

Part II

The Aleuts

War and Evacuation in Alaska

About 10,000 years ago migrants from Asia to North America settled on the remote Aleutian Islands. These migrants were the Native Aleuts, who proudly called themselves *Unangan*, “we the people.”

The Aleutian Islands form a chain strung across 900 miles from the Alaska Peninsula to the island of Attu, 300 miles from the Kamchatka Peninsula of the Soviet Union. The islands are treeless, blanketed by soft tundra. Northward-flowing tropical air from Japan and frigid, dry air from the Arctic clash there, leaving the islands hidden in fog and swept by violent winds most of the year.

In the 18th century the Aleutian Islands and their 10,000 inhabitants were “discovered” by Russian entrepreneurs. After colonization, the Aleut population was decimated by massacre and disease; when the United States purchased Alaska from the Russians in 1867, only about 2,000 Aleuts remained. The Russians removed several hundred Aleuts to the uninhabited Pribilof Islands of St. Paul and St. George, 200 miles north of the island of Unalaska, to harvest the fur seals that annually migrated there.

By 1867 the aboriginal Aleuts had largely assimilated the western culture of the Russians and were converted to the Russian Orthodox religion. Under American dominance the Aleuts’ subsistence economy and aboriginal culture further eroded. The introduction of the American wage-earning economy and educational system, which discouraged traditional Aleut language, art and music, contributed to the attrition.

The irreparable loss of much traditional culture and the tragic demise of the Aleut population was exacerbated by their removal from the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands during World War II. The story of what happened to the Aleuts during the war has, for the most part, remained untold. Like the hard-fought battles of the Aleutian Campaign—the only campaign during World War II to be fought on American soil—it remains a mystery to most Americans, the islands only names in a crossword puzzle. But the Aleuts have never forgotten.

In the struggle for naval supremacy the Aleutian Islands were strategically valuable to both the United States and Japan. Beginning in March 1942, United States military intelligence repeatedly warned Alaska defense commanders that Japanese aggression into the Aleutians was imminent. In June 1942 the Japanese launched a swift offensive, bombing Unalaska, invading two other islands and capturing the Aleut villagers on Attu. During this offensive, American military commanders in Alaska ordered the evacuation of Aleuts on the remaining islands to places of relative safety.

The Aleut evacuation and the removal of persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast during the same period were separate events—neither caused nor influenced the other. When speaking of the two evacuations, common phrases such as “military necessity” do not hold the same meaning, nor should they. The evacuation from the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands, then under attack, was not a government action influenced by wartime hysteria or fear of sabotage or espionage. Both groups of evacuees suffered economic loss and personal hardship; but the root causes of loss and damage are very different in the two cases.

The evacuation of the Aleuts was a reasonable precaution taken to ensure their safety. But there was a large failure of administration and planning which becomes evident when the central questions are addressed: Why did the military and civilian agencies responsible for Aleut welfare wait until Attu was actually captured before they evacuated the islands? Why were evacuation and relocation policies not formulated by the government departments most knowledgeable about the danger of an enemy attack they expected? And why was the return of the Aleuts to their homes delayed long after the threat of Japanese aggression had passed?

The Aleuts were relocated to abandoned facilities in southeastern Alaska and exposed to a bitter climate and epidemics of disease without adequate protection or medical care. They fell victim to an extraordinarily high death rate, losing many of the elders who sustained their culture. While the Aleuts were in southeastern Alaska, their homes in the Aleutians and Pribilofs were pillaged and ransacked by American military personnel.

In sum, the evacuation of the Aleuts was not planned in a timely or thoughtful manner. The condition of the camps where they were sent was deplorable; their resettlement was slow and inconsiderate.

The official indifference which so many Native American groups have experienced marked the Aleuts as well.

The Aleutian Campaign

As global conflict spread during 1940, U.S. military leaders directed their attention to preventing attacks on our Pacific frontier. The defense of America's western outposts, Alaska, Hawaii and the Panama Canal, were strengthened. Although Alaska was low on the priority list, by June 30, 1940, the Army had committed at least 5,000 troops to its defense.¹

By the beginning of 1941, America's naval power in the Pacific was weakening relative to Japan's, and the approaching Pacific war increased the strategic value of the Aleutians. The westernmost Aleutian island, Attu, lay only 600 miles from Japan's northern flank in the Kurile Islands. The Boeing plant and Bremerton Navy Yard in Seattle were only eight hours' bomber-flight from the Aleutians. The Aleutians were stepping stones which either the United States or Japan could use offensively. They were also important to the United States as passage points on the shipping route for our Lend-Lease traffic to the Soviet Union.

The Alaska Defense Command (ADC), with Brigadier General Simon B. Buckner in command, was created in February 1941 as part of the recently-formed Western Defense Command to raise Alaska's priority in military operations. Earlier the Navy had established the Alaska Sector under the Thirteenth Naval District commanded by Rear Admiral Charles S. Freeman. Throughout the summer of 1941, garrisoning accelerated. Army facilities were constructed on Unalaska Island to defend the naval installations at Dutch Harbor, and approximately 5,500 troops were brought in.² Between June and September 1941, ADC strength tripled.³

During the fall of 1941, construction of air bases strategically located at Cold Bay on the Alaska Peninsula and Umnak Island in the Aleutians moved ahead. They were secretly built under the names of fish cannery companies. The Umnak airstrip was particularly essential because it protected Dutch Harbor, which controlled Unimak Strait and passage through the Aleutian chain, linking the Pacific Ocean and the Bering Sea. Strategic use of the Aleutians hinged largely on possession of Dutch Harbor.

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the ADC bolstered the Aleutian bases in preparation for offensives against Japan. Since

naval bases in Alaska were still under construction and lacked adequate air support, the ADC was concerned about possible Japanese attack. As the Governor of Alaska, Ernest Gruening, pointed out to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes:*

It is well known to the Japanese that the Alaska bases, while designed ultimately to be used offensively, are still far from complete, and that if attacked soon would probably be unable to defend themselves adequately and could therefore be destroyed. . . .

[Dutch Harbor] is the base at which the Japanese can strike most easily and which they will probably select first since it is the most difficult of all to defend.⁴

In mid-March 1942, Army Intelligence reported that a Japanese offensive could be expected at any time.⁵ As a result, by the end of April 1942, garrisons in Alaska had doubled to 40,242.⁶

In late April 1942, Colonel Jimmy Doolittle successfully attacked the coast of Japan, dropping bombs on Tokyo Harbor. The stunned Japanese Imperial Staff acted swiftly to secure its newly-acquired possessions and resources in the South Pacific; it believed the destruction of U.S. naval forces was paramount to the further extension of Japanese hegemony in the South Pacific. The Japanese believed, mistakenly, that Doolittle had launched his attack from the Aleutians, so they also acted to protect their exposed northern flank.

On May 5, in an effort to intercept Lend-Lease traffic to Siberia and to cripple U.S. naval forces in the Pacific, Japan authorized the "M I Operation."⁷ This two-phase operation involved establishing both defensive and offensive strategic positions in the Pacific. The Japanese planned to attack the Aleutian Islands as a diversion while simultaneously attacking the more strategically valuable Midway Island. They believed U.S. forces would concentrate on defending the Aleutians while Japan's main thrust was directed toward Midway and the destruction of the U.S. fleet that would be trapped between the Aleutians and Midway. Japan would then control strategic Pacific waters from the western Aleutians south to Midway.

The ensuing attack against the U.S. Pacific Fleet was the largest naval operation in Japanese history.⁸ Having broken the secret Japanese naval code, the U.S. Navy knew the details of their plan. According to Naval Intelligence reports, an attack force would be launched

*Since Alaska was a territory of the United States, the governor was appointed by and reported to the Secretary of the Interior.

from Japan around May 20, and sometime after May 24, the Aleutians and Midway would be attacked.⁹ The Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, decided not to split his forces and instead dispatched a small nine-ship force to Alaska. On May 25, 1942, Nimitz warned Rear Admiral Robert A. Theobald, Commander of that North Pacific Force, that the "Japanese have completed plans for an amphibious operation to secure an advanced base in the Aleutian Islands. . . ." ¹⁰

Additional intercepted Japanese messages enabled the U.S. to predict even more precisely when the attack would occur: "[B]y 21 May the United States knew fairly accurately what the strength of the [Japanese] Northern Area Force would be and when it would strike, 1 June or shortly thereafter."¹¹ Poor weather, however, made it impossible to detect the enemy attack force until a Navy patrol plane spotted the Japanese on June 2, 400 miles south of Kiska Island.

On the morning of June 3, 1942, the Japanese bombed Dutch Harbor naval installations and the following day attacked Army facilities at Fort Mears. Nearby Unalaska's air defenses were unable to prevent the enemy attack. Squadrons coming from Cold Bay arrived too late, and the radio communication systems were so inadequate that the secret airfields at Umnak never received word of the Japanese attack. Nevertheless, losses on both sides were minimal. At the same time, the Japanese were suffering decisive defeat at Midway. But the Japanese commander ordered the Aleutian campaign to proceed as planned in order to secure a defensive position in the northern Pacific and to establish bases in preparation for future offensives.¹²

Foggy weather and typically poor radio communications made the roving Japanese fleet impossible to find. On June 7 and 8, while Admiral Theobald was searching for the enemy fleet in the Bering Sea near the Pribilof Islands, the Japanese Northern Force landed approximately 2,500 soldiers on Kiska and Attu, unopposed. Ten U.S. weather crewmen on Kiska were taken prisoner. The following day in Chicagof village on Attu, 42 Aleuts and two non-Aleut Alaska Indian Service employees were captured.

The absence of daily radio reports from Kiska and Attu aroused suspicion that the Japanese had invaded the western Aleutians. This was confirmed on June 10 when the weather cleared enough for an American scouting plane to sight the Japanese occupation forces on Kiska.

Long-distance bombings proved ineffective in dislodging the Japanese, so an airstrip and command post were constructed on Adak

Island in the western Aleutians. Throughout Fall 1942, continuous bombing of enemy installations on Kiska contained the Japanese in a defensive posture. Secret U.S. airfields on Umnak prevented the Japanese from patrolling the waters of the north Pacific from the Aleutians:

While enemy orders referred to Kiska as "the key position on the northern attacking route against the U.S. in the future," it is fairly evident that the Japanese had no such design and were attempting only to block the American advance.¹³

During the fall, General Buckner garrisoned the islands by landing small forces on Atka and other islands, including St. Paul. To Buckner, the Japanese occupation of Kiska and Attu was the only obstacle to launching an offensive against Japan from the Aleutians. By December 1942, Buckner had 150,000 troops in the Alaskan theatre¹⁴ and, in the following month, Admiral Nimitz ordered the North Pacific Force to clear the islands of Japanese troops.¹⁵

During the winter of 1943 the North Pacific Force blockaded Attu and Kiska to force Japan to surrender these outposts. The blockade was effective, for the last Japanese supply ship reached Attu in March. Equally devastating, the Japanese had to relinquish air power to the U.S. by the middle of spring; losing more than 1,000 airplanes at Guadalcanal, the Japanese had no replacements for the Aleutian campaign.¹⁶ Finally, Japanese naval supremacy in the north Pacific ended in March after the U.S. won the battle for the Komandorski Islands west of Attu.

Fewer than 10,000 Japanese troops on Kiska and Attu awaited the inevitable attack. On May 11, 1943, the U.S. invaded Attu, and for 19 days waged a successful but bloody battle that cost over 500 American and 2,300 Japanese lives.

In July 1943, the U.S. successfully launched a bombing attack from Adak to Paramushiro on the Kurile Islands, the base of the Japanese Northern Force. The Japanese, facing a weakened northern flank, decided to withdraw their troops from Kiska. In late July, under cover of fog, the Japanese evacuated the island, slipping through the U.S. naval blockade. Almost three weeks later on August 15, 1943, the Navy, Army and Air Force invaded Kiska; heavy fog provided the only resistance. This marked the official end of the Aleutian campaign.

In September 1943, General DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command, submitted a plan to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the invasion of Japan by forces based partially on Attu and Kiska. The plan was never used. Also in September, Admiral Nimitz placed the Aleutians in a "Non-Invasion Status"¹⁷ and the Eleventh Air Force was

redesignated the Alaska Department and separated from the Western Defense Command, reflecting a lower priority in defense operations. By the end of 1943, Army forces in Alaska were reduced to 113,000 men.

U.S. military combat activity there did not completely cease. Bombing attacks on Paramushiro were launched from Aleutian bases from 1943 to 1945 to keep constant pressure on Japan's northern flank. These attacks tied up one-sixth of Japan's Air Force.¹⁸ By the fall of 1943, however, the threat of Japanese advances and occupation had long since dissipated.¹⁹

Considering Evacuation

Events between Pearl Harbor and the evacuation from the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands suggest that the government agencies (the Department of the Interior and the military) responsible for protecting the Aleut residents failed to coordinate their activities internally or with each other. Interior officials, despite the growing threat of attack, were unable to agree on the desirability of evacuation and lost valuable planning time. As a result, the military was forced to evacuate the islands without adequate guidance from the Interior Department.

The Interior Department exercised control over policy affecting the Aleuts through three divisions: the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA), the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the Division of Territories and Island Possessions. On the Aleutian Islands, the OIA's involvement with the Aleuts was limited to education. The OIA established primary schools on the islands, and through its Alaska Indian Service appointed a teacher to the larger villages. The FWS's relationship to the Aleuts was based upon its responsibility to manage the profitable fur seal harvest on the Pribilofs. Since the Aleuts provided the only source of labor for this, the FWS maintained control over the Pribilof Aleuts and assumed responsibility for their education and general welfare. During World War II, the Division of Territories' major concern was to coordinate efforts among the Territorial Government of Alaska, which was under its jurisdiction, and federal war agencies on matters relating to supplying Alaska and evacuating the Aleutians. The military offices that established or carried out policies for civilian evacuation of the islands were the Navy's Alaska Sector under Admiral Freeman, the North Pacific Force under Admiral Theobald, and the Army's Alaska Defense Command under General Buckner.

Fearing Japanese attack, Buckner ordered the evacuation of military dependents from Alaska immediately after Pearl Harbor. Dis-

cussions about removing other Aleutian residents were begun by the military and the Interior Department soon thereafter. The Navy Department contacted Paul W. Gordon of the Division of Territories on January 17, 1942, expressing concern for civilians who lived near the military installations at Dutch Harbor:

It is felt that the evacuation of all white women and children from Unalaska would be to the best interest of the present military situation.²⁰

The Army recommended to the Navy that Aleut women and children also be removed in the event of an evacuation, and the Division of Territories relayed this recommendation to Governor Gruening on January 23. The Division concurred with an Army recommendation that "the activities of the Army and Navy connected with evacuation be coordinated with the activities of the Governor's office."²¹ The Territorial Governor's office was a logical place to channel information in order to coordinate planning, since it fell under Interior's jurisdiction.

In the absence of Governor Gruening, Acting Territorial Governor E. L. Bartlett called a meeting on March 13, 1942, to discuss plans for evacuation in the event of enemy attack. Representatives of several civilian agencies were present (including Claude Hirst, a junior OIA officer from Juneau), but no military representatives attended the meeting. One conclusion they reached was that

[N]o general attempt should be made even in the case of actual enemy attack, to evacuate Eskimos or other primitive natives from Alaska. It is felt these people could never adjust themselves to life outside of their present environment, whereas they could "take to the hills" in case of danger and be practically self sufficient for a considerable period.²²

It was decided that Aleut women and children who lived near Dutch Harbor should be relocated to villages on Unimak Island and on the Alaska Peninsula where they would be "less exposed (to both military and social dangers)."²³ The OIA chose relocation sites after conferring with the Aleuts. Five of the nine possible villages were Aleut villages; in three of these locations living quarters were available in closed fish canneries.

At the meeting, officials recognized the need for further planning to coordinate efforts between the military and civilian branches:

There is a need for basic thinking and definite decisions on matters of broad policy relating to evacuation, beyond what has been evidenced to date.

A joint declaration of some kind might be prepared by participating agencies stating evacuation problems and recommending

lines of procedure. This should be addressed to the Army and Navy commands in Alaska and the Governor.²⁴

The meeting concluded with a sense of urgency, with agreement that "another meeting of the group (in the very near future) is desirable."²⁵

In later discussions, high-ranking OIA and other Interior Department officials remained apprehensive about removing the Aleuts from their homes. They feared that the Aleuts could not adjust easily to a foreign environment. John Collier, Commissioner of the OIA, sent a memorandum to Secretary Ickes on April 10, 1942, calling attention to the OIA's responsibility in establishing plans for Aleuts on the Aleutian Islands. Commissioner Collier pointed out that the Navy said it would not protect villages west of Dutch Harbor, and that Aleuts from the westernmost inhabited islands of Attu and Atka showed no inclination to move.²⁶

The OIA faced a difficult situation: it wished neither to evacuate the Aleuts forcibly nor to leave them in a potentially dangerous area. The Aleuts in Unalaska, Collier reported, were willing to be moved eastward.²⁷ The OIA was relatively free to relocate these people swiftly to the preferred sites chosen at the March 18 meeting. A consensus could not be reached, however, among the military, the OIA and the Governor's office whether *any* Aleuts should be evacuated. As Collier pointed out in the same memorandum to Ickes:

Our representative at Juneau, Superintendent Hirst, is in favor of evacuation. Governor Gruening is opposed to it on the grounds . . . [that] the dislocation resulting from a forced evacuation would be a greater damage and involve greater risks to the ultimate welfare of the people than the probable risks if they remain where they are. Admiral Freeman . . . has sent us a wire in response to our request for advice which places the responsibility upon us. His wire seems to say that evacuation is desirable but not mandatory. He does say that the Natives are "wholly unprotected from enemy raiders."²⁸

Collier warned Ickes that if Dutch Harbor were bombed and Aleut residents of nearby Unalaska were injured, the Interior Department might be criticized. But he cautiously concluded, "I am inclined to leave the Natives where they are, unless the Navy insists that they be moved out."²⁹ The OIA chose a course which left the Aleuts in their villages; Claude Hirst dissented. It appears that although the Navy had no desire to make the final evacuation decision, the OIA preferred to leave this ultimate responsibility to the Navy. The OIA's position was approved less than a week later by Secretary Ickes, with the stipulation that the Aleuts would be moved if they wished.³⁰

Sensing that the coordination of military and civilian operations was not running smoothly, James C. Rettie, Counselor from the Alaska Office of President Roosevelt's National Resources Planning Board, contacted the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, Harold D. Smith, on May 7, 1942, to register his complaints about Alaska's unpreparedness:

I feel that it is my personal duty . . . to express to you again my grave concern about the present state of affairs in the Territory.

We shall be worse than fools if we do not anticipate an attack in force against Alaska within the next two months. If nothing is done to remedy the administrative paralysis and lack of clearly defined responsibility now prevailing in Alaska and the inadequate preparations to evacuate civilians, the confusion and loss of life which will follow an attack may easily be worse than it was in Hawaii. The record of inaction, delays, inter-agency squabbles and bickering and lack of proper liaison with the armed forces will be terribly ugly. There will also be the vital question of the need for a unified military command. An outraged public opinion in the United States will rightly insist upon a hard-boiled investigation which might easily shake this administration to its very foundations.

I therefore plead for the utmost speed and resolution in the issuance of whatever Executive Order the military authorities can and will effectively use to achieve proper coordination between military and civilian activities.³¹

Smith forwarded Rettie's correspondence to Henry L. Stimson, the Secretary of War, but it was not until June 11, 1942, after the Japanese attack, that the President signed Executive Order 9181 to establish the Alaska War Council chaired by the territorial governor with commissioners drawn from civilian agencies. The Council was responsible for maintaining close liaison with the military commanders and for conforming civilian policy to military objectives, "relative to the safety and security of the civilian population of Alaska."³²

It appears that no coordinated government policy for developing evacuation plans existed, even as the Japanese launched the M I Operation. The day after Dutch Harbor was bombed by the Japanese, Governor Gruening wrote Secretary Ickes. Gruening doubted that an evacuation of Attu and Atka was desirable and tried to dissuade Ickes from forcibly evacuating those islands; moreover, the presence of Japanese vessels in the vicinity would have complicated any evacuation. At this late date, Gruening sought a clear evacuation policy.³³ He pointed out that Admiral Freeman believed that the Japanese might occupy one of the two westernmost islands, endangering the Aleuts

there. Freeman had indicated to Gruening that "the Office of Indian Affairs desired this evacuation . . . [and] . . . the Navy had no special wishes or desires in the matter."³⁴ The OIA appears to have shifted position regarding the desirability of evacuation, and the Navy seems to have declined any decision-making responsibility.

According to Gruening, General Buckner, on the other hand, clearly opposed the evacuation:

[Buckner] gave me his opinion that it would be a great mistake to evacuate these natives. He said, in effect, that evacuating them was pretty close to destroying them; that they now live under conditions suitable to them; and that if they were removed they would be subject to the deterioration of contact with the white man, would likely fall prey to drink and disease, and probably would never get back to their historic habitat.³⁵

Gruening agreed with Buckner as did Superintendent Hirst, who reversed his former position. Gruening went one step further: "[B]efore any decision could be made, a qualified representative of the Office of Indian Affairs [should] proceed to Attu and Atka . . . [to] discuss the matter fully with the natives, and make the appropriate recommendations."³⁶ Gruening was concerned that the Aleuts understand the full implications of being moved to a strange new environment, although one relatively safe from enemy invasion.

Secretary Ickes responded on June 17, 1942, agreeing with Gruening's recommendation, but ironically noting that:

[R]ecent events have eliminated this procedure. Attu is now occupied by the enemy, and the Navy is in the process of evacuating the natives of Atka and of the Pribilof Islands. Arrangements are in progress for settling evacuees during whatever period may be necessary in Southeastern Alaska.³⁷

Thus began the evacuation of Aleuts from the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands, seemingly without well-developed plans and certainly without a clear policy to define the division of responsibilities between the military and civilian branches of government. The Department of the Interior was unable to reach an internal consensus; the Navy passed decision-making responsibility to Interior; and the Army, despite its knowledge of an inevitable Japanese attack, took a position which they, like the others, would reverse when Japanese invasion became a reality.

Perhaps this unpreparedness can be partially explained by the lack of coordination between the Army and Navy in Alaska. Their headquarters were 300 miles apart, and the exchange of intelligence information was sometimes slow and inaccurate. The commanders of the ADC and the North Pacific Force often clashed because of personality,

and this exacerbated difficulties of coordination.³⁸ Had the Alaska War Council been established earlier, it might have provided an effective focus for military and civilian evacuation planning. By the time the Council was established in June, the ADC and OIA were searching for a place to relocate villagers evacuated from Atka and the Pribilofs.

The Evacuation of Atka and the Pribilof Islands

Following the Japanese bombing of Dutch Harbor, the Navy dispatched the seaplane tender *U.S.S. Gillis* to Atka to search for the elusive Japanese fleet. One of the Navy patrol planes spotted the Japanese invasion force on Kiska, and on June 11, 1942, the Navy launched air raids on Kiska from Nazan Bay on Atka.

The Japanese responded by sending out scouting planes and on June 12, a Japanese reconnaissance plane was sighted over Nazan Bay. At approximately 8:00 p. m., the *Gillis* received orders to evacuate Atka and to apply a scorched-earth policy before leaving.³⁹ The Commander of the Navy Patrol Wing issued the order to evacuate, to relocate the Atkans to a safe place and to prevent Japanese troops from using the Atkans' housing.⁴⁰ The *Gillis* dispatched a unit of sailors to Atka village and evacuated C. Ralph and Ruby Magee, who were employed by the OIA's Alaska Indian Service, she as a schoolteacher and he as a general maintenance man. They were the only people evacuated because, according to the Magees, after eighteen hours of bombing raids on Kiska and sighting a Japanese scout plane, "We had the people move out to their fish camps about three miles from the village, thinking that they might be safer out there in their tents."⁴¹ The Magees were given twenty minutes to pack; then the detail of sailors burned the village, including the Aleut church, leaving only four houses unscathed. The *Gillis* set sail immediately for Dutch Harbor.

Later that evening, most of the Atka Aleuts returned to their burning village. They were spotted by the crew of the seaplane tender *U.S.S. Hulbert* and loaded aboard. The next day the *Hulbert* headed for Nikolski village on Umnak Island, where it eventually dropped off its 62 Aleut passengers to await transportation to Dutch Harbor.⁴² On the night of the 13th, Patrol Wing Four reported that a message from Admiral Nimitz revealed that "the Japanese commander in Kiska had directed his aircraft to bomb Nazan Bay. By this time Nazan Bay had been completely evacuated and our forces were safely away."⁴³ In fact, nineteen Aleuts were stranded at Atka until June 15, when two Navy planes picked them up.

The evacuation of Atka was necessarily hasty, yet the scorched-

earth policy might have been implemented more carefully had planning been coordinated properly between the Navy and OIA. The irony was that the Atkans were prepared to evacuate before a Japanese attack, and they could have been given time to take their belongings before the village was destroyed. As the Magees described it:

[Right after Pearl Harbor] we went to tell the villagers that they ought to pack up and be prepared to leave at any time, for we thought that surely the Coast Guard or someone else would come to evacuate us. However, it was not until six months later that we were taken off the island . . . [also] a letter came from the Juneau Alaska Native Service Office in April of 1942 requesting us to talk over with the people the possibility of having to move to some other part of the territory to be safe from any possible aggression by the Japanese. . . . We were to be ready to go at a moment's notice, so all packed up a few belongings to take with us.⁴⁴

After the Japanese attacked Dutch Harbor and captured Attu and Kiska, Interior Department officials anticipated that if the Pribilofs were threatened, those Aleuts would also be evacuated. At the end of May, Admiral Freeman told the FWS that a scorched-earth policy would be used in the Pribilofs if the Japanese attacked, and that seal-skins would be included in the destruction.⁴⁵ By June 5, the villagers had been warned that an enemy attack was possible, and FWS agents told them what civil defense precautions to take if this came.⁴⁶

The evacuation of the Pribilofs, begun immediately after Atka was evacuated, was executed by the Army with little delay. The Navy's *U.S.S. Oriole* arrived at St. Paul on June 14, with orders to evacuate the island, but these plans changed when the captain of the vessel learned that the Army's *U.S.A.T. Delarof* would arrive the following day to evacuate St. Paul and St. George. The villagers were directed to pack their belongings and, two days later on June 16, the 294 Aleuts and 15 non-Aleut FWS employees departed for St. George aboard the *Delarof*.⁴⁷ Carl M. Hoverson, an FWS employee on St. Paul, recalled that "Many personal belongings as well as government property had to be left at the island because of the need for a speedy evacuation."⁴⁸

The *Delarof's* arrival at St. George was scheduled for June 16, and villagers were notified on the night of June 14 to pack their belongings. Daniel C.R. Benson, an FWS agent and caretaker of St. George, prepared the village:

I was first instructed to prepare the village for destruction first that night by placing a pail of gasoline in each house and building, and a charge of dynamite for each other installation such as storage tanks, light plants, trucks, radio transmitters, receivers, antenna

masts, etc. The packing of everybody was to be very simple—absolutely nothing but one suitcase per person and a roll of blankets.⁴⁹

Early in the evening of June 16, 1942, the *Delarof* left St. George. The entire population, 183 Aleuts and 7 non-Aleut FWS employees, was evacuated.⁵⁰ Only one person, a radio operator on St. Paul, remained on the Pribilofs. Four signal corpsmen were immediately sent to the islands to set up two radio warning stations and remained in isolation on round-the-clock watch from June to September. As part of the plan to garrison the Aleutians before a U.S. offensive, a small Army force was sent to the Pribilofs on September 19, billeted in the departed villagers' dwellings, and ordered to construct an airstrip.⁵¹

On June 17, 1942, the *Delarof* arrived at Dutch Harbor with the Pribilof evacuees on board. While the ship was docked, the Army ordered most of the medical supplies and equipment from St. Paul aboard to be transferred to the Army Hospital at Fort Mears. Ward T. Bower, Chief of Alaska Fisheries for FWS, later attempted to reconstruct that incident:

[W]hen evacuation orders reached St. Paul Island in the previous month, Dr. Berenberg packed eight sealskin barrels with medical supplies and equipment, and packed also the X-ray machine. . . . At Dutch Harbor on June 25, 1942, these eight barrels and one opened package of X-ray film were turned over by Capt. Fred H. Aves, Medical Corps Transport Surgeon of the *USAT Delarof* for use at Fort Mears Hospital . . .⁵²

These expensive supplies were scarce and, although the military hospital may have needed them, the Pribilovians were soon to need essential medical care in the relocation camps, but the St. Paul community was not reimbursed, nor were the supplies replaced.

Meanwhile, additional evacuees from Atka and the Pribilofs were creating a food shortage in Unalaska.⁵³ A decision about permanent relocation had to be made quickly. On June 18, 81 Atkan Aleuts and the Magees were taken aboard the *Delarof* and set sail for an unknown destination.

Conditions aboard the *Delarof* were crowded and unhealthy, for space was inadequate to separate the sick from the well. The first casualty during the Aleuts' evacuation was the infant daughter of Innokenty and Haretina R. Kochutin of St. Paul, who died of pneumonia. Fredrika Martin, a nurse and the wife of a FWS doctor, described the tragedy:

Since once aboard the ship the St. George doctor felt completely free of responsibility for his islanders and had no personal interest

in any of these patients of his, he could not be coaxed into the disagreeable hold even before all the Aleuts and many non-Aleuts came down after our stay-over at Dutch Harbor with "ship's cold," a serious grippe infection. He did not come to assist even at the birth of a St. George baby or its subsequent death of bronchial pneumonia because of our inability [Dr. Berenberg's and mine] to separate mother and child from other grippe-sufferers, and the mother herself was ill. I think I recall this doctor attending the midnight or after funeral of the poor little mite, such a tiny weighted parcel being let down into the deep waters of the Gulf of Alaska against a shoreline of dramatic peaks and blazing sunset sky.⁵⁴

Six days later, on June 24, the *Delarof* landed at Funter Bay and Killisnoo in southeastern Alaska. While the ship sailed, various divisions within the Department of the Interior frantically sought a place to settle the evacuees.

Deciding on Camp Locations

Planning for relocation sites apparently started on June 15, 1942.⁵⁵ As the Pribilofs were evacuated, General Buckner began working directly with the OIA's Superintendent Hirst to choose relocation sites for the Aleuts. The OIA was chiefly responsible, and they determined that Killisnoo Bay village in southeastern Alaska was a potential site for resettlement.⁵⁶ Responsibility for settling the Pribilovians was assumed by Edward C. Johnston, Superintendent of the Seal Division of the FWS, who contacted Fisheries Chief Ward Bower on June 15 to discuss available housing.⁵⁷ First they tried to secure locations in the Seattle, Washington, area. A large Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp and the Tulalip Indian Reservation were considered, but the CCC camp was occupied and housing at the reservation would have had to be built. Both sites were impractical since time was of the essence; Johnston emphasized that the Pribilovians "must have [a] location within [a] week."⁵⁸

The OIA in Washington, DC, decided that evacuees should stay in Alaska, preferably southeastern Alaska.⁵⁹ OIA Assistant Commissioner William Zimmerman contacted Superintendent Hirst on June 16 to report this decision and relay other plans for relocation centers. The evacuation guidelines which had been established at Acting Governor Bartlett's conference in March were followed by a decision that native Alaskans should be evacuated to other parts of Alaska. Apparently the OIA did not wish to relocate the Aleuts to the eastern part of the Aleutian chain or the Alaska Peninsula.

The OIA also decided that Aleuts from the same village should

remain together in separate units. Local OIA and FWS officials were asked to choose relocation sites; Assistant Commissioner Zimmerman recommended the use of fish canneries that were either abandoned or vacant during the off-season.⁶⁰ The school facilities at Wrangell Institute on Wrangell Island in southeastern Alaska would be a temporary location until such sites were found.

Seattle FWS Representative Donald Hagerty was apparently the Interior official who made final decisions on specific sites. On June 16 Hagerty told Zimmerman that arrangements had been made to house the Atkans at an abandoned fish cannery at Killisnoo on Admiralty Island.⁶¹ The OIA was interested in locations where the Aleuts could support themselves, so job opportunities in nearby canneries made this location attractive.⁶² On the same day, Hagerty assigned the Pribilof evacuees to another abandoned cannery at Funter Bay on Admiralty Island in southeastern Alaska.⁶³ Across Funter Bay from the cannery, abandoned facilities of the Alaska Mining Company were also obtained.⁶⁴

Further Evacuation Along the Chain

Government agencies in Alaska disagreed about the need for further evacuation. By the end of June 1942, the Japanese were only beginning their occupation of the Aleutians and it was not clear whether they were entrenched in an offensive or defensive position. Governor Gruening, as chairman of the Alaska War Council, contacted Secretary Ickes on June 20 and reported that the Council feared the Japanese planned to invade the U.S. mainland, using the Aleutians as a base.⁶⁵ General Buckner advised the OIA that no more villages in the Aleutian Islands should be evacuated,⁶⁶ but Admiral Freeman felt that other Aleutian villages were in danger.⁶⁷ On June 29, 1942, Freeman issued an order "directing the evacuation of all natives from the Aleutian Islands."⁶⁸

In a sweep eastward from Atka to Akutan, the Aleut villages of Nikolski on Umnak Island; Makushin, Biorka, Chernofski and Kashega on Unalaska Island; and Akutan on Akutan Island were evacuated. One week after Freeman issued the order, the first of the remaining villages, Nikolski, was evacuated. Yet Aleut evacuees testified that they were given only a few hours' notice. On July 5, two Navy and Army ships arrived at Nikolski and evacuated the entire village of 70 Aleuts plus Barbara Whitfield (the OIA teacher in the village), her husband Samuel and the non-Aleut foreman of the Aleutian Livestock Company, a sheep ranch on Umnak.

The Aleutian Livestock Company, completely dependent on Aleut labor due to the wartime labor shortage, had been assured by the Alaska Defense Command on May 22, 1942, that "no evacuation had been ordered."⁶⁹ It had expected to produce 130,000 pounds of wool during 1942, and the Army thought the company's operation necessary to the war effort. On August 5, 1942, Carlyle Eubank, the company president, protested to the Western Defense command about losing his ranch's work force.⁷⁰ Prior to the evacuation, the Navy had telegraphed Nikolski that:

Nikolski sheep ranchers and four unmarried Aleuts may remain shear sheep inform that they do so at own risk and thereby forfeit government transportation.⁷¹

The message, however, arrived too late to prevent evacuation of ranch workers, and, stated Eubank, "Under such instructions the natives would not return and we cannot blame our Foreman for not returning."⁷² The livestock company later obtained permission from the Army to return to Nikolski, even though the Japanese still occupied Attu and Kiska. That December the foreman came back to the ranch and, for the two following summers, three Aleuts also returned.

The evacuation of the small villages on Unalaska Island and Akutan is not well documented except by personal recollection of the evacuees. According to their testimony, the Nikolski Aleuts—together with villagers from Chernofski, Kashega, and Makushin—departed for southeastern Alaska from Chernofski on the S.S. *Columbia*, an Alaskan Steamship Company vessel. The OIA reported on August 31 that 72 Aleuts from Nikolski (including the Whitfields), 41 from Akutan, 20 from Kashega, 18 from Biorka, and 9 from Makushin (including one white) had arrived at Wrangell Institute on July 13, 1942.⁷³ The entire population of these villages was evacuated, Aleut and non-Aleut. The evacuees, who remained at Wrangell Institute for several weeks until the OIA located a place to resettle them, eventually were moved to a CCC camp administered by the OIA at Ward Lake near Ketchikan.

In Unalaska village, confusion and anger spread because of an alleged statement by Assistant Commissioner Zimmerman that the Aleuts in Unalaska had been offered transportation off the island,⁷⁴ when in fact they had not. The Mayor of Unalaska, John W. Fletcher, in a telegram to Secretary Ickes on July 7, 1942, urged that transportation to evacuate the Aleuts be made available, claiming that they were "desparate [sic] to be taken out."⁷⁵ Fear of Japanese invasion occupied the minds of many Aleuts in Unalaska. Some were able to adjust to new dangers because of the sense of security U.S. military

forces brought to the islands, but others took the first opportunity to leave. Philemon Tutiakoff expressed some of these feelings:

[W]e had been notified prior to the bombing [of Dutch Harbor] that we may be evacuated. Naturally, listening to the radio people were alarmed. They became afraid. The most affluent Aleuts and civilians bought their way by Alaska Steamship to places of safety. The Unalaska Aleuts felt that with the presence of the military and the preparations we could see them taking, [we] thought and hoped that the U.S. military would protect us in case of what we all thought was direct assault on the town of Unalaska.⁷⁶

By July 12, 1942, Secretary Ickes had arranged with the Navy to evacuate Unalaskans.⁷⁷ A week passed before the Aleuts were evacuated, yet, according to their testimony, the Aleuts were usually given less than twenty-four hours to prepare.

On July 19, 1942, the S.S. *Alaska* docked at Unalaska to evacuate the Aleuts. Commander William N. Updegraf, captain of the Naval station at Dutch Harbor, issued the orders, including the provision that:

All natives, or persons with as much as one eighth ($\frac{1}{8}$) native blood were compelled to go. . . . Only such portable baggage as the people could carry was permitted. . . . No employee, native or white, of Siems-Drake Puget Sound Company was to be carried.⁷⁸

This order had an obviously unequal effect among Unalaskans. For example, Charles Hope, a white man, remained in Unalaska, while his Aleut wife was required to evacuate.⁷⁹

Although no clear contemporaneous rationale explains why only Aleuts were compelled to leave Unalaska village, several factors suggest partial explanations. The evacuation order may have come literally from Secretary Ickes' request to the Navy to evacuate the *Aleuts* in Unalaska village.⁸⁰ Since these evacuees were taken at once to Wrangell Institute, operated by OIA, the evacuation and relocation may have been limited to persons for whom the OIA had some responsibility. According to Fred Geeslin, a former OIA officer, the agency's responsibility and authority extended to persons of one-eighth Native American blood, and its evacuation and relocation efforts would consequently be limited to that group and its own employees.⁸¹ This does not explain, however, why all non-Aleuts residing in the Dutch Harbor-Unalaska area were not evacuated by the military to locations other than OIA evacuation camps. Some non-Aleuts were evacuated from Dutch Harbor after the June bombings. James I. Parsons, a businessman in Dutch

Harbor, and his family were evacuated to Juneau on June 6 by Army order; his facilities were used by the Army to house wounded soldiers.⁸²

Many non-Aleuts probably were not evacuated because of the demand for defense construction workers reflected in the specific exemption of Siems-Drake Company employees. Siems-Drake had contracted to handle most of the defense construction work in Alaska for the Navy⁸³ and, at one point during the war, it employed almost 3,000 civilian construction workers in Dutch Harbor.⁸⁴ The shortage of labor was severe. In August 1942, Admiral Freeman complained to General DeWitt that "it has been practically impossible . . . to complete work promptly. At Dutch Harbor, it has been impossible to maintain even the former low level working force."⁸⁵ The Navy may have been concerned about the labor shortage and so prevented defense workers from leaving the village. At least one Aleut, John Yatchmanoff, was an employee of the Siems-Drake Company not evacuated for this reason. The order preventing the evacuation of Siems-Drake employees from Unalaska was issued by the Navy even though the workers were not employed by the government, and the Navy's responsibility was limited to processing their applications for work permits.⁸⁶

According to Captain Hobart Copeland, who directed the Unalaska evacuation, some Aleuts protested being moved.⁸⁷ Copeland requested permission from Commander Updegraf to compel the Aleuts to go, but Updegraf would not forcibly evacuate them, and Copeland let them stay, thus limiting the impact of Updegraf's expulsion order.

The OIA reported that 111 Unalaskans arrived at Wrangell Institute aboard the *S.S. Alaska* on July 26, 1942.⁸⁸ They remained in Wrangell until late August, when the OIA rented an abandoned cannery at Burnett Inlet on Annette Island in southeastern Alaska.

After the Unalaska evacuation, Admiral Freeman decided that further removal of Aleut villages east of Akutan Island was unnecessary.⁸⁹ A total of 881 Aleuts had been evacuated by the military from all Aleut villages west of Unimak Island, including the Pribilofs.⁹⁰ The entire population of each village, except Unalaska, was evacuated, including at least 30 non-Aleuts. All but 50 Aleuts were relocated to southeastern Alaska. The remainder were evacuated to the Seattle area by the Army and Navy after the bombing of Dutch Harbor on June 3; ten were hospitalized in the Indian Hospital at Tacoma, Washington,⁹¹ others were military dependents.

Because the evacuation was inadequately planned, the Aleuts lost the personal possessions they reluctantly left behind. Testimony from the evacuees established that in most cases they were given unneces-

sarily short notice. They were forced to leave behind most personal belongings—including clothing, family albums, musical instruments (a mainstay of Aleut culture), priceless icons of immense religious significance, unique craftwork, boats and essential hunting and fishing equipment. No provision was made by OIA or the military to care for these possessions. They were left unpacked and secured only by locks on the front door or boards nailed across the windows of Aleut homes, vulnerable to theft and the deterioration which followed.

The Attuans' Experience

The story of the Attuans' capture and removal to Japan is perhaps the most tragic of all Aleut experiences during the war. Official failure to warn the Attuans before the Japanese attack about the danger of remaining on the island carried a painful cost: approximately half of the Attuans perished during their captivity.

In May 1942 the Navy attempted to evacuate the islanders. A team of sailors was sent to set up a radio station on Attu, but they failed to land on the island because of adverse weather; the skiffs loaded with radio equipment crashed onshore in the surf. Mike Hodikoff, the Attuan Aleut chief, reached the Navy vessel from shore and, informed of the Japanese threat, was asked if he wanted his people to be evacuated at that time; he declined.⁹²

This evacuation offer was not made in a manner that allowed the Attuans to make an informed decision about leaving their island. Governor Gruening had wanted the OIA to discuss these options with the Attuans, and had pointed out to Secretary Ickes on June 4 that “[p]resenting this matter to the . . . Attuites involves something of a problem since it could not be done by a mere radio message. The pros and cons to them [of] so momentous a decision, the possible risks and alternatives, would have to be presented to them understandingly, sympathetically and clearly.”⁹³ Gruening's recommendations to Ickes came too late, and no attempt was ever made by the Interior Department to discuss evacuation possibilities with the Attuans.

When Attu was invaded on June 8, 1942, an Aleut was wounded by Japanese gunfire and the OIA radio operator, Foster Jones, died after being captured. The Japanese began immediately to garrison the island and to construct housing for their troops. Shortly thereafter, the Japanese eased restraints on movement of the Aleuts, who then fished and went about their daily work almost normally. In September 1942, the Japanese changed their Aleutian strategy and decided to abandon Attu (only to return in October).⁹⁴ The troops were moved temporarily

to Kiska. The Japanese feared the Attuans could reveal military strength and other intelligence secrets to invading American forces, so the 41 Aleuts (one had died in August) were taken to Otaru on Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido.⁹⁵ The non-Aleut schoolteacher, Etta Jones, was taken to Yokohama. Three Attuan evacuees recalled their living conditions in Japan, and reported that they were adequate:

[We] were housed in a large building, supervised by a Japanese policeman, who lived in partitioned rooms in the same building. The Aleuts had no freedom, [and were] held in the same building for the entire war, except the ones who worked in a clay pit near by. The buildings were heated by coal stoves in winter. Hot baths were available whenever the Aleuts wanted them. They slept on the floor on the Japanese standard mats "Tatami" and they had plenty of blankets.⁹⁶

Tuberculosis later spread widely among the Attuans, despite monthly visits to their camp by a doctor who gave routine examinations and inoculations. At one time as many as ten to fifteen Attuans were inpatients at the National Tuberculosis Center in Minamoto-cho,⁹⁷ but despite hospitalization many Aleuts died in Japan. The loss of their high-protein diet and fresh food, aggravated by short rations, caused malnutrition and starvation during the last year of their captivity. As the war dragged on, Japan was starved for resources; Japanese troops and the Attuans' guards alike faced shortages.

Half of the Attuans died in Japan and the surviving 21 Aleuts and one newborn baby left Japan in September 1945.⁹⁸ Upon reaching Seattle on November 20, the Attuans were informed that they would not be returned to Attu. The reason for this decision is not clear because government documents about their resettlement were destroyed by the OIA in the 1960's.⁹⁹ Attu evacuees claim that the government did not allow them to return to Attu because there were too few to sustain a viable community.¹⁰⁰ Instead they were offered transportation to Atka Island. The Atkans and Attuans, however, were traditional rivals, so several Attuans decided against resettling at Atka. To this day, Attu remains uninhabited.

THE EVACUATION CAMPS

Funter Bay

The Aleuts from St. Paul and St. George in the Pribilofs arrived at Funter Bay on Admiralty Island on June 24, 1942. They found the

mountains and forests of southeastern Alaska a sharp contrast to the flat, treeless Pribilofs.

The General Living Conditions. Close to 300 Aleuts and FWS personnel from St. Paul found themselves housed at a fish cannery where many buildings, unoccupied for a dozen years, were only used for storage. They were inadequate housing, particularly in winter. Only a few cottages were available to accommodate the many families; most evacuees were forced to live in two dormitory-style buildings where groups of six to thirteen people slept in areas nine or ten feet square. Until fall, many Aleuts had to sleep in relays in these cramped conditions. Lumber to build partitions and walls was scarce, and they hung blankets between families for privacy. Meals for the entire group were prepared and served in a common kitchen and messhall.

The quarters were as rundown as they were cramped:

The only buildings that are capable of fixing is the two large places where the natives are sleeping. All other houses are absolutely gone from rot. It will be almost impossible to put toilet and bath into any of them except this one we are using as a mess hall and it leaks in thirty places. . . . No brooms, soap or mops or brushes to keep the place suitable for pigs to stay in.¹⁰¹

People fell through the rotten wooden floors. A single toilet on the beach just above the low water mark served ninety percent of the evacuees, whose clothes were laundered on the ground or sidewalks.¹⁰² Agent McMillin's first evacuation report to the Superintendent of the Sealing Division ended with these words:

It seems funny if our government can drop so many people in a place like this then forget about them altogether. . . . If you think that this is any fun, you should be here.¹⁰³

A mile away on the other side of Funter Bay, the 180 Aleuts and FWS employees from St. George had been evacuated to the Admiralty Alaska Gold Mine, also known as the Funter Bay Mine, which had not been worked for several years. The mine was little better than the cannery. One two-story unpartitioned building housed ten families, a total of 46 people. A new mess house was used as a storeroom, canteen and church. Above the messhall, the 26 single men were housed in a low loft accessible only through an outside entrance. The other Aleuts occupied another two-story dormitory similar to the one at the cannery, but the 20 families living there had no heat. In the words of FWS Agent Benson, "The crowded, dark and unheated quarters for the natives are definitely out of the question for the winter."¹⁰⁴ Benson

recommended that 32 apartments or two-room cottages be built, with separate facilities for everything except sleeping.

Cookstoves, plumbing fixtures, water tanks and other equipment and supplies proved difficult to procure and, on July 2, on behalf of the evacuees, *Alaska Fishing News* initiated an appeal to canneries and fishermen for all types of gear.¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, on the same day, Assistant Fishery Supervisor Frank W. Hynes wrote Alaska Fisheries Chief Ward T. Bower:

We feel that Mr. Johnston has the situation well in hand insofar as the Pribilof natives and whites are concerned and predict that his Funter Bay camp will serve as a model for others to be established later.¹⁰⁶

By September, apart from local materials, no supplies had arrived.¹⁰⁷

In early October, the Aleut women of St. Paul submitted a petition protesting their living conditions:

We the people of this place wants a better place . . . to live. This . . . is no place for a living creature. We drink impure water and then get sick the children's get skin disease even the grown ups are sick from cold.

We ate from the mess house and it is near the toilet only a few yards away. We eat the filth that is flying around.

We got no place to take a bath and no place to wash our clothes or dry them when it rains. We women are always lugging water up stairs and take turns warming it up and the stove is small. We live in a room with our children just enough to turn around in. We used blankets for walls just to live in private. We need clothes and shoes for our children how are we going to clothe them with just a few dollars. Men's are working for \$20 a month is nothing to them we used it to see our children eat what they don't get at mess house and then its gone and then we wait for another month to come around.

Why they not take us to a better place to live and work for ourselves and live in a better house. Men and women are very eager to work. When winter come it still would be worse with water all freezed up. . . . Do we have to see our children suffer. We all have rights to speak for ourselves.¹⁰⁸

The complaints in the petition were discussed with the presenting committee by both Agent McMillin and Superintendent Johnston. In his letter forwarding the petition to Chief Bower, Johnston stated:

The women were told that under war conditions they could not expect to enjoy the comforts and conditions as they existed on the Pribilof Islands. . . . Analysis of water samples by the Territorial Department of Health indicates the water to be potentially unsafe. . . . Sickness mentioned in the petition is not due to drinking

water. Some of the children have "fish poisoning," which Dr. Smith states is common at this time of the year and will clear up when the salmon runs are over. . . . The toilet which has been in use is over tide water and is farther from living and eating quarters than any on the Pribilofs was. . . . The men are satisfied with the food furnished, but the women do not like the community mess. They refuse to help with the cooking, which is done by the men. . . . The food mentioned in the petition which is bought for the children from the canteen is principally candy.¹⁰⁹

The superintendent also described what he had done to alleviate the lack of privacy, water, plumbing and laundry facilities, clothing and food.

A year later in Fall 1943, the camps at Funter Bay were visited by numerous government officials, including John Hall of the U.S. Public Health Service, Governor Ernest Gruening, Alaska Attorney General Henry Roden, FWS Director Ira Gabrielson, and Dr. Berneta Block of the Territorial Department of Health. Conditions were little improved. No description is more graphic than the account submitted by Dr. Block after her four-day visit to Funter Bay:

As we entered the first bunkhouse the odor of human excreta and waste was so pungent that I could hardly make the grade. . . . The buildings were in total darkness except for a few candles here and there which I considered distinct fire hazards. . . . [A] mother and as many as three or four children were found in several beds and two or three children in one bunk. . . . The garbage cans were overflowing, human excreta was found next to the doors of the cabins and the drainage boxes into which dishwater and kitchen waste was to be placed were filthy beyond description. . . . I realize that during the first two days we saw the community at its worst. I know that there were very few adults who were well. . . . The water supply is discolored, contaminated and unattractive. . . . [F]acilities for boiling and cooling the water are not readily available. . . . I noticed some lack of the teaching of basic public health fundamentals. Work with such a small group of people who have been wards of the government for a long period of time should have brought better results. It is strange that they could have reverted from a state of thrift and cleanliness on the Islands to the present state of filth, despair, and complete lack of civic pride. I realize, too, that at the time I saw them the community was largely made up of women and children whose husbands were not with them. With proper facilities for leadership, guidance and stimulation . . . the situation could have been quite different.¹¹⁰

Assistant Supervisor Hynes made a grim report to his Division Chief, Ward Bower:

[W]e are convinced that unless adequate measures are taken to

improve conditions before the arduous winter months begin there is more than a possibility that the death toll from tuberculosis, pneumonia, influenza, and other diseases will so decimate the ranks of the natives that few will survive to return to the islands.¹¹¹

But conditions did not substantially improve at Funter Bay until the winter of 1943-44, a year and a half after the Aleuts had been evacuated.

Medical Care and Education. In Fall 1942, the only full-time medical care at Funter Bay came from a white nurse assisted by an Aleut nurse. They served both the mining and the cannery camps, crossing Funter Bay each day, but doctors were only temporarily assigned to the camp, often remaining for only a few days or weeks. The infirmary at the mining camp was a three-room bungalow; the cannery's was a room twenty feet square. Medical supplies were scarce.

Epidemics raged throughout the Aleuts' stay in southeastern Alaska. The Aleuts suffered from influenza, measles, and pneumonia along with tuberculosis.¹¹² Twenty-five died in 1943 alone, and it is estimated that at least 40 people died at Funter Bay.

Because of a lack of space and supplies, school began only in January 1943 for children who were not sent to Wrangell Institute, an OIA school. OIA provided no textbooks; later, reading books were loaned, but only \$100 was appropriated for supplies. The 55 St. Paul children were taught in the cannery kitchen by teachers who, when weather permitted, crossed the bay to the mining camp to work with the 34 children from St. George. When the cannery crew returned in March, school shut down entirely. Absences due to illness shortened this haphazard school year even further, and the students' progress was negligible. Education in the camps somewhat improved during the second year, when classes were conducted from December until April.

Communication, Transportation and Censorship. These small encampments of evacuees were extremely isolated in their hardship. At Funter Bay, communication with the outside world was limited to a weekly mail service; there was no two-way radio. Timely treatment of the seriously ill was unavailable because the hospital in Juneau had a two-week waiting period for admittance, and prompt response to other emergencies was impossible.

Transportation was whatever arrangements could be made with supply ships or the weekly mailboat. Moreover, Aleuts were required to obtain the FWS agent's permission before they could leave Funter Bay.

In addition, under the First War Powers Act, mail between the Territory of Alaska and the continental U.S., the "Lower 48," was censored. As Hynes acknowledged in 1943:

Censorship has kept the press off our necks thus far but this line of defense is weakening rapidly. A few days ago we were advised by one of the physicians who had inspected the camps . . . that he was preparing a report to the Surgeon General of the United States and also to Secretary Ickes and had no intention of "pulling any punches". He warned that it was only a question of time until some publication, such as Life Magazine, would get hold of the story and play it up, much to the disadvantage of the Service and the Department of Interior as a whole.¹¹³

Defense Employment, Selective Service and the Fur Seal Industry.

The fur seal herd in the Pribilof Islands grows 80% of the world's supply of this luxurious fur.¹¹⁴ Since 1910, the federal government has fully controlled the harvest of seals and the fur marketing; in 1941, the annual seal slaughter contributed nearly \$2.4 million to the U.S. Treasury.¹¹⁵ The Pribilovian Aleuts were the primary seal harvesters; after evacuation, only 127 seals were taken in 1942, in contrast to over 95,000 in 1941. For the Interior Department, anxious to resume sealing operations in 1943, projected revenue was a major, if not the predominant consideration, in its policy decisions.

The war had created a labor shortage in Alaska and, by the end of June 1942, the U.S. Employment Service was prepared to place a number of Aleut men in suitable jobs.¹¹⁶ Seal Superintendent Johnston and a few other officials had a different program in mind: they wanted to protect the government's "investment" in the Aleuts and their sealing operation. Assuming that seal harvesting would resume after the war, these officials wished to avoid the inconvenience of locating and collecting Pribilovians scattered to distant parts of Alaska.¹¹⁷ For this reason the FWS sought to keep the Pribilovians together as a unit and to "pay them a nominal salary to keep them satisfied."¹¹⁸ Johnston recommended to Bower that:

No individual should be permitted to take his family and leave camp unless he insists on doing so. In that case he should lose all rights as a Pribilof Native and should not be allowed to return to the Pribilofs at any time except as an ordinary visitor.¹¹⁹

Bower replied:

[W]e have no definite hold on the Pribilof natives who are evacuated to Funter Bay. With regard to employment elsewhere, the rules concerning these natives can be effective only while they are directly connected with the evacuation camp. While there,

they are subject to the jurisdiction, care and support of the Government. If they go away from Funter Bay for a while to engage in other work, there is nothing that we can do to stop them. . . . In my opinion, very few will stay away for any length of time, and when conditions permit them to return to the Pribilof Islands, practically all will be on hand ready and anxious to go. Perhaps experience might give a better appreciation of the excellent care . . . there.¹²⁰

By Fall 1942, Johnston and the local agents stopped trying to keep the Pribilovians at Funter Bay. More than 100 men and their families left, including 27 children who departed for Wrangell Institute.¹²¹

In addition to losing men to more lucrative employment, the FWS lost other able-bodied sealers to the draft. While on the Pribilofs, the Aleuts had not been registered for Selective Service because the FWS assumed that, as wards of the government, the Aleuts were ineligible for the draft.¹²² At Funter Bay the FWS learned differently, and during 1942 all eligible men were registered.¹²³

On November 23, 1942, Secretary of the Interior Ickes wrote Secretary of War Stimson urging "that arrangements be made to return the natives and supervisory personnel . . . to the Pribilof Islands next April or May to resume sealing and other operations."¹²⁴ At first, the War Department refused Ickes' request,¹²⁵ but on January 2, 1943, Stimson notified Ickes that the Pribilof Aleuts and FWS supervisors had been given permission to "return for the sealing season only in order to direct the pruning of the seal herds by military personnel." He added that "[w]ith respect to St. George Island, I have no objection to the return of the natives of that place for rehabilitation."¹²⁶

Few men were available to harvest seals that summer of 1943. By March, seventeen Aleuts had been inducted and another four were subject to immediate induction. The FWS sought four-month furloughs for the draftees and deferments for those not yet inducted. By May, seven of the seventeen servicemen had been granted furloughs, and the other four received deferments for the sealing season.

As plans got under way to resume sealing and to rehabilitate St. George, it was discovered that some Aleuts did not want to return to the islands until the war was over.¹²⁷ Superintendent Johnston began to realize that men with good jobs in Juneau might not wish to leave them. He proposed measures to control the situation:

If any workman remains in Juneau or deserts his post during the summer . . . [he] will forfeit any share of the sealing division. Also, I will seriously consider recommending that he be denied return to St. Paul for residence. As St. George is being rehabil-

itated, any workman who refuses to return this spring will not share in the sealing division and will not be allowed to return at any later date if I can help it. This will include his immediate family (wife and children). Such a man will not receive assistance in any way from the Fish and Wildlife Service at any time and lose all privileges as an island resident.¹²⁸

These recommendations went to Ward Bower,¹²⁹ who once again had to direct his subordinates toward a more temperate attitude:

In view of war conditions, the forced evacuation of the islands, and the designation of the area as a war zone, it is scarcely possible or equitable to require complete forfeiture of all rights of return to the Pribilofs. Present conditions just do not warrant such action.¹³⁰

In April, Johnston came up from Seattle to meet with the Pribilovians. The Aleuts wanted better wages and worried about their safety in the Pribilofs that summer. The St. George men asked that their women and children remain at Funter Bay and that the sealers be returned at the end of the season. Johnston conveyed this to Bower as well as a local agent's opinion that all the women wanted to return to St. George.¹³¹ Bower immediately telegraphed back that the "St. George women and children should be left [at] Funter and St. George workmen returned there at end [of] season same as St. Paul workmen."¹³² It is not clear who made the decision not to repopulate the island—Bower, the FWS director, or the Secretary of the Interior. In any case, Johnston was relieved:

From the standpoint of safety I am glad the change was made; if we had rehabilitated St. George and afterward a single bomb had been dropped there our whole course of action would have been open to criticism. The men are going up for the sealing season in a much better state of mind now that they do not have to worry about their families.¹³³

Despite Chief Bower's moderating words to Superintendent Johnston,¹³⁴ testimony before the Commission and informal interviews by Commission staff indicate that the Pribilovian men felt compelled to leave their jobs to harvest the seals; they were told that if they did not, they would never see their homeland again.¹³⁵

When the sealers went up to the Pribilofs that summer, they left behind at Funter Bay 281 women and children and 32 older men. The FWS agents and a doctor accompanied the men, leaving a schoolteacher and a storekeeper to manage the camp. Neither had borne such responsibilities before, and they were further hampered by a

shortage of men to perform the necessary work. Even worse, a measles epidemic swept Funter Bay that summer—and they had no doctor.

The Aleuts harvested over 117,000 seals during the summer of 1943, a record take which reaped over \$1.58 million in fur and seal byproduct sales for the United States Government.¹³⁶ The approximately 100 Pribilovian Aleut workers were paid from a pool that gave them close to \$1 per skin, and the 13 non-Pribilovian Aleut sealers were paid a salary of \$150 per month.¹³⁷

Later in the summer, Bower broached the subject of Johnston's harsh approach with FWS Director Ira Gabrielson, suggesting that some Aleuts might not wish to return to the islands, but would prefer to try their luck in the Lower 48:

He stated that this was perfectly all right, but that in his opinion most of them had a pretty soft life at the Pribilofs and after working outside for a year or two would be anxious to get back there. . . .

I further said to Dr. Gabrielson that in my opinion it would be of doubtful legality to say to a native of the Pribilof Islands that if he did not go back when we resumed sealing operations, he could never do so. Dr. Gabrielson concurred in this thought.

Dr. Gabrielson said that if some of the natives desired to remain in Alaska or wanted to go to the States to be on their own, they could do so, but of course with the beginning of such departure from our jurisdiction, they would receive no benefits or funds from this Service.¹³⁸

Bower tried to make sure that these views reached Johnston, but he may have been aware of the damage already done. In the end, only a handful of Aleuts remained in Juneau and did not return with the others to the Pribilofs.

Killisnoo

The people hated this tiny tree-covered island with poor, rocky beaches. There was no place to go hiking, as on large, grassy Atka. Many of the older men became sick and passed on. The younger people became acquainted with the Angoon Indians on Admiralty Island. Drinking became excessive and this led to much trouble. . . . We did our best to keep up the morale.¹³⁹

The 83 Aleuts from Atka were evacuated to Killisnoo Island, three miles from Angoon, opposite the southern tip of Admiralty Island. The closest post office and radio facility was in Angoon, and a weekly boat delivered mail and supplies. The Aleuts arrived on June 25, 1942, with little more than the barest personal possessions. Their new home was a herring cannery which had not been occupied for ten years.

From his ship's stores, Captain Downey of the *Delarof* gave evac-

uses a four-day supply of food, cooking supplies, a mattress for each adult, and blankets, as he had for the Pribilovians evacuated to Funter Bay. Health officials soon arrived to give inoculations and checkups, and more food and clothing came from Juneau. Killisnoo was managed by schoolteachers employed by the Office of Indian Affairs; Ralph and Ruby Magee accompanied the Atkans to Killisnoo and stayed for a year until they were replaced by Joe and Vivian Kaklen, a native Alaskan non-Aleut couple, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Beebe.¹⁴⁰

Cabins and houses at the cannery were old and flimsy, but most had stoves and cots or beds.¹⁴¹ Driftwood to heat the buildings was abundant. A laundry and one bathtub were also available. A small spring yielded very little water, and rain became their major source of supply. There were three privies for more than 80 people. An old messhall was converted into a schoolroom whose desks and benches were built by the best Atkan carpenter, supplies came from Juneau and, in September, school opened. But the winter of 1942 was the coldest in 50 years. Food froze solid and meat was scarce. Many of the older people died.

A doctor and a nurse visited once during the Atkans' three-year stay in southeastern Alaska. The doctor stayed four months, the nurse only two weeks. According to the Atkans, "Dr. Bauer did not ask any questions, but he treated everyone in the camp for V.D. without verification. All that time, the people were not aware that he was treating them for V.D."¹⁴²

After six months at Killisnoo, most of the able-bodied men secured work at Excursion Inlet repairing boats for the government. Others worked near Juneau for the forestry department, on Japonski Island in construction or in the canneries. The young men were drafted. Once the Aleuts obtained employment they no longer received free food and clothing, and the OIA schoolteachers began charging them for items at the store:

This change did not go over so well with the people. They seemed to think that they should continue to receive the food and clothing free so they could use their money for mail order business and the many drinking parties they felt they owed the Angoon Indians. It was some time before they became reconciled to the change.¹⁴³

Wrangell Institute

Wrangell Institute was the stopover site for Aleuts evacuated from the villages of Nikolski, Akutan, Biorca, Kashega and Makushin until they could be moved to permanent evacuation camps at Ward Lake

and Burnett Inlet. The Institute was an OIA boarding school whose principal, George Barrett, was instrumental in selecting the Aleuts' eventual evacuation sites.

For two weeks the Aleuts camped in Army tents on the school grounds. They were given three meals a day, primarily dog salmon, tea and bread. Men and women, young and old, were assigned chores in the Institute's kitchen, laundry and bakery.¹⁴⁴ They also built a barge to transport lumber and other materials to Ward Lake.

Army, Navy and civilian doctors examined the Aleuts; yet, according to one evacuee, they were not treated for tuberculosis, pneumonia, viruses or shock. Head lice were treated, however, and some children and adults were close-cropped, their scalps doused with kerosene to exterminate the parasites.¹⁴⁵

Wrangell Institute provided sixth through twelfth grades for children covered by the OIA. A former pupil informed the Commission that the school had a capacity of 350 children, but, after evacuation, Aleut children from the camps swelled its ranks to 750. Classrooms were so crowded that eighth graders with the highest grades were skipped to ninth grade. Food remained insufficient, and a year after the influx of new students, the school's health center was still understaffed.¹⁴⁶

Ward Lake

"My first impression . . . was that of being put in prison."¹⁴⁷

After their stopover at Wrangell Institute, approximately 200 Aleuts were taken to Ward Lake, sometimes called Ward Cove, an old Civilian Conservation Corps camp eight miles from Ketchikan. Not all were strangers. Some had met while working outside their villages; others had married from one village into another.¹⁴⁸

The government "officials" at Ward Lake were Barbara and Samuel Whitfield—an OIA schoolteacher and her handyman husband who later left to join the Coast Guard. The Whitfields, who had been stationed with the Aleuts on Nikolski before evacuation, were joined by Fred Geeslin, an OIA resettlement officer.

The CCC camp was nine small cabins and four communal buildings. Each cabin had a small kitchen and a bedroom with two bunk beds. With lumber brought from Wrangell Institute, the Aleuts built additional housing and furniture. Scrap cardboard was used for insulation. Each household was issued a wood burning stove.¹⁴⁹ Shared facilities for the nearly 200 evacuees included an outhouse; a school; a church; and a laundry with a large tin basin, four cold-water faucets

and two shower stalls. Water was hauled in buckets from an outside hydrant to each cabin, heated, then taken to the laundry. The village outhouse was a long open trough without seats, and insects were thick, despite the toilet's constant flow of water.¹⁵⁰

Not everyone lived at the Ward Lake settlement, however. One woman and her family, who thought the Ward Lake houses "shacks," moved into Ketchikan, as did two or three others. Two girls roomed in the Ketchikan hospital where they worked.¹⁵¹

Neither the OIA nor any other government agency provided the Aleuts with transportation into town. Taxis could be called but the only telephone was at the OIA school—and the teacher would not let the Aleuts use it.¹⁵² The evacuees were saved from complete isolation by a local entrepreneur, Eugene Wacker, who drove evacuees to Ketchikan for 35 cents each way:

Now we were able to shop and ride into town to our jobs. . . . He charged us fare between points, but without his consideration and care we would not have done well for jobs and supplies we needed in town.¹⁵³

Wacker also helped the Aleuts find jobs; whenever he heard of an opening,

[H]e came to our camp to tell us about it and drove those who wanted the job into town. He then would also drive us back to the camp after work. . . . Most of us might have had to go to other communities seeking jobs, but because of him we were near our families at camp. . . . Eugene Wacker did this for the three years we were at Ward Lake.¹⁵⁴

The men found employment at the canneries and sawmills of Ketchikan, in commercial fishing at Sitka, and in construction at the Army base at Metlakatla.¹⁵⁵ Some were in Alaska Sea Scouts, and during the summers of 1943 and 1944, several went up to work for the Aleutian Livestock Company, a sheep ranch near Nikolski.¹⁵⁶ As at Killisnoo, the Aleuts at Ward Lake no longer received free food and other supplies after the men found work.

Health. Not long after they had come to Ward Lake, the Aleuts were visited by at least one doctor and nurse who found many ill and quarantined those with infectious diseases. Yet, after being diagnosed, the Aleuts say they never received treatment.¹⁵⁷ Generally the OIA schoolteacher, Mrs. Whitfield, acted as the camp's health aide. Harry C. McCain, Ketchikan's Chairman of Police, Health and Sanitation, wrote Governor Gruening on May 19, 1943, that the medical situation was very poor:

[W]e have recently been forced to quarantine their camp in order . . . to . . . catch up to their venereal disease situation. . . . These people are also badly honeycombed with tuberculosis, from which disease a considerable number have died since they were placed at Ward Cove.¹⁵⁸

McCain was concerned for the townspeople:

There are a large number of service men in and near Ketchikan and neither they nor the civilians should be infected with their diseased conditions. . . . the proprietor of the Totem Lunch inquired whether or not 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. . . . Therefore we desire to protest their 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.¹⁵⁹

Ketchikan's city council became increasingly involved with the problem. Barbara Whitfield appealed to the city council on behalf of the Aleuts, and the Akutan village chief, Mark Petikoff, wrote a letter to the *Alaska Fishing News* protesting that the Aleuts had been "made a football;" they demanded "the same treatment as any other group of citizens" but were "not asking any special favors." It would have been more useful, he said, to have prevented characters like the whiskey bootleggers from exploiting the Aleuts in the first place.¹⁶⁰

Sentiment in Ketchikan grew more sympathetic toward the Aleuts as some of the townspeople gradually began to recognize the plight of these war refugees: uprooted from their homes, in less than a year at Ward Lake, 20 out of less than 200 people had perished and another half dozen had been sent out for tubercular care. The death rate at Ward Lake was one of the highest of all the Aleut evacuation camps.

On May 27, 1943, Mayor J.A. Talbot of Ketchikan wrote Superintendent Claude Hirst of the Alaska Indian Service protesting the poor medical care given the Aleuts. Hirst responded that the Indian Service had operated a clinic before the city started one and was paying half the expenses of the city's new clinic. The superintendent also added that before the war a tuberculosis sanitarium had been recommended for southeastern Alaska and that "we are doing everything we possibly can with the facilities that have been furnished us."¹⁶¹

The Adjustment to Ketchikan. Many Aleuts found the adjustment to southeastern Alaska difficult, if not fatal:

The older people, especially, said they did not like the trees,

which hemmed them in so that they could not see nor breathe freely. . . . Another big complaint was the forced change in economy. Legal restrictions upon hunting and fishing were imposed, and natural food was simply not available . . . The large number of policemen, and their readiness to arrest on the slightest pretext, was also remarked upon more than once. . . . Ridicule, to which the Aleuts were subjected by whites, increased their sensitivity to their status as "natives" and made them more secretive about their customs.¹⁶²

According to Gerald Berreman, an anthropologist who studied Nikolski in the early 1950's:

Not everything in Ward Lake was unpleasant to these people, however. The company of other Aleuts was generally enjoyed. . . . Schooling was also easier to obtain. . . . The most enjoyed aspects . . . were the blessings of western urban society, which money, earned at numerous available jobs, could buy. These were primarily liquor, dancing, and movies.¹⁶³

Nonetheless, Berreman concluded that most villagers were very unhappy:

Everything they were used to was left behind. . . . Money, liquor, and movies were hopeless substitutions for the security of old and familiar ways. . . . Even those who enjoyed "Southeast" welcomed the anticipated return. Those who were offered permanent jobs chose to go back to the old life instead.¹⁶⁴

Burnett Inlet

The Unalaska evacuees were moved in August 1942 from their temporary quarters at Wrangell Institute to Burnett Inlet, which became their home. They remained at the abandoned cannery on Etolin Island until April 1945. Like Killisnoo and Ward Lake, Burnett Inlet was managed by an OIA schoolteacher and her husband, Edythe J. and Elmer D. Long.

Conditions at Burnett Inlet, although difficult, were not as severe as in the other camps. While the facilities were poor when evacuees arrived, cannery buildings were reconditioned, roughly winterized and converted into small apartments for single people and small families. In addition, four small family houses, a school, teachers' quarters, and a church were built.¹⁶⁵

In May 1943, Edythe Long wrote that it was "discouraging to . . . hear remarks made to the effect that people are hungry" and that there was "practically no limit to the amount and variety of food furnished these people. . . . With the exception of a few hard to secure items

which we divide and ration there has been no limit to the amount of food the evacuees have been issued or allowed to purchase."¹⁶⁶

As with the evacuees at Killisnoo and Ward Lake, the Aleuts at Burnett Inlet were encouraged to become "as self-sustaining as possible, in accordance with instructions from our Chicago headquarters."¹⁶⁷ While the Aleuts reconditioned some cannery buildings and built others, they were not compensated for their labor beyond "necessary subsistence and other supplies."¹⁶⁸ After the housing was completed, the Aleuts were expected to find jobs and were thereafter charged for supplies.¹⁶⁹

Health care at Burnett Inlet was poor, but fortunately the death toll was not as high as in other camps. An Aleut midwife delivered babies for mothers who were unable to reach Wrangell in time, and evacuees also sought her help in treating cuts, bruises and illnesses.¹⁷⁰

One Evacuee's View of Life at Burnett Inlet. Martha Newell was part Aleut and, because she did not wish to accompany her husband when he left for the Lower 48, she was evacuated with the other Aleuts from Unalaska. In March 1943, she wrote her husband, Kenneth, that "[W]e're all anxious to go home. I can't stand thinking of staying another winter, and most of the folks feel the same as there's no work and we are paying for our food,"¹⁷¹ and "I can't say we are living in good houses. They are all warehouses . . ."¹⁷² She encouraged her husband to write their friend, Congressional Delegate Anthony Dimond.

Kenneth Newell's April letter of complaint to Dimond was promptly brought to the attention of Claude Hirst and Fred Geeslin of the Alaska Indian Service. According to the Indian Service's reply:

In general the people there [Burnett Inlet] are satisfied and appreciate the efforts being made by the personnel of this office to accommodate them. . . . The complaint of Mrs. Newell is the first to our knowledge. . . . Naturally these people hear of the Pribiloffs [sic] going back, and think they should go back also . . . Even though these evacuees may be receiving less than Japs in concentration camps, as stated by Mrs. Newell, I am sure that the large majority of them are satisfied under the present conditions, and they have expressed that they wish to be self-supporting as they were at their original homes where there are wage earners in their families.¹⁷³

Burnett Inlet schoolteacher Edythe Long also responded to Mrs. Newell's complaints:

Mrs. Newell has a firm conviction that the more complaints she registers and the more dissatisfaction and discontent she can arouse amongst the evacuees here the sooner the Authorities will be

obliged to move her back to Unalaska. Her entire being is centered on that one purpose—to go back to her home this spring, and it seems she will go to any lengths even of gross misrepresentation to attain this end. She . . . refuses to face the fact that Unalaska is in the war zone and that no women or children can be returned there at present regardless of anyone's views or wishes. She not only complains for herself but goes from house to house spreading discontent . . . Several people have expressed disgust at her unreasonable talk and refuse to listen to her.¹⁷⁴

Martha Newell died at Burnett Inlet and was returned home to Unalaska for burial.¹⁷⁵

RETURN TO THE ISLANDS

The Pribilof Islands

After visiting Funter Bay in September 1943, FWS Director Ira Gabrielson was convinced that the Aleuts should be returned to the Pribilofs that fall, and FWS received War Department approval for a return to St. George and tentative approval for St. Paul.¹⁷⁶ But, as local agent McMillin emphasized, there were no furniture and cook stoves on St. George, nor would present supplies last beyond the end of October. He reported that the Aleuts refused to remain under those conditions.¹⁷⁷ He emphatically outlined his views in a telegram to Assistant Superintendent Morton:

WHOEVER PUSHING FANTASTIC IDEA REHABILITATE PRIBILOFS NOT ACQUAINTED WITH CONDITIONS THIS TIME OF YEAR IN BERING SEA LANDINGS HERE FROM NOW ON VERY UNCERTAIN FOR ANY AMOUNT CARGO WORK AND FOR CONVEYING WOMEN CHILDREN AND SICK PEOPLE STOP CRIMINAL CHARGES SHOULD BE PREFERRED UPON PERSON RESPONSIBLE UNLESS REHABILITATION PLANS DROPPED FOR PRESENT UNTIL SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT OBTAINED TO PROPERLY EQUIP STATION.¹⁷⁸

The FWS officials were surprised:

YOUR WIRES THIS DATE FIRST INFORMATION REGARDING TRUE CONDITIONS PRIBILOFS.¹⁷⁹

WE HAVE ASSUMED ALL ALONG THAT JOHNSTON AND BENSON CONCURRED IN REHABILITATION ST. GEORGE NATIVES THIS FALL AND THAT ONLY QUESTION WAS REGARDING ST. PAUL. THIS OFFICE DOES NOT UNDER-

STAND WHY PLANS FOR ST. GEORGE NEED CHANGING.¹⁸⁰

FWS Director Gabrielson was reluctant to decide on the Aleuts' return to the Pribilofs solely on the basis of Agent McMillin's opinion. Johnston was scheduled to return shortly from a trip to the islands, and Gabrielson was anxious to learn the superintendent's views before coming to a final decision.¹⁸¹ The superintendent, however, arrogated the authority of his superior; without conferring with Gabrielson, Johnston decided that "neither island would be rehabilitated this fall" and issued orders to that effect before leaving the Pribilofs.¹⁸²

Despite Johnston's orders to the contrary, however, plans moved forward to rehabilitate St. George Island partially. One dozen married and three single men were to remain on the island, where their families would join them.¹⁸³ In the end, the Aleut families "declined their return" to St. George that fall, and the men on the island finally departed for Funter Bay on November 11, 1943.¹⁸⁴ The FWS was forced to prepare for another winter at the evacuation camp, and Chief Bower wired Gabrielson suggesting that a Public Health nurse and doctor should be detailed to Funter Bay.¹⁸⁵ It is unclear why the Aleuts chose not to return then—because of poor health, inadequate supplies on the island, the lateness of the season and likelihood of poor travel conditions, or for other reasons. The Commission found no documents that cast light upon the Aleuts' decision.

By mid-March 1944, arrangements had been made for an Army transport to return the Pribilovians about May 1, and this time the plans went ahead. No earlier return was possible because drift ice surrounded the Pribilofs, and approximately 4,000 tons of supplies and equipment had to be purchased after appropriations became available.¹⁸⁶

Funding the Return

As the evacuated Aleuts faced another southeastern Alaskan winter of continuing decimation from disease, the Interior Department negotiated with the War and Navy Departments for funds and services to meet the expense of return and rehabilitation. Interior had been using its Civilian Food Reserve Funds, but it was "very questionable whether these emergency funds will continue to be available after July 1, 1944, for the care of these Aleut refugees."¹⁸⁷

On May 23, 1944, the Army, Navy and OIA jointly concluded that the OIA should administer the resettlement. The Army agreed to make an initial allotment of \$58,000 and the Navy \$129,000 to finance

the return and rehabilitation of the islands, with the understanding that both would make subsequent allotments if required. In addition, the Army and Navy were to transfer to the OIA surplus materials and supplies for resettlement.¹⁸⁸

On August 7, 1944, President Roosevelt approved an allocation of \$200,000 from his "Emergency Fund for the President, National Defense, 1942-45" to be used by the Interior Department for rehabilitation of the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands. This sum was for restoration, repair, reconstruction and equipment of public and private buildings and other property, as well as for subsistence of the Aleuts. The allocation included a maximum of \$25,000 in aggregate payment of claims for damages suffered by Aleut and white inhabitants, but it excluded claims of commercial or business firms.¹⁸⁹ Because losses were greater than originally anticipated, on July 21, 1945, the OIA requested an additional allotment of \$45,000 in order to cover expenses,¹⁹⁰ and a transfer of \$51,725 was made from the President's Fund. According to federal budget figures, the actual obligations for "refunds, awards and indemnities" eventually totalled \$31,441. For "equipment," "supplies and materials" the total was \$177,081.¹⁹¹

The Aleutian Islands

Return to the Aleutians proved more difficult than returning to the Pribilofs. In April 1944, Navy and OIA officials met and OIA then authorized the Commander of the Alaska Sector to send the following message to the Chief of Naval Operations:

In view of impracticability of obtaining school teachers who can act as Bureau of Indian Affairs representatives the difficulty of supplying the villages and impossibility of prevention of intermingling with military personnel they are not desirous of returning Aleuts to the Aleutian Chain.¹⁹²

The OIA officials sent similar messages to their superiors,¹⁹³ and proposed moving the Aleuts at Ward Lake to Funter Bay when the Pribilovians had left.

Within the next two weeks, the Alaska Indian Service changed its position. On April 26, B. W. Thoron, Director of the Interior Division of Territories, radiogrammed Governor Gruening seeking his views on the Aleuts' return to the islands that spring. Thoron believed that early resettlement was desirable despite the lack of teachers.¹⁹⁴ Gruening agreed, and stated that the OIA superintendent in Juneau concurred.¹⁹⁵

Interior assumed that the Aleuts' return was imminent.¹⁹⁶ The status of the village of Unalaska, however, remained unsettled because

of its proximity to Dutch Harbor; accordingly, the OIA was authorized to defer return by the Unalaskans if no teachers could be found.¹⁹⁷

On May 13, the War Department directed the Commanding General of the Alaska Department to take necessary action to return the Aleuts to the islands and rehabilitate their homes. By May 23, the Army, Navy and Office of Indian Affairs had jointly concluded that the great variety of local problems meant that OIA's Alaska Indian Service was best qualified to administer the project. Neither the Army nor the Navy would undertake any aspect of rehabilitation beyond handling local relations between Aleuts and military personnel.¹⁹⁸

Despite apparent agreement, a commitment to move ahead, and funds to finance rehabilitation, no Aleutian islanders were returned to the islands that summer, that fall, or at any time during 1944. They did not leave southeastern Alaska until nearly a year later, April 17, 1945. This delay remains unexplained; it is possible that Lt. General Delos Emmons wished to reevaluate the situation after replacing Simon Buckner as commanding general in June 1944. The Commission was unable to locate any documents beyond those describing the inter-agency agreement of May 1944 and the Aleuts' arrival on the islands in April 1945.

RESETTLEMENT

Although the Aleuts were delighted to return to their island homes after years in southeastern Alaska, they found communities that had been vandalized and looted by occupying American military forces. Rehabilitation assessments made for each village only a year after the Aleuts were evacuated describe disturbingly similar conditions. Reports on Unalaska were typical:

All buildings were 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. Clothing had been scattered over floors, trampled and fouled. Dishes, furniture, stoves, radios, phonographs, books, and other items had been broken or damaged. 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 and that it occurred over a period of many months.¹⁹⁹

Perhaps the greatest loss to personal property occurred at the time the Army conducted its clean up of the village in June of 1943. Large numbers of soldiers were in the area at that time removing rubbish and outbuildings and many houses were entered unofficially and souvenirs and other articles were taken.²⁰⁰

Many items had been "borrowed" and misplaced:

Sergie Savaroff said that a new range that he had bought, a coal range—wood range—was gone from his house, a big heavy thing. It was found at an officers' quarters in Umnak; that is about eighty miles north of Nikolski. And his dory that he had left there with an outboard motor—was found in Chernofski, that had been used and not returned.²⁰¹

Many of the Aleuts were forced to camp outdoors at first because their old homes had not yet been repaired and many proved uninhabitable. The Unalaskans were provided with 16 by 20 Army cabanas, two or three for the larger families and "[e]veryone seemed to be contended [sic] with that."²⁰² Later, it was discovered that the cabanas had to be chained down because of the 90 mph Aleutian winds. Until their village (which had been burned to the ground by the Navy) could be rebuilt, the Atkans lived for a year in Quonset huts shared by as many as nine people in "conditions worse than the camps."²⁰³

The Aleuts repaired and rebuilt their homes themselves. They received free groceries until their homes were ready. The food, building and repair supplies were procured locally—mostly military surplus, and otherwise purchased primarily from the Northern Commercial Company in Unalaska.²⁰⁴

Their losses and resettlement costs were higher than what was originally estimated by the April 1944 survey of evacuated villages. By the time the Aleuts actually returned to the islands, a year had elapsed and very few of the items previously listed as intact could be found in their homes. All household effects and equipment the Aleuts had left behind were missing.²⁰⁵

The evacuated Aleuts suffered material losses for which they were never fully recompensed, either in kind or in cash. As devout followers of the Russian Orthodox faith, the Aleuts treasured religious icons brought from czarist Russia and other family heirlooms that represented their greatest spiritual as well as material loss. They were priceless to the Aleuts. Possessions such as houses, furniture, boats and fishing gear were either never replaced or replaced by markedly inferior goods, testified the Aleuts. Some shipments of goods intended for the islands

never arrived, they say, speculating that the merchandise was diverted to stores on the mainland. The OIA itself found that its first resettlement officer was not competent to the task of supplying and resettling the Aleuts.²⁰⁶ His more effective replacement, Fred Geeslin, could not recall filing claims for lost goods or waiting for freight that never arrived, although the deputy United States marshal who eventually took over as resettlement officer testified before the Commission that Geeslin had made a list of items stolen or taken from homes and had turned over a large sheaf of freight bills consigned to various people that had "lost stuff," that "probably five or six" ever received freight, and that OIA had never responded to letters about the loss of freight.²⁰⁷ Geeslin said that all supplies were purchased locally, and he did not recall any expectation that the Aleuts' personal possessions would be replaced or that some type of monetary compensation would be received.²⁰⁸

The federal budget indicates that \$31,441 was spent for "refunds, award and indemnities" to Aleut and white evacuees from the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands; \$130,719 was spent for "supplies and materials;" and \$46,362 for "equipment."²⁰⁹ The Commission has been unable to recover any further details of these expenditures, the disposition of claims filed, shipping lists, or other documents to verify or disprove the Aleuts' allegations.

World War II Remains Still on Islands. U.S. and Japanese military debris from World War II still litters the Aleutians. Most of it is unsightly; some is hazardous or polluting. Dilapidated military structures such as Quonset huts and hangars, leaky oil and chemical drums, boilers, diesel engines, generators, partially destroyed vehicles, weapon magazines, live munitions and various other pieces of debris are constant, ugly reminders that World War II touched the islands. Large concentrations of debris remain at twelve sites of major military operations or installations during and shortly after World War II; lesser quantities litter sixteen other sites. Ten of the 28 sites are in inhabited areas.²¹⁰ On Atka, children used to entertain themselves by placing the powder from unused 50-caliber machinegun shells in empty beer cans and igniting them.²¹¹ As recently as 1979, nine cases of exposed TNT were discovered.²¹²

There is so much debris that to remove safety hazards, pollutants and standing structures from areas within existing road networks, i.e., from half the sites, would require approximately 24,260 person-days of direct labor at a total cost of approximately \$98 million 1979 dollars. A cleanup limited to hazardous and polluting debris from inhabited

areas, ignoring aesthetic considerations, would require 3,272 person-days at a total cost of about \$28 million.²¹³

EFFECTS OF EVACUATION

Removing the Aleuts from their island homes caused irrevocable change in their way of life. Some may contend that change was inevitable, and that evacuation merely accelerated the process of assimilating "American" culture. Such an argument, however, ignores the way change came about: the Aleuts had their culture snatched from them; they had no choice.

One of the most disturbing consequences of evacuation was the high mortality rate among Aleuts, particularly the elders. Sporadic medical care in the camps no doubt contributed to many deaths. Admittedly, doctors and nurses were no more available in the Aleutians (except Unalaska) than in southeastern Alaska.²¹⁴ But the need in "Southeast" was greater. For the Aleuts, often substandard, unsanitary and crowded living conditions deepened the psychological trauma of losing all their possessions after a sudden uprooting and a voyage in the holds of ships. Adaptation to a foreign, heavily-forested environment followed; all these experiences together imposed stresses greater than many people could withstand, and many perished.

The loss of a generation of village elders has had a cultural impact far beyond the grief and pain to their own families. Among those who died were most of the last people on earth who knew the old Aleut ways, how to make the skin boats, traditional clothing or local styles of basketry. The deaths of younger people, in a population with an historically low birth rate, further endangers the Aleuts' survival as a distinct group.

The government's island resettlement policies further eroded the traditional way of life. Not all Aleuts who were evacuated returned to the islands; many had died, some chose greater economic opportunities on the outside, others outmarried. The government, in addition, forbade any return to certain islands. After a wage-earning economy evolved on the islands during the 1900's the Aleuts grew sensitive to industry and government actions that affected employment, education and government expenditures. Economic pressures to locate in areas of broader, more stable economic opportunity prompted substantial migration from smaller to larger villages and beyond the Aleutian chain as well.²¹⁵

Evacuation accelerated these migration patterns and centralized the population. The villages of Makushin, Biorka, Kashega and Chernofski disappeared after the war, their few surviving villagers never returning to those outposts.

Finally, the American military presence on the islands left a heavy mark. Foxes, a cash "crop," and subsistence animals such as seals and caribou, were slaughtered in great numbers as a pastime by bored servicemen and ship crews. Military builders filled in the rich herring-spawning lagoons of Unalaska; pond and tidal-harvest foods were nearly destroyed by oil spills from military vessels.²¹⁶ Military debris remains to endanger and pollute many sites.

Through the insult of massive looting and vandalism of their homes and places of worship by American military forces, the Aleuts lost invaluable tangible ties to their past. Houses can eventually be rebuilt and refurnished, but stolen family mementos, heirlooms and religious icons brought from czarist Russia in the early 1800's cannot be recovered.

Removal from their homeland permanently changed nearly every aspect of Aleut life. The many who died in the camps were a huge loss to both family and community which also endangers the future of the Aleuts as a distinct people. Evacuation meant irreversible cultural erosion, destroying their means of pursuing a traditional subsistence way of life. They lost artifacts, but also the ability to recreate them. They lost (or found much reduced) the animals and sea creatures that had been essential to traditional subsistence. The evacuation also destroyed many of the Aleuts' ties to their personal and religious pasts. America, proud of its cultural diversity, thereby lost a distinctive part of itself.