

Five reports from 1789-90 concerning treatment of Aleuts.

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Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. (Translated by Antoinette Shalkop).

1st

Year of 1789, 7th day of June. Island of Unalashka, settlement of Sedanak. The Aleut inhabitants - toyen Algamalinag, in Russian Mikhailo, with friends, by means of the interpreter Saguiakh, who was called Martyshka (little monkey) in the past by the Russians and, after baptism, Ivan Chuloshnikov, and by means of the woman Aishges, called Matrioshka by the Russians, and after baptism Akulina - were questioned about what was done to them by the promyshlennye and their foremen [peredovshchiki] on the company's ships. They testified in accordance with the report made in the journal by Builavin that during the wintering of the companies there was a ship with navigator (Shturman) Ocheredin, and the ship of the Tula gunsmith, Orekhov, with the navigator's apprentice Izmailov, and baidarshchik Gogolev. When Lukanin was the foreman on that ship, they were located on the islands of Unimak and Sannakh, and indeed the injuries were inflicted by them when under the foreman Lukanin. And a quarrel was started between Ocheredin and Polutov about the division of places for hunting and of Aleuts for working. By force on the part of Ocheredin and Polutov, hunting places and Aleutmen and girls [devki] were seized by force. They needed many of each. And during the winter stay, they sent Aleuts out into strong winds to hunt. Because of this three Aleuts drowned - one from the village of Sedanak, one from Bobrovski, and one from Unginski, a total of three men.

Upon leaving Unalashka to go to Aliaksa, Ocheredin and Polutov took by force from all the small islands and settlements over one hundred men, Aleuts engaged in hunting, with wives; they confiscated from those who

remained baidarkas, weapons [strelki], parkas and edible food reserves. Those they have taken with them they left on the islands of Sannakh, Unga, Unimak, Kadiak and Stakh[?]; of these only a very small number returned, and it was those who had wives; during the period of four years, other died of hunger and a few of those remained on the islands of Sannakh and Aliaksa. After the transfer of the hunting men [muzhikov], and of the baidarkas and parkas, of the remaining inhabitants only the old and the young, for the most part females, remained in place. They suffered great hunger because the reserve provisions had been taken away and bad weather kept them from collecting any more. Several threw themselves from the beaches into the sea and toward the end others died; this is why these villages are without inhabitants.

During the presence of their company on Unalaska, they forced the Aleuts to catch sea lions of which they took for the company half of the meat, intestines and skins [laytaka]; but of the throats, which are used for footwear, they took them all for the company. These throats were given out later to those who caught beavers. And how tyrannically baidarshchik Pshenichnoi of that company treated the islanders! By force he seized Aleut girls and women, and kept them for fornication; he mercilessly whipped them with straps and beat them with sticks. From among many whom he kept in the work crew [artel], tyrannized and whipped to death, were two Ugamak women, two Akutan Aleuts and two Aleuts from the Bobrovski settlement. On top of this, he starved to death sixteen people, Aleut men and girls, from Akutan, Kigalga, Unimak, Akun and from the village Plashka. Food acquired in hunting by the Aleuts was taken away several times by baidarshchik Lazarev on the island Kigalga and in Domikushinski village on the island of Unalaska. And even toward the end, in the late fall when

the hunting season was over, provisions were taken away; for that because it was too late and winds kept blowing at sea, the islanders could not hunt anymore. The consequence of this was that in the period of two months in these robbed villages over three hundred people, male and female, died from hunger. The man who was sent by the same Polutov and Pankov company, the promyshlennyi, Ivan Tarasov - in the Sharamyga (?) company - took from the Aleuts, by force, all kinds of things and outer clothing (?); and from the boxes and bags of the women, he took without paying, beads and other things. Work hand (rabotnyi) Popov and others handled the inhabitants and the girls of the Bobrovski village as did baidarshchik Pshenichnoi his own work crew; and tyrannizing the females, they pierced with lances all the women, without leaving any, and two Aleut men. The same kind of deeds, robbery and beatings, were performed by the work hand Ivan Briukhanov Makush; and he also pierced Aleuts with a lance.

After this there were ships of the promyshlenniks [promyshlennye sudna] on the island of Unalashka; there were the foremen the Greek Delarov, Cherepanov, Nagaev and the foreman of the company of Orekhov, Shishaev with navigator Potap Zaikov, and for a short while company man Shelekhov joined them. He left that same summer, but Delarov after spending the winter also left for the island of Kad'iak, taking with him the best men (muzhiki) from Kigalga, Unimak and Alaska. Shishaev and Zaikov from the ship of Orekhov seized many Aleuts; they kept them here and took with them about thirty men and twenty women, who have not yet been returned. Cherepanov and Nagaev remained on these islands.

The Cherepanov and Nagaev companies, which are here now, although they do not perform such inhumanities, tyranny and such killings (as are described above), they do, however, keep us prisoners, after they had seized

as many of us as they could. They use us against our will for hunting animals, and for preparing food, and for making the kasory (dwelling?) without any payment. For one beaver which has been caught, we receive from the Cherepanov company either a hat, or a silk (?) shirt, or footwear (?), or a small knife or a kerchief, or a file (shaving implement) for making arrows or about ten large glass beads (korol'ki), or thread. Or we receive tobacco, at times five, six or even ten leaves for one beaver. A handful of beads (bisera) is added to each item given for a beaver. This company as well as Nagaev's, and especially seaman Mukhoplev, find maintaining us a burden. The difference between these two companies is that although we do not catch any beavers when the Cherepanov company sends us to hunt, they still give us a few beads; and those who are kept in the kasora are at least given clothing to wear - although, of course, it comes from our hunting and is prepared by us. But in the other company less is given for a beaver by comparison with this company. No clothing whatsoever is given to those who are kept in the kasora; so that they are always taken naked to fish, and they are sent the same way to hunt. Many ran away from that company because of this rather bad maintenance and cruel treatment, and have gone over to the Cherepanov company so that these would take them under their protection and would not let them suffer anymore that unbearable life.

Not only that, we are obligated to tolerate our women, wives, daughters and sisters being taken away generally by all the companies (except one - that of Panov - which treated us in a decent manner by comparison with those companies which came to our islands before and after it); and although we see how our women are maintained and how inhumanly they are treated, we not only cannot prevent it, but cannot say anything against it.

We are forced to endure this because we know how beastly are the ways of the promyshlenniks and we are afraid that they will do to us the same as did the foreman Solovei [Nightingale] who totally devastated the islands of Unalaska, Sannakh, Akun, Akutan and Kigilga, and shot all the men with guns. And this was not all; at the end, cursing, he placed men, one next to the other, several ones, and tried to find out how many of them he could kill with one bullet from his gun. And therefore, the cruel acts of the promyshlenniks of all the companies are known to us; but from the announcement of Sergeant Builov who was here to collect iasak (tribute with skins), we learned that apparently such acts of the promyshlenniks are prohibited by the central government. And he assured us that upon his return to the Russian place (Russia) there will not be any more of such acts. However, until now we do not see any relief.

Now we have found out that the ship which arrived here is not that of any company, but has been sent by the Russian sovereign, and on it there are more chiefs than on the company ships, where there are only leaders and seamen! And we consider them to be great lords, not only because of the strictness of their behavior, but because they declared about themselves that there aren't any greater chiefs than they. Now that we see the submissiveness which the baidarshchiks and the promyshlenniks manifest in their relationship to you, we do not doubt anymore and report the harm done to us by the promyshlenniks and the company men, and with it we ask you for protection against them.

The draft of this report has been witnessed by the Registrar, in this post under oath, Gavriilo Ermilov.

2nd

Year of 1790, 25th day of June, on the island of Nagai, Egor Purtoy, townsman from Irkutsk and promyshlennyi from the ship of the merchants Golikov of Kursk, and Shelekhov of Rylsk, was questioned and testified: that he was not on the island of Kad'iak when it was taken; he arrived on that island only after said same Shelekhov had left and when the Greek Delarov was there. He, Purtoy, cannot testify anything concerning the management of that company, except that the local islanders are being used for hunting animals as ordered by the chiefs of our company. For catching animals they receive the following items: a shirt, or a parka, or a kamleia, or some other kinds of things. Rumors have reached us that said same Shelekhov had made a report to the central government claiming that around twenty thousand inhabitants have been found on the islands which have been occupied; and that he brought about five hundred men of these islanders to pay iasak; and as if some Russians of their own free will want to settle down on these islands for the rest of their lives. Almost all of the rumors which have reached us, about all of this, are not only incorrect, but have been spread without our wish. As far as the number of the islanders is concerned on all the islands around here, one couldn't find more than three thousand men; and those who pay iasak, no more than fifty. About the Russians who want to settle in these places, perhaps only those who got married on the local islands and have children with local women. About the truth of my report, first of all, about the number of islanders, a seaman who used to be on the ship of Lebedev-Lastochkin, navigator's assistant Gavril Pribylov can testify; he could have seen this in his (Shelekhov's?) dispatched journal, something he (Shelekhov?) did not allow to be reported, of course, when he was in Okhotsk. Second, all of the promyshlennye who

like myself are in the company of the above mentioned Shelekhov, receive all items for a price four times higher than in the town of Okhotsk; or to say it more correctly, a price set by that company man or his trusted associates; this is why we get ourselves into debts we cannot pay out. Before the end of a given time with the company, we have no means to return. Having this in mind, our company man Shelekhov told us that we shall forever remain on this island. I, as a sworn witness, can say that we have been forcefully held here only until the arrival of the expected secret naval expedition, which has been sent by the government. Now if you are going to be in the bay with this ship and will question everybody in detail, and will guarantee our independence, then everybody will agree to return to the Russian docks. But if, upon your arrival in Kadiak, you will not reassure us and will not promise us anything, then we all have unanimously decided to return ourselves on the ships to the Russian shores, regardless of the resistance of those company men. When we get to Russia, we will have to declare everything in detail, among which, while explaining everything, we must report how the islanders have been subjugated and also about how they are paid for the equipment (nariad: boats, weapons, clothing) and for catching of animals in hunting. And our chiefs, leaders and baidarshchiks can testify to all of this; and I in this testimony of mine have explained the very real truth. I cannot testify at all as to the number of the five hundred men mentioned, brought to pay iasak by him, and can only affirm the collection of iasak from fifty men; to which I sign herewith.

Egor Purtoy, the townsman of Irkutsk, has signed the original of this report; this has been verified from the original by Registrar Gavriilo Ermilov.

3rd

Year of 1790, 1st day of July, on the island of Kad'iak navigator of junior rank, Gerasim Grigor'ev(ich), Mister Izmailov, was questioned and testified according to the report of the physician's assistant (podlekar') Briutiukov.

Upon his arrival on these islands, Shelekhov proclaimed his sole right and power, so that he can, without accounting (to anyone), execute and hang islanders as well as Russian rightful citizens. And he, Izmailov, has not heard and does not know that when taken in Kadiak, the islanders did not agree to give hostages. Shelekhov and his Russian workhands killed approximately one hundred fifty or two hundred people of the islands, of both sexes; and it is correct that many of them threw themselves in fear from the cliffs (kekur) into the water and on the baidaras and drowned in this manner. We learned this when later they were being washed on the shore by the sea. During that battle six Russians were wounded. We have taken captive from two hundred to three hundred people of both sexes; and out of this number, by the command of Shelekhov, were selected from the others from six to ten - I cannot recall exactly - older persons, of male sex, who had been taken away to the tundra and were pierced with lances. The remaining people were kept in the bay for about a month and a half, and some of them were given various gifts. And Shelekhov chose from among them one toyen, who was given more gifts than the others, and all the women and the young ones were entrusted to his care. And when the husbands began to come to see their women, and fathers and relatives and young ones, then said Shelekhov returned each to his own relative; toward the end he let all the others go free.

When Russian men were sent in five baidaras to find island inhabitants,



then five Russian men were wounded when the islanders attacked them; on their side twelve had been killed. When these baidaras were on their way back to the bay, two men, islanders, were found; these had been seen with me earlier. These islanders were given letters to be taken to Shelekhov. They took them and gave them to said Shelekhov, and received from him others also to be delivered to me. But they kept these letters with them, because at first they made an attack on our baidaras (of which I, Ixmailov, was the chief); and these two were among the mutineers. But as they had no success, they showed up themselves and brought the letters which had been sent to me. It was these two men that were taken and brought by me to the bay. However, whether they or others were whipped by Shelekhov, with rods made of baleen (whale bone), and one of them was shot with a pistol by Shelekhov, and the other ordered to be pierced with a lance, was in reality not so, because one of them is alive on the island of Kadiak; and his son is in school.

Shelekhov did shoot one man, whom afterward he pierced with a lance, but for what crime, I do not know. Only this was not at that time; at that time there was not anyone shot or pierced. While I was absent, two men arrived from other islands, pretending they had been sent by their toyens for a meeting with the Russians in order to establish friendship and trade. And later when it was exposed that they slandered two men found by the toyens, then upon the command of said Shelekhov, I, although I tried to talk myself out of it, but because of submissiveness as a subordinate, was obligated to carry out this order. Pairing them, I shot both with one shot from the gun (shtutzer).

About those who were shot with a rifle by Shelekhov himself, also two men paired together, I have not heard and do not know; perhaps it happened

when I was not there. I only heard about the decapitation of a man, but by whom and for what, I do not know.

For the assassination of two Russian men, who had been sent to Afognak and Shuiakh (they were sent with various goods for trade, which were delivered into the hands of the toyen), Shelekhov indeed sent to destroy the inhabitants of those islands, three baidaras and about fifty Russian men, under the command of the leader, Konstantin Samoïlov (who died in 1788), and of the promyshlennyi, Vasilii Malakhov. But as to whether or not the destruction of the islanders on those islands has indeed been carried out, I do not know and cannot testify to that, because I left that spring with said Shelekhov for Okhotsk on the ship Trekh Sviatitelei. Upon my return here, in Kadiak I heard from that same Samoïlov that he found the instigators and collaborators of the assassination of those two Russians. Those inhabitants have been destroyed, and the Russians who went on that mission came back. This is what I remember after the passing of a long time, and refer you to the journal I delivered in 1787 to the local government of Okhotsk. In this journal everything that happened has been described in detail. In this report of mine I have testified the real truth and have not concealed anything; to which I sign.

The original of this report has been signed by navigator Gerasim Izmailov; Registrar of the Province, Vasilii Diakonov, in his duty under oath, wrote this from the words and testimony of navigator Izmailov; witnessed by priest Vasilii Sivtsov; this report was performed in my presence, sea captain of second rank, Robert Gall (Hall?); this has been verified from the original by Registrar Gavriilo Ermilov.

4th

Year of 1790, 4th day of July, on the island of Kadiak, sales clerk (prikashchik) from the town of Tomsk, townsman Vasilii Merkuliev, son of Peter, from the company of Golikov and Shelekhov, was questioned and testified as a consequence of the order given by the chief of the expedition, sea captain of the second rank, Mister Iosif Iosifovich Billings, to the sea captain of the second rank, Sarychev in accord with the prescribed ordinance. It was made known to that chief by the workhand Purtoy, who was on the ship of Greek Delarov which he met on his way, that Purtoy was sent with a friend of his and the islanders on two hundred baidarkas. He was also informed by the local Kadiak inhabitants that this same Greek Delarov sent islanders to hunt, a total of about six hundred baidarkas. On account of the order given by the ordinance (ukaz) of Her Imperial Majesty, he had to find out whether the islanders are used to these equipped expeditions, or do they go out to hunt of their own free will; and what kind of payment do they receive for the animals (promysel) and their work. Merkuliev testified that he was not informed about the dispatching of the above mentioned, encountered Purtoy, and the islanders; and he did not know anything about the equipment of these islanders. In brief he does not know anything about the entire production (management) of the company, and did not get involved and is not getting involved in anything; however, the head chief who is here, the Greek Evstrat Delarov, can describe everything clearly and in detail. I, Merkuliev, have not concealed anything in this report and have testified the very real truth. Townsman from Tomsk, Vasilii Merkuliev has signed this report; this has been verified from the original by Registrar Gavriilo Ermilov.

5th

Year of 1790, 5th day of July, on the island of Kadiak, navigator Gerasim Izmailov, who is with the Golikov and Shelekhov Company was questioned by the sea captain of the second rank, Gavriila Sarychev, and testified; conforming with an order given to him by the chief of the expedition, it has been requested to question me and a prikashchik [clerk] who is located here; about how the islanders were equipped for hunting by the company manager, the Greek Delarov. During his trip here, he (the expedition chief) was informed by the workhand Purtov, who was sent here to hunt by said Delarov, that he, Purtov, was dispatched with his friend and the islanders on two hundred baidarkas; and he, the chief, (of the expedition), also informed himself from the local Kadiak inhabitants that said Delarov had sent islanders from these islands to hunt in about six hundred baidarkas. It was necessary to find out if the islanders are being used for these equipped hunting trips, or if they go out to hunt of their own free will; and what kind of payment they get for the animals (promysel). Izmailov testified that said Purtov described how people are equipped for hunting various animals. I informed myself from the leader Delarov that there were only twenty baidaras, and not two hundred; and that the head, Delarov, sends out at times up to six hundred baidarkas to the bay which is called the "Grosse Fluss" (German: Big River). From his (Delarov's?) own villages, a certain promyshlennyi is sent to direct the "ride-out" (vyezd) from the bay; a certain promyshlennyi who has many baidarkas in his village; and they all have a gathering (s'ezd) on the island of Shaiukha. For payment to these islanders this certain promyshlennyi receives from the company beads [biser], large glass beads [korolki], small axes made of iron about a quarter long [a quarter of an arshin is seven inches]. How they go

about hunting and how much they catch, I do not know, as I have never been present. An order is given for building new and repairing old baidarkas, so that they would be ready by the 15th of April, without fail, and that is when they go out to hunt.

Navigator Gerasim Izmailov signed the original of this report; this has been verified from the original by Registrar Gavriilo Ermilov.