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NUMBER 67

THE RUSSIAN-AMERICAN COMPANY
AND THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT

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The creation of the Russian-American Company and its relationship to the Imperial Government need to be reassessed. Soviet scholars have maintained that the formation of the Russian-American Company and the granting to it of a twenty-year monopoly was a conscious attempt by the government to create a mighty monopolistic company, under direct government control to strengthen and expand Russia's hold in the North Pacific and to counter foreign expansion in this area.¹ On the other hand, I have held that the Russian-American Company grew naturally out of the practices of the Russian merchants engaged in the Pacific fur trade and was the posthumous creation of the "astute and far-sighted" Grigorii Ivanovich Shelikhov.² I would like to suggest that both these views may well be incorrect; that the company was established only to bring order out of the chaos brought about by merchant rivalry in Irkutsk following the death of Shelikhov, and that the grant of privileges for twenty years was not the conscious creation of a strong monopoly for imperialistic purposes but an attempt to broaden--rather than limit--merchant participation in the North Pacific fur trade. These are only tentative conclusions based on a reexamination of the events leading to the formation of the Russian-American Company and further study is needed.

In each decade from the 1740's to the 1780's ever greater numbers of Russian fortune seekers risked capital, and often

life itself, in the quest for furs in the North Pacific. During the 1770's thirty merchants or more participated in outfitting twenty-four voyages and shared in cargoes valued at 1,750,000 rubles. In the next decade the trend abruptly reversed; only sixteen merchants participated in the outfitting of nineteen voyages, and sixteen of these ships sailed from Okhotsk prior to 1785. There were several reasons why the small merchants and even many of the wealthy merchants were no longer willing to invest in this trade. There was no dearth of furs--the total value of furs brought to Siberia by ships dispatched in the 1780's exceeded that of the previous decade by 250,000 rubles--but it was necessary to sail farther and stay longer to fill the ships' holds. This meant a larger initial investment and a longer wait for a return on that investment, factors that eliminated all but the wealthiest and most skilled of merchants.³

By 1795 only three merchants and their partners survived in the Pacific fur trade--Shelikhov, Pavl Sergeevich Lebedev-Lastochkin, and the Kiselev brothers--and the competition between them had become increasingly intense. Shelikhov, who began his career in Siberia in 1773 as a merchant's clerk, was now one of the wealthiest and most influential merchants in Siberia. He had assiduously courted the favor of important men, ranging from the governors-general in Siberia to the Empress's last favorite, Platon Zubov, and including the Tsarevich Paul and the industrialist Nikolai Demidov; and he dominated the Pacific fur trade by means of three companies.

Shelikhov apparently was the first merchant in Siberia to understand that if the Russian fur trade were to continue and to expand in the Pacific area, the financing of these activities must be organized in a new manner. He believed that it would no longer be profitable, or even possible, to finance the voyages through the customary temporary partnership ("kompaniia") that lasted only for the length of one voyage. Therefore, he proposed to his former employer and current partner in two voyages, Ivan Golikov, that they organize a permanent company ("postoinaia kompaniia") to build and outfit ships for fur-trading and hunting voyages, which would operate for not less than ten years. By "permanent company" Shelikhov meant a company in a more modern sense, that is, the initial investment capital to be divided into shares (aktsii)* with each investor receiving shares in proportion to his investment. Furthermore, additional capital was to be obtained by selling shares.⁴ The capital was to be divided into three funds: a reserve fund, a fund from which rewards would be paid to those who performed acts beneficial to the company--by

* "Pai" was the term used to denote a share in a partnership or in a company that was organized for one trading venture and ceased to exist when that venture was completed. As far as can be ascertained, the first Russian proposal that spelled out the joint-stock form of a company; that is, a company with a permanent capital and open to all who wished to buy stock (aktsii) was made by Lorents Lange, vice governor in Irkutsk, in 1739. Lange proposed to create a company that would take over the state monopoly of the China trade (for a discussion of Lange's proposal, see Clifford M. Foust, Muscovite and Mandarin: Russia's Trade with China and Its Setting, [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969], pp. 142-147).

discovering new islands, for example--and a working capital fund.⁵

Had Shelikhov's views of the Russian activity in the Pacific been limited to the purely commercial aspects, he would still stand out from the other Siberian merchants. His plans, as the Soviet historian Semen B. Okun pointed out, "were distinguished by breadth of scope, revealing him as a man of great ability endowed with a spirit of enterprise, and far in advance of his contemporaries."⁶ Shelikhov proposed that this new company establish permanent Russian settlements on the islands, that ships be sent each year to carry supplies to the colonists and to return with the year's accumulation of furs, and that these permanent settlements be officially annexed by the Russian Empire. This was a truly revolutionary proposal for, up to that time, no merchant or promyshlennik^{*} had raised even a permanent hunting station on any of the islands. Furthermore, the new company's promyshlenniki, aside from hunting and bartering for furs, were to explore new lands, search for iron, copper, coal, and other useful minerals, and engage in agriculture and cattle-raising. Shelikhov also considered it essential to establish peaceful and permanent trade relations with the natives. He believed that it would be possible to teach the natives reading, writing, and arithmetic and thus prepare them to become interpreters, navigators, sailors, and clerks. All of these measures, he pointed out to Golikov, would not only extend the Russian Empire into the Pacific and, thereby, increase its power

*Professional fur hunters and traders, literally, "enterprisers."

and prestige--a point that Shelikhov was to stress repeatedly in his petitions to Empress Catherine--but it would also vastly increase the opportunities for the hunting and trading of furs.⁷

This plan was as daring as it was novel but apparently Shelikhov was as persuasive as he was farsighted. His former employer agreed to help organize and to be the principal investor in such a company. The ten-year company was organized 17 August 1781^{*} while Golikov and Shelikhov were in St. Petersburg. The initial capital was 70,000 rubles divided into 120 shares. The original investors were Ivan Larionovich Golikov (35,000 rubles), his nephew, Captain Mikhail Sergeevich Golikov (20,000 rubles, and Grigorii Ivanovich Shelikhov (15,000 rubles).⁸

A matter of some curiosity involves a Suzdal merchant, Kutyshkin, who in June, 1800, petitioned the Emperor to transfer ten shares of stock in the Russian-American Company or five per cent of the Company's profits to him because he and not Shelikhov or Golikov was the true founder of the company. Kutyshkin claimed that in 1775 he began an extensive study of the Pacific fur trade and presented Ivan Golikov with a detailed plan for the formation of a company in 1779. According to him, the Golikov-Shelikhov Company organized in 1781 followed his proposal in every detail. In addition, Kutyshkin attached to his petition a copy of an alleged agreement, signed in August of 1799, by which he, Golikov, and two other merchants formed a company in which Golikov had 100 shares (500 rubles

* All dates are in accordance with the Julian Calendar which was eleven days behind the Gregorian from 1 March 1700 to 1 March 1800.

per share) and Kutyshkin 10 shares. Kutyshkin claimed that when Golikov and Shelikov were in St. Petersburg in 1788, he asked them to take him into the company but that Golikov refused. A copy of Kutyshkin's petition was sent to Boris Latstsano, Governor of Siberia, together with a request that he investigate the claim and report his findings to the Senate. Governor Latstsano then sent the petition to the Chief Administration of the Russian-American Company in August 1800.⁹

There is some reason to doubt the validity of Kutyshkin's claim, not because either Golikov or Shelikhov were above such pirating but for another reason. After Shelikhov's death attempts were made, as will be seen, by a number of Irkutsk merchants, including Golikov, to force Shelikhov's widow from the company. Every kind of tactic, both legal and underhanded, was used. It seems reasonable to assume that Golikov would have made use of Kutyshkin's claim at this time if it had been valid.

Golikov and Shelikhov agreed that for the company's initial venture, they would have two ships constructed and outfitted in the vicinity of Okhotsk (three ships were actually built). These ships were then to sail together to collect furs and to establish permanent colonies on the islands and on the coast of Alaska. One of the main stipulations of the agreement was that Shelikhov would personally supervise the construction and outfitting of the ships and then would sail with the expedition as well. He received additional shares in the company as compensation for his labors. If the 120 shares had been divided

among the investors on the basis of their investment Ivan Golikov would have received 60, Mikhail Golikov 34, and Shelikhov 26. It was agreed that each of the Golikovs would give Shelikhov one-third of his shares. In this way, Shelikhov owned 57 shares or 47.5 per cent of the company although he only invested 21.5 per cent of the capital, while Ivan Golikov, who invested 50 per cent of the capital owned only one-third of the company.¹⁰ One can only conjecture as to whether this idea was Shelikhov's or Golikov's. The assumption can be made, however, based on the evidence of Shelikhov's personal direction of all of the company's activities from the time of its organization until his death, that the initial idea was his, and that he undertook this task with enthusiasm and with the accumulation of capital in mind.

By 1795, the year in which Shelikhov died, ships belonging to Golikov and Shelikhov had brought back furs that were valued at more than 1,500,000 rubles.¹¹ And had made Shelikhov, if not Golikov, a wealthy man.¹²

Shelikhov was as persistent in petitioning the Crown for assistance as he was in accumulating capital. In this respect also he seems to have differed from his fellow merchants.¹³ In 1787, when he returned from a three-year voyage to Kodiak, he began sending detailed, and no doubt exaggerated, reports of his activities to the Siberian governors-general as well as proposals that trade relations be established with Japan, coastal China, Korea, India, the Philippine and other islands, and with the Spaniards in America. He also petitioned the Crown for

government assistance to carry out his plans and continued to do so until his death. His petitions included requests for a 500,000 ruble loan (later reduced to 200,000), a monopoly of the Pacific fur trade, a military detachment, a clerical mission to enlighten the natives in the Orthodox faith, and artisan and agricultural serf families, a few of whom would be sent to the Kurile Islands to establish a permanent colony there. His petitions were forwarded to Catherine II by the governors-general with their enthusiastic endorsements.¹⁴

After six years of writing detailed reports, proposals, and petitions with nothing to show for his efforts except a gold medal (bearing the likeness of Catherine) and a silver sword, Shelikhov's efforts were finally rewarded. In June 1793 the Metropolitan of Novgorod and St. Petersburg was ordered to assist Shelikhov and Golikov in establishing an American mission. Of more importance to Shelikhov, however, was the ukaz Catherine issued in December granting the company twenty artisan and ten agricultural serf families from among the Siberian exiles.¹⁵ Shelikhov was greatly encouraged by Her Majesty's actions and by her statement to Governor-General Pil that she found all of the enterprises of the Golikov-Shelikhov Company "wholly useful to the state" and wished them all possible success.¹⁶ Grigorii Ivanovich believed that this was an auspicious sign and decided to reorganize and consolidate all of his enterprises in order to be ready to take full advantage of any future royal favors.

In 1790 the ten-year Golikov-Shelikhov Company had been reorganized to take into account the death of Mikhail Golikov. The company was renamed the Northeastern American Company, and some of the merchants who no longer could engage in the North Pacific fur trade individually joined the company at this time.¹⁷

In 1793, while Shelikhov and Golikov were in St. Petersburg, they signed an agreement that extended the life of the company. They had also formed two temporary companies, one in 1790 and a second in 1791, each of which sent a ship to the North Pacific. To consolidate these enterprises, the two merchants formed a second permanent company in 1794, named the North-American Company, with the same rules and regulations as the Northeastern American Company.¹⁸

Grigorii Ivanovich spent the summer of 1794 in Okhotsk supervising the loading and sailing of two new ships bound for Kodiak with the missionaries, the serf exiles, promyshlenniki, and provisions. He had also planned to send four of the agricultural serf exiles, twenty promyshlenniki, a foreman, agricultural tools, seed, cattle, and provisions to establish a permanent settlement on the Kurile Island of Urup. This enterprise would be financed by the newly formed Kurile Company. It was not until the spring of 1795, however, that the colonists were sent to Urup.¹⁹ A large part of Shelikhov's success must be attributed to the fact that he traveled to Okhotsk every year to supervise personally the unloading of ships that arrived from the North Pacific and the division of furs as well

as the outfitting and provisioning of ships leaving for the North Pacific. He realized that the continued success of his business required both his frequent absence from Irkutsk and the efficient management of his affairs there. He spent the winter in Irkutsk concentrating on this task. By the spring of 1795, he had his office reorganized and staffed with competent personnel who had been given detailed instructions for the conduct of affairs during his absences.²⁰

Had Shelikhov lived, it is quite possible that he would have been able to dominate completely the Pacific fur trade but he died unexpectedly in July of 1795. His death gave new hope to the Siberian merchants who believed that with Shelikhov out of the way, they could reestablish themselves in this lucrative trade. It was their attempts to do so that created such chaos that the Imperial Government intervened directly for the first time.

It had been the government's policy to encourage the merchants in their activities in the North Pacific from the beginning. As Raisa V. Makarova pointed out:

This is completely understandable in light of the fact that the fur trade not only brought the Crown a large income in the form of customs but it also increased the territory of the Russian Empire because it was the merchants together with the promyshlenniki (not the government) that brought the inhabitants of the areas where they hunted and traded under Russian subjection.²¹

This policy was first enunciated by Empress Anna in 1733 when she ordered the Siberian governor to assist the merchants "Because it was more convenient and without loss to the Crown, for the merchants and promyshlenniki themselves to finance the voyages to distant places. . . ." ²² Catherine II continued to

carry out this policy. In April 1764, the Bol'sheretsk chancery was ordered to see that no obstacles were placed in the way of the merchants. Everything possible was to be done to assist the merchants in outfitting their ships, even to supplying them with state-owned materials that were in excess of the needs of the state and delaying payment until the return of the ships. That same year she initiated the policy of rewarding the merchants engaged in the Pacific fur trade by exempting them from service, from the quartering of troops on their property and by canceling their debts to the Treasury. She also ordered that a number of merchants be presented with gold medals with her portrait on one side and a suitable inscription on the other, and in 1766, she bestowed the rank of Siberian dvoriane (a non-hereditary rank) on two men for the discovery of previously unknown islands.²³ But this was as far as Catherine II was prepared to go in encouraging this trade. She was as persistent in refusing to grant a monopoly of the fur trade as Shelikhov was in petitioning for one.²⁴

It was during Catherine II's reign, however, that the Imperial Government sent two naval expeditions to the North Pacific and planned a third that was aborted by the outbreak of war with Turkey. In 1764, at the suggestion of Governor-General Chicherin and Mikhail Lomonosov, Catherine ordered the Admiralty to make preparations to send an expedition to the northwest Pacific to compile accurate information on the newly discovered islands and to formally annex them.²⁵ This expedition suffered many misfortunes but two ships, commanded by Captain Petr Kuz'mich Krenitsyn and

Lieutenant Mikhail Dmitrievich Levashov, did sail in July 1768 to Umnak and Unalashka and returned to Kamchatka the summer of 1769. The only result of the expedition was a detailed description of Unalashka and its inhabitants and it is doubtful that the Empress believed the expedition was worth the 100,000 rubles it had cost.²⁵

Captain James Cook's voyage to the north Pacific, and the publication of the account of this voyage in 1784, inspired the second Russian expedition. In the fall of that year Peter Simon Pallas, a member of the Russian Imperial Academy of Science long interested in Siberia and Russia's eastward expansion, proposed a government expedition "to complete the discoveries of Cook."²⁷ Early in August, 1785, Catherine commanded the Admiralty to draw up detailed instructions for this expedition under the command of a young English Lieutenant, Joseph Billings, who had sailed on Cook's voyage as the astronomer's assistant. The primary purpose of the expedition was scientific, and Billings was instructed to survey accurately the Siberian coast and then to chart the islands in the Pacific between Siberia and the coast of America. Islands and coasts discovered by Billings not claimed by a European country were to be annexed, but only with the consent of the native inhabitants.²⁸ The members of the expedition left St. Petersburg in 1786 for Siberia and returned to the capital in 1794, but the expedition spent less than two years (1790-1792) surveying the Aleutian Islands and the Alaskan coast.²⁹

The primary purpose of the Krenitsyn and Billings expeditions was scientific. The purpose of the proposed third expedition was

to affirm the "first-discovery" rights of the Russians in the North Pacific and to prevent other powers from encroaching on them. In December 1786, Catherine ordered the Admiralty College to prepare to send a naval squadron under the command of Captain Grigorii Ivanovich Mulovskii, from the Baltic to the "Eastern Ocean."³⁰ By September 1787 the naval vessels chosen for the expedition had arrived at Kronstadt from Arkhangel'sk, but by the time they had been provisioned Russia was at war with Turkey. On 28 October 1787, Catherine ordered the Admiralty to cancel the sailing orders and to send the ships to join the Mediterranean fleet.³¹

The Krenitsyn expedition had cost 100,000 rubles, Billings was still in eastern Siberia, and war had caused the cancellation of the Mulovskii expedition. It is not surprising that Catherine decided that it was not in the best interests of the state for the government to play a direct role in an area as remote as the North Pacific. She clearly expressed this opinion in 1788 when she wrote: "More expansion in the Pacific Sea will not bring sound advantages; to carry on trade is one affair, to take possession is another."³² Catherine believed that "the natives of North America and the trade with them must be left to their own fate."³³

There is no doubt that the Imperial Government was interested in the activities of the Russian merchants in the North Pacific. The evidence, however, does not support the contention that there was a consistent imperialist policy in regard to the North Pacific.

The two events that led directly to the formation of the Russian-American Company occurred in Siberia in the summer of 1795:

Shelikhov died in Irkutsk, and his ship, the Phoenix, arrived in Okhotsk with fifteen Japanese who had been shipwrecked on one of the Aleutian Islands. Immediately upon Shelkhov's death, the Irkutsk merchants, including Golikov, attempted to gain control of his companies. They made the mistake, however, of underestimating the ability and determination of Shelikhov's widow. Natal'ia Alekseevna was a most unusual woman--any woman who sailed the North Pacific Ocean, with her children, and spent two years on Kodiak Island as Shelikhova had done, would have had to be unusually strong in mind and body. After her husband's death, Shelikhova sent a written declaration to the proper authorities in Irkutsk stating that she had taken over her husband's affairs and was prepared to fulfill all of his commercial and Crown obligations. She was informed that she could not do this without a written will and his capital would be disposed of in accordance with the law; that is, it would be divided among his children and his blood relations.³⁴ Shelikhova asserted that "this [decision] had been instigated by those who were jealous of my husband's vast establishments and who wish to make my children and me the victims of their cunning."³⁵ Natal'ia Alekseevna in her petition to Catherine requested that the property be disposed of as Shelikhov had outlined in a letter he wrote his eldest daughter when he first became ill. Shelikhova noted, "it is as if he foresaw his death."³⁶ There is no direct evidence that her petition was granted, but later in 1795 in a letter to Platon Zubov, Shelikhova stated that she had inherited the Northeastern American Company, and in 1796, in a letter to Governor Nagel, she

wrote that she and her children were partners with Golikov in the American Company.³⁷ The fact that her eldest daughter, Anna Grigor'evna, was married to a member of the gentry and living in St. Petersburg probably facilitated her petition.

While Shelikhova handled the companies' affairs at Irkutsk, her son-in-law, Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov, acted as her agent and lobbyist in St. Petersburg. Rezanov, born in St. Petersburg in 1764, was a member of the dvoriane--apparently the "poor but proud" branch. After serving in the military and then the civil service for a number of years, he rose to a position of some influence in the court toward the end of Catherine's reign. He probably was aided in this regard by his uncle, Ivan Gavrilovich Rezanov, chief procurator of the Senate's First Department in 1778. Nikolai Petrovich traveled to Irkutsk early in 1790 to visit his father, Peter Gavriilovich, who was chairman of one of the Irkutsk courts. Here he became acquainted with Shelikhov and his family. In 1793 Catherine appointed Rezanov to accompany the ecclesiastical mission, which had been assigned to Russian-America, to Irkutsk. On this visit Rezanov married Anna Grigor'evna. He thus acquired a wife and shares in the Shelikhov enterprises. Shelikhov gained a son-in-law and a staunch and influential supporter in St. Petersburg.³⁸

Rezanov was not only able to retain his influence at court after the accession of Paul I but was able to increase it. He rose very rapidly in the Table of Ranks, from the seventh rank (equivalent to captain, second rank) to the fourth (equivalent of rear admiral) in 1799.³⁹ It was largely through his efforts and

influence that the formation of the United American Company received official sanction in 1797 and was then transformed into the Russian-American Company in 1799.

The merchants had failed to prevent Shelikhova from inheriting and taking over her husband's commercial interests in 1795, but a year later they took advantage of a second opportunity. In May 1796, news that fifteen shipwrecked Japanese had been brought to Okhotsk reached the capital. Catherine in July, 1796, ordered Governor-General Ivan Osipovich Selifontov to arrange to return the Japanese to their homeland. They were to be transported on either a government or a merchant ship, and merchants were to be allowed to send goods. The return of the Japanese was to be used in an attempt to open trade with Japan.⁴⁰ This was the second group of Japanese, who had been shipwrecked in the Aleutians and brought to Russia. The first group, at least those who wished to return, were returned with the same object in mind in 1792. Incidentally, Shelikhov and Golikhov were the merchants chosen to supply the trade goods for this voyage.⁴¹ Selifontov, who had not left St. Petersburg for his new post, wrote Governor Nagel in Irkutsk of Catherine's order and asked him to ascertain if any Crown ships were available for the voyage. Nagel, on 16 October 1796, notified the merchants in Irkutsk that Her Majesty wished to send fifteen Japanese to their homeland on a Crown of merchant ship and that merchants would be allowed to send goods to trade with the Japanese.⁴² This looked to the merchants, including Shelikhova, like a golden opportunity to expand their business with the Crown bearing some of the expense. Shelikhova was the first to answer the call. On 5 November she wrote Nagel pointing out

what her company had accomplished in the past and its financial success--shares in the American Company were now worth 2,000 rubles. She asserted that not only was she prepared to send the necessary goods to Japan on a Crown ship, which would be returned in the same condition in which it was received, but that she could have the goods in Okhotsk by March or April.⁴³

A number of the merchants saw this not only as an opportunity to gain government support but as a means of competing successfully with Shelikhova. Early in December 1796, Stefan or (Stepan) Kiselev, an Irkutsk merchant belonging to the second guild,* submitted an "Exemplary Endeavor to Establish a Commercial Company" to Governor Liudvig Nagel.⁴⁴ He proposed forming a company to expand both domestic and foreign trade, and he noted that his proposal was in response to Her Majesty's wish to return the Japanese to their homeland. The company was to be composed of those who voluntarily contributed shares (aktsii) or portions (chasti) worth two hundred rubles each. Because of the difficulty and high cost of obtaining the necessary materials to build a new ship, Kiselev petitioned the Governor to request Her Majesty to provide a Crown ship. In return for this, he graciously suggested that the company be named The Japanese Company. The company was to be in existence for a minimum of four years, during which time the original

*Merchants were divided into three guilds: the first guild was composed of merchants possessing from 10,000 to 50,000 rubles; second guild, from 5,000 to 10,000 rubles; and third guild, from 1,000 to 5,000 rubles. Merchants having capital in excess of 50,000 rubles were in a category known as "imminent citizens" (Ocherki istorii SSSR, 9 vols. N. M. Druzhinin, et al, eds. [Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1953-1958], 9:157).

investors would not be allowed to withdraw their investment and no one would be allowed to join the company. Furthermore, in order to protect the merchants who were willing to undertake the great expense and assume the risk of the uncertainty of being able to open trade with the Japanese, Kiselev requested that only merchants in this company be allowed to send goods. The original investors would be allowed to sell their shares, at their value as of the most recent annual accounting, but only with the permission of the two duly elected directors and approval by them of the purchaser. It would appear that Kiselev was not only asking for a four-year monopoly on any trade with Japan but was trying to assure that Shelikhova would not be able to buy into the company. This proposal, however, remained just that, despite the fact that on 8 December 1796 thirty-five merchants signed a formal statement that they were interested in participating in the proposed company. Thirty-three of the merchants were members of the second or third guilds and it is doubtful that they could have raised the capital necessary for such a venture. Only five of them are known to have participated in the Pacific fur trade; three of the merchants had one share (pai) each in Lebedev-Lastochkin's 1790-1797 voyage and two had previously invested in one of Shelikhov's voyages.⁴⁵ It has not been possible to ascertain whether Stefan Kiselev who proposed the company was involved in the Pacific fur trade; unfortunately, no patronymic is given. The Kiselevs who had a ship in the North Pacific in the 1790's were Fedor and Mikhail.

By 9 February 1797, Governor-General Selifontov, who was still in St. Petersburg, had received from Irkutsk Shelikhova's

request to return the Japanese and the Kiselev proposal. On this date he forwarded these to Prince Aleksei Borisovich Kurakin, Procurator-General of the Senate. In the covering letter Selifontov requested the money necessary for maintenance of the Japanese until they could be returned to Japan and for the expenses of the expedition. He stated it was necessary for him to proceed to Irkutsk in order "to fulfill Her Majesty's Imperial order."⁴⁶

In Irkutsk one of the merchants who had signified interest in Kiselev's proposed company decided to take matters into his own hands. Nikolai Prokop'ev Myl'nikov, a member of the first guild who had invested in a Shelikhov ship that sailed in 1780, wanted to reorganize the company. His plan was to send ships to a number of places, including the North Pacific, as well as to Japan. He petitioned Governor Nagel for permission to improve the company, for which purpose he needed government assistance (posobie) and for permission to send ships to the North Pacific, Canton, Batavia, and the Philippine Islands. Nagel wrote Kurakin and recommended that the Emperor approve this undertaking. He expressed the opinion that Myl'nikov's personal judgment on all such affairs had proven correct.⁴⁷ Nagel included a report to the Emperor on the matter. The Governor praised the activities of the Golikov-Shelikhov Company but stated his belief that the establishment of a new commercial company would contribute to the expansion of trade and bring greater knowledge of the inhabitants of the islands already brought under Russian subjection. He also pointed out that such a company was needed because of the increase in the number of foreign ships that were sailing in the "northeastern" ocean.⁴⁸

The Emperor, on 9 June 1797, approved the formation of the

Myl'nikov company providing that it did not harm the already established company of the first "acquisitor" Shelikhov.⁴⁹ But Myl'nikov had not waited for permission from St. Petersburg; he was already making the necessary preparations in Okhotsk in May.⁵⁰ According to Tikhmenev, Myl'nikov and his partners started operations with a capital of 120,000 rubles. They ordered construction of a ship and bought a quantity of goods and provisions on credit. Apparently Myl'nikov and his associates were faced with the very real possibility of bankruptcy.⁵¹ Their solution to this problem was to merge their company, The Irkutsk Commercial Company of Myl'nikov and Associates (Irkutskaiia kommercheskaia Myl'nikov s tovarishchii kompaniia), with the Golikov-Shelikhova enterprises now known as the American--North, Northeastern, Kurile--Company. According to Okun, Golikov extorted Shelikhova's consent by threatening to withdraw from the American Company and take all of his capital with him. For this "service" he received a fee from Myl'nikov.⁵² Tikhmenev's version of this maneuvering differs from that of Okun. According to Tikhmenev, Myl'nikov asked Golikov to join his company and Golikov agreed on the condition that Shelikhova would not be allowed to enter the company, but Myl'nikov and his partners would not agree to this condition. Shelikhova merged with Myl'nikov in order to be rid of jealousy and envy and to put an end to her conflicts with Golikov.⁵³ Neither Tikhmenev nor Okun document their statements, and I have found nothing in the archives concerning why the merger took place. Okun's version appears to be the more likely; Shelikhova, a strong-willed and astute businesswoman with a very successful and profitable business and with influential patrons in St. Petersburg would probably not have united her share of the company with a newly

organized and financially shaky company unless some kind of pressure were brought to bear. There is a third possibility--she thought it would be financially advantageous. It was: the 200,000 rubles she invested in the capital of the merged company in July 1797 increased to over 873,000 rubles in three years.⁵⁴

Whatever the reason, on 18 July 1797 Golikov signed a merger agreement with Myl'nikov and his partners, and the next day Shelikhova signed a similar agreement.⁵⁵ On 22 July, Governor Nagel forwarded the two agreements with his recommendation to Prince Kurakin. He first explained that Myl'nikov's company had begun operating before it had received Imperial consent. But he requested that they be pardoned because they had not wanted to waste time and such long distances were involved. Nagel then reported that Golikov and Shelikhova had now joined with Myl'nikov and his partners, and that the mutually agreed upon contracts had been confirmed in his presence. He requested Kurakin's assistance in obtaining the Emperor's approval because the united company would benefit the State and be in the public interest.⁵⁶ What was to become known as the United American Company in 1798, renamed the Russian-American Company in 1799, had come into existence in July 1797; and the Imperial Government had played no direct role in its creation.

On 5 August 1797, Prince Kurakin delivered his report "On the harmfulness of many Companies in America and the Advantages of uniting them into one, with an explanation of the means for [accomplishing] this" to the Emperor at Pavlovsk. This report was based on Nagel's reports, the 1796 proposals of Shelikhova and Kiselev in response to Catherine's order to return the shipwrecked Japanese,

and Myl'nikov's proposal to form a new company to operate in the North Pacific.⁵⁷ Nagel's letter of 22 July and the two merger agreements had not yet reached the capital. Kurakin's report recommended that the Emperor call for the "union of all those merchants [involved in the Pacific fur trade] following the example of the East and West India companies, which [company] would be administered by directors chosen from the participants and augmented by one [chosen by] the Crown, who would in no way meddle in commercial affairs. [He] would only see that the government regulations prescribed for the company were in fact being carried out and would report to the office or official appointed by Your Imperial Majesty."⁵⁸

From the arguments that the Procurator-General presented to support his recommendations, it would appear that he had been in contact with some one who represented the Shelikhov interests; the most likely person would have been Rezanov. Kurakin first pointed out that it was doubtful that the newly established company had more than 100,000 rubles of capital. This was not enough even to begin operations on a solid basis. The results could be irreparable damage rather than advantages. On the other hand, the Shelikhova-Golikov Company had already strengthened its establishments in America. Furthermore, since Shelikhova and Golikov had a combined capital of approximately 1,500,000 rubles, they could continue to supply their settlements annually and bring glory and benefits to the State. Experience had proven this. In a short time this company had built a shipyard, started agriculture and cattle-raising, and had transported and was supporting an ecclesiastical mission. This part of the report

read as if it were written by Shelikhov himself. Kurakin pointed out that the new company had already received the Emperor's approval, and that while it had many participants, "not one of them could be called a capitalist (kapitalist)." This lack of capital had already brought jealousy and discord that threatened to destroy the trade. Shelikhova, however, was willing to take measures necessary to bring this to an end. In order to encourage Shelikhova's company to continue to advance the interests of the Fatherland and to stimulate in the new participants the desire to end the rivalry, Kurakin recommended that the Emperor place all companies under one office or person--to be called the "protector of the American companies." The "protector" would have two tasks: to assist the companies in obtaining from the government what was needed for their operations, such as navigators, master shipbuilders, and other necessities; and to receive the companies' reports and to report to the Emperor on the success of their operations and whether or not they were politically advantageous. He concluded his report with the recommendations that the existing companies and the new company be placed under the direction of the Commerce College, and that no similar companies be allowed to organize without the consent of the existing one and in accordance with a preliminary contract mutually agreed upon.⁵⁹

The Emperor immediately approved Kurakin's report. On the same day, 5 August 1797, Kurakin sent notification of Paul's decision to Petr Fedorovich Soimonov, President of the Commerce College, together with copies of all the papers he had on the subject.⁶⁰ Kurakin also wrote Nagel on this date informing him of the decision and pointing out that any one who wished to join the new company

could do so only with the consent of the initial participants.⁶¹

It is clear that the Imperial Government now was directly involved in the Pacific fur trade. It had called for the formation of an East India-type company to be placed directly under the Commerce College. What is not clear is whether this action was taken to protect the interests of the Shelikhov family or whether it was taken to further the imperialist goals of the State.

By 7 September, the Commerce College had examined all the material sent to it and had found it "quite insufficient."⁶² On that date the College requested the Irkutsk Governor to gather and forward the following information: maps of the voyage to the north-eastern sea, plans for new enterprises; information on the former and present participants and their mutual agreements; detailed descriptions of all the hunting and trading and of the settlements and forts on the mainland and the islands; information about the participants in the united company, similar information on the small traders; and an account of the Irkutsk merchants' attempts to open trade with Japan.⁶³

One would assume that if the Government planned to establish a strong company to carry out its imperialistic goals, it would not act without the requested information. But this was not the case. On 8 September the Emperor issued an ukaz to Governor Nagel sanctioning the merger of the Golikov-Shelikhova and Myl'nikov companies and praising Nagel for his report.⁶⁴ The following day, the Commerce College reported to the Emperor its recommendations concerning the merger. The College had found the merger "highly useful" and believed that "the union promises many advantages only if the act for the administration of this company and its offices will be

made on a good and firm basis as mentioned by the widow Shelikhova in her agreement."⁶⁵ The members of the Commerce College, however, felt it was necessary to point out officially to the Emperor that the union of these two strong companies would mean that the largest part of the Pacific fur trade would be concentrated in a few hands, as would the trade with the Chinese at Kiakhta where most of the furs were sent. They noted that there were a number of small promyshlenniki in this trade who apparently were in no condition to join the company at the time of the merger. In their opinion, there should be no obstacles placed in the way of those who wished to join. They recommended that the Irkutsk governor summon all the small traders and invite them to enter the company on the basis of mutually agreeable contracts.⁶⁶

The State Council met, on 24 September 1797, to consider the matter. After the Council had heard both Kurakin's and the Commerce College's reports, it approved both the merger and the recommendation that the company be enlarged to include all those involved in the Pacific fur trade. The Council urged that the Irkutsk governor help the small promyshlenniki to share in the advantages of the united company. In order to encourage participation in the Pacific fur trade, which, the Council noted, "required great expense and no little courage," it recommended that the Emperor grant the company privileges--similar to those enjoyed by foreign companies--for a period of twenty years. The State Council asserted that such privileges could not be considered a monopoly because all who wished to participate in this trade could become a participant in the company. The Emperor approved all of the Council's recommendations.⁶⁷

The Government's desire to bring order out of chaos in the Pacific fur trade was not to be realized for several years. The merger of the companies of Shelikhova, Golikov, and Myl'nikov did nothing to lessen the rivalry. Each hoped to be able to dominate the United American Company, and they now transferred their efforts to St. Petersburg.⁶⁸ The attempts to discredit Shelikhova failed, and her influence in the capital grew. In November 1797, the Emperor personally signed a decree that read:

Our attention has been drawn to the services of the deceased Shelikhov who gave his life and property in subjecting to Our Scepter the peoples inhabiting North America. He laid the foundation there for the Greek-Orthodox Faith and a sound beginning for various trades useful to the State. We most graciously bestow on his widow Natal'ia Shelikhova, who shared with him the hardships of his travels, and to their children, the merit of dvorianstvo of Our Empire, and also grant ~~them~~⁶⁹ the continuance of their original right to trade.

The Commerce College was frustrated in its attempts to obtain the information it requested in September 1797 or an official merger contract from the participants. In February and again in March, 1798, Governor Nagel wrote that the original participants had asked for more time because of "the vastness and importance of their undertakings."⁷⁰ In July, however, his successor informed the College that the true reason was they were too busy with quarrels and disputes among themselves and between them and the small promyshlenniki. President Soimonov renewed his demand and finally, on 27 September 1798, the Commerce College received the formal "Act of the United American Company."⁷¹

The act had been signed in Irkutsk on 3 August 1798 by Shelikhova, Golikov, Myl'nikov, and six second-guild and eleven third-guild merchants.⁷² Of the 724 shares of stock (representing a capital of

724,000 rubles) Shelikhova and her children owned 240; Golikov and his son, 100; Myl'nikov and his sons, 132; the six second-guild merchants owned a total of 128; and the eleven third-guild merchants, 84.⁷³ Only four of the merchants had joined the company since it was first organized in July 1797. In addition to the stock capital of 724,000 rubles, the company had borrowed 400,000 rubles from Golikov and Shelikhova; article 4.2 provided that no profits would be distributed until this debt had been paid. In order to comply with the Commerce College's recommendation, article 3.4 contained provisions for small promyshlenniki to join. The Main Office (Glavnaia Kontora) was to be located in Irkutsk* (article 7.1); and two directors (four if it were found necessary) would be elected by the stockholders, on the basis of one share--one vote, to manage the company's affairs (articles 8.1 and 8.2).⁷⁴

The Commerce College studied the act carefully and, on 11 January 1799, reported their findings to the Emperor. The members of the College were concerned that the capital of 740,000 rubles was insufficient to accomplish all that the company had proposed. Therefore, it recommended the issuance of an additional one thousand shares to be sold to all Russian subjects and foreigners who had registered as Russian subjects,** whatever their rank (chin) or station (sostoianie). Another important change the College recommended was that only stock-

* The main office was moved to St. Petersburg in October 1800 (P.S.Z., No. 19611, 26:348). This action had been taken at the request of Rezanov and it signified the victory of the Shelikhov faction over that of Myl'nikov (Ts GIA, f. 1374, op. 3, ed. khr. 2404, ll. 1-2, 40-46).

** The State Council, on 4 July 1799, qualified this by adding "Provided that they own real property" (A.G.S., 2:523).

holders who owned at least twenty-five shares could serve as directors, only those who owned at least ten shares could vote, and the votes were to be counted on the basis of the number of stockholders present--not the number of shares owned. The report also recommended that the company be renamed the Russian-American Company, and that it report directly to the Commerce College.⁷⁵

The State Council met on the 4th and the 7th of July to consider the "act," the Commerce College's recommendations, the privileges to be granted the company for a twenty-year period, and a petition from Shelikhova asking that, until the majority of her son, one of the four directors be appointed to act as guardian or trustee of her interests.⁷⁶ At its first meeting, the Council was informed that Paul had decided to place the company "under His protection" (pod Svoe pokrovitel'stvo) and to grant Shelikhova's petition.⁷⁷ The Council accepted all the recommendations with only three changes: the change noted above (p. 27); the stipulation that the stockholders would not withdraw any profits until the debt to Shelikhova and Golikov was paid would not apply to the purchasers of the additional one thousand shares; the company would be named The Russian-American Company under the Supreme protection of His Imperial Majesty; and the directors would report not to the Commerce College but directly to the Emperor.⁷⁸ These changes were incorporated in the Emperor's ukaz commanding the Senate to prepare the necessary charter.⁷⁹

This was done and, on 27 December 1799, the Emperor signed the "Charter Granted to the Russian-American Company under Our Supreme Protection--for the enjoyment of the privileges granted to it for twenty year."⁸⁰ The Russian-American Company now had the exclusive right to

hunt and trade in the North Pacific and on the coast of North America above 55° north latitude; to annex to the Russian Empire all lands discovered by it both north and south of 55° that were not occupied by or dependent upon any other nation; and the right to send ships to and conduct trade with all adjacent Powers, with their consent and the Emperor's affirmation.⁸¹

A comparison of the United American Company act and the rules and privileges of the Russian-American Company with the charters of similar European companies indicates that the charters granted to the French West and East India Companies in 1664 served as models, although this is not explicit in any of the available sources.⁸² There are a number of similarities, but there are two very significant differences. First, the French charters contained the stipulation that neither directors nor shareholders could be obligated to furnish any sum over and above their original investment. By contrast the stockholders in the Russian company had the right to share equally in the profits and the obligation to share equally in the losses.⁸³ Limited liability was not incorporated into the regulations of the Russian-American Company until 1821, when the company received its second twenty-year charter.⁸⁴ Second, the French companies, unlike their Russian counterpart, received substantial financial assistance from the Crown; one-tenth of the capital of the West India and one-fifth of that of the East India company was contributed by the Government. Is it not reasonable to assume that if the Russian government were attempting to establish a strong monopolistic company, under its direct control, that would expand its foothold on the coast of North America, it would have invested heavily in that company itself and also have adopted the principle of limited liability in order to

attract additional capital?

It is a pity that Grigorii Ivanovich Shelikhov did not live to see the Imperial Charter of 1799 for it granted all the rights for which he so long petitioned the Crown. On the other hand, had he lived the Russian-American Company might never have come into existence because until his death in 1795, there was no need for the Government to intervene directly in the Pacific fur trade.

The origins of the Russian-American Company, its activities, and the Company's relationship to the Imperial Government are multifaceted and complex subjects. I have presented only one facet in order to stimulate a reassessment of the subject and create an interest in the study of the Siberian merchants. Siberia was the only region of the Russian Empire where the trade--foreign as well as domestic--was in the hands of Russian merchants. The role of the merchants and commercial developments in Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been neglected in the past. A few American scholars are now doing research in this area; I hope that their number will increase and that they will be joined by Soviet scholars.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Semen Bentsionovich Okun, Rossiisko-amerikanskaia kompaniia (Moscow-Leningrad: Sotsekgiz, Leningradskoe Otdelenie, 1935); Raisa Vsevolodovna Makarova, Russkie na Tikhom okeane vo vtoroi polovine XVIII v. (Moscow: "Nauka," 1968); Nikolai Nikolaevich Bolkhovitinov, Stanovlenie russko-amerikanskikh otnoshenii, 1775-1815 (Moscow: "Nauka," 1966).

²Mary E. Wheeler, "The Origins of the Russian-American Company," Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, 14 (December 1966), 485-494.

³Vasilii Nikolaevich Berkh, Khronologicheskaiia istoriia otkrytia aleutskikh ostrovov ili podvigi rossiiskago kupechestva s prisovokupleniem istoricheskago izvestiia o tekhnologii torgovle (St. Petersburg: V Tipografii N. Grecha, 1823), Prilozhenie I; Aleksei Vladimirovich Efimov, Iz istorii russkikh ekspeditsii na Tikhom okeane (pervaia polovina XVIII veka) (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Vooruzhennykh Sil SSSR, 1948), pp. 291-309; Makarova, Russkie na Tikhom okeane, pp. 182-188; "Istoricheskii kalendar'," in A. I. Blinov, et al, eds., K istorii Rossiisko-amerikanskoi kompanii (Sbornik dokumental'nykh materialov) (Krasnoiarsk: Krasnoiarskii Gosudarstvennyi Pedagogicheskii Institut, 1957), pp. 14-20.

⁴The few sources available for the formation of this company do not mention that shares would be sold, but this conclusion has been made on the basis of a letter Shelikhov wrote, in 1789, in which he said that "our shares, under the present unsettled conditions are selling for less than seven hundred rubles. If I had not raised the price myself by bringing in one hundred thousand rubles in cash, no

one would pay even four hundred rubles for them; however, do not mind this, the time will come when the price of goods will not decrease" ("Pis'mo Shelikhova Delarovu," in Aleksandr Ignatevich Andreev, ed., Russkie otkrytiia v Tikhom okeane i severnoi Amerike v XVIII veke [Moscow: OGIZ, Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Geograficheskoi Literatury, 1948], p. 287).

⁵Petr Aleksandrovich Tikhmenev, Istoricheskoe obozrenie obrazovaniia Rossiisko-amerikanskoi kompanii i deistvii ee do nastoiashchago vremeni, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia E. Veimar, 1861-1863), I:7.

⁶Okun, Rossiisko-amerikanskaia kompaniia, p. 31.

⁷"Donoshenie G. I. Shelekhova irkutskomu general-gubernatoru I. V. Iakobi," in Aleksandr Ignatevich Andreev, ed., Russkie otkrytiia v Tikhom okeane i severnoi Amerike v XVIII-XIX vekakh (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1944), pp. 66-73.

⁸Tikhmenev, Istoricheskoe obozrenie, I:7; Ms., A. S. Polonskii, "Perechen' puteshestvii russkikh promyshlennykh v Vostochnom okeane," Arkhiv Vsesoiuznogo Geograficheskogo Obshchestva, razriad 60, op. 1, ed. khr. 2, 95-96 (hereinafter cited as AVGO).

⁹Ms., Library of Congress, Yudin Collection, Russian-American Company in Alaska, Box 3, Folder 15.

¹⁰Ms., AVGO, 60:1:2:95-96.

¹¹Blinov, K istorii Rossiisko-amerikanskoi kompanii, p. 20.

¹²Golikov accused Shelikhov of not only taking the profits of the company for himself but of "naming himself owner in my place and appropriating all my capital as his own with the assistance of my

treacherous clerk, Polevoi (Aleksandr Romanovich Vorontsov to Governor-General Pil', 22 February 1792, Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov [hereinafter cited as TsGADA], f. 1261, op. 1, ed. khr. 745; Golikov to Petr Vasil'evich Lopukhin, 16 December 1798, Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv [hereinafter cited as TsGIA], f. 1374, op. 1, ed. khr. 819).

¹³A search of the published documents and of the collections in TsGADA and TsGIA did not reveal any petitions by Lebedev-Lastochkin or the Kiselev brothers.

¹⁴The reports and petitions have been collected and published by A. I. Andreev in Russkie otkrytiia v Tikhom okeane i severnoi Amerike v XVIII veke.

¹⁵20 June and 31 December 1793, Polnoe sobranie zakonov rossiiskoi imperii s 1649 goda, Sobranie pervoe. 46 vols. (St. Petersburg: Kantseliariia Ego Imperatorishcheskago Velichestva, 1830-1839), Nos. 17135 and 17171, 23:440-441, 478. (Hereinafter cited as P.S.Z.)

¹⁶P.S.Z., 23:478.

¹⁷"Pis'mo Shelikhova k Delarovu," in Tikhmenev, Istoricheskoe obozrenie, II, Prilozhenie, 25; and "Donoshenie Shelikhova Piliu" and Raport Pilia," in Andreev, v XVIII veke, pp. 295, 303.

¹⁸"Istoricheskii kalendar'" and "Predpisanie Shelikhova Popovu," in Blinov, K istorii Rossiisko-amerikanskoi kompanii, pp. 21, 53; Tikhmenev, Istoricheskoe obozrenie, I:31-32, 45; Arkhiv Gosudarstvennago soveta, 5 vols. in 16 (St. Petersburg: V Tipografii Vtorago Otdeleniia Sobstvennoi E. I. V. Kantseliarii, 1869-1904), I, Part 2, 663-664 (hereinafter cited as A.G.S.).

¹⁹"Donoshenie Shelikhova Piliu," 18 November 1794, in Andreev, v XVIII veke, pp. 353-386; "Pis'mo Shelikhovoi k Zubovu, 22 November 1795, in Tikhmenev, Istoricheskoe obozrenie, II, Prilozhenie, 111.

²⁰Tikhmenev, Istoricheskoe obozrenie, I:46-47; Kirill Timofeevich Khlebnikov, "Zhizneopisaniia dostopamiatnykh Russkikh: Grigorii Ivanovich Shelikhov," Syn otechestva, II (1838), 82.

²¹Makarova, Russkie na Tikhom okeane, p. 99.

²²Ibid.

²³Senatskii arkhiv, 15 vols. (St. Petersburg: V Tipografii Pravitel'stvuiushchago Senata, 1888-1913), 14: 444-445 (hereinafter cited as S.A.).

²⁴During the reign of Elizabeth, in 1750, the Governing Senate granted the Irkutsk merchant Emel'ian Iugov the exclusive privilege of sending four ships to hunt and trade for furs. In return for this temporary monopoly Iugov was to pay the Crown one-third of all the furs collected. Unfortunately this merchant reaped no benefits from the privilege as he died during the course of his first voyage. This was the only monopoly granted in the Pacific fur trade until the formation of the Russian-American Company in 1799 (P.S.Z., No. 9480, 12:929-933).

²⁵V. A. Perevalov, Lomonosov i Arktika: iz istorii geograficheskoi nauki i geograficheskikh otkrytii (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Glavsovmorput' 1949), pp. 282-283.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 292-303, 435-458.

²⁷William Coxe, Account of the Russian Discoveries between Asia and America. To which are added, The Conquest of Siberia, and the

History of the Transactions and Commerce between Russia and China, 4th ed. (London: Printed for Cadell and Davies, 1803), p. 349; Martin Sauer, An Account of a Geographical and Astronomical Expedition to the Northern Parts of Russia for Ascertaining the Degrees of Latitude and Longitude of the Mouth of the River Kovima; of the Whole Coast of the Tshutski, to the East Cape; and of the Islands in the Eastern Ocean, Stretching to the American Coast. Performed by Command of Her Imperial Majesty Catherine the Second, Empress of All the Russias, by Commodore Joseph Billings in the Years 1783, & to 1794 (London: Printed for Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, 1802), pp. vii-ix.

²⁸Sauer, An Account, p. viii; P.S.Z., No. 16563, 22:881-882.

²⁹See Sauer, An Account, and Gavriil Andreevich Sarychev, Puteshestvie po severo-vostochnoi chasti Sibiri, Ledovitomu moriu i Vostochnomu okeanu, 2 vols. in 1. 2nd ed. N. N. Zubov, ed. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Geograficheskoi Literatury, 1952).

³⁰P.S.Z., No. 16530, 22:836-837; Makarova, Russkie na Tikhom okeane, p. 152.

³¹Materialy dlia istorii russkago flota, 17 vols. (St. Petersburg: V Tipografii Morskago ministerstva, 1865-1905), 13:197-200.

³²"Zamechaniia Imperatritsy Ekateriny II na doklad Komissi o kommertsii o plavanii i trgovle v Tikhom okeane," in Andreev, v XVIII veke, pp. 281-282.

³³Pis'ma i bumagi Imperatritsy Ekateriny II khраниashchiiasia v Imperatorskoi Publichnoi Biblioteke (St. Petersburg: V Tipografii Vtorago Otdeleniia Sobstvennoi Ego Imperatorskago Velichestva Kantseliarii, 1873), p. 65.

³⁴Shelikhova to Catherine II, 15 October 1795, TsGADA, f. 11, ed. khr. 1117.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Tikhmenev, Istoricheskoe obozrenie, II, Prilozhenie, 108-113; Shelikhova to Nagel, 5 November 1796, TsGIA, f. 1374, op. 1, ed. khr. 236.

³⁸Russkii biograficheskii slovar', 25 vols. incomplete (St. Petersburg: "Kadima," 1896-1918), Pri-Rel, 539-541; Gavriil Romanovich Derzhavin, Sochineniia, 9 vols. (St. Petersburg: V Tipografii Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1864-1883), 5:152-153.

³⁹S.A., I:126, 246, 438, 561. In December of 1799 Rezanov was appointed chief procurator of the First Department of the Senate, and in 1800 Tsar Paul presented him with 3,000 desiatiny of land in Saratov guberniia (ibid., pp. 569, 634-635).

⁴⁰Selifontov to Kurakin with attachments, 9 February 1797, TsGIA, f. 1374, op. 1, ed. khr. 236.

⁴¹P.S.Z., No. 16985, 23:249-251; Arkhiv Kniazia Vorontsova, P. O. Bartenev, ed. 40 vols. in 24 (Moscow: Tipografiia A. I. Mamontova, 1830-1895), 24:188 ff.; also see [Adam Laxman], "Puteshestviia Laksmana v Iaponiiu (Zapiski)," Russkii arkhiv, 3 (1865), 848-851; Iurii Zhukov, Russkie i Iaponiia: Zabytye stranitsy iz istorii russkikh puteshestvii (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Glavsovmorput', 1945), and George Alexander Lensen, The Russian Push Toward Japan: Russo-Japanese Relations, 1697-1875 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

⁴²Selifontov to Kurakin with attachments, 9 February 1797, TsGIA, f. 1374, op. 1, ed. khr. 236.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴"Primernyi opyt' uchrezhdeniia kompanii," *ibid.*, ll. 5-11.

⁴⁵Berkh, Khronologicheskaiia istoriia, pp. 115-116.

⁴⁶TsGIA, f. 1374, op. 1, ed. khr. 236.

⁴⁷Nagel to Kurakin, 24 April 1797, *ibid.*

⁴⁸"Vsepodanneishi raport," 24 April 1797, *ibid.*

⁴⁹Kurakin to Emperor, 5 August 1797, *ibid.*

⁵⁰Nagel to Kurakin, 22 July 1797, *ibid.*

⁵¹Istoricheskoe obozrenie, I:61-62. The problems and the expense involved in building and provisioning ships at Okhotsk were both exceedingly great (see James R. Gibson, Feeding the Russian Fur Trade: Provisionment of the Okhotsk Seaboard and the Kamchatka Peninsula, 1639-1856 (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

⁵²Rossiisko-amerikanskaia kompaniia, pp. 38-39.

⁵³Istoricheskoe obozrenie, I:61-62.

⁵⁴Buldakov to Rezanov, 4 July 1800, TsGIA, f. 1374, op. 3, ed. khr. 2404. Although it usually took seven to eight weeks for letters to reach Irkutsk from St. Petersburg, it is conceivable that the news of the Emperor's decision of 9 June approving Myl'nikov's company reached Shelikhova prior to 19 July.

⁵⁵TsGIA, f. 1374, op. 1, ed. khr. 236, ll 35-50, 55; ll. 56, 41-48. These are bound documents and ll. 55 and 56 were bound out of place.

⁵⁶Ibid., ll. 23-24.

⁵⁷Ibid., ll. 25-27. Myl'nikov's proposal is not included in this fond, but from other sources it is evident that he proposed to call his company the American Commerical Company (ibid., ll. 28-29).

⁵⁸Ibid., l. 26.

⁵⁹Ibid., ll. 26-27. Okun incorrectly identified Kurakin's report as being from the Commerce College (Rossiisko-amerikanskaia kompaniia, pp. 39-40).

⁶⁰TsGIA, f. 1374, op. 1, ed. khr. 236, l. 28. Also see P.S.Z., No. 18076, 24:670.

⁶¹TsGIA, f. 1374, op. 1, ed. khr. 236, l. 30.

⁶²A.G.S., 2:517.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴P.S.Z., No. 18131, 24:725.

⁶⁵"Vsepoddanneishii raport," TsGIA, f. 1374, op. 1, ed. khr. 236.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷A.G.S., 2:517. Monopolies had not existed in Russia for a number of years. Peter III began abolishing monopolies in March 1762 (P.S.Z., No. 11489, 15:959-966), and Catherine II continued this policy until all monopolies had been withdrawn (P.S.Z., No. 11630, 16:31-38; No. 13141, 18:695-696).

⁶⁸See Okun, Rossiisko-amerikanskaia kompaniia, pp. 41-43.

⁶⁹S.A., i:316. Shelikhova was now a member of the gentry but unlike other members of this group she could engage in retail trade. For a discussion of the right of gentry to trade, see Victor

Kamendrowsky and David M. Griffiths, "The Fate of the Trading Nobility Controversy in Russia: A Chapter in the Relationship Between Catherine II and the Russian Nobility," Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, 26 (1978), 198-221.

⁷⁰A.G.S., 2:518.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²"Akt Amerikanskoi soedinennoi kompanii," TsGADA, op. 1, d. 794; P.S.Z., No. 19030, 15:704-718.

⁷³"Spiski aktsionerov," TsGIA, f. 994, op. 2, ed. khr. 828.

⁷⁴"Akt," TsGADA, op. 1, d. 794.

⁷⁵"Doklad kommerts-kollegii Pavlu I," TsGADA, f. 1261, op. 1, ed. khr. 797. For a discussion of the voting question, see Okun, Rossiisko-amerikanskaia kompaniia, pp. 44-45.

⁷⁶A.G.S., 2:523.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹8 July 1799, P.S.Z., No. 19030, 25:699-718.

⁸⁰P.S.Z., No. 19233, 25:923-925.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²This comparison is based on the charters granted to the French West India Company, 28 May 1664, in Médéric Louis Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry, Loix et constitutions des colonies françaises de l'Amérique sous le vent: suivies, 1^o. D'un tableau raisonné des différentes parties de l'administration actuelle de ces colonies: 2^o. d'observations

générales sur le climat, la population, la culture, le caractère et les moeurs des habitans de la partie française de Saint-Dominque:

3^o. d'une description physique, politique et topographique des différens quartiers de cette même partie; le tout terminé par l'histoire de cette isle et de ses dépendances, depuis leur découverte jusqu'à nos jours, 6 vols. (Paris: Chez l'auteur, 1784-1790), 1:100-114;

and to the French East India Company, 11 September 1664, in Henri Grolous, La campagne française des Indes Orientales de 1664 considérée comme Société de Commerce (Paris: A Rousseau, 1911), pp. 147-159.

See Mary E. Wheeler, "The Origins and Formation of the Russian-American Company" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1965), pp. 181-183.

⁸³P.S.Z., 25:708.

⁸⁴P.S.Z., No. 28756, 37:846-847.