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## FRANCE.

Letter from Rear Admiral Truguet to the committee of Public Safety, respecting the present state of the French navy, and its officers.

Paris, July 12, 1793, Second Year of the Republic, One and Indivisible.

### CITIZENS,

**S**IGNIFIED to the National Convention on my apprehensions, and I dare say, those felt by all good citizens, respecting the disposal of our naval forces. I owe farther details to the Committee of Public Safety, respecting our resources and obstacles. The publicity of my opinion is only dangerous, when it apprizes our enemies, of what we have to fear from them. The avowal of our errors proves, on the contrary, but the energy which compensates for them. It is my duty to conceal nothing, and the courage of truth increases with the danger and want of declaring it.

"I shall forego the task of tracing the picture of our humble state: I have said all that can be said, when I shewed the Spanish navy unfurling the broad pendants of despotism in the Mediterranean, while we hide in our roads the flag of the Republic. The Mediterranean was the empire of our commerce; it is now but the witness of its ruin, and of the outrages of our rivals.

"What ought we to have done? What have we done? What is left for us, to do?"

"In declaring, or, if you choose, in commencing the war against England, Holland, and Spain, we ought to have calculated the forces of that triple confederacy; we ought to have compared them with our own forces; we ought to have prevented their junction, by a well combined use of our resources; to gain probable successes. We ought to have foreseen, that the gold of our enemies would be scattered in our arsenals and in our fleets, and to have created at that epoch permanent courts martial, who would have exercised incessant vigilance, and severely punished the first hired agitators. Thus we should have prevented that cruel anarchy, which at one time, under the mask of excessive patriotism, and at another, in the garb of open Aristocracy, has constantly impeded the celerity of our armaments and naval repairs, and the conveyance of the supplies so indispensable to our squadrons on actual service. I say more, the troubles in our ports have frequently rendered impossible the sitting out of ships, and their sailing from our harbours.

"It was not by political protestations at the Ottoman Porte, always awed by the menaces of Russia, and the calumnious representations of other Courts, but by the imposing aspect of a fleet completely fitted out, completely supplied with provisions, casting anchor in the Dardanelles, and before Constantinople, that we ought to have determined Turkey to share no longer the empire of the Black Sea, by procuring to that country the possession of the Crimea. The Divan, ever besieged by titled spies, would have been seduced by a naval army ready at its command.

"Had we chosen to reject the courageous operations on which national character authorized us at the same time to depend; had we chosen to adopt a simple plan of defence, I had also presented it; but I wished our silence abroad to be compensated by the greatest activity in our ports.

"I intended to exercise the army whose command was entrusted to me, in constant evolutions, and to form, by an indispensable discipline, the new soldiers and officers of liberty; as likewise the fresh seamen who abound in our fleets. I wished for, I never ceased to demand, those laws which in every society ought to curb and terrify the

attempts of mutineers and dastards. I also wished that the Admiral should have time to make himself known and respected. The confidence of an enthusiasm without motives, soon ceases with the latter. It is not a slavish but a conquered sentiment, which proves lasting, and it is this alone which unites the General and his soldiers. Such a spectacle, citizens, such schools of naval industry, would already have proved as beneficial to us as victories, even in the opinion of our enemies.

"Then we should have sent supplies and reinforcements, which I constantly requested, to St. Peter's and St. Antioch, two points so important for our trade to the Levant.

"I had furnished sufficient convoys for the arrival of our grain, and the protection of our coasting service; but it was indispensably necessary to let our best frigates be commanded by the ablest officers, and cruise the seas to observe the number, situation, and projects of our enemies. If some unforeseen circumstance, some gust of wind, had dispersed the Allies, we should have known it; we should have been ready to choose our enemy, and to triumph separately over their league.

"When I proposed to the successor of Bertrand to collect the naval forces, escaped from the criminal dispositions of the King's Ministers, and to make the greatest part of them rendezvous in the Mediterranean, we had soon after, on the 10th of August, 1792, twenty three ships of the line, and forty frigates or corvettes; and while our deserters insulted our marine, 104 Republican ships, well armed, and well commanded, were seeking enemies on the seas.

"What have we done?"

"You know it, citizens; we have made no proper attack; we have made no timely defence; we have combined no maritime operation, and a criminal want of skill, reduced to nullity, at the epoch of war, a navy which had already been formidable for five months before the armaments of the Allied Powers.

"Our Colonies are almost open; and however great the enemy's insolence may be, yet we must still think, that the idea of what we can do, has made them respect us more than our inactivity encouraged them. The Spanish Squadron arrived in a mass on our coasts; it was soon separated by the winds; it does not even think of uniting again; its rejunction is considered as unnecessary; the Spaniards have a due sense of their insignificance. This was, however, the epoch which could easily be foreseen, and at which even inferior forces would have thundered upon the foe. I call to witness the courage of my brothers in arms, who can judge of the sailors of Castile.

"The fleet of the Republic was to have seconded the operations by land in Sardinia. It was easy for us to seize that important Isle, after the taking of Nice and Savoy; but long expectation—a defence then preparing—want of discipline—an anticivic and mercenary terror—base jealousies and plots, frustrated that enterprize.

"Let us cast a veil over those misfortunes; the only means to diminish their effects, is to consider them as lessons.

"Ships, men, courage, all those elements are in our hearts and in our hands. Employment and discipline, the choice of chiefs, the submission of the subordinate, the silence of the passions, the common love of fame and liberty; this the navy stands in need of, and in fact, it is even what the Republic herself wants. But here the errors of administration are followed by the greatest evils. The sea service depends on an exact science, of which every agent ought well to understand the whole, and in a General, a position, a single moment of enthusiasm may

ensure a victory.

"By sea nothing is left to hazard—nothing can compensate for the manœuvres—nothing can atone for the Chief who would be able to perform a good one. Where responsibility is not equally divided, the means ought to be distinct; and this is the whole theory of discipline.

"I know that administration is forced to fear its own opinions, respecting the command it may be inclined to confer upon the ancient sea officers; but if it be essential to be sure of their principles, ought we to despise their talents?—and because it is rare now-a-days, to see these united together, ought we to condemn the principles beforehand, merely because we have found talents in an individual? I am very far from censuring this kind of solicitude, which for my own part, I shall never fear; but why punish in a free man the hazard which is regenerated by equality?—Let us examine his conduct, follow his connections, interrogate his soul; and let us not reject experience, without being sure of not committing an act of injustice, as this would reflect upon ourselves. Patriotism is no doubt the first of virtues; there is none where this is not to be found; but justice will also be a Republican virtue, if it were not a duty common to every man.

"Several officers of the ancient marine, not to be shaken by seduction, have renounced the dearest affections of the soul, the sweetest and most antiquated habits, to devote themselves to the defence of freedom. Well, they are now persecuted, arbitrarily deprived of their charge, dragged in dungeons—yet nothing proves that they have not truly and seriously abjured the prejudices which they themselves have destroyed with tyranny. No part of their conduct can impeach their military services; no overt act can arraign them for incivism. How often have I not myself employed successfully for discipline, the love and the respect with which they inspired the seamen under their command.

"Citizens, suffer not the sad and disastrous pleasure of humbling good and gallant officers, to be preferred to the welfare of your country.

"I solicit for my comrades and self, all the eyes of vigilance, all the severity of censure: but I should deserve the contempt of my fellow-citizens if I were afraid to appeal from their mistrust to their impartiality. Oh how unjust would he be, that would seek in my expressions a sentiment different from that which dictates them! If some should mistake me, and confound the love of my country with the love of command, I should be able then to, distinguish both; I should prove my subordination to the Chief set over me, the whole of my zeal: you would soon acknowledge that my efforts, to obtain repressive and regulating laws, are the result of the congenial and most intimate conviction which I feel that discipline is the essence of true courage, and the safe pledge of success.

(Signed)

TRUGUET,

Rear Admiral, commanding the Naval Army of the republic in the Mediterranean."

LONDON, August 10 and 12.

The King of Prussia with his victorious army, have before this, most probably, passed the Sarre—there is nothing to obstruct his entering France. The whole of the Republican troops in Lorraine and the Northern part of Alsace, do not exceed 40,000 men. Thionville, which is expected to be one of the first objects of attack after the reduction of Landau, is garrisoned by a rabble which stiles itself volunteers, without Generals, or any of the requisites necessary for the formation of an army.