

OCTOBER 5, 1797

A REPORT FROM IEROMONK MAKARIÏ, HEAD OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX MISSION IN ALASKA, TO THE HOLY GOVERNING SYNOD, DETAILING TREATMENT OF NATIVES BY RUSSIANS.

This humble report is submitted in accordance with the personal Imperial decree of Our Most Merciful Sovereign of Illustrious Memory, the [late] All Wise Empress Catherine Alekseevna, and His Eminence Metropolitan Gavriil of Novgorod and St. Petersburg, member of the Holy Governing Synod. The decree directs that Father Arkhimandrit and the now Bishop Ioasaf and his brothers leave St. Petersburg on December 25, 1793, for the northern part of America in order to convert the native peoples to the Christian faith.

I [Makariï] was by my own request assigned by His Excellency the Archbishop, with his blessing, to go to Kodiak Island, which I reached safely in September 1794. When the arkhimandrit arrived I was sent from Kodiak Island to settlements to the natives of America to spread the Word of God and to exhort those people to accept Holy Baptism. I continued this through the first winter. On May 25, 1795, the arkhimandrit sent me from Kodiak Island to the Aleuts on the Fox Islands to spread the Word of God. I went there aboard the vessel *Phoenix* which belonged to Shelikhov and Golikov, the company owners, who were voyaging to the town of Okhotsk. The vessel was under the command of the navigator [Gerasim A.] Izmailov, and it reached these islands safely on June 13. I remained there until June 25, 1796. I baptized more than 1,000 men at the request of the natives themselves. While I was on those islands I was so badly treated by the peredovshchik of the Golikov company, the town dweller of Vologda Ivan Kotiutin, and his men, that I feared for my life. To save my life I requested an armed guard of two men from the peredovshchik of Okhotsk, the citizen Ivan Svinin who was employed by the Irkutsk merchant of the second guild Stefan Kiselev, a navigation company owner who was at that time working on these islands.

These two men stood guard with weapons day and night without fail and would not allow any member of the Shelikhov-

Golikov company to enter the iurt where I lived. I was in such danger that I would not let any person come to me without making inquiries about him.

The peredovshchik Kotiutin treated me in a most barbaric manner. He came to the door of the iurt where I lived but the sentry would not let him pass through the door. So then he came to the window, but again the sentry told him to leave. He would not obey, but tried again to come in through the window. He threatened me, shouting,

"We fed you *pirogi* [meat pies] in vain, and we tried to treat you nicely, the same as if you were our master, Grigorii Ivanovich [Shelikhov]." He also said, "You are a big man, you talk with the Bishop."

Meanwhile the sentry ran to the peredovshchik Svinin and told him that Kotiutin was trying to climb through the window into the ieromonk's room. When the peredovshchik heard this he immediately ran to Kotiutin and asked him why he was trying to climb through the window, "Don't you know who lives here? Get away from here!"

But Kotiutin would not go away, so Svinin quickly pushed him away but Kotiutin would not pay any attention to him. Svinin, seeing that he did not intend to leave the window and that he was being troublesome, had to hit Kotiutin in the face. He ordered his workers to carry Kotiutin away from the window. But then Kotiutin shouted to his comrades, "Fellows! They are beating me!"

From around the corner twelve men jumped up and ran toward the iurt where I lived. The peredovshchik Svinin then ordered his workers to ready their weapons. One of his workers grabbed a big oak staff and jumped on those who were attacking. If Svinin had not saved me, peredovshchik Kotiutin would either have killed me or perpetrated some other evil deed. This experience was the worst in my whole life.

I asked Svinin for a third man, and they stood guard day and night, constantly, with guns loaded and bayonets fixed, until I boarded the ship to leave these islands. This is what I suffered at the hands of the Shelikov-Golikov Company. Furthermore, an Aleut died and I did not dare perform his funeral service. I did give instructions that he be buried, and I read the service in the iurt where I lived. But this Aleut died without confession because

I did not dare hear his confession. In the iurt I performed marriages and baptized children in the presence of the guard. I was exposed to such danger that I did not dare go out of the iurt without a guard.

The Shelikhov-Golikov Company treats the native islanders in the most barbaric manner. They have no humane instincts. They take the wives and young daughters [of native men] as their sexual partners. They kill any who refuse to hunt sea otters, and early in the spring they send out the healthy and the sick alike, against their will. Many of these, especially those who are ill, die on the way and during the hunt which lasts until fall.

As a result the natives cannot prepare enough food for themselves, nor can they catch enough birds to make parkas. Because of the failure to prepare enough food they starve to death, and for lack of adequate clothing they suffer greatly from the cold. And because they are so severely beaten, many of them commit suicide. Any of the Aleuts who bring in too few foxes are stretched out on the ground and beaten with heavy sticks mercilessly and accused of laziness. The Russians take away from them for the company any sea otter and fox pelts which they have procured over and above their quotas. They even force men to work whose wives have died. These people cannot procure food for themselves and are forced to join the company. They are compelled to fish, cut lumber, and build baidarkas. Young people are forced to go to the desolate northern island to hunt for the company. They take the young children of these men as hostages, two from each family, so that there is no one to procure food.

They will take a native's baidarka to the coast and put him in it, and because he has no provisions he must go out to sea to catch fish for his own sustenance and for his family so they will be able to eat and not go hungry.

The prikashchik Maksim Krivdin took one very young girl, who had been baptized, as his enslaved sexual partner. One day he planned to commit a sexual atrocity against her. He called her to his bed and when she refused him he beat her so severely with a stick that her back bled. There was no one to prevent this. The Russians take whatever they want. The Aleuts have come to a point where they have no hope of Imperial mercy.

I did try as much as possible to encourage the natives to have hope in Imperial great mercy, but the Russians of the Shelikhov-



An Aleut from the island of Unalaska dressed for hunting in a waterproof gut *kamlei* and an intricate wooden headpiece which serves as a rainhat and eyeshade. It also presented a non-human profile to a curious sea otter or seal. The Shelikhov-Golikov Company forced male Aleuts to hunt every day from spring until autumnal storms. The death toll from beatings, starvation, hostage mistreatment and storms at sea was catastrophic. Sarychev, *Atlas*. (OHS neg. 80225)

Golikov Company have behaved so dreadfully that one said he was a priest from Kodiak Island, and gave his priestly blessing to the Russians. He even tried to persuade the Aleuts by saying that the priest commits a sin if he says that Russian men should not

keep women. One of them told the Aleuts that I was a Tatar. Another, talking to an Aleut, asked him facetiously whether a priest had baptized him. Using these confusing words, they put the newly baptized people into a state of bewilderment and pressure, and there is no one to stop them.

During my stay on these islands I was told about important government secrets which are being suppressed and not reported to His Imperial Majesty. These are secrets which no one but His Imperial Majesty should hear. In order to report directly [to the Emperor] I requested a vessel from peredovschik Ivan Svinin so I could leave the islands and make my report. Svinin himself should have an opportunity to leave the islands and go to the Russian harbor at the town of Okhotsk to report to the Okhotsk administration that he had been approached by more than 20 island toions who were seeking protection from the Shelikhov-Golikov Company. These toions had previously been rewarded with government medals. They could no longer endure the violent abuse and mistreatment perpetrated by the North American [Company] administrator, Vasilii Merkulev and the peredovshchik Kotiutin and their men.

The principal toions, Aleksei Shelikhov and Petr Mykhoplev, who work for the Shelikhov-Golikov Company on contract, are virtually enslaved. These toions who have been rewarded in the past pleaded with the peredovshchik Svinin to take them under his protection. One toion named Kusikh, another named Fedor Osetrobeznov, and another also named Osetrobeznov who walks with two crutches, in their settlement organized their own group of Aleuts and asked Svinin to come to their iurt. They knelt before Svinin and wept bitterly and asked him to accept them under his protection. Witnessing this emotional plea, I could not bear it; I too cried, and indeed Svinin himself wept.

Those who live well in the settlement are genuine rarities, and out of bitter experience they are very glad to avail themselves of protection. These island toions asked that the Okhotsk administration send Svinin to protect them in the islands, but they were given no assurance. Now they are left without any protection. Although the administration sends written instructions to the islands that the islanders are not to be abused and robbed, and that no other evil deeds are to be perpetrated against them, the Russians do not heed these instructions, but do as they please. On the

islands they simply say, "The sky is high, the sovereign is far away, so do whatever you wish." They also say "As long as there are sea otters there will be no problems."

The newly baptized islanders cry not with tears but with blood. They expected justice. They thought they would have Svinin because they were greatly attached to him and loved him for his kindness toward them.

A toion named Elisei Puryshv and two Aleut interpreters, Nikolai Lukanin and Nikifor Svinin, came with me to go to His Imperial Majesty with secret reports and petitions. We left the islands on June 25, 1796 and reached the first of the Kuril Islands on September 7. We spent the winter in the harbor in the second strait. From there we sailed on June 30, 1797 and reached Okhotsk on July 28. We left Okhotsk on August 8 and reached Iakutsk on September 12. We have stopped in Iakutsk, and are waiting for the first winter route to be open. If God should so desire, and if we are still alive we will take that route from Iakutsk. Because I am in such great danger I am presuming to put this into my report. I find myself at present in great danger and in perilous circumstances. I suffered greatly in the islands, and do now as well.

When I reached the town of Okhotsk the Shelikov-Golikov Company office administrators there, the Kursk merchant Nikifor Shmatov and the Rylsk merchant Sidor Shelikhov, tried to detain me in Okhotsk so they could take me back to Kodiak Island with them. But I, your humble servant, submitted a statement in writing to Okhotsk commandant Prince Myshetskii, saying that I was carrying a secret report to His Imperial Majesty. Because of that they did not detain me further in Okhotsk. But I am afraid that in Irkutsk the request of the Shelikhov-Golikhov Company people will not be honored. Thus, in order that the Aleut toions and I will not be detained, and so that the secret report and other papers will not be taken away from us, I am presenting this humble report to the Holy Governing Synod, so that these matters will be known to all.

[Signed] Ieromonk Makarii, humble servant of the Holy Governing Synod in the North American religious mission.

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Reference: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division. Yudin Collection, Archive of the Holy Synod, Box 643, 13–24.