

THE POWER OF PROJECTIONS  
(POTEMKIN)

– PART ONE –  
MEN AND MAGGOTS

A huge wave breaks violently over the jetty, raising a sparkling fountain of spray, and flows turbulently over the stones on the shore. Wave after wave breaks over the jetty, ever more violently, and flows over the stones on the shore, ever more turbulently. The raging sea boils.

[On screen the words:] REVOLUTION MEANS WAR.  
THIS, THIS IS THE ONE LAWFUL, REASONABLE AND  
JUST, TRULY GREAT WAR OF ALL THE WARS THAT  
HISTORY HAS KNOWN.

Its stark, geometrical beauty distinguishing it, a powerful battleship lies in the anchorage. On the battleship, a sailor ascends a ladder and is quickly approached by another.

[On screen the words:] THE SAILORS MATYUSHENKO  
AND VAKULINCHUK

Matyushenko speaks urgently to Vakulinchuk:

[On screen the words:] *We, the sailors of the Potemkin, must support the workers, our brothers, and must stand in the front ranks of the revolution.*

Vakulinchuk answers him in agitation and quickly descends the ladder.

By night, the silhouette of the battleship stands out starkly and majestically in the anchorage.

[On screen the words:] THE OFF-DUTY WATCH IN  
DEEP SLEEP

The lower deck: packed like sardines in a tin, the sleeping sailors lie in canvas hammocks. A brutally faced boatswain descends the ladder into the crowded lower deck and looks with malice at the sleeping sailors. He mistrustfully surveys the men and allows his gaze to rest on them while he threads his way through the canvas hammocks. Unexpectedly, he slips and almost falls.

[On screen the words:] HE VENTS HIS ANGER  
ON A YOUNG MAN

Furiously, the boatswain raises his arm and lashes the naked back of a young sailor with his pipechain. The young sailor awakens, looks uncomprehendingly at the boatswain and speaks out in surprise. The boatswain looks impudently at the young sailor and plays with the chain. The young sailor, stiff with rage and resentment, stares hotly at the departing boatswain, turns over with hatred and throws his face violently against his pillow. The muscles of his naked back twitch.

[On screen the words:] INDIGNANTLY

His neighbour lays a sympathetic hand on his shoulder and points out to him the figure of Vakulinchuk on one side.

[On screen the words:] VAKULINCHUK

Amidst the canvas hammocks, naked to the waist, Vakulinchuk, holding a leaflet in his hand, speaks with passion and resolution to the sailors:

[On screen the words:] *Comrades, the time has come when we must speak out.*

Vakulinchuk's whole body breathes hatred. The sailors awaken one by one. Vakulinchuk continues his speech passionately. A sailor with a sickly face assents to everything he says, and a sailor with a big moustache impatiently interrupts him and demands the beginning of action. Firmly Vakulinchuk calls for battle. Again, the sailor with the big moustache demands the beginning of action. The sailors listen with attention and fellow feeling to the words of Vakulinchuk.

[On screen the words:] MORNING

A gloomy looking officer, his hands in his pockets, walks along the deck. Suddenly he notices that a crowd of sailors has gathered around a carcass of meat. The crowd of sailors grows larger and larger. A senior officer with a proud, weakly aristocratic face, steps out of a cabin, and pompously, his hands clasped behind his back, begins to walk along the deck, but he soon stops and looks contemptuously at the sailors surging around the carcass of meat. The eyes of the senior officer fill

with malice when he notices the figure of Vakulinchuk walking past the carcass of meat. The crowd of sailors excitedly inspects the carcass of meat. The senior officer moves away and soon reappears on the upper deck, above the heads of the sailors. The legs of the approaching senior officer draw near to the handrail. The senior officer looks at the sailors with such menace that they timidly press closer to one another. The legs of the officer turn away. The senior officer goes off, and the crowd of sailors surges with ever increasing movement.

[On screen the words:] *We've had enough of eating rotten meat!*

Again, the faces of the sailors turn with indignation to inspect the carcass of rotten meat. The indignation of the sailors grows. Again and again, the faces of the sailors turn to inspect the carcass of rotten meat. The crowd of sailors around the carcass bubbles like a whirlpool. The senior officer returns with the ship's surgeon, a small shortsighted man, his courage comically mustered. Vakulinchuk, standing in front of the sailors, indignantly points out the rotten meat to the surgeon. With an authoritative expression, the surgeon examines and sniffs at the carcass of rotten meat, turning it over squeamishly. The meat is visibly infested with maggots. However, the surgeon does not agree with Vakulinchuk that the meat is rotten, and agitatedly waves his pince-nez about.

[On screen the words:] *These are not maggots. They are the dead larvae of flies. They can be washed off with vinegar.*

The senior officer roughly disperses the crowd of sailors. Furiously, he swears at them and shouts. Then he goes up to the boatswain, who proceeds himself to drive the sailors away from the carcass of meat.

In the ship's galley, a cook begins to hack at the carcass of rotten, maggoty meat with an axe. Sailors indignantly approach and tell him that the meat is rotten, but he does not stop hacking at the carcass. More sailors approach and try to prevent him from hacking at the rotten meat. The axe hacks

the carcass into pieces. The sailors try to tear the rotten meat from him, but he swears at them and continues his work. The axe hacks the carcass into pieces.

On deck, the muzzle of a cannon is being cleaned by a sailor. A cleaning-rod is pushed down the muzzle of the cannon. Two sailors polish a copper capstan. Again, a cleaning-rod is pushed down the muzzle of the cannon. The sailor on the muzzle withdraws the cleaning-rod. Two sailors polish a copper capstan. Two sailors polish some copper engine parts. A third pair of sailors cleans a chain. Two sailors polish a copper capstan.

Borshch from the rotten meat bubbles in a cauldron. In the ship's mess a detachment of sailors begin to let down the tables which hang by ropes from the ceiling. Some sailors leaves the ship's mess, and then, another, and another, until the mess is empty. Borshch from the rotten meat bubbles in a cauldron.

Some sailors can be seen through a grating. They sit by the edge of one side of the battleship. One of them, holding a dried fish in his hand, talks indignantly. Another cuts off a piece of black bread to eat. The sailor with the fish is full of anger and hatred.

[On screen the words:] IMPOTENT FURY SWEEPS OVER  
THE GROUP OF SAILORS

The sailor with the fish fits the head of it beneath a ring on the deck and forcefully tears it off.

## – PART TWO – DRAMA ON THE QUARTERDECK

The bugle sounds shrilly and uneasily. Seen from above – past the muzzles of the cannons menacingly overhanging – the sailors quickly fill the quarterdeck, forming themselves in double file along either side of the deck. The bugler sounds his call. The petty officers arrange themselves in single file in front of the sailors.

[On screen the words:] COMMANDER GOLIKOV

From the hatch appears the figure of Commander Golikov, resolutely ascending the ladder. The officers salute him. Commander Golikov steps onto the deck and salutes. He walks up to a capstan and stands upon it. The sailors in their ranks stand stiffly to attention, and so do the petty officers. The muzzles of the cannons hang menacingly over the ranks. Commander Golikov, one hand by the side of his frock coat, the other behind his back, looks threateningly round the motionless rows of sailors. The officers are at the salute. Restraining his fury, Commander Golikov orders:

[On screen the words:] *Those satisfied with the borshch...!*

A pause.

[On screen the words:] *...two paces forward!*

He raises an admonishing hand.

The petty officers step hesitantly forward. The muzzles of the cannons hang menacingly over a motionless rank of sailors. Enraged, Commander Golikov shouts:

[On screen the words:] *Hang the rest on the yardarm!*

and he points at the mast. Commander Golikov fixes his eyes ominously on the sailors. The petty officer is stiff with fright.

Commander Golikov shouts:

[On screen the words:] *Call out the guard!*

and does not remove his gaze from the sailors. The words of the Commander strike terror in the hearts of the sailors.

Seen from above – past the muzzles of the cannons menacingly overhanging – the tension is at its peak.

A huge painted backdrop illustrates the dramatic scene: On Golikov's command the petty officers have raised the tarpaulin and covered the sailors with it in order to shoot them. But Matyushenko gets loose, breaks rank and quickly runs past the gun-turret. The rest of the sailors follow. Vakulinchuk turn decisive towards the guard pleading for solidarity. The incident has reached crisis point. One after another, the sailors in the guard lower their rifles. One of the sailors in the

guard does not know what to do. His fist is flying. Gilikov's face is distorted with rage. The storm has burst. The reflection of the battleship dances on the waves. On deck, a great battle starts. Sailors race for the rifles. On the side of the battleship, a sailor propels an officer into the sea. On the deck, the sailors hunt down the surgeon and the fleeing officers who all fall overboard. The water receives them greedily. The sailors throw their caps high in the air with joy celebrating the ship is now in their hands. Behind them the senior officer suddenly shoots Vakulinchuk who falls unconsciously overboard. The ropes descend on a pulley, and the unconscious Vakulinchuk slips down towards the sea in the cradle they form. The water carries the dead body of Vakulinchuk.

A sailor shouts and the backdrop is torn down.

[On screen the words:] *Vakulinchuk's overboard!*

The sailor runs along the yardarm, followed by a second, and a third. The sailors jump into the water to save his body and carry it up the gangway.

The sailors move the body of Vakulinchuk, hero and victim of the rebellion, to the shore in a cutter.

[On screen the words:] ODESSA

On the still quay in the moonlight: a solitary tent.

[On screen the words:] THE TENT AT THE END OF ODESSA'S  
NEW JETTY – VAKULINCHUK'S LAST RESTING PLACE

In the tent lies the body of Vakulinchuk. An inscription on a sheet of paper: "On account of a spoonful of borshch." In his hands is a lighted candle. His body is turned towards the town, which is visible in the distance through the opening in the tent.

– PART THREE –  
THE DEAD MAN CRIES FOR VENGEANCE

In the bay, ships wrapped in thick mist. The turgid waves splash gently. Seagulls on a buoy, alarmed, take wing. The turgid waves

splash gently. The bay is full of ships. Dawn. Beyond the corpse of Vakulinchuk, in whose hands a lighted candle burns, can be seen the distant town.

[On screen the words:] VOICES FROM THE JETTY  
MAKE THEMSELVES HEARD THROUGH THE MIST

Men, women and children begin to move towards the tent containing the body of Vakulinchuk. An old woman enters the tent and straightens the lighted candle in Vakulinchuk's hands. The crowd around the tent quickly grows larger.

[On screen the words:] AND TOGETHER WITH THE  
SUN THE NEWS BREAKS ON THE TOWN!

At first empty, the long, seemingly endless staircase leading down to the harbour, quickly fills with moving people. Along the bridge, quietly and purposefully, flows the stream of people. Along the harbour flows the stream of people. In the hands of Vakulinchuk, the candle burns. The crowd around the tent quickly grows. Men and women regard the murdered man and then pass on. Along the jetty flows the vast stream of people. The multitude descends the long, narrow steps by the bridge. The endless stream of people flows along the jetty. A vast, solid crowd surrounds the tent containing the body of Vakulinchuk.

A woman turns to the crowd:

[On screen the words:] *Let us not forget him!*

and she points to the corpse of Vakulinchuk.

The lighted candle is in his hand. The inscription on a sheet of paper: "On account of a spoonful of borshch."

Angrily, the woman says:

[On screen the words:] *On account of a spoonful  
of borshch.*

A young man in a sailor's sweater agitatedly reads an address to the crowd:

[On screen the words:] *People of Odessa! Before us  
lies the body of the brutally murdered sailor, Grigory  
Vakulinchuk – murdered by a senior officer of the*



*squadron battleship, 'Prince Tavrishesky.' Let us have our revenge on the bloodthirsty vampires! Death to the oppressors! Signed by the crew of the squadron battleship, 'Prince Tavrishesky.'*

The people listen to him avidly. A vast crowd is around the tent. The student delivers his speech.

[On screen the words:] *Down with the butchers!*

The crowd is agitated. A fist is clenched in hatred. The crowd listens to the speaker. A fist is clenched. The excitement of the crowd grows. One of the women begins to make a speech. Again, a fist is clenched in hatred. The woman turns to the crowd. An old woman shouts in excitement. A fist is raised threateningly.

Everybody excitedly waves their hands and shouts:

[On screen the words:] *Down with the autocrats!*

The excitement of the crowd rises and reaches its peak. The sailors make their appearance on the decks and by the gun turret of the battleship, and begin to listen to the speakers. The inhabitants of Odessa joyfully praise the insurgent battleship. Odessa is with the sailors.

#### – PART FOUR – THE ODESSA STEPS

Placed along the harbour a huge painted illusionary backdrop illustrates the idyllic panoramic scenery: The sun is high, the sky is clear blue and the sea is welcoming. The townspeople load their sailing boats with provisions. Other boats have sailed past the town and the wharf, and out into the open sea, towards the battleship. The sails of the boats are filled with wind. A fleet of white-sailed yawls races through the water to the side of the battleship. One after another the boats sail up to the battleship. A woman with a live goose in her hands climbs up the gangway and gives it to the sailors. Bread is passed from hand to hand. On board the battleship the sailors are embraced by the inhabitants of the town.

Hundreds of townspeople standing on the seemingly endless harbour staircase, look at the battleship in the distance and tribute it. A man with the appearance of a professor has taken off his hat and looks ardently in the direction of the rebellious battleship. A group of workers tumultuously hail the rebellious sailors. Standing with a young schoolgirl, an elderly woman in pince-nez waves her hand. On the wharf an educated young woman with an umbrella joyfully waves her black gloved hand. The staircase seems endless. The sailors on board the battleship wave their caps in delight. On the mast of the battleship the red flag flutters victoriously.

The town lives at one with the rebellious battleship. And then, suddenly, the idyllic backdrop is torn down in a single moment.

[On screen the words:] PANIC STRIKES

A woman with bobbed hair standing at the harbour staircase throws back her head in terror. The crowd around her shudders and begins to run down the steps. A rank of soldiers draws near to the top of the long, broad steps. In terror, the big crowd runs down the seemingly endless staircase. Relentless, like a machine, ranks of soldiers with rifles trailed descend the steps. In terror, the crowd runs down the steps. The ranks of soldiers aim and fire into the crowd. People fall onto the steps. In terror, the crowd runs down the steps.

The son of a woman draped with a shawl is shot from behind and falls onto the steps. Mechanically the woman continues to run down the steps. The fallen boy raises himself and shouts. The fleeing mother stops, turns and sees her boy. The boy falls back, unconscious. In horror, the mother tears her hair. In terror, the crowd runs down the steps, trampling the slaughtered boy. Her hands to her head in horror, the mother goes up the steps. Behind the balustrade a group of terrified civilians hide, among them an elderly woman in pince-nez. One of them is shot and dies. Her slaughtered son in her arms, the mother goes up, towards a rank of soldiers. In terror, the crowd runs down the seemingly endless staircase strewn

with corpses. The elderly woman in pince-nez, hidden behind the balustrade, exhorts the women with her to advance towards the soldiers, in order to stop the massacre. Her slaughtered son in her arms, the demented mother goes up the steps. In a frenzy, the elderly woman in pince-nez regards the hiding civilians boldly.

[On screen the words:] *Come! Let us plead with them!*

In terror, the crowd continues to run down the steps. The elderly woman in pince-nez smiles encouragingly. From behind the balustrade, a young girl, some old men, an old woman, and an invalid on crutches stand up behind her. The soldiers fire into the crowd. In terror, the crowd continues to run down the steps. Through the corpses strewn on the steps, her slaughtered son in her arms, the demented mother goes up the steps. Led by the elderly woman in pince-nez, the group of women and old men go up the steps towards the rank of soldiers, and pleadingly hold out their hands to them.

Her slaughtered son in her arms, going up the steps of the seemingly endless staircase strewn with corpses, the mother shouts to the soldiers:

[On screen the words:] *Hear me! Don't shoot!*

Inexorably, the rank of soldiers moves on. The shadows of the soldiers fall on the steps. She draws close to the rank of soldiers, their rifles aimed and to the officer, his saber raised. Led by the elderly woman in pince-nez, the group of women and old men plead and go up the steps. The officer lowers his saber, and a volley is fired. Her slaughtered son in her arms, the mother falls dead onto the steps. At the bottom of the steps, the people run onto the carriageway, and horsemen charge them. Her slaughtered son held tight to her breast, the mother lies on her back, over them creep the advancing shadows of the soldiers.

The rank of soldiers fires volley after volley into the crowds. A mother falls wounded to the ground and drops the carriage with her baby that starts to fall down the steps. People are fleeing in despair. The carriage with the baby is falling down the steps.

[On screen the words:] AND THEN THE CANNONS OF  
THE BATTLESHIP OPEN FIRE IN RETALIATION AGAINST  
THE SAVAGERY OF THE ARMED FORCES OF ODESSA

The muzzles of the cannons, pointed menacingly towards  
the town.

[On screen the words:] THE BULL'S EYE, THE ODESSA  
THEATER, THE TOWN'S MILITARY HEADQUARTERS!

The cannons of the battleship open fire against the theatre  
building, enshrouding everything in smoke. The sculptures: a  
lion dormant, a lion with evil face raised, a lion up on its paws,  
snarling. The iron gates of the theatre building are enshrouded  
in smoke. The smoke disperses, to reveal that the theatre  
building has been destroyed.

– PART FIVE –  
MEETING THE SQUADRON

[On screen the words:] ON THE BATTLESHIP, MEETINGS  
CONTINUE PASSIONATELY UNTIL EVENING

A speaker cries to the sailors:

[On screen the words:] *The people of Odessa look to you  
for their liberation. Disembark now, and the army will join  
forces with you.*

The speaker continues. The muzzles of the cannons loom  
menacingly. The sailors argue among themselves. One of the  
sailors says:

[On screen the words:] *We cannot disembark.  
The admiralty squadron has begun to move against us.*

He continues to speak. The sailors wave their arms about  
excitedly. The sailor passionately exhorts his comrades, who  
wave to him with their caps.

[On screen the words:] WITH ONE HEART THEY DECIDE  
TO FACE THE SQUADRON

The empty deck.

[On screen the words:] A NIGHT OF ANXIETY BEGINS

The sea splashes gently. On the battleship, the watch looks tensely into the distance. The silhouette of the battleship stands out starkly and majestically in the moonlight.

The cabin: sailors asleep on the divan, in a deck chair. The watch looks tensely into the darkness.

[On screen the words:] THE SQUADRON CREEPS UP  
IN THE DARKNESS

Murk is over the water. The squadron is on the horizon. The sailor looking through the telescope bends and cries:

[On screen the words:] *Squadron on the horizon!*

In an instant, the sailors are awake. The one and the other raise themselves, stand up, and quickly run out.

[On screen the words:] ACTION STATIONS!

The bugler sounds his call. About the deck the sailors run. Sailors remove the tarpaulins from the cannons. In the gun-turret, a gunner prepares for battle. Sailors move the heavy shells up the lift to the cannons. The sailors remove the tarpaulins from the cannons. The engineer, speaking on the telephone, passes an order to a comrade. The engineer pulls a lever. Sailors descend the gangway and pull up the handrail. The engineer pulls a lever. Smoke pouring from the funnels. Faster and faster the engines run. The battleship carves its way through the sea, dividing the water into tall waves. The calm sea splashes gently against the shore. At full speed, the engines run. Smoke pours from the funnels. The squadron is visible on the horizon. The gunner is prepared for battle. The engines at maximum speed. Great waves caused by the passage of the battleship. The water bubbles and foams.

[On screen the words:] THE "POTEMKIN" AND  
DESTROYER NO. 267

Alongside the battleship joins a destroyer. The muzzles of the cannons are raised menacingly. The squadron draws ever nearer and nearer.

Matyushenko is plunged in thought. His hand goes to the speaking tube.

[On screen the words:] *Give the signal: 'Join us'*

He replaces the speaking tube. A sailor signals with flags, and another looks through a telescope.

[On screen the words:] *Join*

On ropes, the flags go up the mast. The battleship raises great waves on all sides. The squadron draws ever nearer and nearer. The muzzle of a cannon aimed towards the enemy. The helmsman looks through a telescope. The gunners await the signal.

[On screen the words:] THE ENEMY IS  
WITHIN RANGE

The helmsman looks through a telescope. The gunners await the signal. Sailors have shells in their arms.

[On screen the words:] ALL FOR ONE

The cannons of the enemy turn slowly, point towards the Potemkin and are menacingly raised.

[On screen the words:] ONE FOR ALL

On the mast of the battleship the red flag flutters victoriously. Alongside the battleship follows the destroyer. A cannon raised looms menacingly. Standing by the helm, Matyushenko shouts. The muzzles of all the cannons of the battleship are directed menacingly towards the enemy.

[On screen the words:] TO FIRE

The gunners tensely await the signal. Matyushenko looks uneasily into the distance. He blows concentrated on his pipe. A cannon looms menacingly.

[On screen the words:] OR NOT

A gunner tensely awaits the signal. The engines are running. The imperial eagle on the prow of the battleship. Sailors with shells in their arms are tensely expectant. Shells on the tarpaulin. The gunner is motionless.

Suddenly, a smile appears on the face of one of the sailors.

[On screen the words:] *Brothers!*

Joyfully, the sailors break out into laughter. The sailors run out onto the prow of the battleship. The sailors are overcome with joy. On the mast of the battleship the red flag flutters victoriously. The muzzles of the cannons are lowered. The sailors on board the battleship tumultuously wave their caps. In return, from the sides of the ships of the squadron passing, the sailors joyfully wave their caps.

[On screen the words:] WITHIN THE HEARING OF THE  
TSARIST ADMIRALS, BROTHERLY CHEERS SOUND  
ACROSS THE WATER

From the sides of the ships of the squadron passing, the sailors joyfully wave their caps. Without a shot being fired, a ship of the admiralty squadron goes past the rebellious battleship.

[On screen the words:] AND WITH THE RED FLAG OF  
FREEDOM PROUDLY FLUTTERING, WITHOUT A SINGLE  
SHOT BEING FIRED, THE INSURGENT BATTLESHIP PASSES  
THROUGH THE RANKS OF THE SQUADRON

The sailors on the decks of the battleship, on the mast and in the watchtower tumultuously wave their caps in the air. Victoriously, the insurgent battleship passes through the ranks of the squadron. Joyfully, the sailors on the mast, in the watchtower, on the decks and on the prow of the battleship wave their caps in the air.

Great waves caused by the passage of the battleship. The tall prow of the rebellious battleship moves victoriously onwards.

[THE END]

This text by Anna Wignell (2014) is based upon the famous silent film *The Battleship Potemkin* by Sergei Eisenstein (1925) and is a free interpretation of the transcribed script.

*The Battleship Potemkin* is a dramatized version of the mutiny that occurred in 1905 when the crew of the Russian battleship Potemkin rebelled against their officers of the Tsarist regime. The director Sergei Eisenstein wrote the film as a revolutionary propaganda film, but also used it to test his theories of “montage”, an editing technique with the aim of producing the greatest emotional response among the audience. The film was considered to be very successful in this sense and consequently to have a very high potential to influence political thought. The film was (for different reasons) banned in many countries until the beginning of the 1950's.

The text *The power of projections (Potemkin)* leaves some of the original film scenes out, others are rewritten and shortened and a few are replaced with descriptions of painted backdrops that illustrate the original scenes. The use of painted illusionary backdrops is a comment to the phenomena “Potemkin village” that derives from the story of Prince Grigory Potemkin painting fake settlements on huge backdrops placed along the river banks in order to impress his mistress Empress Catherine the Great when visiting Crimea in 1787.

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