



The Townsend Thoresen car ferry Viking III crowded with passengers transferred from the liner France off Le Havre yesterday after the crew had refused to take the liner into port.

Liner 'mutineers' ready for siege

By ANNE SINGTON in Le Havre

THE 66,348-ton liner France was completely blocking the main channel into Le Havre last night, and her striking crew threaten to keep her there until the Government promises to reconsider plans to scrap her.

As the 1,032 foot liner lay two miles offshore at No. 9 buoy, the 1,266 passengers from New York transferred to the Townsend-Thoresen car ferry Viking III to be brought ashore.

French maritime authorities could not say yesterday whether the crew's rejection of Capt. Pettre's appeal on the ship's closed television circuit to take her into port constituted mutiny or legitimate strike action.

There were emotional scenes yesterday as passengers made their way across the narrow gangway set up between the France and the Viking III, carrying luggage and pet dogs.

"The whole crew was hanging out of the portholes singing Auld Lang Syne," said Mrs Grace Harris, a lawyer from Pittsburgh. "I felt like crying."

She and her husband, a soft drinks manufacturer, had made the crossing for the sake of the voyage in the France and were due to fly straight back to the United States.

Union demand

Union leaders had boarded the vessel at Southampton and presented their terms when the crew halted the ship off Le Havre on Wednesday night. These were either a reprieve for the liner, due to be withdrawn from service on October 25, or a guarantee of future jobs for all who serve aboard.

Pilots charted a new entry route for vessels up to 100,000 tons. But a supertanker due in tomorrow will have to be diverted to another port if the situation remains unchanged.

According to disembarking passengers, who praised the 900 crew for the peaceful way they conducted their rebellion, they had food for a week and were ready to wait out the Government.

Their action had been carefully planned and instructions were received in three coded messages from union leaders ashore.

Printed cards were distributed to passengers, apologising for the "unusual" end to the trip. "This is our last and only chance to keep the ship in service"