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**Govor/Twelve Days at Nuku Hiva**

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## Part I

# FROM RUSSIA TO NUKU HIVA

They had come from Cape Horn to do for the Russians what Bougainville had done for the French and Cook had done for the English—to discover the Pacific and its worth.

—Greg Denning, *Islands and Beaches*

### **The Broken Icon**

The first Russian round-the-world expedition, which would inaugurate the anthropological studies of the northern Marquesas, left Kronshtadt in August 1803 on board the *Nadezhda* (Hope) and the *Neva*, commanded by Adam Krusenstern and Urey Lisiansky. Greg Denning has summed up its primary purpose, but like all expeditions the Russian round-the-world expedition had its own genesis.

By the end of the eighteenth century Russian expansion to the east had reached the North Pacific and the northwest coast of North America and resulted in the establishment of the Russian-American Company (RAC). Its interest in launching a sea connection with Russia's European ports and promoting a direct fur trade with China coincided with Russian naval aspirations to gain a foothold in the North Pacific and to follow Cook and La Pérouse in the exploration of the Pacific. The planned circumnavigation expedition, championed by Krusenstern since 1799, was approved in 1802, and he was appointed the commander. But he achieved more: this expedition, initially planned as a commercial venture, was gradually transformed into one supported and partly financed by the Russian state. This change came about in early 1803 when Emperor Alexander I decided to add to the expedition the Russian Embassy to Japan, headed by the Russian statesman Nikolai Rezanov. Moreover, Krusenstern, Rezanov, and Count Nikolai Rumiantsev (Romanzoff), the minister of commerce and supporter of science and scholarship, each from his own angle,

set out to charge the expedition with broad exploratory and cultural tasks as well.

The expedition was intended to proclaim Russia's prowess as a naval, trading, colonial, and cultural power. It was seen off at Kronshtadt by the emperor himself—an ardent supporter—and senior officials of the imperial government. Eight months later, while the ships were anchored in Taiohae Bay at Nuku Hiva, a disagreement between Krusenstern and Rezanov brought to a head a conflict of which Rezanov later wrote, 'During the voyage the naval officers of my ship mutinied against me' (Sgibnev 1877:389). Tensions ran so high that on reaching Kamchatka both parties were ready to abandon their well-planned voyage and return overland to St Petersburg to seek the emperor's justice. Gradually Kamchatka exerted its cooling effect: they reached a compromise and managed to complete their mission. A veil of silence was laid over the events at Nuku Hiva by participants and government officials alike, including the emperor.

But this conflict was only the tip of the iceberg. The island of Nuku Hiva, which the Russian expedition had opened to the world, would become for many of them a place of supreme happiness and deepest distress. The aftershocks of those twelve days at Nuku Hiva would reverberate for a long time to come. The official artist of the expedition, Stepan Kurliandtsev, who left the ship at Kamchatka, would take an axe and destroy everything in his cabin. His pictorial record of Nuku Hiva would mysteriously disappear. His friend, the naturalist Fedor Brykin, who also left the ship at Kamchatka, would take his own life on reaching St Petersburg, and his Nuku Hiva material would likewise disappear without a trace. Petr Golovachev, the first to meet the Nuku Hivans on a pilot boat leading the *Nadezhda* into harbor, would take his own life at St Helena, only a few months from home, and the events of Nuku Hiva figure in his last letters. The priest Gideon would denounce Lisiansky's behavior in Nuku Hiva in a complaint to the authorities of the Orthodox Church. In 1828 the naturalist Wilhelm Tilesius would dispute the interpretation of the Nuku Hivan materials by his colleague Georg Langsdorff, and Langsdorff would disagree with Krusenstern. The tales of two participants, Count Fedor Tolstoy and Joseph Kabris, who were adorned with Nuku Hivan tattoos, would for years supplement the official Russian accounts of the island. Finally, twenty-two years later, another Russian ship, the *Krotky*, lured by the accounts of the first Russian seafarers, would come to Nuku Hiva and lose four of its crew in a massacre.

What did this faraway island mean to Russia? What happened to the Russian voyagers there, and how did this mutiny come about? The mutiny at Nuku Hiva has never been interpreted in the context of Russian encounters with the native peoples of the South Pacific. This is a first attempt.

The seeds of the major conflict, the issue of leadership of the expedition, were sown in St Petersburg in 1803. The expedition was Krusenstern's brainchild, and he was appointed its commander from the very beginning; but less than two months before it was due to sail, when the Russian Embassy to Japan, headed by Rezanov, was added to the expedition, the authorities resorted to their favorite policy of divide and rule. Krusenstern's orders were amended to the effect that the diplomatic and trade aspects of the expedition were put under Rezanov's charge, but Krusenstern and his officers left Kronshtadt convinced that this amendment did not diminish his authority as the head of the expedition.

Rezanov, on the other hand, knew the real state of affairs from the outset: his instructions were drawn up by Rumiantsev and signed by the emperor. These instructions, although stressing the role of Krusenstern as the commander of the ship, placed most areas—trade, diplomacy, administration, relations with native peoples, acquisition of ethnographical and scientific specimens, record-keeping, and so forth—under Rezanov's charge or, at least, oversight. Although he had never been to sea, Rezanov was to 'constantly' 'ensure accuracy in chronometer readings and longitudinal calculations' by the expedition's astronomer. The sentence 'Both these vessels, with officers and crew in the employ of the Company, are entrusted to your care' unambiguously made him the head of the whole expedition (Rumiantsev 1960). It was probably expected that Rezanov, in view of his senior rank, would be the titular head of the expedition and its supervisor at the same time. Rezanov, as we shall see, took his position seriously.

For two hundred years the expedition has been the subject of numerous publications. It was not only its geographical and anthropological results that appealed to readers; it was the passions concealed below the surface. The first revealing publications in Germany and France appeared in 1805 and 1813, but the Russian press started discussing this subject only at the end of the nineteenth century, when all participants in the events had died (Sgibnev 1877; Voenskii 1895; Ratmanov 1876). Surprisingly, despite a general tendency to take a skeptical view of Russian officialdom, which Rezanov personified, it was Rezanov who captured the sympathies of the historians.

For many years after the Russian revolution of 1917, however, Rezanov could not be viewed sympathetically. It wasn't until after the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945, which gave an enormous boost to Russian nationalism, that a spate of publications celebrating Russian preeminence in every field of science and culture appeared and the masquerade of proletarian internationalism was set aside. Vladimir Nevsky, the author of *The First Russian Voyage Round the World* (1951), must have found himself in a difficult situation: a group

of naval officers, mostly with German names, confronted a patriotic ethnic Russian statesman, supported by others of Russian extraction. He could have exploited the incident to support the current line of official propaganda, but Nevsky chose the best option open to an honest historian who happened to work under the Soviet regime: if the truth is unmentionable, at least do not lie. Although he knew the archival materials, he did not support Rezanov's claim to leadership of the expedition. Nevsky's was a considerable exploit that later generations, accustomed to freedom of the press, can appreciate only with difficulty.

Gradually the canonically paired names of Russian explorers—Krusenstern and Lisiansky, Bellingshausen and Lazarev—were absorbed into 'true' Russian history. This history was notorious for its ability to strip events and personalities of all life and replace them with heroic graven images. Krusenstern alone seemed to escape this fate. For those who grew up in Leonid Brezhnev's Soviet Union, Krusenstern seemed a white knight, with his unusual name, his lonely monument on the bank of the Neva in Leningrad, the tall ship bearing his name—all tokens of a forbidden world beyond the Iron Curtain. The Russian bard Alexander Gorodnitsky expressed this longing for journeys that could never be in his intimate lines:

Under the changeable northern wind,  
Under the azure southern sky,  
Again the *Kruzenshtern's* sails  
Are singing their song on high.

And suddenly in the stifling atmosphere of Moscow in 1981 came a cultural explosion: the rock opera '*Juno and Avos*', the love story of Rezanov, the long-forgotten member of the expedition, and Conchita, a fifteen-year-old Spanish girl. In it the figure of a romantic lover was united with that of a visionary:

Let me lift fatigue from your shoulders!  
Why can't people learn to be brothers?  
In the ocean the rivers all mingle!  
Hallelujah for love! Hallelujah for love!  
Hallelujah!

Let me find a land more vital,  
Where a new breed of men can settle  
Without money or injustice!  
No republics, thrones or jails!

The enigmatic lyrics, by the nonconformist poet Andrei Voznesensky, the inspired performance, and the story reaching across continents and oceans all combined to generate public interest and bring out a new dimension in the canonical story of the expedition. It would hardly be an exaggeration to speak of a Rezanov fan club, whose members emphasized his Russian ethnicity. This came at a time when the Soviet empire, with its dogma of proletarian internationalism, was collapsing, and unrestrained Russian nationalism was filling the void.

At the same time a very different picture was gradually taking shape. Tamara Shafranovskaia, a St Petersburg ethnographer, spent many years deciphering the travel journal of Hermann Löwenstern written in German in his elaborate handwriting, describing daily life aboard the *Nadezhda* without self-censorship (1803–1806, 2003b). The previously unpublished journals and letters of Krusenstern, Rezanov, Ratmanov, Shemelin, and Gideon, from archives in Russia and abroad, also became available, thanks to the efforts of Olga Fedorova (Fedorova and Fedorova 2006; Fedorova 2008), Alexey Kruzenshtern (Kruzenshtern and Fedorova 2005), Leonid Sverdlov (2006), and others. In the United States, Gideon's journals and letters (1989) were translated by Lydia Black, and Löwenstern's journal (2005, 2003a) by Victoria Moessner. In Germany, Ewert von Krusenstjern (1991) wrote a detailed biography of his famous relative, using family archives. In Japan, Frieder Sondermann (2002b) opened a new field with his thorough study of German-language archival materials, particularly Krusenstern's and Tilesius' travel journals and correspondence between the members of the expedition.

Readers of these private accounts realized with horror that, far from being a matter of national pride, this expedition, with its intrigues, hatred, denunciations, arrogance, and incompetence, was more a cause for national shame. But perhaps we have no right to judge the actors by our conventional standards. When memoirs of the Gulag poured forth after perestroika, readers realized that they could not judge people who were there by their own criteria. The same applies to the experience of war. And the same should apply to the participants in the expedition. Rather than passionately trying to refute the truth of myth with the truth of fact or justify one side at the expense of the other, it may be more important simply to listen to the chorus of voices and try to understand each of them. They endured unprecedented pressure and strain—physical, emotional, and moral. They were children of their times; they are history itself, which we must accept in its entirety, without taking sides, as we look back from our complacent present.

Only now, when abundant new materials have come to light, is this new approach to events becoming possible. In this book the varied sources on the expedition are drawn together for the first time in a study of a single episode—

the twelve eventful days at Nuku Hiva. The three ‘gospels’—the well-known accounts by Krusenstern, Lisiansky, and Langsdorff—are juxtaposed with the ‘apocrypha’ of other participants—Rezanov, Ratmanov, Romberg, Löwenstern, Shemelin, Tilesius, Horner, Espenberg, Gideon, and Korobitsyn. Three artists—Tilesius, Langsdorff, and Löwenstern—provide the pictorial materials. They are supplemented by some unexpected voices—those of the Japanese passengers aboard the *Nadezhda*, who left a visual legacy as well; of the European sailors living on Nuku Hiva, Edward Robarts and Joseph Kabris; and, not least, of the Nuku Hivans themselves, whose shadowy presence made itself felt throughout the Russian accounts—in more or less obscure countersigns, as Bronwen Douglas (1999a, 2003, 2009) aptly terms the matter. The Nuku Hivans even today relate a myth about the Russian visit two hundred years ago. The voices agree and disagree, complement and rebut each other. At times they seem to render the very notion of ‘truth’ elusive, and the words of Solomon very apt: ‘For in much wisdom is much vexation; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow’ (Ecclesiastes 1:18).

In the Soviet/Russian tradition, the early Russian exploring expeditions in the Pacific were understood and interpreted through the prism of imperial history. The accounts of these Russian expeditions were scrutinized for their ‘contributions’ to the field of exploration, for their ‘discoveries’, and for the observations made by their naturalists and the ethnographic collections they brought back. During the Soviet era such studies were characterized by a strong anticolonial stance, which was reflected in the way the expedition accounts were edited. Equally, the Soviet appropriation of this exploration history wrote out the disparate voices represented in these accounts to create a single unified Russian voice, which thus minimized the outstanding role played by others of different backgrounds, such as the ethnic Germans, in the early Russian expeditions.

The issues of encounter—particularly the significance of indigenous agency in encounters and in European experience and representations of them, as addressed in Douglas’ groundbreaking ethnohistories (1999a, 1999b, 2003, 2006, 2007)—were hardly ever explored in these Soviet-era works. Nevertheless, the publication of source materials by such Russian scholars as Bolkhovitinov, Komissarov, and Shafranovskaia and the recent works of a younger generation of historians provide a solid basis for any further study of Russian Pacific voyages. In the West the study of source materials in this field was further developed by the Canadian historian Glynn Barratt, who made accessible the richness of Russian-language materials for Western scholars, and by Richard Pierce’s Alaskan school, which was mostly concerned with the history of the Russian-American Company.

Although, as in the research of my predecessors, primary documents are a cornerstone of my approach, my main priority was not gauging and analyzing ‘reliable’ data from the sources as such. On the contrary, I was more interested in exploring the wealth and diversity of the textual and visual accounts, which has allowed me to reveal the predominantly subjective nature of this supposedly scientifically observed ‘data’ and how it was mediated through the voyagers’ ethnosocial backgrounds and their emotional and psychological states of being. In this respect the personal interactions of the participants are more important than their life histories in untangling their Nuku Hivan experience. While recent historical studies of the conflict aboard the Russian ships have taken no account of the Nuku Hivan backdrop, I see it as an essential part of this ethnohistorical drama, which is thick with countersigns left by the Pacific setting and the agency of indigenous protagonists. Such an approach mines the tales and anecdotes produced by the expedition participants after their return for the richly diverse material they contain, producing accounts no less telling than the published official journals.

Contextualizing my research in the expanding field of recent ethnohistorical studies of Pacific voyages, which was pioneered by Greg Denning (1980) and elaborated by Nicholas Thomas (2003) and Anne Salmond (2003), I would stress the singularity of my material. The richness and diversity of my texts and the limited time frame of the visit provide a golden opportunity to weave a tapestry of encounters involving savants, officers, and seamen; Germans, ethnic Russians, and Japanese; French and British go-betweens; Marquesan *haka‘iki* (chiefs) and ordinary men and women, priests and warriors. Relationships of race, class, and gender intertwine in complex patterns across the beach and within each side on the beach—the tropes introduced and developed by Denning in his Marquesan studies (1980, 2004).

Nuku Hiva enjoyed a particular reputation in the European popular imagination, built upon its singular tattoo practices, its celebrated masculinity, and rumors of cannibalism, all of it reinforced in the rich imagery that emanated from encounters in place. At the time of the Russian encounter favorable historical conditions obtained for the study of Nuku Hiva as a result of the presence of three Europeans who happened to be living on the island in the years 1799–1806. This was the decade that preceded the mass European invasion, which wrought catastrophic change in Nuku Hivan society from the introduction of European diseases, firearms, and sandalwood trading (Thomas 1990). This period of Nuku Hivan history is also connected with the outstanding role of Kiatonui, the *haka‘iki* who for nearly four decades up to his death in around 1818 was the leader of a complex tribal entity inhabiting the valleys surrounding Taiohae Bay. In this respect the timing of the Russian 1804 visit was espe-

cially fortunate. And because the Russian visitors were highly educated—with, for instance, six men of science among their number—the expedition proved to be the most intellectually productive in the early history of Nuku Hiva and, more broadly, Marquesan encounters. It is not surprising that the ‘three gospels’ mentioned above became standard texts on the Nuku Hiva social microcosm and were widely used in the studies of Steinen, Denning, Thomas, Gell, Ottino-Garanger, and Ferdon. Similarly, images of Nuku Hivans from Krusenstern’s *Atlas* (1813b) and Langsdorff’s *Voyages* (1813) became iconic in the history of Nuku Hiva tattoo and bodies in general.

The wealth of new Russian, German, and Japanese accounts and images, which this study brings to light, allows us to reposition the well-known accounts by Krusenstern, Langsdorff, and Lisiansky by juxtaposing them with these newly found accounts and using them to test the ‘facts’ from different perspectives and fresh contexts.

Drawing on Douglas’ innovative critical method (1999b, 2009), I use juxtaposition as my main strategy for uncovering traces of the involvement of Nuku Hiva’s indigenous inhabitants during the Russian visit. By counterposing varied media and different genres of texts, this strategy uncovers and exploits discrepancies between, for example, textual and visual representations; published and unpublished texts; field notes or journals and well-edited books; field sketches and engravings. A related strategy—acknowledging Thomas’ insight that one is studying ‘encounter between “cultures” that were each themselves made up of many cultures’ (2003:xxxv)—is juxtaposition of accounts produced by observers of different ethnic, social, and cultural backgrounds. The resultant polyphony of voices helps to decenter history in Oceania, to observe it as a concurrence of ‘messy actualities’ (Thomas 2003:xxxiii), of ambiguous meetings and exchanges conducted by voyagers, islanders, and go-betweeners.

This book seeks to depict the nature of the encounters that took place during the Russian visit to Nuku Hiva by adopting a narrational style that utilizes this great diversity of voices to portray the ‘messy actualities’ as seen through the lens of the record each writer or artist left behind. I am endeavoring to relate a complex story, leaving other more specialized, in-depth studies to explore the great variety of relevant anthropological topics raised by these hitherto unsuspected Russian materials, such as cannibalism, polyandry, homosexuality, exchange, tattooing, and so forth.

The idea of polyphonic history manifests itself in different ways, for instance in maps. Every explorer produced his own set of maps. Between 1791 and 1793 the island of Nuku Hiva was ‘discovered’ four times by American, French, British, and again American navigators, each drawing his own map and giving his own names to geographical features. There is a bewildering abundance of early

maps. The English-speaking world prefers maps with mostly British names, allowing a scattering of French names, a token number of Russian names, hardly any German names, and none from Japanese. But these nations also had their own maps and perceived the world through them. Krusenstern's expedition had several outstanding cartographers: Krusenstern himself, who would later spend years compiling his *Atlas of the Southern Sea*, and Horner, Löwenstern, Bellingshausen, Kotzebue, and Lisiansky. The Russian map of the South Pacific looks quite different from the British map, and features hundreds of Russian toponyms from New Guinea to the Marquesas. The time has now come to accept these different images of our world, to superimpose these transparent maps one upon another, and to allow the background to remain the property of the peoples of the South Seas. In *Beach Crossings* Denning made a start on this project in relation to the Marquesas. My aim is to try to add all the wealth of the Russian-German layer, in the hope that all of us may be the richer for it.

### **Noah's Ark—the Men Aboard**

Before turning to the details of the Russian incident at Nuku Hiva and the conflict that occurred there, we must look more closely at the personalities of the men involved, their literary and artistic legacy, and their voyage.

#### **The Naval Officers**

Adam Johann von Krusenstern, or in Russian Ivan Fedorovich Kruzenshtern (1770–1846; fig. 1), was born into a noble family in Haggud (Hagudi), near Reval (Tallinn) in Estland Province, now Estonia but then part of the Russian Empire. His ancestors were of Swedish and German origin, part of that ethnic group known as Baltic Germans. At the age of fourteen Krusenstern was sent to study at the college of the Naval Cadet Corps. The corps was established in 1752 to provide a solid grounding in mathematics, navigation, military skills, and geography, as well as three European languages—French, English, and German. Krusenstern and most of the officers of his expedition happened to be there at a time when it was temporarily transferred after a fire from St Petersburg to Kronshtadt (1771–1796). Life there was extremely harsh, with much application of corporal punishment and brutal exercise of power by the *gardemarins* (senior cadets) over the junior cadets. Students would go hungry and cold and were reduced to scavenging for food and firewood in winter. The lack of regular communication with St Petersburg resulted in a low standard of teaching, which was often conducted by Kronshtadt garrison officers. Furthermore, because of the Russo-Swedish war, senior cadets were released before they had completed the course, as soon as they had undergone summer



FIGURE 1.  
Adam Johann von  
Krusenstern  
(A. J. Krusenstern,  
*Voyage autour du  
monde*, Paris, 1821)

exercises in the Baltic. Years later Krusenstern would become the director of the corps and try to improve conditions there.

In 1788, at the age of seventeen, Krusenstern was released early from the corps as a midshipman to take part in battles with Swedes in the Baltic. Here he met Captain Grigory Mulovsky, who, with the support of Empress Catherine the Great, had planned the first Russian round-the-world expedition. Those plans were thwarted by the outbreak of war, and Mulovsky was killed in action in 1789. In 1793 Krusenstern and Lisiansky were among sixteen junior officers selected for further training as volunteers in the British Royal Navy. They took part in Britain's war against the French and visited America and Britain's Caribbean colonies. During their sojourn in the US they met George Washington. In 1797 they sailed with the British to South Africa, and Krusenstern went on to India, the East Indies, and China. Observing the fur trade in the Far East, he became convinced of the benefits of a future Russian maritime trade in the North Pacific.

He returned to Russia in 1800 with the project of an expedition in mind and began to lobby for it. In the meantime, in 1801, he married Julia Taube for love, his bride being a twenty-year-old orphan girl who had been brought up in his brother's family. Their first son, Otto, was born in August 1802, a few

days after Krusenstern's plan was approved by the new emperor, Alexander I. 'I owed a sacrifice to my country, and I made it', Krusenstern wrote. 'I determined upon the voyage, and felt the greatest sorrow and affliction on account of my wife. How, indeed, could I remain insensible to the tears of a dearly beloved spouse, which I saw her shed daily during a twelvemonth' (1813c:xxxii).<sup>1</sup>

Krusenstern, who at thirty-three was to head the expedition, was a singular phenomenon in the Russian Navy of the time. His harsh schooling, war experience, and long service with the British Navy, which was notorious for its cruelty and degrading treatment of sailors, had not affected his innate integrity, gentleness, and kindness, which probably came from his family. At a time when Russia, the empire of serfs, was recovering from the despotic regime of Paul I, Krusenstern decided to rule his ship with kindness and abolish corporal punishment on it. He wrote, 'I had indeed been advised to take some foreigners among my crew: but I knew too much of the spirit of Russian sailors, whom I prefer to all others, even to the English, to listen to this proposition' (1813c:16). He chose his crew from Russian volunteers willing to share the hardships of the voyage. Although they were serfs with no civil rights, he treated them with respect and took care to see them properly fed, clothed, and looked after and properly remunerated when they returned. Löwenstern, his most ardent supporter on the ship, sometimes felt that the captain's kindness bordered on weakness, remarking that 'the common man . . . is too unenlightened to be able to value and to honor forbearance and liberality' and that 'Russians have to be treated somewhat strictly so as not to go to ruin.' The officers and crew, though sometimes critical of him for his mildness in relation to the sailors and his tolerance of Rezanov's intrigues, responded to him with deep love and respect. They, the elite of the Russian fleet, could not fail to appreciate the accomplishments of Krusenstern, who was combining 'knowledge with unequalled work' (2003a:407, 126, 336). Horner wrote to Zach of him, 'We all thank Heaven for sending us a captain who by his qualities of mind and heart has won the unreserved love of us all. He has rightfully been placed in command of us, as his merits raise him up over everybody else' (Krusenstjern 1991:73).

The commander of the *Neva* was Urey Lisiansky (1773–1837; fig. 2). 'Urey' was the form of his name that he himself used in the English version of his travel account, although a more usual transliteration from Russian would be Yuri. His career before the expedition was similar to that of Krusenstern, whom he knew well: the Naval Cadet Corps, where he was one year ahead of Krusenstern, the Russo-Swedish war, secondment to the Royal Navy, and visits to America, South Africa, and India. When Krusenstern was appointed to lead the expedition he immediately invited his friend to take command of the second ship and handpick his own crew. Lisiansky was happy 'to serve under



FIGURE 2.  
Urey Lisiansky  
(Lisiansky 1814)

the command of a good friend' (1994:37). Krusenstern expected to find in Lisiansky an 'unbiased and obedient man, with zeal for the common benefit' as well as a thoroughly accomplished officer (1809:2–3; 1813c:2).

Despite the similarities in their careers, they were very different. In Soviet historiography, Lisiansky's Russian origins made him immune to any criticism—a trend that has survived into post-Soviet times. Nevertheless, accounts by several of his contemporaries contrast him sharply with Krusenstern. Löwenstern, who was highly critical of all on board except Krusenstern, his idol, left a number of unfavorable remarks about Lisiansky. Löwenstern does, however, take care to base his impressions on facts, with which he was always meticulous:

To the same degree that our atmosphere is a happy one, it is said to be quiet on the *Neva*. Lisianski, the tyrant, has introduced a strict moral code so that everyone sits in his cabin and broods.

The sailors on the *Neva* are very dissatisfied with Lisianski. They intended to ask Krusenstern to mitigate their situation. (Lisianski often capriciously has his people whipped with the cat.) Our peaceable sailors advised them to hold out until they are back in Russia and complain there.

Lisianski . . . says, ‘Treat the Russian like an animal, last of all (before the end of a campaign, voyage, or march), be tender and friendly toward him; thus, everything in the past is forgotten, and you have won the love of your people.’ (2003a:26, 381, 423)

Löwenstern’s attitude to Lisiansky as an ambitious petty tyrant is supported in the complaint of Gideon, the priest. The matter he complained about probably spelled the ruin of Lisiansky’s career:

Captain Lisianskii and Midshipman Berkh are people of troublesome character and caused me much offense, against which my only cure was magnanimous patience. Even now I shall pass in silence the many prohibitions against performance of the Divine service on Sundays and Lord’s Feast Days, the only solace at sea for those who know God. I am ashamed to mention various scathing remarks ridiculing Religion. The son of Archpriest Lisianskii from the town of Nezhin, one who, one should think, had been born and raised in the very lap of Religion, often took leave at table, drinking the Tenerife wine, to address me with these words: ‘Father! The Health of the Mother of God!’ (1989:81)

Indeed, Lisiansky, born in the township of Nezhin in Ukraine, came from the family of a provincial priest. He left home for the Naval Cadet Corps when he was just nine, and at the age of nineteen he became a British volunteer, so the experience of the Royal Navy may have done more to shape Lisiansky than his older friend Krusenstern. At the same time he obviously lacked the air of a European gentleman, which Krusenstern drew from his family background. Löwenstern remarked that as a result of his service with the British, ‘Lisianski . . . forgot how to speak Russian’ (2003a:385). That is an exaggeration, but it is certain that English became for Lisiansky almost a native language: he wrote his travel account in two versions—English and Russian—which differ a great deal. The British seaman Robarts, meeting Lisiansky in Nuku Hiva, immediately recognized him as a ‘proper’ British officer, while Krusenstern attracted no such praise.

While Lisiansky had probably departed too far from traditional Russian values and mores to be accepted by the Russian wing of the expedition, he was destined to remain an outsider among the Baltic German officers and scientists, as Löwenstern’s scornful attitude to him clearly indicates. After their return from the expedition, this would sour his relations with Krusenstern and his attitude to ‘official’ Russia in general. Yet although at the time of departure Lisiansky’s

service record was two years longer than Krusenstern's and they both held the same rank, he did not object to serving under his friend's command.

Krusenstern and Lisiansky aimed to recruit the best young Russian officers into their crews. It was Krusenstern's idea to use this expedition as a 'nursery' to mold a new generation of officers with experience of long circumnavigation voyages. Class barriers mattered little to him. In his book he argued, 'Nor would Cook, Bougainville, or Nelson, have ever been what they proved to [their countries], if attention had only been paid to their birth' (1813c:xxvii). Ethnically speaking, on the upper decks the Baltic Germans predominated. The *Nadezhda* had only two ethnic Russian officers: Ratmanov and Golovachev.

Makar Ivanovich Ratmanov (1772–1833; fig. 3), the first lieutenant of the *Nadezhda*, was born in Toropets district, Pskov Province, central Russia, in the family of a landlord. He joined the Naval Cadet Corps at the age of twelve and, like Krusenstern and Lisiansky, took part in the Russo-Swedish war. Since 1793 he had served in the Russian Navy in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, commanding ships in the squadron of the famous admiral Fedor Ushakov. 'During the last hostilities with France,' Krusenstern wrote, 'he had so much distinguished himself by his courage and activity' (1813c:10).



FIGURE 3.  
Makar Ratmanov  
(Kruzenshtern and  
Fedorova 2005)

Ratmanov's personality may be seen in his private travel journals (Fedorova 2008). Occasional remarks in Löwenstern's and Shemelin's diaries show him as a red-headed man with heavy fists and a 'thundering voice'. As the voyage progressed Löwenstern became increasingly critical of him: uneducated, rude, conceited, quarrelsome, imperious, foul-mouthed—these were just a few of the epithets he applied to Ratmanov. Somewhat haughtily he stated, 'He would be unbearable if we were not all above him' (2003a:35, 100, 34, 72, 276, 368–370, 277). Ratmanov undoubtedly felt that some other officers and scientists on the *Nadezhda* looked down upon him, with his 'raw, coarse, unrefined' manners of a Russian officer. In his private diary he diagnosed the cause easily: 'I am now in what one might call a German synagogue. They look askance at me behind my back because I love the truth and speak the truth. But I will not stop.' His diary is full of his patriotic reflections, probably provoked by his surroundings: 'Value your beloved homeland more than anything on Earth, and whenever possible silence the scum who regret they were born Russian. Those men of wisdom seem to me either scoundrels or, if they have practiced the sciences, have worn their minds so thin that no more reason is left in them.' He is proud to be a Russian, to be a subject of that greatest of monarchs, the wise Alexander (Ratmanov 1803–1805a:64v.–65, 15–16).

Ratmanov was truly Russian in spirit. He joined the expedition as Krusenstern's old friend from cadet school and was the only one among his officers who dared to criticize him. In spite of all his pro-Russianness and anti-German feeling, he remained Krusenstern's true ally to the end and did not desert to Rezanov's pro-Russian party during the Nuku Hivan revolt. This man, so 'coarse' and primitive in the eyes of his educated and refined companions, claimed to find solace in 'philosophy', and sent accounts of the voyage to the famous Russian writer and historian Nikolai Karamzin, who published some of them in the popular magazine *Vestnik Evropy*. He also drew travel sketches, which unfortunately are missing. After being promoted to the rank of captain-lieutenant he recorded the following in his diary: 'I . . . lock myself in my cabin and read, write or draw. I dearly regret that I have been promoted to captain-lieutenant, and the officers on watch often barge in with reports and disturb my peaceful moments on this voyage' (1803–1805a:20–20v., 65). Löwenstern saw this as laziness and evasion of his duties, but the two were made of very different stuff.

Friedrich (Fedor Ivanovich) von Romberg (1774–1811), the second lieutenant, was of Baltic German origin, probably also from Estonia. After the Naval Cadet Corps he served in the Russo-Swedish war and later on the frigate *Narva* under Krusenstern's command. He was obviously well Russianized, skilled in languages—Löwenstern remarked that 'Romberg . . . works on translations'—

and a cultivated officer: in musical improvisations on the *Nadezhda* he would play first violin. He corresponded with Karamzin, although Golovachev was scornful of his language: ‘You always speak so pompously that you cannot be understood at all.’ Romberg kept a private journal. His only known account of Nuku Hiva is his letter in Russian written from Kamchatka to his friends, but it is known that from Kamchatka he also sent Karamzin a detailed description of the voyage, which, unfortunately, did not appear in *Vestnik Evropy* (Löwenstern 2003a:307, 19, 24, 148; Romberg 1804a).

Petr Trofimovich Golovachev (1777–1806), the third lieutenant, was born in the Russian north, in Olonetsk Province, and came from an impoverished family of the Russian nobility. After the Naval Cadet Corps he had served in the North Sea and Mediterranean. Krusenstern wrote, ‘I had selected him for this voyage without having seen him. He was universally approved. . . . I never found any cause to repent my choice’ (1813c:10). His papers have not been found, but from the accounts of others about his tragic involvement in the confrontation between Krusenstern and Rezanov it is possible to see that the personality of this young man, who found himself psychologically dependent on Rezanov, was shaped according to traditional Russian values (Sverdlov 2006).

Hermann Ludwig von Löwenstern, or Ermolai Ermolaevich Levenshtern in Russian, (1777–1836; fig. 4), the fourth lieutenant, has recently been ‘discovered’ as an outstanding chronicler of the expedition, and his huge private journal, to which I refer throughout this book, was published in 2003. Löwenstern was born in Jendel, Estland Province, into a noble family of Baltic Germans who had lived in the area since the Middle Ages. He had his first experience of the sea when he was just fifteen and attending a local parish school: ‘I took such pleasure in the Naval Service that my fate was determined. I understood not a word of Russian. I had lessons in navigation from a Russian pilot and tried to learn.’ A diligent student, he would copy naval terminology mixed with Russian swearwords into his diary (Moessner 2003b:xix; Fedorova and Shafranovskaia 2003:533). Although his diary indicates that he mastered enough Russian to communicate with sailors and in the wardroom, throughout his naval service (1793–1815) he kept his diaries in German, which remained his main language. Still, he often recorded words and sentences in Russian as he heard them, with little attention to grammar. By contrast, the written Russian of Krusenstern and the other Baltic Germans who were educated at the Naval Cadet Corps was fluent.

Löwenstern joined the navy and served in the Baltic. His attempt to enter British East India service in 1796 was not successful, but his sojourn in Britain allowed him to pursue further study of navigation and English. Returning to the Russian Navy, he served on ships in the North Sea, Mediterranean, and



FIGURE 4.  
Hermann Ludwig von  
Löwenstern. Private collection  
of Ludolf von Löwenstern,  
Hamburg, Germany

Black Sea, but unlike the senior officers on the *Nadezhda* and *Neva*, he did not experience combat. He continued to study navigation and passed his midshipman exams with distinction, becoming a highly skilled cartographer and draughtsman. He used his service in the navy, with its rough and often despotic ways, for extensive self-development and education: he read about the countries he visited, mastered languages, went to theaters, museums, and archaeological sites, and even took violin lessons (Moessner 2003b:xix–xxii, xxv; Fedorova and Shafranovskaia 2003:533–539). ‘To an amiable and cultivated mind, he added a very extensive and well grounded knowledge of his profession,’ Krusenstern wrote about him (1813c:10).

His passionate nature combined with his habit of meticulous accuracy (seen by Russians as a specific German trait) and his devotion to truth and justice. He wrote in his diary, ‘My impetuous character comes to the fore involuntarily wherever unfairness, caprice, and egotism come into play. In such cases I am not master of myself.’ For instance, he took a dislike to Golovachev, whom he considered ‘false and sanctimonious’, but his dislike was not in any way ethnically based. His judgment of his fellow Baltic Germans was often no less severe. Six years of service in the Russian Navy allowed him to see the root of the problem. He believed that the ethos of the Naval Cadet Corps, where

cadets had to show blind obedience to their officers, produced a culture of servility to superiors and disdain for subordinates and made officers accustomed to deception, drunkenness, and sybaritism.

In 1801 Löwenstern retired from the Russian Navy and went to Paris in the hope of entering service with the French. He did not succeed, and his future seemed uncertain when the news of Krusenstern's project reached him. 'Krusenstern's voyage around the world has me totally enthused. I would like to go along, for even though the Russian Navy Service is worth so little, I am still a passionate seaman,' he wrote in his diary. He gladly accepted Krusenstern's invitation (Löwenstern 2003a:56, 89, 51, 84; Fedorova and Shafranovskaia 2003:539; Moessner 2003b:xxii).

Midshipman Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen, or Faddei Faddeevich Bellingsgauzen in Russian (1778–1852), was born on Oesel (Saaremaa) Island (now Estonia) in an ancient family with the title of baron. Like many of his compatriots he loved the sea, and at the age of ten he joined the Naval Cadet Corps. Upon graduation he served in the Baltic. Vice-Admiral Khanykov recommended the eager young midshipman to Krusenstern, who found his 'reputation as a skilful and well informed officer in different branches of navigation' fully justified (1813c:10). Bellingshausen joined the *Nadezhda* and was promoted to lieutenant during the voyage. Being especially gifted at cartography and hydrography, he drew most of the expedition's charts. Löwenstern recognized Bellingshausen's talents, 'clear head', and 'biting wit'. At the same time he remarked that the cadet corps had given him 'a lot of falseness in his character' and 'little education'. However partial Löwenstern in his remarks often was, he recorded a telling episode illustrating Bellingshausen's conformism: 'Horner and Bellingshausen had a bitter dispute about the mail, because Bellingshausen recognized the government's right to open letters and Horner disputed it' (2003a:422, 370, 358). Bellingshausen did not leave a travel journal of his own, but his first South Pacific impressions left traces in the account of his own expedition to the Pacific in 1819–1821.

Krusenstern also took two young cadets aboard the *Nadezhda*, Otto von Kotzebue (Otto Evstafevich Kotsebu) (1787–1846) and Moritz von Kotzebue (Morits Evstafevich (Avgustovich) Kotsebu) (1789–1861), the sons of the famous German writer August von Kotzebue (1761–1819). Most of his life August Kotzebue moved back and forth between his native Germany, St Petersburg, and Estonia. Otto and Moritz's stepmother, Christina von Krusenstern, was a cousin of Krusenstern, and he later referred to August as his friend. The boys studied in the Army Cadet Corps and, at August's request, joined the expedition as cadet volunteers at the age of fifteen and thirteen (Moessner 2003a:452). Otto, who was to lead two more expeditions to the Pacific, admit-

ted, ‘Perhaps I was not born for a sailor: an accident, by no means calculated upon in my previous education, made me such in my fifteenth year’ (Kotzebue 1967a, 2:155). The three years aboard the *Nadezhda* changed his life. Besides gaining practical experience, the brothers continued their studies aboard the ship with its officers and naturalists.

The ship’s navigator, Filipp Kamenshchikov, and his assistant, Vasily Spolokhov, were ethnic Russians, as was gunnery sergeant Alexey Raevsky, who received his commission during the voyage.

The officers aboard the *Neva* were lieutenants Pavel Arbuzov (?–1837) and Petr Povalishin (1775–1852) and midshipmen Fedor Kovediaev (1777–?) and Vasily Berkh (Berg) (1781–1834). Of these, Berkh would later make his name as the historian of the Russian Navy. Unfortunately, the Marquesan part of his journal, unlike the Hawaiian, has never come to light.

### **Surgeons, Naturalists, and the Scientific Program**

As mentioned above, the expedition, first conceived with trading routes in mind, very soon acquired additional scientific purposes as a result of the efforts of Krusenstern and Rumiantsev. The Russian Academy of Sciences was instrumental here. Krusenstern was elected a corresponding member not long before the departure—a symbolic gesture, since at that stage he had no publications. The expedition was provided with instructions from specialists in mineralogy, zoology, and botany and with ethnographic guidelines. In particular, in respect to ethnic history, it was suggested that the expedition should gather information on ‘the probable order in which these [lands] were populated’; they should also investigate ‘what changes various tribes of people and species of animals have undergone, and whether it is true that some of them have become extinct’. The voyagers were instructed to collect ‘clothes, weapons of war, ornaments, household utensils, tools and musical instruments’, to depict ‘folk rituals . . . and everything of artistic interest that you encounter’ (Severgin 1804:182; Barysheva and Fomenko 2001:123).

While initially it was planned to employ only two graduates of the St Petersburg Institute of Commerce trained to provide accounts of the places visited, in the end the expedition was given an unprecedented team of six naturalists and surgeons of Russian and German origin. It was not easy to find them. The deputy naval minister Pavel Chichagov in his letter to Semen Vorontsov, the Russian ambassador in Britain, grumbled,

Can you imagine that they are planning to travel round the world  
with neither the knowledge nor the means to build naval vessels?  
They are lacking in everything: they can’t find an astronomer,

scientist, naturalist or respectable surgeon for the journey. With the equipment they have, even if the sailors and officers were all right, what would be the use of the whole endeavor? (Quoted from Kruzenshtern, Shafranovskaia, and Fedorova 2003:482)

At that time studies in the fields of medical and natural sciences were interconnected, and the interests and competence of naturalists and physicians often overlapped.

Krusenstern's particular concern was the health of the crew, for whose care he employed two surgeons with two assistants. They performed their duties irreproachably; none of the sailors was lost to illness during the three-year voyage—a remarkable achievement for that time.

Karl Espenberg, a doctor (1761–1822; fig. 5), joined the *Nadezhda* as a surgeon. A Baltic German, born in Hageri (now in Estonia), he graduated from Reval High School and went to the University of Jena in Germany; he then specialized in medical studies at Halle and received his doctorate in Erlangen. In 1797 he returned to Estonia and practiced medicine, becoming the family doctor of the Krusensterns (their estates were close to each other). Krusenstern wrote of him, 'We had long been friends; and I may perhaps attribute to this friendship alone his resolution to undertake this voyage. I was acquainted with his skill; and, in my endeavors to preserve the health of the crew, I met with the most active assistance from him.' Espenberg could hardly understand Russian, but he knew German and French (Levenshtern 2003b:557; Moessner 2003a:442; Krusenstern 1813c:10–11; Löwenstern 2003a:135). Krusenstern trusted Espenberg so much that in Nuku Hiva he put him in charge of barter and thus the collection of artifacts. Besides his medical observations, during the voyage Espenberg wrote a detailed account of their stay at Nuku Hiva, printed in Tilloch's *Philosophical Magazine*, an influential scientific journal published in London. This important account, which shows Espenberg as a skilled writer and trained observer, is sometimes wrongly attributed to Krusenstern.

Löwenstern in his journal left a vivid portrait of Espenberg. In his eyes the forty-two-year-old Espenberg was an 'old man' (he was indeed the oldest upper-deck participant in the expedition). 'No one else finds the inconveniences [aboard the ship] as unbearable as Espenberg,' Löwenstern wrote after three months at sea. 'Dr. Espenberg pulled out one of his old vests; and, when he put it on, it almost went around his shrunken body twice, he had lost so much weight.' Nevertheless, Espenberg remained greedy for life, be it 'a pretty girl in the inn [who] excited the old man's lust', food—the constant subject of Löwenstern's critical remarks—or Nuku Hivan skulls. But Löwenstern had to acknowledge that Espenberg 'learnt more than the rest of us' and that 'aside