO ON 1 SEPTEMBER 1931

1. Flag Officer. R.Adm. Roberto Chappuzeau-Cienfuegos
2. Arsenal. Capt. José A. Goñi-Germain
3. IV Section Arsenal. Cdr. Antonio Alviña-Vergara
4. School of Naval Gunnery. Cdr. Gastón Nef -Videau [18 students only].
5. Gunnery and Ammunition Depot. Cdr. Luis Ramírez-Ossa
6. Coastal Artillery Talcahuano. Cdr. Fidel Alviña-Vergara
6. Naval Hospital. Lt Cdr. Surgeon Jorge Soto-Moreno
7. School of Seaman Apprentices. Cdr. Jorge Guillermo Troncoso-Palacios. This school had a crew of 274 men. 115 were students. The rest belonged to the staff and a few students of a course of boatswains. There was also a sailing frigate used as a school of merchant marine officers dependent on this establishment. It had 32 students.
8. School of Machinists. Engineer Cdr. Plutarco Aedo-Sepúlveda
9. School of Torpedo and Electricity, Torpedo Depot. Cdr. Guillermo Ilabaca- León
10. Submarine Depot. Lt Cdr. Danilo Bassi-Galleguillos
11. Cruiser *Chacabuco*, destroyers *Williams* and *Uribe*. Lt Cdr. Alfredo Caces-Ramírez [he was the Executive Officer of this group of reserve ships; the Commanding Officer was the Arsenal CO]
12. Cruiser *Prat*. Lt. Cdr. Carlos Mewes-Ortiz [Another reserve ship]
13. Patrol Ship *Micalvi*. Lt Cdr. Pedro Espina Ritchie
14. Destroyer *Riveros*. Cdr. Jorge Guillermo Troncoso-Palacios [he was also the Commanding Officer of the School of Seaman Apprentices]. This ship was inside one of the dry docks]
15. Cruiser *Blanco Encalada*. Cdr. Gastón Nef-Videau [serving as well as Commanding Officer School of Naval Gunnery]. This was a training ship for engineering midshipmen.
16. Submarine Tender Ship *Araucano*. Cdr. Muñoz-Valdés. [Commander in Chief Submarine Squadron]
17. Submarine *Thompson*. Cdr. Sady Ugalde-Urquieta
18. Submarine *Simpson*. Lt. Cdr. Gustavo Silva-Silva

19. Submarine *Fresia H5*. Lt. Cdr Alberto Julio-Miranda
20. Submarino *Quidora H4*. Lt. Cdr Gustavo Toro-Gertosio
21. Submarino *Guacolda H1*. Lt Cdr Gustavo Virgilio- Aguirre
22. Patrol Ship *Leucotón*. Lt Cdr Guillermo Calvo-Le Beuffe
23. Destroyer *Condell*. Cdr. Víctor Ramm-Seibt. This ship was part of the Instruction Squadron but was undergoing maintenance in Talcahuano.
24. Patrol Ship *Sibbald*. Lt Cdr. Auxiliary Fleet. Luis Olave-Escobar
25. Submarine *O'brien*. Lt Cdr. Alfredo Schulz-Gamboa. This ship was being repaired and could no sail at that time.
26. Submarines *Guale*, *Tegualda* and *Rucumilla*. Lt. Cdr. CC Danilo Bassi-Galleguillos [also Commanding Officer Submarine Depot]. These submarines were being repaired.

**APPENDIX D: SHIPS AND SHORE ESTABLISHMENTS IN VALPARAÍSO ON 1
SEPTEMBER 1931.**

NAVAL BASE COMMANDER IN CHIEF			Radm. Francisco Nieto-Gallegos
CHIEF OF STAFF			Capt. Daniel Valenzuela-Lafrenz
SHIPS			
Type	Name		Commanding Officer
Oiler	<i>Rancagua</i>	At Valparaíso	Cdr. Miguel Bahamondez - Torrejón
Oiler	<i>Maipo</i>	Sailing to Panamá	
Tug	<i>Galvarino</i>	At Valparaíso	
Training Ship	<i>Baquedano</i>	Abroad	
SHORE ESTABLISHMENTS			
Naval Academy			Capt. Julio Allard-Pinto
Telecommunications Depot			Cdr. Emilio Merino-Lemus
School of Telecommunications			Cdr. Emilio Merino-Lemus
School of Mechanics			.
Coastal Artillery Group and School of Coastal Artillery			Capt. Rodolfo Turenne-Badilla
Silva Palma Barracks			Lt Cdr. Fernando

			Aranda-Osorio
Naval Hospital			Radm [Ret.] Bracey-Wilson
Radio Station Las Salinas			Cdr. Emilio Merino-Lemus
Radio Station Playa Ancha			
Arsenal			Cdr. Juan Gerken- Mahn

APPENDIX E: MEMBERSHIP OF OFFICERS' COMMITTEES OR JUNTAS

COMMITTEE NAMED IN NAVAL CLUB, VALPARAISO

Source: [Bennet. N.d. p.81]

7 September 1924

Rear Admiral Gómez-Carreño, Rear Admiral Engineer Diógenes-Córdova, Captain Carlos Ward- Rodríguez, Commander Abel Campos- Carvajal, Lieutenant Commander Luis Muñoz- Artigas, Lieutenant Enrique Cordovez- Madariaga, Lieutenant Commander Supply Corps Carlos Zegggers and Engineer 1st. class Tadeo Miqueles

THE MEMBERS OF THE NAVAL AND MILITARY JUNTA

The names of the officers of this committee changed with time and there is no unanimity among sources on this point. But the following is one commonly accepted:

NAVAL OFFICERS INCORPORATED ON 8 SEPTEMBER 1924

Source: [Bennett, p.81]

Commanders Olegario Reyes del Río, Benjamín Barros-Merino, Lautaro Rosas-Andrade, Carlos Jouanne de la Motte du Portail, Julio Dittborn-Torres and Luis Escobar-Molina. Reyes, Barros and Rosas are the only named in another source [Donoso, p.398]

THE WHOLE LIST

Source: [Bennett, p.81]

Colonels Arturo Ahumada and Fernández Pradel;

Lieutenant Colonels Salinas, Ewing, Blanche, Díaz and Charpin

Majors Canales, Mujica, Puga, Viaux, Grove, del Pozo, Grasset, Ibáñez, Sáez y Vergara

Captains Moreno, Fenner, Aguirre, Vásquez, Cabrera, Toro, Millán

Lieutenents Urizar, Bravo, Lazo, Calvo and Zúñiga.

To these officers of the Army and Carabineros [see Definitions] it must be added Police Chief Dinator.

Commanders Ditborn, Barros Merino, Jouanne and Escobar were the Navy's representatives.

The names quoted are those most frequently appearing in the historiography. It must be underlined that Ibáñez was the leader 'in the shadows'. The Army officers Alfredo Ewing Acuña, Bartolomé Blanche Espejo, Pedro Charpin Rival, Óscar Fenner Marín, Juan Millán Iriarte and Alejandro Lazo Guevara must be taken into account because of their important and long political participation, especially when Carlos Ibáñez ruled the country. Carlos Sáez Morales had an interesting participation within the Army and he wrote the already quoted book. This source may be used trustily due to its soundness and because the writer was a personal witness of many events inside this Junta.

The members belonging to the Navy did not have a relevant participation in national politics except Olegario Reyes del Río who returned to the Navy in the 1930s as Director General with the rank of Rear Admiral. The writer of the 11 September manifesto was Captain Óscar Fenner who was an attorney.

MEMBERS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE OF 23 JANUARY 1925

Source: [Monreal, p.258]

Lieutenant Colonel Carlos Ibáñez

Lieutenant Colonel Marmaduque Grove

Captain Sócrates Aguirre

Captain Manuel Hormazábal

DELEGATES

Captain Alejandro Lazo [Cavalry School]

Captain Carlos López [Ministry of War]

Captain Enrique Zúñiga [Army Aviation]

Captain Óscar Fenner [Carabineros]

Captain Fernando Cabezón [Tacna Regiment]

Captain Armando Vásquez [Cavalry Group]

Captain Sócrates Aguirre [Pudeto Regiment]

Captain Amaro Pérez [Cazadores Regiment]

Lieutenant Adolfo Ballas [Buin Regiment]

Lieutenant José Jara [Valdivia regiment]

Lieutenant Luis Alarcón [Railway Regiment]

Lieutenant Deleskar Iribarren [Signals Regiment]

Lieutenant Manuel Hormazábal [Military Academy]

GLOSSARY

Abominable clique or ‘execrable camarilla’. This was a group of civilian politicians with close ties with Alessandri. The revolutionary Army officers considered that this group had an immense power and were responsible of unethical manoeuvres and corruption.

Carabineros. At that time it was a cavalry troop of the Army dedicated to police tasks, specially in rural areas while the ‘Policías’ acted mainly in urban areas. Ibañez, as a President in 1927, turn Carabineros into a national police, independent of the Army and absorbing the ‘Policías’ while Alessandri, in his second term, created a civilian police oriented to criminal investigation known until now as ‘Policía de Investigaciones’.

Comintern or the Communist International (also known as the Third International) was an international communist organization founded in Moscow in March 1919. The International intended to fight ‘by all available means, including armed force, for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and for the creation of an international Soviet republic as a transition stage to the complete abolition of the State⁶⁸³’. Though this stated purpose, the Comintern functioned chiefly as an organ of Soviet control over the international communist movement.

Civil War of 1891. This internal conflict is called sometime “Revolution of 1891. This author prefers calling it a civil war although some political restructuring took place after it, since two different entirely Chilean armies and navies were organized fighting successive combats between January and August 1891.

⁶⁸³ Security Service MI5, ‘History: The Communist Threat’, <<https://www.mi5.gov.uk/output/the-communist-threat.html>> (accesed 19 July 2010)

Chilean Names. In Chile, as in Spain and other Spanish speaking countries the full name of a person is given in the following order: Christian Name, father's family name and at the end mother's family name. If it is necessary to quote a person's name in an abbreviated form, the Christian name followed by the father's family name is used. For example Arturo Alessandri-Palma will be quoted as Mr Alessandri or Arturo Alessandri (not Arturo Palma). The Spanish full spelling of names will be respected in this thesis and usually the full name will appear at the first time and the abbreviated form in the following quotations.

Coastal Gunners [Artilleros de Costa]. They manned the Coastal Artillery Forts and were in charge of internal security of the Naval Bases.

Director General de la Armada. Literally 'Navy's Director General'. It was the top position in the Chilean Navy at that time and it was served usually by a Vice Admiral, the highest rank of those days. Later (1927), President Ibáñez eliminated this position and the senior naval officer became the Inspector General.

Governor. The Chilean provinces at that time were ruled by an 'Intendente' but this term has been translated as 'Governor' in the absence of a better one.

La Moneda. The Santiago's Presidential Palace so called because it was a mint in the colonial times.

Minister of the Interior. In Chilean constitutional tradition, this Minister is the senior member of the Cabinet and if the President is absent by any reason [e.g. trips, illness] he becomes the Chief of the State with the title of Vice President. In Chile, there is no elected permanent Vice President. Several presidents, to designate their successor until a new election would take place, used this mode. This Minister excerpts supervision over the police.

Naval and Military Junta or 'Junta Militar y Naval. A committee formed by junior officers belonging to both services of the Armed Forces and the Police in September 1924 with the objective to influence politically [see names in Appendix E]. Not to be confused with the **Government Junta or 'Junta de Gobierno'**, a committee of three flag officers

who assumed the executive power due to the resignation of president Alessandri in September 1924. Another Junta de Gobierno was formed after the coup of 23 January 1923.

Navy Board. In the Chilean Navy this had as members all the flag officers present in Valparaiso where the naval headquarters are located. It had an advisory role until 1925. It is said that admiral Montt used a phrase that summarized this: ‘After hearing that Naval Board, my resolution is...’.

Navalism was an idea authored by Alfred T. Mahan, a naval historian. It held that economic power and a strong navy were what made a nation great. The navy is necessary to protect the markets, raw materials, and merchant marine necessary for a strong economy. Thus, a strong navy and naval bases are required to maintain a strong economy and guarantee economic expansion. This concept was popular throughout the US, Germany, and Japan.

‘Sabre’s Rattling’ or ‘Ruido de Sables’. Demonstrations of disagreement expressed in the Chilean Senate public galleries by Army officers rattling with the sabres they normally wore at that time, as part of their uniforms.

Unión Nacional. A political coalition between the Conservative Party and liberal groups. The other coalition was the Alianza Liberal supporting Arturo Alessandri in the 1920 election. This latter political alliance included more leftist liberal groups plus the Radical and the Democrat Party.

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Serial N°143. File N° 901-100

Serial N°152. File N° 901-200

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The sources of this type are quoted as in the following example:

CM, v.1 (V) (456M), pp.121-124. BUPERS.

These sources are documents (mainly Court Martial proceedings) until now kept by Dirección General de Personal de la Armada in Viña del Mar, Chile, and at the end of this thesis will be transferred to Museo Naval y Marítimo de Valparaíso (Archivo Histórico de la Armada).

These documents are bound in volumes listed below in the following tables.

TABLE I. FILES ORIGINALLY BELONGING TO NAVAL COURT VALPARAÍSO.

Vol.	COVER INFORMATION	SUMMARY OF CONTENTS	PAGES
V1(V)	JUZGADO NAVAL DE VALPARAÍSO. CAUSA CRIMINAL POR LOS SUCEOS ACAECIDOS EN LA ESCUADRA. (456 M)	Contiene el proceso instruido por el Fiscal CN Enrique Cordovez Madariaga en contra de la tripulación amotinada del acorazado Latorre y la Sentencia del Consejo de Guerra de San Felipe. Proceedings in Court Martial sitting in San Felipe. Mutinied <i>Latorre's</i> personnel. Prosecutor: Cdr. Enrique Cordovez. Includes verdict.	461
V2(V)	SENTENCIA DEL CONSEJO DE GUERRA CRUCERO <i>O'HIGGINS</i> (456 L)	Contiene el Proceso instruido en por el Fiscal CF Gastón Kulcewsky en contra la tripulación amotinada del crucero <i>O'Higgins</i> y la Sentencia del Consejo de Guerra de La Serena. Proceedings in Court Martial sitting in La Serena. Mutinied <i>O'Higgins</i> personnel. Includes verdict. Prosecutor: Cdr. Gastón Kulcewsky.	572
V3(V)	DICTAMEN DEL FISCAL.(456 I)	Investigación administrativa instruida por el Fiscal CN Julio Allard Pinto en contra de los Oficiales de las Escuadras de instrucción, de Evoluciones y del Apostadero Naval de Valparaíso. Incluye solamente la Vista Fiscal y una indagación de la conducta del CN(R.) Carlos Frödden-Lorenzen (ex Ministro de Marina y del Interior). Administrative Investigation by Prosecutor: Captain Julio Allard. Ships anchored in Coquimbo Officers. Shore establishments of Valparaíso officers. Investigation about Captain Carlos Frödden-Lorenzen (Former Minister of the Navy) actions. Prosecutor's summary.	48
V4(V)	CUADERNO ANEXO N°4 (456C)	Causa Judicial instruida por el Fiscal Osvaldo Prieto por los sucesos ocurridos en las Escuadra de Evoluciones y de Instrucción surtas en Coquimbo.	486

		Proceedings of Criminal Investigation against officers of ships anchored in Coquimbo by Prosecutor: Osvaldo Prieto.	
V5(V)	CUADERNO ANEXO N°5 (456D)	Actas del Consejo de Guerra instruido en contra de los Oficiales en la Escuela de Comunicaciones de Viña del Mar (no incluye la sentencia) Proceedings in Court Martial sitting in Viña del Mar. Judgement of officers not including verdict.	1046
V6(V)	CUADERNO ANEXO N°6 (456E)	Actas del Consejo de Guerra instruido en contra de los oficiales en la Escuela de Comunicaciones de Viña del Mar (incluye la sentencia). Proceedings in Court Martial sitting in Viña del Mar. Judgement of officers including verdict.	801
V7(V)	JUZGADO NAVAL DE VALPARAÍSO CAUSA CRIMINAL AMOTINAMIENTO DE LAS TRIPULACIONES. (456 A).	Contiene solamente declaraciones sobre los sucesos en las reparticiones de Valparaíso. Fiscal CN Julio Allard P.). Statements about actions on Shore Establishments in Valparaíso. Prosecutor: Captain Julio Allard.	352
V8(V)	APOSTADERO NAVAL DE VALPARAÍSO. CONSEJO DE GUERRA TRIPULACIÓN. (456B)	Contiene el proceso instruido por el Fiscal CF Marcial Sanfuentes en contra de la tripulación amotinada de la Escuela de Comunicaciones, Cuartel N°2 Silva Palma y los buques Aldea, Riquelme, Serrano, Lynch, Orella y Rancagua. Proceedings of Criminal Investigation by prosecutor: Commander Marcial Sanfuentes. Mutinied personnel belonging to Escuela de Telecomunicaciones, Cuartel N°2 Silva Palma and <i>Aldea, Riquelme, Serrano, Lynch, Orella y Rancagua.</i>	288

Total pages: 4,054.

TABLE II. FILES ORIGINALLY BELONGING TO NAVAL COURT VALPARAÍSO.

Vol.	COVER INFORMATION	SUMMARY OF CONTENTS	PAGES
V1(T)	SUMARIO ADMINISTRATIVO (OFICIALES)	Instruido por el Fiscal Osvaldo Prieto Castro. Incluye Dictamen del Fiscal. Contiene declaraciones y dictamen del Fiscal. Administrative Investigation by Prosecutor: Osvaldo Prieto Castro. Talcahuano's officers.	363
V2(T)	CAUSA ADMINISTRATIVA PARA ESTABLECER LA ACTUACIÓN DE LOS EE CC.	Fiscal CC Guillermo Calvo. Administrative Investigation about civil employees by Prosecutor: Guillermo Calvo.	155
V3(T)	INFORMES ORIGINALES DE LOS JEFES Y OFICIALES DEL GRUPO AC.	Partes y oficios. Reports and documents about Coastal Artillery officers.	90
V4(T)	ANTECEDENTES VARIOS (N° 1)	Contiene cartas, telegramas, mensajes (radios) de carabineros e investigaciones sumarias administrativas desarrolladas para determinar la participación de gente de mar en los hechos. Miscellaneous items: telegrams, messages, Administrative Investigations of non commissioned personnel.	206
V5(T)	ANTECEDENTES VARIOS (N° 2)	Contiene cartas, telegramas, mensajes (radios) de carabineros e investigaciones sumarias administrativas desarrolladas para determinar la participación de gente de mar en los hechos. Miscellaneous items: telegrams, messages, Administrative Investigations of non commissioned personnel.	276

V6(T)	ANTECEDENTES VARIOS (N°3)	Contiene declaraciones manuscritas bastante ilegibles. Miscellaneous items: Illegible handwritten statements.	154
V7(T)	ANTECEDENTES VARIOS (N°4)	Contiene declaraciones manuscritas bastante ilegibles. Miscellaneous items: Illegible handwritten statements.	170
V8(T)	LISTA DE DECLARACIONES.	Solamente es un listado gente de mar (y unos pocos oficiales) que prestaron declaraciones que estarían en v.13(T) y v.14(T). It is only a List of Statements in v.13 (T) and v.14 (T).	13
V9(T)	VISTA FISCAL	Proceso instruido en contra de las tripulaciones amotinadas en Talcahuano por el fiscal CF Luis Ramírez Ossa. Proceedings of Criminal Investigation against Talcahuano's mutinied by prosecutor: Commander Luis Ramírez-Ossa.	38
V10(T)	CONSTITUCIÓN DEL CONSEJO DE GUERRA PRESIDIDO POR EL AUDITOR NAVAL FERNANDO REYES UGARTE.	Acta de constitución del Consejo de Guerra y otros documentos procesales. Act of Constitution of Court Martial in Talcahuano. Presiding Judge: Fernando Reyes Ugarte.	6
V11(T)	ACTA DEL CONSEJO DE GUERRA (TRIPULACIÓN) (456 K)	Contiene declaraciones de reos y testigos. Statements by witnesses and defendants in Court Martial mutinied personnel Talcahuano.	146
V12(T)	SENTENCIA DEL CONSEJO DE GUERRA (TRIPULACIÓN) (456J)	Contiene solamente la sentencia. Court Martial for enlisted personnel. Verdict only.	56
V13(T)	SUMARIO JUDICIAL TOMO I (OFICIALES). (456F)	Contiene declaraciones de oficiales de Talcahuano. Proceedings of Criminal Investigation. Statements by officers. Talcahuano.	358
V14(T)	SUMARIO JUDICIAL TOMO II (OFICIALES).(456G)	Proceedings of Criminal Investigation. Statements by officers. Talcahuano	154

V15(T)	SUMARIO JUDICIAL TOMO III (OFICIALES). (456H).	IN CD	115
V16(T)	DICTAMEN DEL FISCAL (TOMO IV) (OFICIALES)	Dictamen del Fiscal en Causa Judicial contra Oficiales. Prosecutor's summary. Talcahuano's officers.	44
V17(T)	CAUSA 366 (OFICIALES). NOTIFICACIONES	Contiene además decretos de amnistía. FALTA. Notifications. Talcahuano's officers.	6
V18(T)	CUADERNO DE COMPETENCIAS	Proceso contra oficiales de Talcahuano. Proceedings of Criminal Investigation, jurisdictional dispute.	28
V19(T)	ANEXO A PARTES DE TALCAHUANO	Partes de los Comandantes de buques y Jefes de Reparticiones y de otros oficiales. Commanding Officers Reports. Other Officers Reports.	206
V20(T)	ANEXO B BITÁCORAS BUQUES TALCAHUANO	Extractos de bitácoras de buques y reparticiones. Talcahuano ships. Log Books summaries.	53
V21(T)	ANEXO C DOCUMENTOS VARIOS TALCAHUANO	Oficios, mensajes y otros documentos emitidos por el Apostadero Naval (T). Oficios y partes del Ejército y de oficiales navales que actuaron junto al Ejército en Talcahuano. Documents issued by Talcahuano Naval Base: letters, messages. Army reports regarding naval officers action's with this service in Talcahuano.	118
V22(T)	ANEXO D TELEGRAMAS E INFORMES	De buques de Valparaíso y Talcahuano. Telegrams and reports regarding ships (Talcahuano and Valparaíso)	68

V23(T)	ANEXO E INFORMACIONES DE PRENSA	Recortes de diarios de Concepción y Talcahuano con noticias de la zona y de otras ciudades. Talcahuano and Concepción newspapers clippings.	59
V24(T)	ANEXO F CALIFICACIONES OFICIALES TALCAHUANO	Fotocopias de Calificaciones Anuales. Annual reports of Talcahuano officers (copies).	247
V25(T)	ANEXO G ORDENES DE VÍVERES TALCAHUANO	Algunos documentos firmados por amotinados. Official documents signed by mutineers.	87

Total pages: 3,216.

TABLE III. FILES ORIGINALLY BELONGING TO DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DEL PERSONAL DE LA ARMADA (BUPERS) REGARDING ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS.

Vol.	COVER INFORMATION	SUMMARY OF CONTENTS	PAGES
DP 1	ÍNDICE DE ANTECEDENTES DEL AMOTINAMIENTO EN VALPARAÍSO Y BUQUES	<p>Colección de listas elevadas por los buques y reparticiones proponiendo expulsar o mantener en servicio a personal de gente de mar aplicando la Orden Ministerial N° 64 del 22 de septiembre de 1931. Versión digital.</p> <p>Ships and Valparaiso's shore establishments. List of non commissioned personnel classified for application of administrative punishments according to Order N° 64 22 September 1931. Digital version .</p>	533
DP 2	ÍNDICE DE ANTECEDENTES DEL AMOTINAMIENTO EN TALCAHUANO Y BUQUES	<p>Listas elevadas por los buques y reparticiones proponiendo expulsar o mantener en servicio a personal de gente de mar aplicando la Orden Ministerial N° 64 del 22 de septiembre de 1931. Lista de personal de los buques de Talcahuano que se amotinaron, fueron a Coquimbo y después se rindieron en Valparaíso y que fue enviado a Talcahuano por ferrocarril. Lista de personal de otros buques y reparticiones que se embarcaron en los buques que fueron a Coquimbo amotinados. Lista del personal que permaneció detenido en la Cárcel de Chillán y en el Regimiento O'Higgins. Versión digital.</p> <p>Ships and Talcahuano's shore establishments. List of non commissioned personnel classified for application of administrative punishments according to Order N° 64 22 September 1931. List of Talcahuano's personnel travelling to Coquimbo in mutinied ships. List of imprisoned personnel sent by train from Valparaíso to Talcahuano. List of personnel imprisoned in different jails. Digital version.</p>	648

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