



Pirates: Book 11 of 11 (The Face of the Enemy Series)

Glyn Adams

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Revised on 5th November, 2015. After the fall and execution of Louis XVI, France experienced a period of violent political upheaval from 1793 to 1799 up until the ascendancy of Napoleon. The fall of the Monarchy led to the establishment of a Republic which in turn led to violent periods of political turmoil leading to 17,000 people being officially tried and executed during the Reign of Terror.

France's costly involvement in the American War of Independence left the country on the brink of bankruptcy. Not only were the coffers depleted but two decades of poor cereal harvests, drought, cattle disease and ever increasing rise in bread prices led to unrest among peasants and the cities poor leading to rioting looting and striking.

Non-Aristocratic Third Estate represented the majority of the people and voted to set up the National Assembly replacing the Legislative Assembly, which was then replaced by the National Convention which produced the most violent aspect of the revolution dominated by a body called the Committee of Public Safety, which led to the Executive power being overseen the five-member Directoire. Their four years in power led to financial crisis, popular discontent and political corruption.

I am sorry to bore you with all this guff, and this is only a small section of the chaos that existed in France; but now imagine the largest navy in the world at that time sailing the seas, mainly the Atlantic, and ask yourself, with all the political chaos and corruption that was going on at the time in France who was controlling the navy with its hundreds of warships and thousands of officers and men operating thousands of mile away from their headquarters in France? Add to that the fact that many Aristocratic families placed their meritorious off- spring into careers in the Navy only for them to find on their return to France that the guillotine or degradation awaited them: leaving the Navy without a huge swathe prime officer material, their positions being filled by lesser, perhaps more easily corruptible political upstarts.

Is it any wonder then that with the French government, that is to say whomever the bunch of corrupt officials were that lay claim to power at the time, refused to negotiate with the American Congress about their indebtedness regarding the financing of the War of Independence unless they received a bribe – and that was just to attend the talks about a resolution. Is it any wonder that the French Navy became little more than an uncohesive, uncontrolled loose association of crooks akin to the Mafia? Hence their slide into piracy on the high seas; no doubt leaning heavily on the notion that Congress had reneged on a financial agreement and owed France a great many hundreds of thousands of pounds.

This fictional story is set in those times, when many hundreds, maybe even thousands, of American merchant ships were hijacked and hidden away in Caribbean Harbours then looted and sold on - probably to other freelance French pirates. I am unable to discover what happened to the thousands of American crewmen, but I am prepared to bet that many found themselves in plantations cutting cane under armed guard.

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