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The Mulovsky Expedition and Catherine II's North Pacific Empire

During the reign of Catherine II important changes occurred in the sphere of Russia's external affairs, such as obtaining an outlet to the Black Sea in 1774 and annexation of the Crimea in 1783. Like the other leading European powers, Russia aspired to have the capability to carry out long distance oceanic voyages and to undertake geographical discoveries. With that objective, in April 1787 the Government of Catherine II commissioned Captain of the First Rank Grigory Ivanovich Mulovsky commander of a small squadron destined to carry out a voyage to the North Pacific Ocean including Kamchatka, Japan and the western coast of America. The principal tasks of the expedition were formulated as 'securing the safety of long-distance trade and commerce, making useful discoveries and obtaining geographical knowledge', making ethnographic observations, and the study and collection of descriptions of the islands, shores, bays and harbours neighbouring Kamchatka as far as Japan.

The importance of the intended Mulovsky expedition may be understood within the wider context of the European entry into the Pacific and exploitation of its resources following the breakdown of the Spanish *mare clausum* regime there in the late eighteenth century. News of James Cook's voyage to the Pacific of 1776 to 1780 led Russia to look at the area in terms of economic and strategic considerations and to increased consciousness of the Pacific's importance.¹ The attempt to organize the Mulovsky expedition was a Russian response to that of Cook, which inspired similar responses from other European powers with maritime pretensions: an attempt was made to organize an Imperial Austrian expedition under the command of William Bolts; there was the French expedition commanded by Jean Galaup de Lapérouse; and the Spanish expedition under Alexandro Malaspina. As a Russian response to the growing presence of the English in the Pacific, the Mulovsky expedition would probably have visited the new English colony at Sydney Cove, New South Wales, some time during 1788.

¹ Alix O'Grady-Raeder, 'Major von Behm und Captain Cooks letzte Tagebücher', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 1989, 65–72.

In July 1787 the London press reported the intention of the Government of Catherine II of Russia to send out a voyage of discovery around the Cape of Good Hope to the North Pacific:

A letter from Petersburg, dated June 20, says, that that Government is busily occupied in establishing its power on the Black Sea, and has likewise formed the project of extending it, if possible, on the other seas at the extremity of the empire. With this design they have ordered a frigate of 36 guns and three other vessels to be fitted out, besides a small squadron, destined particularly to take the soundings and examine the coasts of China and Japan, and afterwards those of Kamschatka, that new and correct charts may be made of those coasts, in order to render the navigation of them more secure, or to procure an exact knowledge of those parts. These vessels will proceed by the way of the Indian Sea, and will sail directly from Cronstadt for the Cape of Good Hope. Capt. Maulowsky has been to receive his instructions from the Empress herself at Kiow [Kiev].²

The Russian initiative took its origin from the activities of other European powers in the North Pacific, a part of the world that Russia had become accustomed to regard with an exclusive eye. *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, Captain James King's account of the voyage he undertook under the command of James Cook to the North Pacific (Cook's last voyage), was published in May 1784. His description of the possibilities of the North Pacific fur trade attracted wide attention. In particular, his vivid account of the prices paid at Canton for the sea otter furs the crew had gathered on the American coast was repeatedly referred to in public discussion:

During our absence, a brisk trade had been carrying on with the Chinese for the sea-otter furs, which had, every day, been rising in their value. One of our seamen sold his stock, alone, for eight hundred dollars; and a few prime skins, which were clean, and had been well preserved, were sold for one hundred and twenty each. The whole amount of the value, in specie and goods, that was got for the furs, in both ships, I am confident, did not fall short of two thousand pounds sterling... When it is remembered that the furs were at first collected without our having any idea of their real value, the

² *The General Evening Post* and *The Whitehall Evening Post*, 25 July 1787; *The London Chronicle*, 26 July 1787; also *Gazeta de Madrid*, 13 and 31 julio 1787.

first two Otter skins we had having been bought for six green glass beads, the greatest part of them having been worn by the Indians, from whom we purchased them; that they were afterwards preserved with little care, and frequently used for bed-clothes, and other purposes, during our cruise to the North; and that, probably we never received the full value for them in China; the advantages that might be derived from a voyage to that part of the American coast, undertaken with commercial views, appear to me of a degree of importance sufficient to call for the attention of the public... The rage with which our seamen were possessed to return to Cook's River, and buy another cargo of skins, to make their fortunes, at one time, was not far off mutiny.³

A mercantile response to the enticing prospects held out by King was not slow to eventuate. British merchants in Canton and in Indian ports were in a position to take prompt action in response to the revelation of fortunes to be made from the trade in sea otter furs. In April 1785, the 60-ton brig *Sea Otter* (or *Harmon*, her previous name) sailed from Macao for the North West coast under the command of James Hanna. The vessel was chartered by John Henry Cox, a Canton merchant, on behalf of backers in India and Canton. Hanna made a most profitable voyage, and his success on the Canton market upon his return more than fulfilled the promise held out by the experience of the crews of the *Resolution* and *Discovery*. Word of this success was sent back to England and reported in the London press on 21 September 1786:

The Sea Otter, Capt. Hannah, is arrived from King George's Sound, on the West coast of America, after one of the most prosperous voyages, perhaps, ever made in so short a time. This brig, which was only 60 tons, and manned with 20 men, was fitted out in April 1785, by Capt. Mackintosh, of the Contractor, and some other gentlemen in the Company's service, as an experiment while the Captain is gone to England to procure a licence from the India Company for the carrying on this trade. Should he succeed in his application, of which I presume there is but very little doubt, I am sensible it will insure them a tremendous fortune; you will be astonished when I tell you, that the whole out-fit, with the vessel, did not cost them

³ Vol. 3, 437; quoted in an article carried in *The Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* and *The Public Advertiser* of 2 September 1785, and *The General Evening Post* and *St. James's Chronicle* 1–3 September 1785.

1,000 *l.* [pounds] and though she was not more than one month on the coast, the furs she collected were sold at Canton for upwards of 30,000 *l.* Had they had goods to have bartered, and had been two or three months more on the coast, Captain Hannah assured me he could have collected above 100,000 *l.* of furs.— The beauty of these furs is beyond description, and held by the Chinese in the highest estimation: it is astonishing with what rapidity they purchased them.— Captain Hannah acquainted me that there were several sent home to England as presents; your friend Sir Joseph Banks hath two of them sent by this ship, where no doubt you will see them.— It is astonishing that this business hath not been taken up long before this directly from England, as there is a full description of it in the publication you sent me of Capt. Cook's last voyage: it is fully expected that when the astonishing value of this trade is well known in England, that the Company will send out some of their China ships to trade for furs on that coast, and to try to open a trade from Japan for the disposal of them. Should they be able to accomplish this trade it would be a great acquisition, as it would procure them vast quantities of silver and gold, and the furs would sell for 300 per cent. more than they do at China. The trade is carried on by the Chinese at an amazing advantage.⁴

The Russian Ambassador in London, Count Semyon Romanovich Vorontsov, forwarded this information to State Secretary Pavel A. Soimonov in St. Petersburg. Together with the information on the success of the *Sea Otter's* voyage, Vorontsov forwarded to Soimonov a proposal from James Trevenen, an unemployed naval lieutenant who had been with Cook on his last expedition, for a Russian expedition to the North Pacific. Trevenen referred to Cook's intention, before his death, of exploring the coasts of China and Japan and as, 'to all appearance this project is no longer thought of here', he had resolved to offer his services to the Empress of Russia to undertake the proposed expedition. The opening of trade to Japan, he thought, gave reason to entertain the most flattering hopes of changing 'the useless and uninhabited wastes of the bay of Awatchka into the flourishing neighbourhood of a commercial city [Petropavlovsk] which may extend its influence over the whole country of Kamchatka and produce a revolution throughout the affairs of the eastern world.'⁵

⁴ *The London Chronicle; The Whitehall Evening Post; St. James's Chronicle.*

⁵ Charles Vinicombe Penrose, *A Memoir of James Trevenen*, edited by Christopher Lloyd and R. C. Anderson, (London: Navy Records Society, 1959), 90–91.

Upon receipt of the information concerning the voyage of the *Sea Otter*, Simonov submitted a memorandum in December 1786, 'Notes on Trade and Hunting in the Eastern Ocean', to Vorontsov's brother, Count A. R. Vorontsov, President of the Ministry of Commerce, and to Count Ivan Grigoryevich Chernyshev, the Naval Minister, warning of the danger posed to the Russian interests in the 'Eastern Sea' by the encroachment of the English traders:

The sloop Otter sent by their East India Company, returning from the St. George Channel [Nootka Sound] which lies at about 50° latitude, brought to Canton bartered soft goods [furs] worth up to 30,000 pounds sterling. Her captain, Macintosh, asserts that if he had been supplied with goods for trading with the Americans [natives] he could have obtained a cargo worth up to 100,000 pounds while the outfitting of his vessel cost no more than 1,000 pounds sterling. On such basis the English already nourish the hope to extend this trade not only in China but also in Japan and consider it a source of great potential riches.⁶

A report from Kamchatka published in St. Petersburg on 19 December 1786 could not have but reinforced Russian concern about English encroachment:

Accounts are received from Capt. Ismayloff, Governor of Kamschatka, that two armed ships, under English colours, from the coast of America, with a cargo of furs, were put into the island of Metmi [Matsumae, i.e. Yezo, now Hokkaido]; that on their arrival they were not allowed to land or even traffic for fresh provisions, but after making the Prince some valuable presents of European articles, they had entered into a league of friendship with him for the carrying on a traffic with the Japanese for the disposal of their cargoes, which chiefly consisted of furs; that before the sloop which brought the intelligence sailed from Metmi, they had made several voyages to the Coast of Japan, and met with great success; that they were preparing to leave some of their people on the island, to whom the Prince had promised protection; and had actually betrothed one of his daughters to the supercargo who was

⁶ А. Л. Нарочницкий, А. И. Алексеев, *Русские экспедиции по изучению Северной Части Тихого океана во второй половине XVIII в. Сборник документов* (Moscow: Nauka, 1984) Document No. 71, 225–8; cited in Lydia Black, '“The Russians were Coming...”', Robin Inglis (ed.), *Spain and the North Pacific Coast* (Vancouver: Maritime Museum Society, 1992); and in James R. Gibson, 'The Abortive First Russian Circumnavigation: Captain Mulovsky's 1787 Expedition to the North Pacific', *Terrae Incognitae*, Vol. 31, 1999, 49–60.

to be left on the island as commander of the party, for the carrying on a correspondence with the Japanese and Kurile islands.⁷

This referred to the *Lark*, under William Peters, and the *Sea Otter*, under William Tipping. The *Lark* left Macao under the command of Peters in July 1786. As stated by Soimonov, the English merchants were interested in extending their trade to Japan, and Peters was instructed to make his passage between Japan and Korea, and to examine the islands to the north of Japan.⁸ After calling at Matsumae (Yezo) and Petropavlovsk, he was lost with his vessel on Mednyy Island, one of the Commander Islands. *The Calcutta Gazette* of 4 April 1793 reported:

The Phoenix, Captain Moore, just returned from the N.W. Coast of America, brings the first substantiated accounts which we have heard of the loss of the Lark, Captain Peters, which vessel was fitted out from this port some years ago. The Lark was lost on Beering's Island off Kamscatca [in fact, on the neighbouring Mednyy, or Copper Island], and several of the crew got on shore; but owing to the hardships they underwent from the inclemency of the climate, and want of necessaries, only four survived, who were relieved by a Russian vessel, which carried them to Siberia, where they have met with the most humane and attentive treatment from the Russians – they are two Portugeze and two lascars, and are still residing at Irkush in Siberia.⁹

The *Sea Otter*, under Tipping, sailed from Calcutta on 1 February 1786 and, according to his journal, 'made his passage between Korea and Japan; had communication with the inhabitants of the latter; and had visited some of the islands to the northeast of Japan'.¹⁰ The *Sea Otter* was lost during her return voyage from the North West Coast of America, but before then Tipping had encountered James Strange, another fur trader, near Prince William Sound on 5 September 1786, and showed him his journal. The Russian fur trader Grigory Shelikhov went to Petropavlovsk to meet Peters and bought goods from him, engaging to buy more on future visits. Shelikhov subsequently made a report to the Governor-General at Irkutsk, in which he warned that 'it may be seen that foreign nations

⁷ *The General Evening Post* 1 February 1787, *The Gentleman's Magazine* February 1787.

⁸ *European Magazine*, November 1788.

⁹ See also Black, n. 20; and J. J. B. de Lesseps, *Travels in Kamchatka* (London: n.p., 1790), Vol. 1, 10–11.

¹⁰ 'New Fur Trade', *The World*, 6 and 13 October 1788; *The European Magazine*, November 1788.

that are not contiguous to our possessions and have not the slightest rights to this sea are endeavouring to reap the great benefits that properly belong to the Russian throne and to its subjects'.¹¹

Trevenen's proposal, and the memorandum from Soimonov caused A. P. Vorontsov and his colleague, Count A. A. Bezborodko to advise the Empress in a memorandum of 22 December 1786 [1 January 1787]¹² to declare to the other European powers that the Kuriles, together with the Aleutians and North West Coast of America belonged to Russia by right of discovery and that no other nation could therefore sail to or settle there. To enforce this claim, they recommended the sending of 'two armed ships, on the model of those used by Captain Cook, as well as two armed naval sloops, or other vessels', from the Baltic around the Cape of Good Hope and, with stops at Batavia or Canton, to Kamchatka and beyond, where they would defend Russian enterprise and dominion, make more discoveries, and perfect existing charts. One of the ships would examine the Kurile Islands while the other would explore the Aleutians and the American coast as far East as Prince William Sound. Vorontsov and Bezborodko supported a recommendation by Soimonov that a new port be founded at the mouth of the Uda River, which would be better placed than Okhotsk to serve as a base for Russian sovereignty in the region, and they proposed that the expedition be assigned this task.¹³

The Russian Court had already considered a proposal to send an expedition to the North West Coast of America. In 1781–82, inspired by what he had learned of the findings of Cook's final voyage in the North Pacific, the merchant adventurer William Bolts, who since 1776 had been trading to India and China under an Imperial charter, had developed for the Austrian Emperor Joseph II a plan for a voyage of circumnavigation whose political, scientific and commercial objects would include exploration and colonization of the North West Coast of America

¹¹ А. И. Андреев, *Русские открытия в Тихом океане и Северной Америке в XVIII веке* (Moscow: 1948), Document No. 19, 214–218; and A. I. Andreyev, *Russian Discoveries in the Pacific and in North America in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, translated by Carl Ginsberg (Ann Arbor: American Council of Learned Societies, 1952), Document No. 7, 72–76.

¹² The Julian Calendar used in Russia was eleven days behind the Gregorian Calendar used in Western Europe in the eighteenth century.

¹³ Narochnitskii et al., Document No. 72, 229–232; and Ал. П. Соколов, «Приготовление кругосветной экспедиции 1787 года, под начальством Муловского», *Записки Гидрографического Департамента Морского Министерства*, часть VI, 1848 г., 142–91.

and the Kurile Islands.¹⁴ It was to have been carried out by Bolts in command of a ship belonging to the Imperial Asiatic Society of Trieste. Nathaniel Portlock, who led an English fur-trading expedition to the North West Coast in 1786, claimed that Hanna's voyage owed its inspiration to this scheme of Bolts. The *Sea Otter* had been chartered in Canton by John Reid and John Henry Cox who headed a consortium of British merchants. John Reid had been set up at Canton in 1779 as Austrian consul and agent of William Bolts's Imperial East India Company of Trieste.¹⁵ Reid had been at Canton in November–December 1779 when Cook's ships, *Discovery* and *Resolution*, under the command of James King, had caused a sensation by selling the sea otter pelts they had obtained for trinkets on the North West American coast in the course of the great navigator's third expedition.¹⁶ Reid had presumably reported this to Bolts, who immediately grasped the possibilities of the new commercial opportunities opened up by Cook's voyage. In the account of the voyage he published in 1789, Portlock wrote:

As early indeed as 1781, a well-known individual, Mr. Bolts, attempted an adventure to the North Pacific Ocean from the bottom of the Adriatic, under the emperor's flag; but this feeble effort of an imprudent man failed prematurely, owing to causes which have not yet been sufficiently explained. The project of Bolts appears to have been early adopted by the British subjects who are settled in Asia... And a brig of sixty tons, with twenty men, under the command of James Hanna, was, in pursuit of this flattering object, dispatched from the river of Canton in April 1785.¹⁷

When plans for an Austrian venture fell through, the Emperor consented in November 1782 to a request from Bolts to place his proposal before Catherine II,

¹⁴ Walter Markov, 'Спорна питања око Тршћанске Индиске Компаније/Sporna pitanja oko Trscanske Indiske Kompanije (1775–1785)', *Историски Часопис/Istoriski Časopis*, (Beograd), Vol. 8, 1958–1959, 69–82.

¹⁵ Franz von Pollack-Parnau, 'Eine österreich-ostindische Handelskompanie, 1775–1785: Beitrag zur österreichische Wirtschaftsgeschichte unter Maria Theresia und Joseph II', *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, Beiheft 12, Stuttgart, 1927, 42, 78.

¹⁶ Catherine Gaziello, *L'expédition de Lapérouse, 1785–1788*, (Paris: CTHS, 1984), 49–50.

¹⁷ Nathaniel Portlock, *A Voyage Round the World* (London: Stockdale, 1789), 2–3; W. Kaye Lamb and Tomás Bartoli, 'James Hanna and John Henry Cox: the First Maritime Fur Trader and His Sponsor', *BC Studies*, No. 84, 1989–90, 3–36.

then on friendly terms with Austria.¹⁸ In his petition to the Emperor, Bolts said that the expedition would sail from Trieste under the Russian flag.¹⁹ He sent a letter dated 17 December 1782 to the Russian Vice-Chancellor Ivan Andreyevich Ostermann, explaining his proposal. The details of his plan were set out in a separate document, but it appears to have been the same as the proposal he subsequently put to the French Court in 1785. He outlined to Ostermann his plan to send his ship the *Cobenzell* from Trieste to the North West Coast of America by way of Cape Horn under naturalised British officers who had made the voyage with Captain Cook, of whose charts and plans Bolts had obtained copies. The North West Coast should be claimed for Russia, and this would enable a most advantageous commerce between that region and Kamchatka, all the coasts of Asia and as far as East Africa, as well as all the islands in between. He also held out the prospect of discovering ‘the communication strongly suspected to exist between Hudson’s Bay and the Pacific’ in the region to taken possession of for the Empress. Some of the Pacific islands along the way could be suitable for sugar plantations to provide Russia with a direct supply of that commodity. For the conduct of this enterprise, Bolts required an advance of 150,000 roubles, against which as security he offered the *Cobenzell* and her cargo, then at Trieste preparing for her voyage to India and China.²⁰

When the Russians proved unresponsive, probably because Trieste was an unacceptable home port for a Russian expedition, Bolts put his plan before Joseph’s brother-in-law, Louis XVI, who adopted the concept (though not its author), sending out the Lapérouse expedition in July 1785.²¹ In September 1787, this expedition called at Petropavlovsk, Kamchatka, whence Lapérouse’s journal and

¹⁸ Referat der Staatskanzlei, Kaunitz an Joseph II, 26 November 1782, Wiener Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHSTA), Staatskanzlei, *Staatenabteilungen, Ostindische Compagnie – Triest-Antwerpen (OIC)*, K.2, Konv. 1781–1784, f. 6; cited in Pollack-Parnau, 88; see also contract of 20 December 1782, Wiener Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHSTA Vienna), Ost-indische Compagnie (OIC) vi, and Hofkammerarchiv (HKA, Vienna), *Commerz, Litorale 1749–1813*, n. 103, fasc. i–iv; cited in Walter Markov, ‘La Compagnia Asiatica di Trieste’, *Studi storici*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1961, 3–28.

¹⁹ Bolts to Joseph II, 25 November 1782, HHSTA Vienna, Staatskanzlei, *Staatenabteilungen, Ostindische Compagnie – Triest-Antwerpen (OIC)*, K.2, Konv. 1781–1784, ff. 7–9.

²⁰ Bolts to Ostermann, 17 December 1782, Российский государственный архив древних актов (Moscow), *fond Gosarkhiva, razryad 24, delo 61*; cited in Glynn Barratt, *Russia in Pacific Waters, 1715–1825* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1981), 89, 254.

²¹ Bolts à Castries, 25 de janvier 1785 and 9 de avril 1785, Rigsarkivet (Stockholm), *Handel och Sjöfart*, 193, ‘W. Bolts’ forslag till kolonisation af en ö... 1786–1790’; cited in Holden Furber, ‘In

other reports were carried back to Versailles over land through Siberia and Russia, including St. Petersburg, by Barthélemy de Lesseps.²²

From the time she had first learned of it, Catherine had regarded the expedition of Lapérouse as a threat to Russian interests in the North Pacific.²³ The Spanish ambassador in St Petersburg reported to Madrid in February 1786:

I have information on how greatly this Court suspects that the French expedition under the command of Mr. de la Peyrouse has the aim of taking possession of a port not far from Kamchatka, where the river to which the English explorer Cook put his name empties into the sea. It is believed here that from this place France will be able to carry on a most profitable trade in furs, there being a great demand for this kind of goods in Japan, China and in other parts on the coasts of Asia. This has given rise to talk of making another expedition by sea from Archangel to the same port, following the course of the French frigates to observe them and to make sure of arriving before them; but as this thought has not been put into effect during the course of the last year, I suppose it to have been set aside, but the expedition by land which has been sent out from here and their views on the territorial boundaries of China surely have for their main object the securing of the said branch of commerce.²⁴

Perhaps Catherine recalled the advantages William Bolts had held out from such an enterprise, which had obviously found ready support at the French Court. Within ten weeks of the sailing of the Lapérouse expedition, orders were drawn up in St. Petersburg for a ‘geographical and astronomical’ expedition to easternmost Siberia, the Aleutian Islands and Alaska, under the command of Captain Joseph Billings. This was reported in *The St. Petersburg Gazette* of 28 June 1785:

the Footsteps of a German “Nabob”: William Bolts in the Swedish Archives’, *The Indian Archives*, Vol. 12, Nos. 1–2, January–December 1958, 16.

²² Lesseps, 208–17. Whitworth to Grenville, 18 May 1792 with enclosure no. 2, *Wason Collection*, Cornell University, docs. nos. 119 and 359, quoted in J. L. Cranmer-Byng, ‘Russian and British Interests in the Far East, 1791–1793’, *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Vol. X, 1968, 357–75.

²³ Barratt (1981), 92.

²⁴ Normande to Floridablanca, St Petersburg, 17 February 1786, Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid), *Estado*, legajo 4289 (copy held at Library of Congress Manuscripts Division, Foreign Copying Project Reproductions); quoted in Anthony H. Hull, *Spanish and Russian Rivalry in the North Pacific Regions of the New World*, University of Alabama PhD thesis, UMI microfilm, 112–3.

H. M. the Czarina has ordered an enterprise directed at removing the doubt that still remains concerning the extent and position of the coasts of eastern Siberia, and of those of that part of the American Continent opposite them, as well as of the Islands situated in the intermediate seas. The Officer, to whom this charge has been committed, is Mr. Billings, companion of Captain Cook in his last voyage. He has orders to go overland to eastern Siberia, to determine the true position of the River Kolyma, and of the coasts of the country inhabited by the Chukchis, who have voluntarily submitted themselves to the sceptre of Catherine II. Afterwards he will embark at Okhotsk for the purpose of completing the chart of the Islands tributary to Russia, and maps of the ports or harbours of America, whither go the vessels from Okhotsk for trafficking in furs; and finally to fill in the gaps that remain from the former navigators concerning various coasts and Islands of the eastern Ocean. Six years will be spent on this expedition; and the commander, who will be accompanied by an able Botanist, goes with all the aids and instruments proper for perfecting Geography and the physical knowledge in general of the terraqueous globe.²⁵

The arrival of the French expedition in the North Pacific, and even more the encroachments of English (and Spanish) voyagers a region regarded by Russians with a proprietorial eye, demanded that Billings's scientific survey be complemented by a naval force capable of occupying and defending Russian sovereignty, and plans were drawn up for an expedition of five ships under the command of Captain Grigory Ivanovich Mulovsky, charged with exploring the North West coast of America and claiming it for Russia, as well as opening up trade with Japan.²⁶ The Empress's ukase authorizing the expedition was issued on 22 December 1786 (2 January 1787 new style), and specifically stated that it was being sent out 'for the protection of our rights to the lands discovered by Russian navigators', because of 'the attempt on the part of English merchants to trade and hunt in the Eastern Sea'.²⁷

²⁵ Reported in the *Gazeta de Madrid*, 12 agosto 1785.

²⁶ Admiralty instructions to Mulovsky, April 1787; quoted in Sokolov, 142–91; and in Narochnitskii et al., Document no. 75. В. А. Дивин, «Кругосветная экспедиция Муловского», in *Русские Мореплаватели на Тихом Океане в XVIII веке* (Moscow: 'Mysl', 1971), 287–93; Barratt (1981), 74–99.

²⁷ Basil Dmytryshyn, E. A. P. Crownhart-Vaughan and Thomas Vaughan (eds.), *Russian Penetration of the North Pacific Ocean, 1700–1797*, Volume 2, *To Siberia and America* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1988), 325.

Mulovsky was the natural son of the Naval Minister, Count Ivan Grigoryevich Chernyshev (hence he bore his mother's surname), and was aged twenty-nine. He had been trained in the British Navy, spoke four languages (he had served a period in the British navy, and George Forster said he spoke English like a born Englishman) and was considered the fleet's best officer. He had graduated from the Naval Academy in 1772, had commanded a 74-gun ship in the Mediterranean in 1782, and become Captain of the First Rank in 1784. His name was mentioned in a report in the *Gazeta de Madrid* of 17 December 1782, which stated that on 11 November the Russian 74-gun ship *David*, under her Captain, 'Mr. Molosky', had anchored in the port of Leghorn, and that the ship was one of a squadron that would spend the winter in the Mediterranean. The same journal recorded the departure on 10 December of the *David*, commanded by 'Capitan Morosqui', for Naples, where she was to take on board official gifts from the King of Sicily.

P. S. Pallas, Russia's foremost naturalist, drew up a memorandum of advice for the expedition. As the expedition's naturalist and official chronicler, Pallas recommended George Forster, who had accompanied his father, Johann Reinhold Forster, on Cook's expedition of 1772–1775 and who was currently Professor of Natural History at the University of Vilna (Vilnius).²⁸ Pallas recommended that the expedition found new settlements: on Sakhalin as a base for Russian power in the region; and on Urup, one of the Kuriles, which would 'serve as a focus for direct trade by sea with China and Japan'. Urup was also favoured by William Bolts as the place for a settlement in his plan for exploration and trade with China and Japan, and perhaps Pallas was influenced by this.²⁹ Bolts drew on G. F. Muller's *Voyages et Decouvertes faites par les Russes*, published in Amsterdam in 1766, which contained a list and description of the Kurile islands, including Urup whose people were said to trade with the Japanese but were not under their control, and presumably Pallas also relied on this source.³⁰ In fact, a small Russian presence had been established on Urup by the fur trader Ivan

²⁸ G. I. Spassky (ed.), 'Pis'mo professora P. S. Pallasa k grafu Ivanu Grigoryevichu Chernyshevu', *Moskvityanin*, pt. 6, no. 23, kn. 1, 1849, 53–57; В. А. Дивин, *Русская тихоокеанская эпопея* (Khabarovsk, 1979), supplement to document 127, 545–49.

²⁹ Bolts à Castries, 25 de janvier 1785 and 9 de avril 1785, Rigsarkivet (Stockholm), Handel och Sjöfart, 193.

³⁰ Gerhard Friedrich Muller, *Voyages from Asia to America, for completing the discoveries of the North West Coast of America*, translated by Thomas Jefferys (London: Jefferys, 1761).

Chernyi in 1768, acting on instructions from the Governor of Siberia. During the 1770s it was the base for attempts to establish trade with the Japanese on Yezo (Hokkaido) which came to an end when it was destroyed by a tsunami in June 1780.³¹ The attractions of the Kuriles, presumed to be independent of Russia and Japan, had been described by James King in *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*:

Should we be so fortunate as to find in these islands any safe and commodious harbours, we conceived they might be of importance, either as places of shelter for any future navigators... or as the means of opening a commercial intercourse among the neighbouring dominions of the two empires [Russia and Japan].³²

In addition to the four naval ships proposed for the expedition by Vorontsov and Bezborodko and authorized by the Imperial ukase of 22 December 1786 / 2 January 1787, Pallas recommended a transport ship be added to the squadron to carry all the supplies directly to Okhotsk. This was accepted, and the ships comprising the expedition were the flagship, *Kholmogor* (600 tons, 38 guns, 169 men), the *Solovki* (530 tons, 20 guns, 154 men), the *Sokol* (450 tons, 16 guns, 111 men), *Turukhtan* (450 tons, 16 guns, 111 men) and the smaller transport *Smelyi* (10 guns, 91 men).

James Trevenen was called to St. Petersburg to take command of one of the ships of the expedition. The Empress's instructions were for the expedition to rendezvous in Portsmouth, England, thence to proceed to the Cape of Good Hope by way of Lisbon, Madeira and Rio de Janeiro. From the Cape, the commander was given the choice of proceeding to the North Pacific by either the Straits of Malacca or the Sunda Strait and Manila, Formosa or Canton, or by the South of New Holland, the Friendly and Society Islands and Hawaii. He was allowed discretion to sail to the English colony at Botany Bay in New Holland if the ships needed to repair damage or if circumstances required it.³³ After arriving off the northern coast of Japan, Mulovsky was to attempt to obtain fresh provisions from

³¹ George A. Lensen, *The Russian Push toward Japan: Russo-Japanese Relations, 1697–1875* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 61–85; Valery O. Shubin, 'Russian Settlements in the Kuril Islands in the 18th and 19th centuries', *Russia in North America: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Russian America* (Kingston and Fairbanks: Limestone Press, 1990), 425–450.

³² *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* (London: Nicoland Cadel, 1784), Vol. III, 384–76.

³³ Glynn Barratt, *The Russian Navy and Australia to 1825* (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1979), 2.

the coastal residents. He was also 'not to miss the slightest opportunity to obtain the most reliable information on that country, especially the northern part and the large islands lying near its northern margin'. As well, 'in all cases the Japanese and Kurilians living on the nearest islands are to be treated in a friendly manner, and the establishment of trade is to be attempted'. The expedition was then to split into three detachments: the *Smelyi* transport was to go directly to Petropavlovsk to deliver provisions there; two ships were to investigate thoroughly the Kurile islands, the Japanese territories of Matsumae and Yezo (i.e. Hokkaido), Sakhalin and the Amur estuary as well as the Shantar Islands, while the remaining two ships, including the *Kholmogor* under the command of Mulovsky, were to proceed to the North West American coast, between 40° and 50° North.

The detachment sent to the Kuriles was to circumnavigate the archipelago and describe all the islands, chart them accurately, and take formal possession of them for Russia by posting markers and burying medals with inscriptions in the Russian and Latin languages. It was also to examine the coasts, bays and harbours of the islands and make a record of their resources, particularly those of Urup, with a view to finding the best site for a settlement with arable land, fresh water, timber for building and ship construction, and a good port. Time and wind permitting, a search was to be made for any large and unknown lands to the East of the Kuriles and Japan, the legendary Staten and Company (or Da Gama) Lands. The island of Sakhalin was to be sailed around and described, and its resources and inhabitants reported on. The expedition was to investigate the mouths of the Amur and Uda rivers as well as the Shantar Islands which lay at the mouth of the Uda, with a view to establishing a new port there, as had been recommended by State Secretary Soimonov. The ships were then to sail first to Okhotsk for repairs and supplies and then to Petropavlovsk to rendezvous with Mulovsky's detachment returning from America.

The American detachment under Mulovsky himself was to proceed to 'the St. George Sound or Nootka Haven discovered by Captain Cook', which was to be explored, and it was to be ascertained if the English or some other European power had established an outpost there or were preparing to do so: 'From this locality you are to proceed along the American coast to that part thereof which was discovered by Russian Captains Chirikov and Bering and you are to take possession for the Russian State of that coast from the harbour of Nootka to the

point where Chirikov's discovery begins, if no other State is occupying it'.³⁴ In any case, formal possession was to be taken of the coast and islands to the North of that point. However, the Aleutian Islands and the coast north of the Alaska Peninsula were not to be explored, that task being left to the expedition commanded by Captain Joseph Billings. If any foreign vessel had anchored in Prince William Sound or Cook Inlet, it was to be removed, by force if necessary, and any foreign settlements were to be destroyed and all markers removed. Mulovsky's ships were to proceed along the southern coasts of the Aleutians to rejoin the rest of the squadron at Petropavlovsk. There he was to assist Billings, if his expedition had not yet departed, by lending him one or two ships for surveying the northern coasts of the Aleutians and the American coast as far north as Cape Rodney, at 64°30' North and, time, wind and other circumstances permitting, as far south as Cape Blanco, at 42°50' North. The expedition was to spend the winter either on the North West Coast, at Hawaii or at Petropavlovsk.

The main object of the whole expedition was, according to Mulovsky's instructions, 'barring foreigners from sharing in or dividing the fur trade with Russian subjects on the islands, coasts and lands discovered by Russian navigators and rightfully belonging to Russia'. The expedition was to take possession of lands not subject to any other power by raising the Russian flag, affixing a medal to a cross or an inscribed post raised on a promontory some distance from the shore, and putting one copper and one silver coin in a tarred stone vessel and an inscription in Russian and Latin in a tarred bottle and burying them in the ground; or a medal was to be affixed to a large raised post or to a boulder. Native people were to be treated without resort to force, if at all possible, and given small presents. All journals were to be surrendered to the Admiralty upon the expedition's return to Kronstadt.

Spain's Ambassador to St. Petersburg, Pedro Normande, advised in February 1787 that news had been received in Russia about English trading vessels bringing sea otter skins to China at immense profit, 'from the coasts of America facing Kamchatka, which are continuous with those of California' (a reference to the news of Hanna's voyage). This had aroused the interest of the Empress, but great care was being taken to hide all signs of official concern. Normande wrote that Captain 'Moloski', the natural son of the Minister of Marine, had been

³⁴ Sokolov, 142–91; Narochnitskii, et al., Document no. 75, 232–43; cited in Black, 31–2.

chosen to command a squadron of four men-of-war being sent to Kamchatka to protect Russian interests, and that Academician Pallas had helped him plan the voyage. Meetings at the Admiralty with a secretary of the Empress's cabinet had resulted in an official proclamation, plans and maps for Mulovsky. Normande had discovered that Catherine and her ministers were contemplating a declaration of Russian sovereignty over all of North America from Mount St. Elias eastward to the neighbourhood of Hudson's Bay. Announcement of this sovereignty would be communicated to other European Powers, declaring that Mulovsky's expedition was to secure those possessions and defend them against other nations seeking to make settlements there. The two frigates and transports would sail by way of the Cape of Good Hope and join the expedition led by Joseph Billings at Okhotsk.³⁵

Normande's report was read with concern in Madrid, where the Government had already at the end of January 1787 sent orders to Mexico for a pair of ships to go to the North West coast to investigate the extent of Russian advance.³⁶ This expedition left the port of San Blas in Mexico in March 1788, and upon reaching the island of Unalaska in July 1788 learned of the Russian intention to colonize Nootka from the head of the Russian fur trading settlement there. This man, Potap Kuzmich Zaikov, told the visiting Spanish commander, Esteban José Martínez, that 'the next year he expected two frigates from Kamchatka which, together with a schooner, would go to settle the port of Nootka to block English trade'. In an apparent reference to Hanna's voyage, he said 'his Government intended taking this action because an English trading vessel had come to Canton from Nootka in 1785 loaded with a variety of furs, and its captain had claimed that the English had a right to trade and possess land along that coast because of the discoveries of Captain Cook'.³⁷ Communication between the Russian and Spanish parties was facilitated by the pilot with the Spanish ships, Istvan (or Esteban) Mandofia,

³⁵ Normande to Floridablanca, St. Petersburg, 16 February 1787, Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid), *Estado*, 4289; quoted in Anthony H. Hull, *Spanish and Russian Rivalry in the North Pacific Regions of the New World* (University of Alabama PhD thesis, UMI microfilm), 113–7; and in Warren L. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543–1819* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 116.

³⁶ M. S. Al'perovich, 'К предыстория Нутка-Зундского кризиса (1789–1790)', *Amerikanskii Ezhegodnik* (Moscow: Nauka, 2000), 76–85.

³⁷ Esteban José Martínez, *Diario*, Archivo General de Indias, V. Audiencia de México, 1529; quoted in Francisco Antonio Maurelle, 'Cuarta exploración de la costa septentrional de Californias... en el año 1786', Museo Naval (Madrid), ms. 331; cited in Cook, 123.

a native of Ragusa (Dubrovnik), whose own language proved equal to the task of interpreter, although he was ‘very hard to understand.’³⁸ The official Spanish account of Martínez’s voyage published in the press said disarmingly:

Mr. Martinez investigated the Shumagin islands and many others unknown to Captain Cook, stopping afterwards at Unalaska, where he was received very cordially by the Russian Commissar, Mr. Saicost Potap Cusmich, who commanded the colony, where there were 70 Russians serving and one gal-
liot. The Spanish Navigator, after having stayed a month at Unalaska, set sail and returned to the port of San Blas, by way of Monterey and the Santa Barbara Channel, without touching the coast at Nootka where the Russians had no settlement. The fruit of this expedition has been to dissipate the unease there had been on the subject of the pretended hostility of the Russians, of whom we have had proofs, on the contrary, of the most generous hospitality.³⁹

This was published at the very moment when Martínez had returned to fortify Nootka to prevent its occupation by the Russians, the English or anyone else. The news Martínez brought from Unalaska, confirming the intelligence provided by Ambassador Normande from St. Petersburg, prompted the Viceroy of Mexico to send him back to Nootka immediately to occupy the port, and the Spanish home government in Madrid was stimulated to send a full-scale expedition from Spain to the Pacific.⁴⁰ Commanded by Alexandro Malaspina, it left Cadiz at the end of July 1789 with among its tasks that of making an investigation of any Russian settlements on the North West coast of America.

Meanwhile, in June 1787, Mulovsky made a visit to George Forster at his residence at the University of Vilna and invited him to join the expedition as naturalist and official chronicler.⁴¹ Full of enthusiasm, Forster wrote to his friend,

³⁸ R. G. Liapunova and S. G. Fedorova (eds.), *Русская Америка в неопубликованных записках К. Т. Хлебникова* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1979), 94; cited in Black, 29.

³⁹ Report from Madrid of 6 August, carried in the *Journal Politique de Bruxelles/Mercure de France*, 15 août 1789.

⁴⁰ Robert J. King, ‘Ambrose Higgins, Lapérouse and the Genesis of the Malaspina Expedition’, *Derroteros de la Mar del Sur*, (Lima), año 7, núm. 7, 1999, 79–88. Also at: <http://web.mala.bc.ca/black/amrc/vault.htm>.

⁴¹ Josef Haubelt, ‘Haenke, Born y Banks’, *Ibero-Americana Pragensia*, Vol. IV, 1970, 182; Sokolov, 142–91; Логгин И. Голенишев-Кутузов, *Предприятие Императрицы Екатерины II для путешествия вокруг света в 1786 году* (St Petersburg: tip. Morskogo kadetskogo korpusa, 1840).

Samuel Thomas Soemmerring, inviting him to join the expedition as surgeon, and outlining its proposed itinerary:

Still I myself do not quite dare to abandon the sweet intoxication of the idea that we both, united again in a way which exceeds our most ardent desires, entered jointly on such an active course, working hand in hand with each other, taking equal care for fame and fortune, will visit England, Lisbon, Madeira, Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope, New Holland, New Zealand, the Friendly, Society and Sandwich Islands, the Coast of America, Kurile Islands, Japan and China – and everywhere our zeal for Science will be left unhindered!⁴²

Soemmerring declined the invitation, leaving the way open for the Bohemian, Thaddaeus Haenke, to join the intended Russian expedition as Forster's assistant, as Haenke explained in a letter to a friend:

I must tell you before anyone else, that I have the greatest hopes of making the voyage round the world with Forster, the one which the Empress of Russia will send out over the coming years and which, on Jacquin's own recommendation and with a considerable salary, I will accompany as Botanist... at the beginning of March 1788, we will sail from England where the ships of the expedition lie at anchor, southward into the great, wide world.⁴³

Forster explained in a letter of 6 August 1787 to his publisher:

The voyage goes in March 1788 from England (whither the ships will go in September from Petersburg) by the Cape to New Holland, New Zealand, Otaheiti, the Sandwich Islands, the coast of North America and from Japan to Kamchatka and the neighbouring areas, but only to the South of the Bering Strait. The Empress has given the Captain carte blanche, and spared no expense.⁴⁴

The London newspaper, *The Daily Universal Register*, of 21 September 1787, carried a report from Hamburg dated 24 August, saying that:

⁴² Forster to Sömmerring, Vilna, 17 June 1787, *Georg Forsters Werke: sämtliche Schriften*, (Berlin: Akademie-verlag, 1978), Bd. 14, *Briefe, 1784–1787*, 696.

⁴³ Haenke to Abbé Franz Anton Spielmann, Wien, 18 September 1787; quoted in Josef Kühnel, *Thaddeus Haenke: Leben und Wirken eines Forschers* (München: R. Lerche, 1960), 191.

⁴⁴ Forster to Johann Karl Philipp Spener, Vilna, 6 August 1787, *Forsters Werke*, Bd. 15, *Briefe, 1787–1789*, 26.

The Empress of Russia has given orders for a voyage to the East Indies to be set on foot. The object of this expedition is a commercial one to that part of the world. There will be on board of this fleet an historiographer, an astronomer, a botanist, and a delineator. We are assured, that Professor Forster, of Wilna, is to be the historiographer.⁴⁵

As the Mulovsky expedition had been organized because of Russian concern at the growing presence of the English in the Pacific, it would probably have visited the new English colony at Sydney Cove, New South Wales, some time during 1788. The preparations for the Botany Bay expedition were widely reported in the English and European press in late 1786. George Forster expected the Mulovsky expedition to visit New Holland, and in his article, 'Neuholland, und die britische Colonie in Botany-Bay' (written in November 1786 and published in the *Allgemeines historisches Taschenbuch... für 1787*) he wrote that New Holland was 'the future homeland of a new civilized society which, however mean its beginning may seem to be, nevertheless promises within a short time to become very important'.⁴⁶ In his biography of James Cook, written about the same time, he said: 'New Holland, considered as a centre of trade, appears to be favourably situated for linking India and America and, as it were, for maintaining dominance over the East Asian archipelagoes'.⁴⁷ The Lapérouse expedition, having received instructions during its call at Petropavlovsk to investigate the newly-settled English colony, did so in January–February 1788, and the Malaspina expedition undertook a close examination in March–April 1793; it is reasonable to expect the Russian government would also have wanted to obtain first hand intelligence on the colony.

Even as Mulovsky completed his preparations, war clouds were gathering. Catherine's ambitions to dismember the Ottoman Empire and to see her grandson Constantine installed on the throne at Constantinople brought the reaction that might have been expected from the Turkish *Kaisar*. The impositions of the 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji and Catherine's annexation of the Crimea nine years later provided sufficient provocations, and on 15 August 1787 the *Kaisar* placed

⁴⁵ See also *The Whitehall Evening Post*, 21 September 1787; *Gazeta de Madrid*, 28 setiembre 1787.

⁴⁶ Georg Forster's *Kleine Schriften: Ein Beytrag zur Völker- und Länderkunde, Naturgeschichte und Philosophie des Lebens, gesammelt von Georg Forster* (Leipzig: Kummer, 1789), pt 1, 233–74.

⁴⁷ 'Cook, der Entdecker', Vorrede für *Des Capitain Jacob Cook's Dritte Entdeckungs-Reise...* (Berlin: Haude und Spener, 1787); *Forster's Kleine Schriften*, 1–223.

the Russian ambassador in Constantinople under confinement, while his army commenced an attack on the Russian fortress of Kinburn at the mouth of the Dnieper. Nevertheless, preparations for the expedition continued up to the last moment. A report from St. Petersburg of 20 October 1787 said that:

Mr. Maulofsky, commander of the squadron destined for the Indies and coast of Kamtschatka, advised yesterday that he stood ready to make sail. He had provisions for three years, and officers and Marines had been embarked. It was believed by others that the departure of this detachment had been suspended in favour of another destination.⁴⁸

A report of similar date carried in *The Whitehall Evening Post* of 6 December 1787 said:

From Petersburg we also hear, that (even in the midst of 'wars, and rumours of wars') Catherine is determined to persevere in her grand object of CIRCUMNAVIGATION. For this purpose, the squadron destined for the Indies, and particularly for the coast of Kamschatka, is ready, or nearly ready, to sail, after having laid in provisions for three years.

When it became clear that the Swedish King, Gustaf III, was seeking to take advantage of Russia's embarrassment on the southern front to gain redress of his own grievances in the Eastern Baltic, all of Russia's naval resources were required to meet the crisis. Russian naval forces were also required for operations against the Ottoman Turks in the Mediterranean and Aegean. The Empress's ukase cancelling the expedition was issued on 28 October / 8 November 1787. *The Whitehall Evening Post* of 27 December 1787 carried news from St. Petersburg dated the preceding 20 November, which said:

Every disposition making throughout the wide-extended States of our august Sovereign announces a most obstinate war against the Turks. To support it without burthening her subjects too much, her Imperial Majesty has recourse to oeconomy... The same principle has occasioned the intended expedition to Kamschatka to be laid aside, orders having been sent to pay off and disarm the vessels which had been destined for that service.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Gazeta de Madrid*, 4 diciembre 1787.

⁴⁹ See also *Gazeta de Madrid*, 8 enero 1788.

John Cadman Etches, a London shipping merchant with good connections in Russia and with the British Government, and who was one of those involved in the attempt to establish a trade in furs from the North West Coast of America, published a description in June 1790 of his understanding of James Trevenen's proposed expedition:

So sensible was the Empress of Russia of the importance of this trade, that five sail of large frigates, armed *en flute*, were two years ago equipped at St. Petersburg, and furnished with every kind of stores, for the formation of settlements on the north-west coast, and on the opposite coasts of Asia, for establishing a complete Marine Yard for Ship building, and for prosecuting a regular system of commerce, on the most extensive scale, throughout the great Pacific. The equipment was made under the direction of Captain Trevannon, a lieutenant in the British Navy, and a favourite officer of the late Captain Cook, whom he accompanied in his last voyage. This naval expedition, when ready to depart, was frustrated by the rupture with Sweden... Captain Trevannon was to have acted in concert with a land expedition, of similar importance and purport, under the command of Captain Billens, another of Captain Cook's scholars, who was accompanied by 1500 attendants, and assistants, consisting of the most select mechanicks, artificers, &c. assembled from all parts of Europe, and who are now, and have been during the last four years, occupied in surveying the eastern coast, and large rivers of Asia.⁵⁰

Some of the resources assembled for the expedition were taken to Okhotsk for the use of Joseph Billings, who was also assigned some of Mulovsky's tasks. The Billings expedition, too, was almost cancelled: a courier from St. Petersburg reached Billings in Okhotsk in September 1788 with orders for him to return to St. Petersburg if he had not already left Okhotsk or was not on the point of sailing from there.⁵¹ Billings, however, was ready and did proceed with his

⁵⁰ [John Cadman Etches], *A Continuation of an Authentic Statement of All the Facts Relative to Nootka Sound* (London: Fores, 1790), 11–12. Etches and his brother, Richard, had with official support organized Nathaniel Portlock's and several related fur-trading voyages to the North West Coast; at the same time, Richard was the Empress's commissar-general of marine and in 1789 proposed using one of his fur-trading voyages from England as a covert means for attacking the Ottomans by capturing the port of Basra in the Persian Gulf (Sir James Bland Burges Papers, Vol. 51, ff. 12–40, Vol. 52, f. 107 and vols. 53–56, Bodleian Library, Oxford).

⁵¹ Martin Sauer, *An Account of a Geographical and Astronomical Expedition to the Northern Parts of Russia* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1802), 143.

expedition. By that time he had already completed the first of his voyages, which *The St. Petersburg Gazette* of 1 February 1788 reported:

The Court has received news of Mr. Beling, the English officer charged a year ago by the Empress with examining the coasts of the Frozen Ocean, as far as the eastern and northern extremities of Asia. After having successfully crossed the whole of Siberia this intrepid traveller constructed a ship proper for this hazardous voyage. He embarked in it down the Kolyma, and in the month of May last year debouched from that river to examine, following the coast, the cape where Captain Cook put an end to his exploration, and whose location he indicated at great variance with respect to that of the Russian voyagers before him. If the ice permits, which is not known, the bold enterprise of Mr. Beling proposes to double Cape Chukchi, and return to Kamchatka.⁵²

The St. Petersburg Gazette of 31 March 1788 further reported on the Billings expedition:

The Ministry has received news of the expedition made by order of the Empress to the seas that bathe the N.E. part of Siberia. Captain Belligas, the Commander, has already left the Kolyma, according to the most recent advice from as late as July 1787. The boats in which he should have embarked on the Lena being found not to be ready, as was proposed, to proceed from thence as far as the Frozen Ocean, he has undertaken his voyage from the Kolyma, thereby shortening his journey by a year, and being now more easily within reach of the point of Asia which extends to the N.E., than he would have been by going from the Lena to that part of the Northern Ocean.⁵³

The St. Petersburg Gazette of 13 April 1792 reported:

The Ministry has received news from Captain Billings, charged with prosecuting the Russian discoveries in the Pacific. During the year 1790 this navigator sailed along the Kuriles and Aleutians, where he found several new plants very useful for human food; and taking advantage of this useful discovery, he made a collection of them to test their cultivation in some region of our widespread dominions.⁵⁴

⁵² Reported in the *Gazeta de Madrid*, 8 marzo 1788.

⁵³ Reported in the *Gazeta de Madrid*, 23 mayo 1788.

⁵⁴ Reported in the *Gazeta de Madrid*, 25 mayo 1792.

Meanwhile, the Russo-Swedish war proceeded at enormous cost to both sides, St. Petersburg itself coming under danger of capture at one stage. Both Mulovsky and Trevenen gave distinguished service in the conflict, each surviving several battles before falling in action. *The Gentleman's Magazine* for September 1789 carried a Russian report of the death of Mulovsky during the Battle of Oeland (or Bornholm, as the battle took place in the waters between the two islands) of 26 July 1789 (15 July in the Julian calendar used then in Russia):

M. de Moulofsky, who commanded the leading ship of M. Spiridoff's division, made incredible efforts to approach the enemy, and had got a little nearer, as did also five other ships; they sustained the enemy's fire till eight o'clock in the evening, with little damage... The Russians have suffered an inexpressible loss in their brave Captain Moulofsky, who was wounded by a random shot almost at the beginning of the action; and about three quarters of an hour after he expired, bravely animating his crew.⁵⁵

James Trevenen's death in the Battle of Vyborg, 4 July 1790, was reported in the English press:

Letters from Petersburg say, that in the late naval engagement the Russians lost four of their British Captains, viz. Commodore Trevenen, a Lieutenant in our navy, and a pupil of the immortal Cook. Mr. Trevenen went out to Russia, at the particular request of the Empress, to take the command of a squadron destined for a voyage of discovery. On the war with the Turks this design was postponed; and Mr. Trevenen was offered a line of battle ship, and had since received the most honourable marks of the Empress's favour.⁵⁶

The newspaper report indicated that Trevenen was to have had command of a separate expedition to that of Mulovsky, though complementary to it. The St. Petersburg correspondent of the Edinburgh journal, *The Bee*, wrote: 'Public report said... that the commander, captain Molofsky was to conduct the division of the little squadron by the way of the Cape of Good Hope, whilst the captain of the second rank, Traveneon... was to take charge of the other, by the more dan-

⁵⁵ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, September 1789, 845. His last words were: «Братцы! не сдавайте корабля» ['Don't give up the ship, boys!'].

⁵⁶ *The Calcutta Gazette*, 17 March 1791; *The Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1790 contained an obituary by George Samwell.

gerous route of Cape Horn.⁵⁷ The British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, Charles Whitworth, wrote to the Foreign Secretary Lord Grenville in October 1791:

Two small squadrons were actually equipped at Cronstadt, and ready to sail for Kamtschatka the very moment the war with Sweden broke out. The one was commanded by Captain Travanion, an Englishman who had been with Captain Cook, and was to have gone round Cape Horn, the other by Captain Mulofskoi (a natural son of Count Iwan Chernicky and an excellent officer formed in the English Navy) who was to have gone round the Cape of Good Hope... These two commanders are since dead.⁵⁸

Whitworth reported that 'the Empress was much dissatisfied with the English having a settlement at Nootky Sound'. Whitworth subsequently wrote to Grenville on 18 May 1792 and, after referring to the abandoned Mulovsky / Trevenen expedition, said the Russians 'certainly build much on the advantages which they expect to derive from [Japan], and they consider Great Britain as the only Power capable of thwarting them'.⁵⁹ Subsequently, in June 1792 a Russian expedition under Lieutenant Adam Laxman sailed from Okhotsk to Nemuro in Yezo with the aim (which proved unsuccessful) of opening relations with Japan. *Lloyd's Evening Post* of 26 April 1794 reported:

A new channel of commerce has been proposed between the Japanese and the Russians, by a person from Japan who was shipwrecked on the Russian coast some years since, but returned home with the son of the Professor Laksman. He [Laksman] is now charged with a kind of treaty to the Japanese, promising to send a ship to Russia every year; but the want of ship-timber in Kamschatka is supposed to be a drawback upon this undertaking.

The Japanese castaway referred to in the newspaper report was the shipwrecked merchant, Daikokuya Kodaiyu, who had been met in Nizhni Kamchatsk

⁵⁷ Arcticus, 'Anecdotes of distinguished British Officers who fell in the Russian Naval Service during the last War with Sweden', *The Bee*, 8 May 1793, 13.

⁵⁸ Enclosed with Whitworth to Grenville, 18 May 1792, *Wason Collection*, Cornell University, doc. no. 119, quoted in Cranmer-Byng, 357–75. Perhaps the misunderstanding arose from the Admiralty's instructions for the expedition to divide to carry out separately the tasks assigned for the Kuriles and Japan, and for the North West American coast.

⁵⁹ Whitworth to Grenville, 18 May 1792, *Wason Collection*, Cornell University, doc. no. 119, quoted in Helen H. Robbins, *Our First Ambassador to China* (London: Murray, 1908), 362; and in Cranmer-Byng, 357–75.

by Barthélemy de Lesseps, the interpreter with the Lapérouse expedition, who was conveying the journal of Lapérouse from Petropavlovsk to Paris. De Lesseps described him in his subsequent book, published in translation in London in 1790 as *Travels in Kamchatka* (pp. 208–17). British Secretary of State William Grenville wrote to Whitworth enquiring as to whether Daikokuya could be recruited as an interpreter for the embassy that was being organized to be sent to China and Japan under George Macartney.⁶⁰ The Russians prevented any access to Daikokuya by Whitworth when he was brought to St. Petersburg, and used him themselves as an interpreter in 1792 during the expedition to Japan led by Adam Laxman, as reported in *Lloyd's Evening-Post*.

Although the Mulovsky expedition was postponed indefinitely in November 1787 due to the outbreak of war, the work done in preparing it was not without consequences. The reasons for sending out such an expedition remained cogent, and so Adam von Krusenstern's plan in 1799 for a renewed effort met with a favourable reception, leading to the 1803–1806 expedition of the *Nadezhda* and *Neva* to the North Pacific under his command. Many of the tasks intended for the Mulovsky expedition were carried out by Krusenstern. During a subsequent voyage, from Kronstadt to Novo-Arkhangelsk, the *Neva* under the command of Lieutenant Ludwig von Hagemeister was the first Russian ship to visit Port Jackson, 16 June–1 July 1807.⁶¹ Mulovsky's name is commemorated by Cape Mulovsky in Terpeniya Bay on Sakhalin, named by Krusenstern, as he recorded:

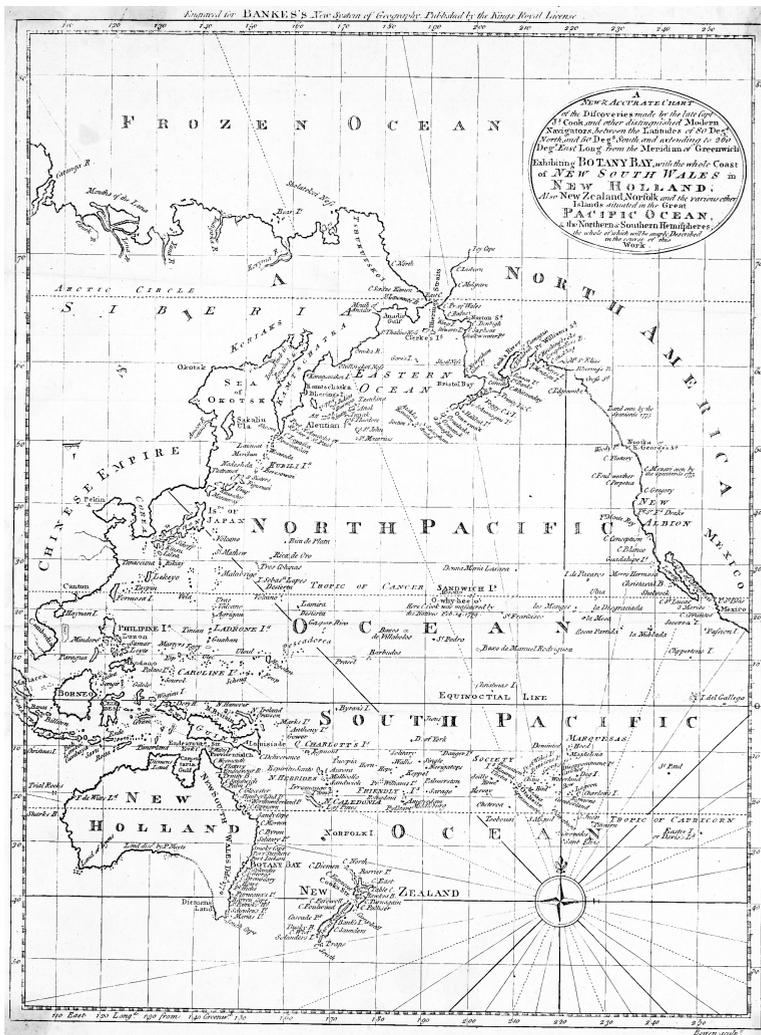
In honour of my first commander in the navy, the brave Captain Muloffsky, who, eighteen years before, was chosen as chief of a great and important voyage of discovery, which a hateful war (the Swedish affair), in which he himself gloriously perished, prevented from taking place. He died on the 17th July, 1789, in the battle near Bornholm (as commander of the Mstislaff,

⁶⁰ Whitworth to Grenville, 18 May 1792, *Wason Collection*, Cornell University, doc. no. 119, quoted in Robbins, 362; and in Cranmer-Byng, 357–75. See also Kasaki, Ryouhei, *Kodaiyu to Lakusuman: Bakumatsu Nichi-Rou Kousho no Isshokumen [Kodaiyu and Laxman: An Aspect of Japanese-Russian Relations in the Late Edo Period]* (Tokyo: Tosui Shobo, 1992). Kodaiyu's adventures were the subject of the 1992 joint French–Japanese film production, *Rêves de Russie/Oroshia Kokusui Mutan* (Toho).

⁶¹ Aleksandr Massov, 'The Visit of the Russian Sloop *Neva* to Sydney in 1807: 200 Years of Russian–Australian Contacts', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, Vol. 20, Nos. 1–2, 2006, 203–214.

74 guns), at the early age of twenty-seven, it being my sad lot to witness his last moments.⁶²

⁶² *Путешествие вокруг света въ 1803, 4, 5 и 1806 годах* (St Petersburg: Morskaya Tipografia, 1810), Pt. 2, 97; *Reise um die Welt* (Berlin: Haude und Spener, 1811), Pt. 2, 120; A. J. von Krusenstern, *Voyage round the World*, translated by Richard Belgrave Hoppner (London: John Murray, 1813), Vol. 2, 86 (the phrases enclosed within brackets only appear in the Russian and German editions respectively).



Thomas Bowen, A New & Accurate Chart of the Discoveries made by the late Capt. J. Cook and other distinguished Modern Navigators... exhibiting Botany Bay, with the whole Coast of New South Wales in New Holland, also New Zealand, Norfolk and the various other Islands situated in the Great Pacific Ocean, & the Northern & Southern Hemispheres, *Bankes's New System of Geography*, London, 1780. Available from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.map-nk1584-sd-cd>.