



THE LOST INTERNMENT

G. Edward White

THE EVACUATION AND INTERNMENT of Japanese residents of the west coast during World War II is now regarded as one of the notorious episodes in American legal history, one in which thousands of persons who posed no risk to the American war effort were subjected to curfews, forcibly removed from their homes, and detained in prison camps for the duration of the war and in some instances beyond. Apologies and reparations to surviving victims, and to their descendants, have served as a partial culmination of the affair, but it remains a prominent and awkward episode in our past.

Another evacuation and internment of residents of the United States occurred about the same time. Although that episode has received some scholarly treatment, and was described in the report of a 1982 government commission, it remains largely unknown to the general public and to many members of the legal profession. This is a narrative of the episode.¹

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¹ The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, created in the last stages of the Carter administration, issued its report under the title *Personal Justice Denied* in 1982. For the details of its creation, see Dean Kohlhoff, *When the Wind Was a River: Aleut Evacuation in World War II* 183-184 (1995). See also Ryan Howard Madden's *An Enforced Odyssey: The Relocation and Internment of Aleuts During World War II* (unpublished dissertation, University of New Hampshire, 1993). All those sources rely on civilian and military records from the time of the evacuation and on personal interviews with Aleut survivors and their descendants.

I

In paleolithic times a land mass existed that is now called Beringia, commonly described as a “land bridge” linking what is now eastern Siberia and western Alaska across what is now the Bering Strait. But by about 9,000 years ago, Beringia had disappeared, covered by the seas formed from glacial melting, and a chain of volcanic islands had emerged. Those islands – rocky and treeless, but with a comparatively mild climate – stretched from the tip of the Alaskan peninsula, southeast of modern Anchorage, 900 miles west to the island named Attu, 300 miles from Siberia’s Kamchatka Peninsula.²

By 2000 B.C., and possibly much earlier, people had migrated from Asia and Alaska on boats and established themselves on several of the islands. They were subsistence hunters, feeding on the incredibly rich supply of whales, octopuses, and shellfish, supplemented by birds and their eggs. They fished for halibut, cod, herring, and salmon; they hunted seals and sea lions. Their societal norms were comparable to those of aboriginal tribes on the North American continent: communal hunting and gathering, the sharing of resources, devices to cope with the quick decay of collected food, some tribal conflict among residents of different islands, deep spiritual attachments to the elements of the natural world, the presence of male and female shamans who could summon up the spirits of ancestors and cure the sick and wounded.³

Into this culture would come, between 1741 and 1942, three sets of invaders.

The first set was from Russia. Vitus Bering, a native of Denmark for whom the strait is named, and Aleksey Chirikov, a Russian, were sent in separate ships to “discover” the area housing the island chain in 1741. Bering’s and Chirikov’s ships were separated by a storm, resulting in Chirikov’s landing on some eastern, and Bering on some western, islands in the chain. Another set of three islands would be discovered by the Russian navigator Gabriil Pribilof in

² A succinct description of the islands’ topography and climate is in *Personal Justice Denied*, 317.

³ For more detail, see Dorothy M. Jones, *Aleuts in Transition* 11-17 (1967).

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1786. After the expeditions of Bering and Chirikov, Russian fur traders came, seeking the furs of sea otters and seals, extremely coveted items in Europe and America in the 18th century. The Russian government claimed possession of the islands and named the indigenous peoples on the islands “Aleuts” (pronounced “al-ee-outs”), a variation on a native word meaning “community.” It named the three islands Pribilof found for the discoverer. The result is that English speakers today refer to the islands in the chain as the Aleutian or Pribilof Islands, and the descendants of the indigenous peoples as Aleuts.

The presence of Russians on the islands had, on the whole, negative effects on the Aleuts. Approximately 12,000 Aleuts lived in the island chain in 1750; by 1867, when the Russian government included the islands in the sale of Alaska to the United States, the indigenous population numbered around 2,000. The decline was primarily the result of violence and disease. The Russians dispatched to the islands after 1741 were initially fur hunters and ships’ crews. When Aleuts resisted their presence, attacking Russian settlements, hunters and crews responded by killing and kidnapping members of the Aleut population. Aleuts also had no immunities to the bacterial microbes transmitted to them by Russians, so that epidemics of smallpox and other diseases ravaged Aleut communities.⁴

By the opening of the 19th century Russia, following the practices of other colonizing European nations, had established the Russian-American Company to oversee the fur trade in seals and otters. The Company was given a monopoly and made the unit of government for all of Alaska. As Company government evolved during the 19th century, Russian-Aleut interaction came to be defined by four themes.

First, Russian employees of the Company failed to learn the Aleuts’ skills in piloting bidarkas (the kayaks used to hunt sea otters), and in processing seal and otter furs without damaging them. This

⁴ For more detail on the effects of the Russian invasion on the Aleut population, as well as information about traditional Aleut culture, see 5 Margaret Lantis, *Arctic Handbook of North American Indians* 161-180 (1984).



Holy Ascension Russian Orthodox Church, Unalaska Island.

meant that Russians could not displace Aleuts from the Company's labor force, enabling the Aleuts to make a relatively smooth transition from their paleolithic subsistence labor forms to what resembled a "company store" economy.⁵

Second, Russian Orthodox churches became the symbolic spiritual centers of Aleut culture, replacing the shamans, whose authority was undermined by their inability to cure the new diseases. The

⁵ See generally Semen Ben Okun, *The Russian-American Company* (1979).

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churches conducted services in Aleut languages, and by the time the U.S. acquired the island chain, every settlement had its own church.

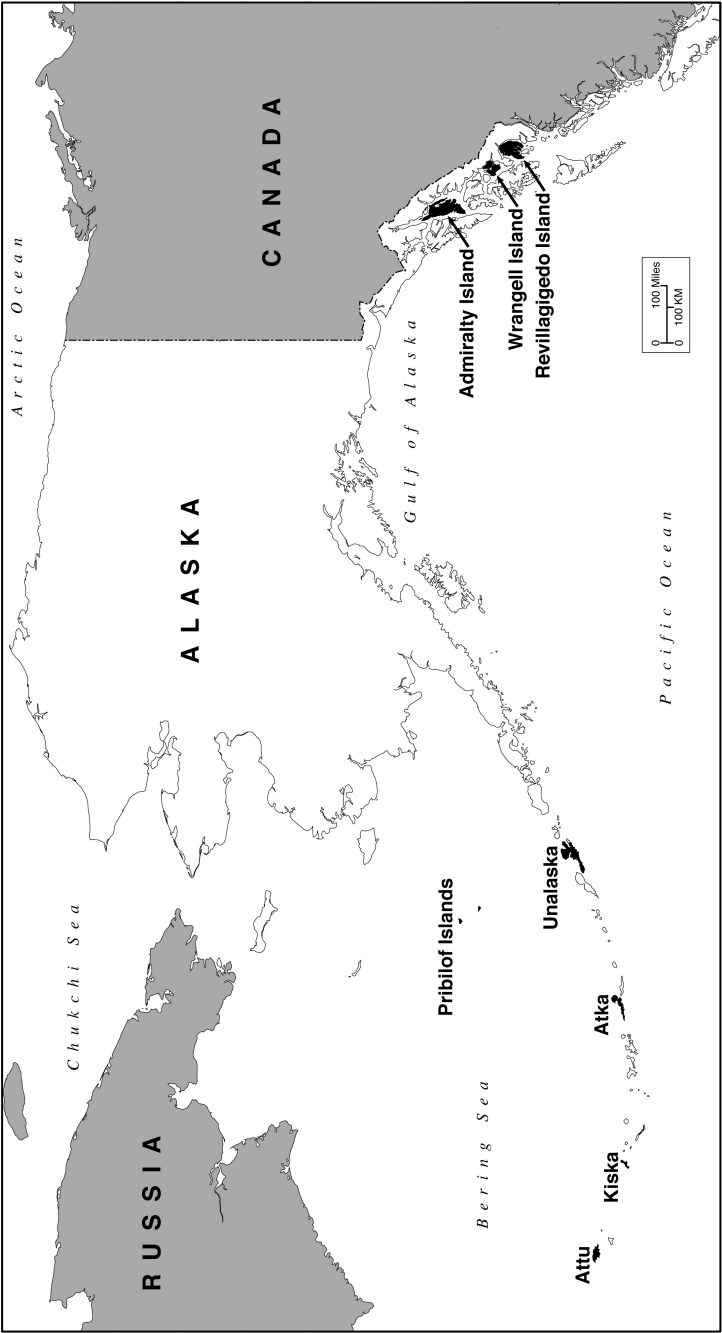
Third, the Russian missionaries made a determined effort to “Christianize” the Aleut population by encouraging Aleuts to build single-family dwellings, establish nuclear families, and abandon communal rituals. Some members of the Aleut population embraced the Company’s new guidelines, others resisted.

Fourth, the Company required some Aleuts to resettle on two previously uninhabited Pribilof islands, St. Paul and St. George, to hunt the seals that migrated there in large numbers to bear their offspring.

The presence of fur seals on the Pribilof Islands was a major reason that the U.S. government showed an interest, after the Civil War, in purchasing Alaska from the Russians. For the Russians’ part, they were motivated to dispose of Alaska because although the seal population remained robust, the islands’ sea otter population had been reduced by over a century of systematic hunting. The remainder of Alaska, from the Russian government’s point of view, was a vast northern wilderness in a nation that already had vast northern lands.

II

In 1867 the second invasion of the island chain began. President Andrew Johnson’s Secretary of State, William H. Seward, negotiated the purchase of Alaska, which contained 375,000,000 acres of land, for \$7,200,000. In addition to the fur seal trade, Seward wanted to expand U.S. access to Asian markets and eliminate European nations from the North American continent. Three years after the Alaska purchase, the U.S. government granted the Alaska Commercial Company an exclusive franchise to operate a seal rookery on St. Paul and St. George, but by 1910 concern had begun to mount about the possible extinction of sea otters and fur seals. In 1911 Great Britain (representing Canada), Japan, Russia, and the U.S. signed a treaty outlawing the hunting of sea otter, and two years later the U.S. government made the Aleutian chain a national wildlife refuge.



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That action reflected the emergence of a paternalistic attitude toward the Aleut population. In 1886 Sheldon Jackson, a missionary who was the first “education agent” appointed by the federal government to service the Alaska Territory, revealed that attitude in two comments about the Aleuts. He first defined the purpose of “Indian Education” as

to instruct a people the greater portion of whom are uncivilized [in] sanitary conditions, the laws of health, improvement of dwellings, better methods of housekeeping, cooking, and dressing, more remunerative forms of labor, honesty, chastity, the sacredness of the marriage relationship, and everything that elevates man.⁶

Jackson then identified some benefits of his version of “Indian Education”:

If the Alaska natives could be taught the English language, be brought under Christian influences by missionaries and trained into the forms of industry suitable for the territory, it seems to follow as a necessary result that the white population of Alaska, composed of immigrants from the States, would be able to employ them in their pursuits.⁷

Jackson’s comments revealed that by the late 19th century U.S. officialdom had folded the Aleuts into the category of “Indian wards of the state,” a category that reflected the predominant attitude of the U.S. government toward indigenous peoples on the American continent. After three centuries of contact, most Americans of European descent had concluded that “Indians” were largely unassimilable “savages” whose inability to cope with modern American civilization meant they were best-off treated as wards of the federal government and confined, mainly for their own good, to reservations in underpopulated areas.⁸ The situation of the Aleuts, however, was recognized by policymakers as different, in two respects. Even

⁶ Sheldon Jackson, *Report on Education in Alaska* 22-23 (1886).

⁷ Id.

⁸ See generally Stewart Banner, *How The Indians Lost Their Land* (2005).

though the Aleut population was not large, it far outnumbered the non-Aleut resident population of the islands. Moreover, there was little land occupied by Aleuts that non-Aleuts coveted. Forcible separation of the Aleuts from other residents of the Aleutian chain thus seemed unnecessary and counter-productive.

Later, in the 1930s, as policymakers in Congress and the Roosevelt administration debated the creation of an "Indian New Deal," in which the reservation system was reorganized to provide for greater tribal self-government and control over natural resources, Alaska was treated as a separate entity. Although the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act was extended to Alaska in 1936, Ernest Gruening, the territorial governor of Alaska, opposed the extension, asserting that proponents of the Act, such as Felix Cohen and Harold Ickes, "had no hesitation in assuming that what in their view was good for the [continental] Indians must also be good for the Eskimos, Aleuts and Indians of Alaska."⁹ In practice, the Act's application to the Aleutian chain fit clumsily because of the distances involved and the cultural diversity of the native groups living on various islands. Those factors would loom large during the third invasion of the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands.

A snapshot of the attitudes of resident U.S. government officials toward the Aleut population in the early 1940s can be found in a three-page letter written by Ruby and Charles Magee, who were employed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to teach school on Atka Island, roughly equidistant from the eastern and western ends of the Aleutian chain and a considerable distance from any other populated island. The Magees noted that "the Atka people had no contact with the United States other than through the mail order houses and the few people who happened out . . . on boats." The Atka people were mainly subsistence foragers, placing the materials they collected at a village store for communal use.

Nonetheless, the Magees did "not find these people very different from other Americans." They were "not primitive at all the way

⁹ Quoted in Ramona E. Soza, *Alaska Natives and Federal Indian Policy* 91 (unpublished dissertation, University of Washington, 1988).

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Aleut children in front of a school, circa 1938.

isolated Eskimo villages were.” The Atka people “had the radio for years, and magazines gave them an understanding of how others lived. They could all read English.” Their “little homes” were “quite livable, with running water piped in from a mountain stream.” They had “a good supply of reindeer meat” from “a big herd of reindeer on Atka” to eat, as well as plenty of fish, along with geese and ducks at certain times of the year. In sum, the Atka people “didn’t have any special build-up for them to understand.” In fact, many were tri-lingual, speaking Russian and English as well as their native language. Still, the Magees remained uncertain about many elements of native Atkan culture. “We heard nothing of their folk-lore, if they

had any,” they wrote. They didn’t “think the people were concerned about the science or theory as to why or how the world or the people in it came about, other than the religious teachings their [Russian Orthodox] church offered.”¹⁰

The Magees’ letter was a summary of their experiences on Atka Island between 1940 and 1942, when they hurriedly left the island. They had to leave in a hurry because the third set of invaders had arrived.¹¹

III

On June 3, 1942, Japanese forces began a bombardment of Dutch Harbor on Unalaska Island. Dutch Harbor was the principal U.S. military outpost in the Aleutian chain. Its depth accommodated large ships, and its location, between the Bering Sea and the Pacific Ocean, was thought strategic in any military conflict involving the U.S. and Japan.

The year of 1941 had been a decisive one for the Pacific theater of World War II. Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union threatened to divert Russian attention from its Siberian coast, adjacent to Japan. The U.S. had committed itself to the lend-lease program, of which the Soviets as well as England were beneficiaries. Well before Pearl Harbor, U.S. military intelligence anticipated that Japan, concerned about U.S. ships using Pacific routes to supply the Russians, would make aggressive naval and air moves in the Pacific, and, if established on Pacific islands, would use them as bases to attack Alaska and the U.S. West Coast.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii in December 1941 confirmed those fears and escalated the stakes in the Aleutian chain. The U.S. had begun a frantic build-up of the Dutch Harbor

¹⁰ Ruby and Charles Magee, “Our Island Experience, 1940-42,” in 2 John C. Kirtland and David F. Coffin, Jr., *The Relocation and Internment of the Aleuts During World War II* 98 (1981).

¹¹ On the circumstances of the Magee’s departure, see Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Magee to General Superintendent, January 6, 1942, quoted in *When the Wind Was a River*, 56.

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area in 1941, constructing air and naval bases where large numbers of troops could be stationed. After Pearl Harbor, Japan's goals in the Pacific theater were to neutralize the growing U.S. presence in the Aleutians while establishing naval supremacy by securing Midway Island, an ideal location for naval aircraft carriers. Japanese commanders resolved to launch an offensive on the Aleutians, which they hoped might deceive the U.S. about a simultaneous "sneak" attack on Midway. Their ultimate goal was not to use the Aleutians as a launching post for attacks on the U.S. mainland, but simply to prevent the U.S. from using them to invade Japan. Despite having cracked the Japanese war codes by the spring of 1942, the U.S. was unaware of the Japanese goals, and in any event did not want any Japanese presence in the Aleutian chain.

The result was that when, four days after the June 3 bombing of Dutch Harbor, Japanese forces took control of the islands of Kiska (largely uninhabited) and Attu, Atka – an island 600 miles west of Attu with a sheltered harbor – seemed next in line, with Unalaska to follow. On June 11, U.S. Navy bombers flew over Atka in an operation against Kiska, with some planes using Atka as a temporary base of operations. Japanese retaliation was expected, and Unalaska and the Pribilof Islands, with their large fisheries, were thought to be under siege as well. The U.S. military initially resolved to evacuate all Americans on those islands who were not directly connected to the war effort, including the Magees, who had initially helped out with the offensive against Kiska.¹² Thus began, in the summer of 1942, one of the more bizarre and chaotic forcible relocations of indigenous peoples in American history.

IV

It seems fair to conclude that the U.S. government, thought of as a collective set of civilian and military policymakers, never figured out what to do about Alaska, and especially the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands, during World War II. Officials responsible for the Alaskan theater brought radically different perspectives to its operations,

¹² See *When the Wind Was a River*, 45, citing military files.

quarreled among themselves, and dithered. Meanwhile the military forces charged with handling operations made a series of random and arbitrary decisions, particularly those involving the evacuation of civilians and the dispatch of troops to the Aleutian chain. Aleut peoples got caught in the middle of the ensuing chaos, and many of them ended up in internment centers, allegedly for their own good.

The “fog of war” is a highly appropriate metaphor for the internment process. First, fog – as in water vapor near ground level that obscures vision – was quite literally a constant presence on the Aleutian chain, making it difficult for both Japanese and American U.S. forces to launch operations or know where the enemy was. Second, neither the Japanese nor the Americans, in the critical summer of 1942, knew each other’s goals for the Aleutians, and both sides feared the worst. At one point it appeared that a major battle would take place over Atka. As it turned out, the decisive defeat the Japanese suffered at Midway on June 4 and 5, 1942, ended their aggressive plans for Pacific supremacy, but U.S. civilian and military policymakers did not know that at the time.

By the fall of 1943, U.S. and Canadian troops had driven the Japanese off the Aleutian chain. Only one decisive battle had taken place, a nineteen-day assault by American soldiers on Attu in May 1943 that eventually recaptured the island. By then there were no Aleuts left there. In September 1942 they had been evacuated to Japan as part of a Japanese pullback from the entire Aleutian chain. Meanwhile the U.S. was preparing for an expected Japanese invasion of Atka, Unalaska, and the Pribilofs, and the evacuation to the American mainland of Aleuts on those islands, and additional smaller ones, began. Various representatives of U.S. agencies, including the Department of Interior, the Alaska Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Alaskan Office of Indian Affairs, as well as Governor Gruening, weighed in on the discussion of whether to evacuate Aleuts and where they should go. That discussion was still ongoing in July 1942, even though Navy transports had begun the evacuation a month earlier and even though no concrete plans had been made for exactly where the evacuated Aleuts would be housed. All the discussants anticipated that it would somewhere in “southeastern Alaska”

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U.S. armed forces landing on Attu Island in May 1943.

because of its relative accessibility to the Aleutians and somewhat moderate climate, but no facilities for housing the Aleuts had been prepared.

At that point, a search began for abandoned canneries or warehouses to house the Aleuts. Eventually five “campsite” locations were identified: Funter Bay and Killisnoo, west of Admiralty Island; Wrangell Institute, a stopover site on Wrangell Island, southeast of Admiralty Island; Burnett Inlet, a permanent campsite on Wrangell Island; and Ward Lake on Revillagigedo Island, where the town of Ketchikan was located. (See the map on page 288 above.) Decisions to locate particular groups of Aleuts at particular campsites were made while the private and Navy transport ships carrying the groups were wending their way northeast from the Aleutian chain. As a result, the ships stopped in various places as their itinerary was being figured out. Conditions on the ships were crowded; food was scanty; the weather, even in June and July, was sometimes inclement; the threat of war hovered over the ships’ passages; and the Aleut passengers were not allowed to take many of their belongings.

When the various groups of Aleuts (some of them composed of residents of one of the larger islands, others composed of inhabitants of several smaller islands) were deposited in the southeastern Alaska camps, they found a beautiful landscape with abundant fish and wild game. But they also found that the officials in charge of their resettlement had not decided such questions as whether they could work and receive wages, whether they could freely leave the camps, how they might be fed, how their camps were to be kept sanitary, whether they would be supplied with any medical services, and what their living conditions would be. Each of the camps was located near a village or, in one case, the flourishing town of Ketchikan. But the local residents, on the whole, did not welcome the Aleuts, describing them as half-breeds, finding their habits filthy or promiscuous, viewing them as potential competitors for jobs, and expressing concern that their diseases might be infectious.¹³

At no point were the Aleuts subjected to the barbed wire fences and other security measures employed in the “relocation centers” in which Japanese residents of the West Coast were housed. For a time, in 1942 and 1943, the U.S. Coast Guard issued identification badges for the Aleuts, and their travel was subject to military restrictions. They were also made eligible for the draft, and some

¹³ On May 19, 1943, Harry C. McCain, the Chairman of Police, Health and Sanitation for the town of Ketchikan, wrote Gruening about the reaction of Ketchikan residents to the presence of Aleuts at the Ward Lake campsite. After noting that “[t]here are a large number of service men in and near Ketchikan and neither they nor the civilians should be infected with [the Ward Lake Aleuts’] diseased conditions,” McCain continued,

[T]he proprietor of the Totem Lunch inquired whether she could refuse their patronage for the reason they were unsanitary and diseased and thus obnoxious to her regular customers besides requiring an unusual amount of trouble in sterilizing of their dishes. . . . [E]ven the bars would much prefer not to have their patronage.

McCain concluded his letter to Gruening as follows:

Therefore we desire to protest [the Aleuts] being kept quartered at Ward Cove and to suggest they ought to be moved to some suitable location where they would not have immediate contacts with large numbers of people.

Quoted in *Personal Justice Denied*, 349.

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“able-bodied males” were drafted. But some male Aleuts found work in towns near their camps at comparatively high wages. The difficulty was that even those Aleuts who found jobs outside the camps eventually had to return to facilities that were, to put it mildly, substandard, and the U.S. government took the position that if they left the camp population, they would not receive any assistance. Diseases broke out in the campsites, and several Aleuts died. Moreover, the transition from their homes and ways of life in the Aleutian Islands to camps on the Alaskan peninsula was traumatic for many Aleuts. Eyewitnesses recalled that many of their contemporaries were depressed and homesick.¹⁴

Even the eventuality of returning home posed a difficulty: many evacuated Aleuts had no homes to return to. As the military situation in the Aleutians improved, U.S. officials in charge of the interned Aleuts began to make plans for their return. No official *wanted* to keep the Aleuts in southeastern Alaska, any more than the officials had wanted to bring them there in the first place. But the Aleutian Islands remained a theater of war, and the U.S. Navy and Army had moved into the islands in earnest. The Army initially developed a “scorched earth” policy on such islands as Atka, to keep potential Japanese invaders from gaining access to anything useful. Attu had been ravaged in the May 1943 battles. Unalaska and the Pribilofs, along with Atka, thronged with soldiers who were housed in rapidly constructed barracks that replaced the Aleut dwellings. When some of those soldiers found possessions the departing Aleuts had been forced to leave behind, they looted them. Even some churches were vandalized or destroyed.

¹⁴ In the early 1950s Gerald Berreman, an anthropologist, interviewed residents of Nikolski Island who had been interned at the Ward Lake campsite. He concluded that although most of the Nikolski Aleuts enjoyed making money and the “liquor, dancing, and movies” that it provided, those benefits were “hopeless substitutes for the security of old and familiar ways.” “Everything they were used to was left behind,” Berreman noted. “Those who were offered permanent jobs [in southeast Alaska] chose to go back to the old life instead.” Gerald D. Berreman, *A Contemporary Study of Nikolski: An Aleutian Village* 255 (unpublished master’s thesis, University of Oregon, 1953).



Naval base on Unalaska Island, with huts in the foreground built in 1942.

A military police memo written in 1944, describing the situation on Unalaska, provide some sense of the condition of the occupied areas of the Aleutian chain.

All buildings damaged due to lack of normal care and upkeep. . . . The furnishings, clothing and personal effects remaining in the homes showed, with few exceptions, evidence of weather damage and damage by rats. Inspection of contents revealed extensive evidence of widespread wanton destruction of property and vandalism. Contents of closed packing boxes, trunks and cupboards had been ransacked Many items listed on inventories furnished by the occupants of the houses were entirely missing. . . . It appears that armed forces personnel and civilians alike have been responsible for this vandalism. . . .¹⁵

¹⁵ *Personal Justice Denied*, 355-56 & n.200. It is hard to imagine what “civilians” other than those directly associated with the military effort in the Aleutians would have been present on Unalaska Island (the site of the report) between the summer of 1942 and January, 1944, when the report was filed.

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A government commission concluded in 1982 that “[t]hrough the insult of massive looting and vandalism of their houses and places of worship . . . the Aleuts lost invaluable tangible ties to the past. Houses can eventually be rebuilt and refurbished, but stolen family mementos, heirlooms and religious icons brought from czarist Russia in the early 1800s cannot be recovered.”¹⁶

V

Can the lost internment be placed in context? First, one needs to compare the treatment of the Aleuts interned in southeastern Alaska with the fate of the inhabitants of Attu who were evacuated by the Japanese in September 1942. The Attu Aleuts remained prisoners of war throughout the war. Of the forty Attu evacuees, sixteen died in their first prison facility, in the city of Otaru on the west coast of Hokkaido Island, the northernmost of Japan’s four major islands. In the fall of 1945, after Japan’s surrender, they were transferred by U.S. authorities to Okinawa. After a long, torturous journey from Okinawa to Manila to San Francisco to Seattle, twenty-four survivors touched down in November 1945. Nine more of the evacuees would die before the Attuans were resettled in the Aleutian chain in December, but not on Attu. The U.S. government did not want to spend the money to rebuild Attu, and built homes for the Attuans on Atka. Traditionally the Atkan and Attuan peoples had been rivals.¹⁷

Thus although those inhabitants of the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands who were evacuated to the U.S. fared, on the whole, poorly, those taken to Japan fared far worse. Further, the attitudes of the evacuating governments differed. The Japanese treated the Attuans as prisoners of war. American authorities evacuated and interned Aleuts in part for their protection. The U.S. government also paid for their food and lodging, made some effort to find them jobs, and, after a time, did not drastically restrict their ability to leave the camps. It also paid for the Aleuts’ resettlement, and filed claims on

¹⁶ *Personal Justice Denied*, 359.

¹⁷ For more detail, see *When the Wind Was a River*, 41-43, 85-87.

behalf of the Attuans with a War Claims Commission, established by Congress in 1948. Twenty-three surviving Attuans or their descendants received payments under those claims in 1951, the largest amounting to \$2,358. The funds came from the sales of confiscated enemy property.¹⁸

But the U.S. government's performance was incompetent, and tainted by ethnic stereotyping. Eventually those facts came to be partially acknowledged. Surviving Aleuts and their descendants would receive redress comparable to that secured by Japanese American detainees of World War II, if not the same conspicuous public apologies. After a highly critical report on the evacuation of Aleuts appeared in 1982, members of the Alaska congressional delegation, who had partially been responsible for the commissioning of the report itself, pressed for Aleut reparations.¹⁹ Six years later, despite considerable opposition in Congress and from the Justice Department, the House and Senate passed the "Aleutian and Pribilof Islands Restitution Act," establishing restitution and valuation funds totaling \$20,000,000.²⁰ The Aleuts had "won" in the sense of having the ordeal of their internment briefly and tangibly acknowledged. Nonetheless the episode, for the most part, lingers in obscurity. This essay has been an effort to recover it.



¹⁸ See id., 181.

¹⁹ The individual most responsible for securing the Aleuts some redress was John C. Kirtland, a member of the Washington, D.C. law firm of Cook and Henderson. Kirtland was retained to represent the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association, a group of descendants of the evacuated Aleuts. Kirtland helped associate the cause of Aleut reparations with that of survivors of the Japanese internment centers, secured a grant from Alaska to finance documentation of the experiences of Aleut internees, and produced a lengthy memorandum that became the basis for the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. For more on Kirtland's role, see *Personal Justice Denied*, 182-185.

²⁰ For more detail, see id., 185-186.