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Title: The Role of State in the Formation of the Russian-American Company

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The Role of State in the Formation of the Russian-American Company

The question of State influence of the private enterprise and their interaction is one of the pivotal and most debatable in New and Contemporary History. This is a problem one could hardly avoid while studying the history of Russia's first monopolistic joint-stock trading company – the Russian-American Company (RAC).

The point of view of S. B. Okun, Soviet historian, is considered by many Soviet-Russian historians consider to be traditional. The core of this conception is that the State took the initiative of creating the Russian-American Company in order to begin the great plan of expansion in the Pacific region, and to stop foreign (American, English and Spain penetration) in that area. The formation of the RAC was a direct challenge to the foreigners. The State, in the person of such organizations as of Commerce-College, College of Foreign Affairs came to this idea gradually after scrupulously analyzing the situation.

Another view is stated in certain publications abroad, mainly in the USA, where the authors try to define how the Russian government influenced the North Pacific market. They bring into light some important factors, that were somehow avoided by Russian-Soviet historians. So, C. A. Manning is certain that the struggle between State bureaucracy and laissez faire was the primary reason of the company's formation. A. G. Mazaur thinks that such a phenomenon of the joint-stock company in the monarchical government, where serfdom was in its height and semifeudal aristocracy ruled supreme, was inconceivable. M. E. Wheeler thinks that the State started to play active role by trying to stop a bitter rivalry among the merchants after the death of G. I. Shelikhov.

Having analyzed literature and sources of the problem it is possible to suggest the following comments. The initiative in forming monopolistic company belonged solely to the Russian merchants. They used the State in their interests and not visa-versa. the I. L. Golikov-G. I. Shelikhov

company stepped forward among many fur-trading companies. It became the leader in the Pacific fur trade. These merchants came to market with some crucial innovations: organizing permanent settlements in Alaska, creating the company not for a season but for 10 years, developing a system of selling furs – buying goods on Chinese and Russian markets.

Katherine II rejected the proposal for the monopoly. From 1781 till 1796 the State was in the neutral or negative position towards the domination of one particularly company in the North Pacific. There were a certain contradictions inside the I. L. Golikov-G. I. Shelikhov company, which were revealed after the death of Shelikhov. His widow managed to save the capitals by united them with a new merchant company. She and her son-in-law N. P. Rezanov were the authors of many documents, signed by Commerce-College. Those documents formed the basis of the Charter of the Russian-American Company. The Commerce College and other State organization did not designed the constituent documents of United-American and later Russian-American Companies. They just followed Shelikhov's family ideas without their adequate analysis. By way of illustration Natalia Shelikhova's proposal of certain rules and privileges for the company in her "Memorial" that were simply copied in the final documents of the RAC. The result was that state officials missed obvious mistakes, for example, the wrong calculation of shares.

Up to the formation of the Russian-American Company the State neither had interest in the land in the North Pacific, nor plans to occupy California and Hawaii islands. Katherine II was not sure about the merchant discoveries and wrote that no one had proven them. She indicated that the State interests were in the South and not in the far East. Already in the XIX century, according to the Convention of 1824-1825 Russia made a certain concessions to the USA and England by giving them the right to trade and fish in the State.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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WORK EXPERIENCE:

- 1996-Present Research Fellow, Center for North American Studies, Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia
- January, 1998 – June, 1998 Visiting Assistant Professor, History Department, Oregon State University
- 1995-1996 Junior Research Fellow, Center for North American Studies, Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia
- 1995-1996 Manager, East Line, Ltd
- 1992-1994 Interpreter/Translator, East Line, Ltd
- 1990-1992 News Assistant, Rusfilm Invest, Ltd
- 1988-Present Extensive Practice in Teaching World History Russian/English Languages, and Political Research/Analysis for International Clientele

PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCES, SEMINARS (*presented or discussed papers*):

- October, 1999 "Russian America and The Far East of Russia", International Conference, Vladivostok Division of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Vladivostok, Russia
- September, 1999 "Bicentennial of the Russian-American Company", International Conference, (*Managing Secretary*), Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia
- October, 1997 "Contemporary International Relations", International Conference, St.-Petersburg, Russia

- September, 1997 "Russian Exploration in the Pacific Northwest and G. I. Shelikhov", International Conference, Kursk State University, Ryl'sk, Kursk Region, Russia.
- July, 1996 "International Relations in an Era of Globalization", Russian-American Seminar, Institute on Future Global Issues, University of Maryland, USA.
- August, 1995 "Historical Readings, Dedicated to G. I. Shelikhov", International Conference, Irkutsk State University, Shelekhov, Irkutsk Region, Russia.
- June, 1992 "The 500th Anniversary of the Discovery of North America", International Conference, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia.
- March, 1991 "A New Look at American History", Soviet-American Conference, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia.

AWARDS:

- 1998 Research Fellow, John F. Kennedy Institute, Free University of Berlin, Germany.
- 1998 Research Fellow, Center for the Humanities, Oregon State University, USA.
- 1996 Award for Excellence, Institute on Future Global Issues, University of Maryland, USA.
- 1992 Diploma with Highest Honors, Medal For Excellent Graduation, Moscow State University, Russia.

MEMBERSHIP:

- 1991-Present Russian Cultural-Historical Society "Russian America".

REFERENCES:

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS:

"The Formation of the Russian-American Company" (*Monograph, in Print December, 1999*)

"The Specific Financial-Economic Activities of Russian Trade Companies in North-West America in the Second Half of the XVIII Century" in: *Russian America 1799-1867, (Collection of Reports)* Moscow, 1999, pp. 136-160.

"Naval Officers in the History of Russian America, 1800-1825," in: *The History of Russian America: 1732-1867, Vol. 2, Ed. N. N. Bolkhovitinov, Moscow, 1999, pp. 339-387.*

"The Replacement of the First Governor of Russian America," in: *Bulletin of Moscow Cultural-Historical Society "Russian America" # 33, January, 1998.*

"The Formation of the Russian-American Company, 1795-1799," in: *The History of Russian America: 1732-1867, Vol. 1, Ed. N. N. Bolkhovitinov, Moscow, 1997, pp. 322-364.*

"The Founding of the Permanent Settlements in the Northwest of America," in: *The History of Russian America: 1732-1867, Vol. 1, Ed. N. N. Bolkhovitinov, Moscow, 1997, pp. 109-154.*

"I. L. Golikov and G. I. Shelikhov: The Question of their Relationship," in: *Russian Historical Reading Dedicated to G. I. Shelikhov (Collection of Reports) Shelekhov, 1995, pp. 13-15.*

"The Role of the Shelikhov Clan in the Formation of the Russian-American Company," in: *Annual Studies of America, 1994, Moscow, 1995, pp. 137-152.*

Book Review of: "Russia and the New World: The Last Third of the 18th Century," M. S. Alperovich, Moscow, 1993, in: *Voprosy Istorii (Questions of History), 1994, # 11, pp. 182-183.*

TRANSLATIONS (WITH COMMENTS)

Bernard Bailyn "Framing the American Federation. (On the Contours of the American Revolution)" *Annual Studies of America, 1997, Moscow, 1998, pp. 7-35.*

B. Dmytryshyn "Administrative Apparatus of the Russian-American Company: 1798-1867," *Annual Studies of America, 1993, Moscow, 1994, pp. 96-116.*

Author of Films' Scenario

Author of the Science-Popular film "Road to America" Time 30 minutes. Demonstrated on the Second Chanel of Russian TV in December, 1997.

Co-author of the Film "Patriarch Alexii II visit to Vologda Region" Time 35 minutes. Demonstrated on the 1 Channel, July 1993.

1988- Present Took part in different TV

Project Description: "TOWARD A NEW UNDERSTANDING: On the Occasion of the 200th Anniversary of the Russian-American Company, 1799-1867"

The project furthers my work on the formation of the Russian-American Company (RAC) and the beginning of Russian-American relations. Early in my research I realized that many key figures involved in the formation of the Russian-American Company and the beginning of Russian-American relations continued to play an important role in later events. One of those individuals was Natalia Shelikhova, a founder of the Russian-American Company and the first Russian businesswoman.

The first chapter probes the beginnings of the RAC, and focuses on its growth from a small operation into a large business. The formation of the RAC, Russia's first government-chartered joint-stock company, is a watershed in Russian commercial and business history. The framework for the analysis will be multidisciplinary—an original approach to the RAC in Russian and foreign historiography. I am proposing in the work that the initiative for the formation of the RAC came solely from Russian merchants, and the government merely followed their recommendations. This relationship greatly affected diplomatic ties between the USA and Russia.

Chapter two explores the changing circumstances for the Russian-American Company in the North Pacific at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when its interests began to define Russia's policy towards the Native Americans. Special attention will be paid to the role of women in the history of Russian America, in particular, their role in educating the Native Americans. For example, Natalia Banner and Elena Rotcheva organized schools for orphan girls in Alaska.

Chapter three examines the diplomatic, economic and cultural relations between the two nations. It is necessary to address the relationship of these areas, in order to understand adequately the situation in the North Pacific. Mutually advantageous business contacts between Boston ship owners and Russian colonies gradually developed. A comparative look at the American Fur Company of John Jacob Astor and the RAC also reveals their mutual influence. It is

also important to investigate the reason Russia was trading with the republic of America, while maintaining a hostile position against revolutionary France.

Chapter four investigates how the Russian-American Company came under governmental control, and whether this transformation supported or hindered the company's affairs. The chapter analyzes in detail how different governmental institutions affected the commercial activities of the Company. In addition, financial data such as the balance of payments, bills of exchange and figures for market activities of the Company are considered.

The final chapter of the book continues to explore the legal, diplomatic and mercantile agreements between Russia and the USA on the American continent. The chapter also examines the Hudson's Bay Company-Russian-American Company relations and explores the similarities and differences of both companies' activities. The chapter concludes with some parallels between this period and the renewed Russian-American interaction today; while bearing in mind that there are significant differences in the present economic, business and cultural environment.

A note on sources: Several fundamental historical works concerning the Russian-American Company have formed the foundation of my current work. I became interested in the RAC through the work on the history of Russian-American relations by Nikolai N. Bolkhovitinov. His focus is on diplomatic relations between the nations. Petr A. Tikhmenev's *Historical Survey of the Formation of the Russian-American Company and Its History to the Present Time*, published in 1863, and the American historian Hubert H. Bancroft's *History of Alaska*, published in 1881, have been important. Semen B. Okun's work on the fur expeditions in the North Pacific and on the history of the Russian-American Company has also provided material for my project. Moisei S. Alperovich's work on Spanish-American relations includes information on the RAC. The work of the Canadian scholar, James R. Gibson, concerning geographical questions of Russian settlements in the area of Alaska and Canada has been helpful, as have the biographies of Russian and American merchants by Richard A. Pierce. All these works contain interesting and valuable material, but they do not make full use of the considerable

information available in Russian and American archives.

In my project I bring into this research the disciplines of economics, ethnography, genealogy and historical psychology, and will focus on the development of the Russian-American Company within the course of Russian-American relations. This work will be based on extensive research from more than 40 different document collections in Russian archives, many of which are unpublished. There are important English resources as well. The research grant would enable me to study thoroughly the books and collections of documents available in the USA. At your University I would like to work with published materials: books, newspapers, journals, etc., for example, I am looking forward to studying some books on my subject that are absent in Russian depositories, for example, the works of Hector Chevigny, Raymond Fisher, Peter Newman, Paul Phillips, Edgar Wesley, etc. Currently this project consists of a draft of the first two chapters and a detailed plan of the next three. I would like to use my time in your Center to write the remaining three chapters and a conclusion, and to revise the final manuscript.

An exchange of ideas with members of the academic community would be most useful in helping me elaborate and refine the final chapters. I am especially interested in beginning and sustaining a dialogue with scholars from other disciplines. From them I hope to gain deeper insights into the lessons from this formative period of the Russian-American Company and Russian-American relations.

A number of Russian research centers are interested in the results of the project. Among them are: The Institute of World History, now preparing a series of case-studies of the American Civilization patterns, as well as a conference dedicated to the 200th -Anniversary of the Russian-American Company; Vologda Pedagogical University, contributing to a number of international projects with special emphasis on the history of Russian America.