

DEZHNEVO (KENGISQUN): THE WESTERNMOST POINT OF THE FIFTH THULE EXPEDITION¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers an overview of Knud Rasmussen's short visit to Chukotka, Russia, which took place on September 17–18, 1924, during the final weeks of the Fifth Thule Expedition. Since Rasmussen did not receive official permission to visit Russia, his trip was abruptly terminated, and he could complete only a small portion of the research he envisioned. Though Rasmussen's trip was described in his popular narrative of the Fifth Thule Expedition, and in other publications based on his diaries, little has been known about the local communities he visited, Dezhnevo and Uelen, and the people he met there. This paper incorporates Russian sources to cover the history of the Russian-Chukchi trading village of Dezhnevo, where Rasmussen landed and from which he was deported to Alaska after a 10-hour stay in the nearby district hub of Uelen, where he interacted with Russian officials, local traders, and Native residents.

ARRIVAL IN DEZHNEVO

On September 17, 1924, Knud Rasmussen arrived in Chukotka on the schooner *Teddy Bear* and disembarked in the community of Dezhnevo (see Schwalbe et al., *this issue*). The voyage, according to Rasmussen's plan, was supposed to present him with an opportunity to study the Asiatic Eskimo [known as "Yupik" or "Siberian Yupik" today—*ed.*] and was to serve as the culmination of the Fifth Thule Expedition (FTE). However, his research in Chukotka did not happen the way he envisioned it. He was immediately apprehended on the shore by a Soviet border guard, whose last name Rasmussen recorded as "Allayeff," and was taken to the nearby community of Uelen, the headquarters of the local Soviet authorities. On the following day, Rasmussen was forced to leave the Soviet territory, as he did not have the appropriate documents allowing him legal entry to Russia.

Rasmussen described in detail the story of his visit to Chukotka in the first popular account of his travels (Rasmussen [1927] 1999:357–380); the English ver-

sion, unfortunately, lacks some details available in the earlier Danish publication (Rasmussen 1925–1926). A brief synopsis of this information was later included in the final report of the FTE (Mathiassen 1945:104–107). Unfortunately, no documents verifying Rasmussen's presence in Chukotka have so far been identified in the State Archive of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug (SChAO) in Anadyr, the capital of Chukotka. Therefore, the main outline of events is presented below mainly in accordance with Rasmussen's published description. Russian sources allow the addition of certain details to his accounts and enhance them with information about sites he visited and the people he encountered in Chukotka. The goals of this paper are to analyze surviving written records (mostly in Russian but some in English) about his trip to Chukotka, to compare different versions of the events, and to shed light on the reasons for discrepancies in how one and the same story was presented by Rasmussen and in the official Soviet narrative.

In order to visit Russia (then USSR, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) from Alaska, Rasmussen needed to have an entry permit from the Soviet authorities. He requested one while in Nome (or even earlier—see Schwalbe et al. *this issue*), but fruitlessly waited for it for almost three weeks. The navigation season in the Bering Strait was coming to an end, so Rasmussen decided to visit Chukotka without an official permit and chartered the schooner *Teddy Bear* under the command of American captain Joe Bernard. It was a risky move because the Soviet authorities were trying to limit American trading operations in Chukotka at that time and were imposing stricter rules on foreign vessels.

On September 17, 1924, the *Teddy Bear* crossed Bering Strait and arrived in Dezhnevo Bay near the settlement commonly known in Russian as Dezhnevo but which Rasmussen called Emmatown (Rasmussen 1999:360–361, 365). The name “Emmatown” is cited in the final account and on the map attached to the FTE summary report (Mathiassen 1945:106). Soviet gazetteers (toponymical reference books) give other local names for the same community: the Chukchi name *Ken’isk’un* (*Kengisqun*) and the Yupik name *Kangisqaq*, which translate as “located at a bend” and “the apex of a bay,” respectively (Leont’ev and Novikova 1989:181, 188; Menovshchikov 1972:105). Harald Sverdrup, a participant in Roald Amundsen’s expedition who visited Dezhnevo in 1921, cited its misspelled Chukchi name as “Kengeskon” (Sverdrup 1930:232, 259).

One might think that Rasmussen simply made a mistake or cited a name that was common among American traders in Nome. However, versions of “Emmatown” are repeated in several other late nineteenth and early twentieth-century sources, such as the Krause brothers’ report of their trip in 1881 (as “Enmittan”) (Krause 1882:4), and in many Russian sources as “Enmyyatin” (Kolbasenko 1899:48), “Il’mittaun” (Bogdanovich 1901:55), “Enm’tag’n” [Энм’тагън] (Bogoraz 1934:15), “Ermitayn” [Ermitown] (Kalinnikov 1912, map), “Ermitayn” (Galkin 1929, map), etc. Waldemar Bogoraz translated the name from the Chukchi language as “the end of a cliff” but noted that “Eskimos” lived there (Bogoras 1904:15). According to Mikhail Chlenov and Igor Krupnik, Enmytagin was indeed a small Yupik settlement on a steep slope between Dezhnevo (Keniskun/*Kangisqaq*) and Nunak, the southernmost community of the group speaking Naukanski Yupik at Cape Paek (Chlenov 2020:363; Chlenov and Krupnik 2016:40). It is thus possible that Rasmussen confused the names of

the two neighboring settlements, although it would not be prudent to exclude that “Enmytagyn” (Anglicized as Emmatown) was an alternative name for *Kengisqun*/*Kangisqaq* that was in use at the time of Rasmussen’s visit.

THE DEZHNEVO SITE: ORIGINS AND EARLY HISTORY

In the 1990s, Russian archaeologist Sergey Gusev excavated some early semisubterranean dwellings at the Dezhnevo/Kangiskak village site; according to his data, the site was occupied continuously from the fifth or sixth century to the nineteenth century AD (100–1400 BP) (Gusev 1995:26). Shortly after, Akradyi B. Savinetskiy and his team performed archaeozoological research at the site; according to their findings, its most ancient layers span from 2630 to 1270 years BP, thus indicating an almost unbroken 2700-year record of occupation (Savinetskiy 2000:98). The site contained objects from several successive ancient Eskimo cultures: Old Bering Sea, Birnirk, Punuk, Early Thule, and Late Thule. Such a long period of occupation was due to favorable conditions for marine mammal hunting in the area, primarily for bearded seal and walrus (Gusev 1995:26; Savinetskiy 2000:99–100).

For the later period of the 1800s and early 1900s, written sources contain important data on the population size of the community residing at the site of ancient Kaniskak/*Kengisqun*: four dwellings in 1881 (Krause 1882:34, 113), eight dwellings in 1896 with a total population of 42 (Kolbasenko 1899:48), 10 dwellings ([Chukchi] skin tents, *yarangas*) in 1912 (Kalinnikov 1912:48), and 18 dwellings (*yarangas*) in the 1920s (Galkin 1929, map). The beginning of the historical settlement of Dezhnevo and its rapid growth in the first years of the twentieth century happened thanks to the establishment of a logistical and trade base for the Russian North-Eastern Siberian Society (NESS), formed in 1900. The society was actually a commercial company headed by retired Russian imperial guard colonel V.M. Vonlyarlyarsky. As envisioned by the Russian authorities, it was supposed to curb American commercial expansion from Alaska into Chukotka following the gold rush and the build-up of the city of Nome after 1899; but in fact it became a “middle man” for promoting American interests (Garusova 2001:67, 68; Tul’chinskiy 1906). Vonlyarlyarsky received exclusive rights for the exploration and extraction of mineral resources on the Chukchi Peninsula, primarily gold; however, the NESS did not receive any special dispensations for conducting trade.

In 1902, the NESS established outposts at three convenient harbor sites on the Russian coast of the Bering Sea: St. Michael (Sviatogo Mikhaila) in Dezhnevo Bay, St. Nikolay (Sviatogo Nikolaya) in St. Lavrentiya Bay, and St. Vladimir (Sviatogo Vladimira) in Provideniya Bay (Kalinnikov 1912:175; Krupnik and Chlenov 2013:10–12). The St. Michael post (commonly called Mikhailovski Station) soon received the name Dezhnevo due to its location close to Cape Dezhnev (East Cape), named after Semen Dezhnev—who first navigated the strait between northeast Asia and North America in 1648. The NESS selected this site as one of its bases because of its location in the bay, which was also named Dezhnevskaya Bay, and its relative proximity to Nome, which served as a convenient hub to upload trade goods and construction materials.

Russian engineer Konstantin N. Tul'chinsky (1865–1939), sent to Chukotka in 1905 to audit NESS activities, described the Dezhnevo station in the following manner:

“Based on the Society’s activity in Chukotka, I cannot call the structures depicted in the photo by any other name, except ‘wine trading warehouses of the North-Eastern Siberian Society’” (Tul’chinsky 1906:21). Unfortunately, the photos were not attached to Tul’chinsky’s published report. However, the warehouses can be seen in many of the later photos (Figs. 1 and 2; see also Krupnik and Chlenov 2013:11, fig. 1.7). In 1924, Knud Rasmussen certainly could see the same warehouse structures being used for their main purpose of storing imported goods.

Russian police captain Nikolay F. Kalinnikov, who visited the area in 1910, asserted that the purpose of these NESS stations “was twofold: to serve as base points and stockpiles for mining equipment and to be shops for trade with Natives” (Kalinnikov 1912:175). According to Tul’chinsky’s report, the stations primarily conducted trade, including the exchange of spirits for marine mammal products, pelts, polar bear skins, and other trophies, even though it was strictly prohibited. In 1905, Baber,



Figure 1. A group of Native people next to the newly built warehouses at the Mikhailovski station of the Northeastern Siberian Society in Dezhnevo. Heritage of Chukotka, Museum Center, Anadyr, Russia. #NV-18-210-01.

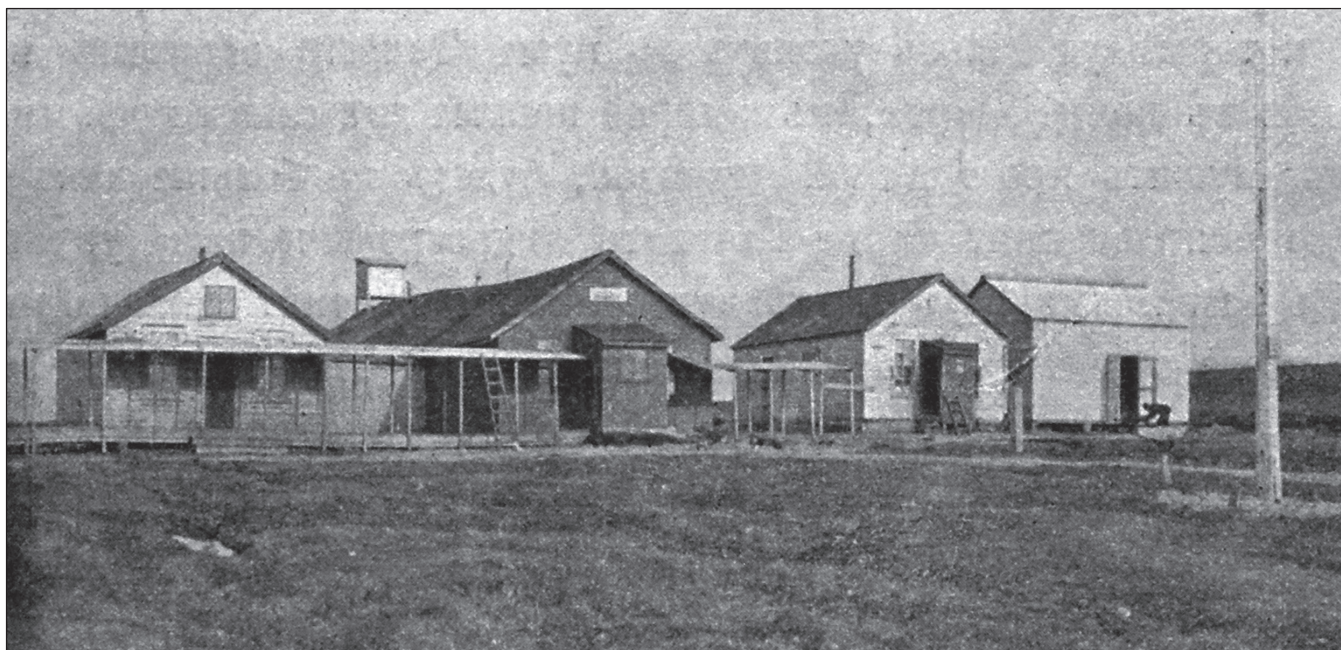


Figure 2. *Mikhailovski Station at Dezhnevo, ca. 1910. From Nikolai Kalinnikov (1912:18), Nash Krainii Severo-Vostok (Our Far Northeast). Photographer: unknown.*

an American, was the manager of the Dezhnevo post. Someone named “Cossack Mishka” (Mikhail L’vov Bashanin) was the only representative of the Russian government in the area. Tul’chinsky reported that in 1904–1905, Dezhnevo post brought 50,000 rubles in profit to the NESS (Tul’chinsky 1906:19–22, 26–31, 98–101, 115). Kalinnikov (1912:175) wrote that NESS activity was carried out “irrationally and, as a result, its affairs went downhill.” During the last year of the concession (1910), the NESS stations were closed due to lack of trade goods, and soon the NESS ceased to exist (Kalinnikov 1912:175–177). One reference indicates that the concession was terminated because NESS pursued the interests of the Americans (Garusova 2001:68).

DEZHNEVO SETTLEMENT AND ITS INHABITANTS IN THE 1910S TO 1920S

In 1910, another Russian trading company, the Karaev Brothers, began operations in Chukotka. Alexander I. Karaev (1886–1961), an Ossetian, was its founder. Contrary to many other traders, the Karaev Brothers excluded spirits from their trading inventory (Amundsen 1936:324). The main office was in Vladivostok, and the local stations or “satellites” were in Chukotka, in the villages of Ryrkaypii (North Cape), Vankarem, Enurmino, Uelen, Dezhnevo, Yandogay, Chaplino, and Zaliv Kresta (Holy

Cross Bay). Thanks to the presence of the abandoned NESS warehouses, Dezhnevo became the center of the Karaevs’ trading empire in Chukotka. Boris A. Karaev, son of Alexander Karaev, wrote in his memoirs:

...the Company’s business was going well; the sale volume, profits, and capital increased. The company became famous not just in the Russian Far East, but also in Alaska. The Karaev Brothers’ business was carried out in harsh competition with American traders. The Karaevs aimed at establishing dominance of Russian trading capital and provided support to new Russian entrepreneurs. (Karaev 2003:6)

Further he wrote about his father:

Alexander Karaev who headed the company was noted not just for his business skills, but also for his wide interests. He knew the Chukchi and Eskimo languages well, learned in detail the habits and ways of the local population, and was friends with Vladimir K. Arsen’ev, famous Russian naturalist and researcher of the Far East [who lived in Khabarovsk—*ed.*]. He wrote articles that were published in the regional journal, *The Economic Life of the Far East*, printed in Khabarovsk (e.g., Karaev 1926). For the time, he was considered to be a very decent photographer. The photographs that he took in Kamchatka, Chukotka, Alaska, USA, and Vladivostok, which depicted the life of

people in the area in 1910s–1920s have been preserved to this day. (Karaev 2003:17)

Some photos from the Karaev family archives were published in Boris Karaev’s memoirs (2003). Some other photographs were also published in a Live Journal blog by a user named Odynokiy (Vitaliy Yastremsky), who collected various materials on the history of the Karaev family and the village of Dezhnevo, including from the Karaev family collection (Fig. 3, left, right; Figs. 4, 5). The family’s contribution to the local culture is evident from Alexander Karaev’s report that:

[the] Eskimo [Yupik—*ed.*] in the vicinity of Provideniya Bay and Cape Chaplin correspond among themselves not just in Russian, but also in their Native language. The written language was introduced by us, the Karaevs, who took advantage of the fact that we, the Ossetians, Eskimo, and

Chukchi have the same sounds [in our languages—*ed.*]. (Karaev 1926:153)

Karaev also carried out meteorological observations in Dezhnevo in 1916, 1917, and 1918 (Leont’eva 1937:90).

As the Russian Civil War (1918–1921) started, Karaev trading company stores were robbed repeatedly by the Bolsheviks and the White Guard regiments alike. However, the Karaevs chose to take the side of the Soviet authorities. On December 23, 1922, Fyodor Karaev, Alexander Karaev’s younger brother, was appointed the Kamchatka Revolutionary Committee’s authorized representative in the Anadyr’ *Uezd* [district—*ed.*] and the Chukotka Peninsula, starting from January 3, 1923. He was assigned:

to begin organizing a reliable local guard (militia) made of local people, to undertake decisive actions to protect the valuables and to apprehend the White bandits who escaped with stolen furs from



Figure 3. Karaev family photos. Left: The Karaev brothers, with Alexander (left) and Fyodor (right), January 1910. Right: Fyodor Karaev (left), Khariton Karaev’s daughter (center), and Alexander Karaev (right) in Chukchi winter fur coats. Karaev family collection, courtesy Alexey Karaev.



Figure 4. Karaev Brothers warehouses in Dezhnevo. The big sign in Russian on the leftmost building reads “Karaev.” Photo taken presumably by Moisei Karaev, ca. 1921–1922. Karaev family collection, courtesy Alexey Karaev.



Figure 5. Arctic fox, red fox, and wolf pelts drying at the Karaev Brothers’ trade station at Dezhnevo, February 1918. Left to right: unknown person; Charley Carpendale; Alexander Karaev; Petr Penkok, Chukchi carver; Russian paramedic Golovko. Karaev family collection, courtesy Alexey Karaev.

the Kolyma Region and intended on sneaking across the Bering Strait to America. (*Bor'ba za vlast' Sovetov* 1967:141)

Fyodor Karaev organized a “citizen guardsmen” detachment, composed of local traders and trade post workers (including several immigrants from the Russian Northern Caucasus—Ossetians, Dagestanis, and Ingush), and local Indigenous hunters. Moisey Kharitonovich Karaev, the nephew of Alexander Karaev, was a commander of one of the detachments. Grigoryi Z. Kibizov's detachment, from Markovo, participated in armed confrontation with the White Guardsmen (in Amundsen's diary, Kibizov was mentioned as one of Karaevs' business partners; Amundsen 1936:320, 322–325, 328). After uniting with the Red Army troops, Kibizov's home guard participated in the defeat of V. I. Bochkarev's White detachment in Gizhiga and Nayakhan on April 10 and 13, 1923.

In December 1959, Alexander I. Karaev wrote a letter to the (then) Soviet leadership, in which he recounted his contributions to the establishment of Soviet rule in Chukotka.

I, A(lexander). I. Karaev, one of the three Karaev brothers, still alive at 74 years old, a sick and disabled person since 1958, would like to know why the USSR historians, to this day, are silent about our role in the bloodless [sic] Sovietization of the Chukotka-Anadyr' Region when it is even mentioned in American publications. We, the Karaev brothers, mainly with the help [from Alaska—crossed out] from our countrymen, the Ossetians and the local population, defended this remote region from the Whites invasion and Sovietized it without any cost to the Soviet Gov[ernment]. In the interest of regional history and for the sake of truth and in order to avoid any misinterpretations, it is time to highlight this issue. (Odynokiy 2018)

Fortunately, the Chukchi District, where the Karaevs' trade stations were, was spared clashes with the White Army detachments, and Fyodor I. Karaev, the new Soviet administrator, mostly battled with unscrupulous traders and moonshiners. He issued trading certificates, collected fur tax, provided assistance to starving local people, and in many ways strived to establish law and order in Chukotka (*Bor'ba za vlast' Sovetov* 1967:165–175; Garusov 1963:100; Krupnik and Chlenov 2013:15–16). During the winter of 1923, he conducted a detailed survey of Chukotka's coastal population by traveling via dogsled from Uelen to Anadyr, during which he collected data on the settlement size and

ethnic composition of each Native community, the number of skin boats, sled dogs, etc. (*Materialy po statistike* 1925). But as soon as the Civil War was over, Karaev, an alien to the new Soviet rule, was displaced from his position as an authorized Soviet representative in the area.

The Karaev brothers left Dezhnevo in 1923, a pivotal year for the region. After the Bol'sheviki's victory, it became apparent that individual traders were no longer welcome in Soviet Chukotka. Already in 1921, Alexander Karaev considered liquidating his trade operations, after his warehouses in Anadyr' and Kolyma were robbed by the Bol'sheviki (Boreish 1921:4 [reverse side]). The Karaevs' property was nationalized in 1923, and the new district authorities proposed to make Dezhnevo the center of Soviet trade in the area (Kolomiets 2018:280). The Karaev family relocated to Vladivostok, and in 1925 Alexander Karaev moved to Japan, where he organized a company to trade with the USSR. In 1947, he and his family returned to the USSR, and he died in the city of Sverdlovsk (now Ekaterinburg) in the Urals (Karaev 2003:18–19, 116–117). He left diaries and detailed memoirs that have not yet been studied or published. In the 1920s, Fyodor and Moisey Karaev participated in various Soviet polar expeditions in the Chukchi and East Siberian Seas. However, it is known that Moisey Karaev eventually returned to the USSR. There is some information that in 1939 Moisey Karaev was arrested, then acquitted, and died soon thereafter (Odynokiy 2020).

From 1904, another colorful character named Charley Carpendale (Clarendon Coulson Carpendale, 1874–1951; Karpandel' in Russian), a trader from Australia and a partner of Olaf Svenson, an American entrepreneur, lived in Dezhnevo. In 1900, he had started prospecting for gold in Alaska and soon arrived in Chukotka with a party of American gold prospectors. Carpendale owned a warehouse in Dezhnevo and a fur trade post (station) in Uelen. The flamboyant persona of Charley Carpendale is depicted in many sources: in Swede Harald Sverdrup's and Russian Nikolai A. Galkin's memoirs, he is described as a wise expert on northern people and customs, whereas in Tikhon Z. Syomushkin's and Yuriy Rytkeu's novels he is featured as a ruthless predator and exploiter (Galkin 1929:38, 40–41; Rytkeu 1982; Sverdrup 1930:259, 260; Syomushkin 1947). Galkin offered the following description of Carpendale's character and appearance:

He is the Peninsula's old timer that arrived here twenty-four years ago as an employee of the

Russian-American Gold Concession. Later, just as all Europeans that reside here, he had his trading [company] and currently lives off of his savings. In the span of a quarter of a century, Charley went to America two to three times, but, as he says, “the noise of life” does not attract him and he has no desire to leave. He considers the Chukchi to be good people whose moral qualities are higher than among the civilized inhabitants of the New and Old worlds. Charley looks somewhat as a Chukchi European....He is dressed in an embroidered, short, neatly fitted Chukchi *torbaza* [skin boots] and a plaid shirt tucked into his pants. He smokes a fragrant Capstan [a British brand of unfiltered cigarettes] and does not let the pipe leave his mouth. (Galkin 1929:37–38)

Carpendale was married to a Chukchi woman named Poong-ya (Chukchi: Pun,aya or Pan,aya); according to other sources, his wife was a Yupik woman named Tonanik (Tunangik?). Nine children were born from this marriage. He called his wife Jessi, perhaps in honor of his mother, Jessi Anne Turner. When the status of foreign traders worsened in 1926, Carpendale’s family moved across Bering Strait to Alaska. During the later years, Carpendale lived in Canada, where he had a poultry farm; his wife Jessi died in 1971 (Yarzutkina 2012:223–225).

During the winter of 1921, when the Norwegian expedition vessel *Maud* was ice-bound off the Chukchi Peninsula, its leader, Roald Amundsen, visited Dezhnevo. He became friends with Carpendale and his family. Amundsen gifted Carpendale with the Norwegian flag that was issued to him. The flag was signed by the royals of England and Norway and was (reportedly) taken by Amundsen to the South Pole, the North Geomagnetic Pole, and across the Northwest Passage. Amundsen adopted Camilla, Carpendale’s 11-year-old daughter, and took her to Norway along with another local girl, a four-year-old Chukchi named Kakonita (Nita Kakot). The girls became very famous; in Norway they attended school, and Amundsen, his friends, and his servants took care of them. However, after Amundsen’s bankruptcy, he sent his adopted children back to Chukotka. In 1925, Camilla reunited with her parents and Carpendale’s family adopted Nita Kakot as one their own children (Ytreberg 2018a; 2018b:34–36). In 1926, Nita moved to Alaska with the Carpendale family.²

Several other traders—the Swede (?) Sil’vermar (local agent of Olaf Svenson), the Russian Pyotr Samsonovich Bryukhanov, and a certain Kazakov—were reportedly also

living in Dezhnevo in 1923. However, Bryukhanov most probably lived in Uelen at that time. Perhaps, it was the same “Bryukhanov” who talked to Rasmussen in Uelen in September 1924. Rasmussen described Bryukhanov as “an old trader named Gobrinoff” (Kolomiets 2018:277; SACHAO, col. R-37, inv. 1, file 8, p. 24; col. R-186, inv. 1, file 1, p. 35).

KNUD RASMUSSEN IN DEZHNEVO AND UELLEN: SEPTEMBER 17–18, 1924

Charley Carpendale was the first person to meet Rasmussen’s boat on the beach in Dezhnevo (Rasmussen 1999:361), but nothing else is said about him in FTE published accounts. Rasmussen also did not mention Carpendale’s links to Amundsen [although he was carrying a letter from Amundsen to Carpendale—*ed.*]. Apparently, their interactions were short-lived (but see Bronshtein, *this issue*). Carpendale introduced Rasmussen to Russian policeman Alyaev (Alyaeff), who arranged for Rasmussen’s move to his superiors’ headquarters in Uelen to process his entry permit.

According to Rasmussen, Dezhnevo was then a small settlement, inhabited by Chukchi, several destitute ex-traders, and a representative of the Soviet government. Nikolay A. Galkin, who visited Dezhnevo during the same period, described Dezhnevo as follows:

The “European” section is right at the shore, (is made of) five small American-style houses; the Chukchi settlement is further up the shore cliff, twelve *yarangas*. Five people inhabited the European section, which does not include the Chukchi family of Charles Carpendale. The structures, in which we are supposed to spend the winter, appear to be very unsubstantial. (Galkin 1929:37)

Russian journalist Boris Lapin, who visited Dezhnevo in 1928, echoed Galkin’s account: “The village looked pathetic and forsaken” (Lapin 1929:72). According to the Russian Polar Census of 1926–1927, the population of Dezhnevo was then 78 people (36 men, 42 women). A much larger community of 269 people (147 men, 122 women) resided in nearby Uelen on the Arctic coast. A still larger group of 349 people lived in Naukan, near East Cape (Cape Dezhnev), Rasmussen’s intended destination (*Spisok naseleennykh mest* 1929:225, 227–228).

From Dezhnevo, Rasmussen was brought to Uelen by dogsled across the marshy tundra (see Schwalbe et al., *this*

issue). In his book (Rasmussen 1999:366–368), he mentioned the names of several Uelen residents, among whom were representatives of the Soviet administration and traders alike. Three of the mentioned names can be identified: “Governor” Nikolaus Losseff, “police-constable” Maxim Penkin, and trader and interpreter Piter Cossigan. For the first two, Rasmussen made a mistake in their first names but provided correct last names.

Grigoriy Nikolaevich Losev (Losseff, according to Rasmussen) was the Chukchi district head (authorized representative) appointed by the Kamchatka Regional Revolutionary Committee as Fyodor Karaev’s replacement beginning January 1924. In 1918–1922, he fought in the Civil War in the Russian Far East. From 1923, Losev served in the Worker-Peasant Inspection (WPI); that same year he was assigned to Chukotka as a representative of the WPI’s Kamchatka branch. As a district head, Losev performed the same duties as his predecessor Karaev. He apprehended American small trading vessels and levied taxes on their goods, collected taxes, issued trading licenses, provided goods to local residents, collected statistics, fought the moonshiners, and tended to ongoing management issues. On March 13, 1925, the first Chukotka Regional Congress of Indigenous Peoples Representatives took place in Uelen while Losev was there (Krupnik and Chlenov 2013:227). In the summer of 1925, Losev returned to Petropavlovsk in Kamchatka, and until the 1950s he worked at a local supply agency. Losev reportedly spoke the Chukchi and Koryak languages, was familiar with local lifestyle and traditions, and drove a dogsled team (Galkin 1929:69, 127–128, 132; *Vo imya naroda* 2011). Tikhon Syomushkin depicted Losev under the last name Los’ (Russian *moose*) in his fictional book (Syomushkin 1947). According to Rasmussen’s description, “governor” Losev was very friendly toward him, invited him to his house, introduced him to his family, and fed him dinner, but was unable to grant him permission for a continued stay in Chukotka.

Ivan Egorovich Penkin was senior police officer of the Chukchi district. He was a man of towering size; Rasmussen called him “a giant,” and Lapin remarked that he was “a tall, freckled chap.” He also fought against American and Japanese contraband (in the way it was perceived by the Soviet authorities), investigated crime, and maintained law and order in the region entrusted to him. Boris Lapin portrayed Ivan Penkin in his novel *Pacific Diary* under the last name Pyatkin and made him

a hero of Chukchi legends (most likely concocted by the journalist himself) (Lapin 1929:28–32; Nikiforov 2014; SACHAO, col. 188, inv. 1, file 3, p. 27).

Pyotr Vasil’evich Kosygin, who settled in Chukotka in the first years of the century, was Karaev’s companion. He had his own warehouse in the community of Ryrkaypiy (North Cape), which the Soviet authorities had planned to deem “abandoned” in 1929 (Kolomiets 2018:278; SACHAO, col. R-155, inv. 1, file 2, p. 42). Possibly, Kosygin participated in fighting against the White Guard as a part of “the Karaev’s militia” (*Vo imya naroda* 2011). He was of Kamchadal origin [Russian term for the Russified Kamchatka Natives and inhabitants of the Markovo community on the Anadyr River—*ed.*] and was married to a local Chukchi woman. He resided in a Chukchi skin tent (*yaranga*) with his wife’s family. Galkin wrote about Kosygin: “He says he wanted to go to the mainland (Russia) or to America, but his Chukchi mother-in-law does not agree and would not let her daughter and granddaughter go” (Galkin 1929:69). In 1924, Kosygin was mentioned in a [criminal] case of drunkenness and moonshining in Uelen; the local police suspected him of producing spirits (SACHAO, col. R-191, inv. 1, file 2, pp. 10, 12–13, 17). He remained in Uelen long after Rasmussen’s visit and was listed “in charge” of local weather observations from December 1928 to August 1930 (Leont’eva 1937:88).

The 1930 report of a border guard officer, A. A. Kampan (often his name is mistakenly spelled as “Kaltan”), contains the last known information about Kosygin. At that time Kosygin was listed as a salesman at the Dezhnevo trading post of the Kamchatka Joint Stock Company:

[Kosygin] is a person who is quite popular in Chukotka. He is a Kamchadal himself, traveled to America, studied there, they say he graduated from a college in San Francisco. [He] knows English (American) language very well. He visited Chukotka a long time ago. [He] used to be a *promyshlennik* (fur hunter) and a trader. [He] used to have his semi-subterranean dwellings and currently owns a boat. [He] knows Chukotka well. [He] worked at the revolutionary committee, and then at the Worker-Peasant Inspection. [He] is quite old now. [He] annually awaits to be sent outside of Chukotka. [He] was very eager to provide various background information on Chukotka. (Kaltan 2008:297)

Rasmussen made a valuable observation after his meeting with several former traders in Uelen (Rasmussen

1999:371). At that time, traders ended up without any means to support themselves; the Soviet administration did not allow them to trade but also restricted them from leaving the area or emigrating to America. After a discussion with the bankrupt traders, Rasmussen came to Pyotr Kosygin's Chukchi *yaranga*, where he got acquainted with the Chukchi way of life and heard a story about the origin of the Chukchi and the Eskimo. Rasmussen recorded about one hundred words in the Naukan (Naukanski Yupik) dialect that he had heard from Yupik speakers (Mathiassen 1945:107; Rasmussen 1941:8, 36–41).

On September 18, Rasmussen, accompanied by Penkin, left Uelen and returned to Dezhnevo, then went aboard the *Teddy Bear*, which departed shortly thereafter. Because of the drifting ice, the vessel was forced to stay for a while offshore from Naukan, which Rasmussen described as “the promised land” (Fig. 6). Some Yupik men from the village reportedly walked over the ice close to the vessel, conversed with Rasmussen, and expressed regrets about his departure (Rasmussen 1999:379). At that time, he was able to add to his knowledge of the Naukanski Yupik dialect.

In an ironic twist of fate, when Rasmussen arrived in Nome, a person was waiting for him on the shore with a

telegram stating that he had received permission from the Soviet government to visit Chukotka. However, it was too late in the season to go back. Instead, Rasmussen obtained in Nome a small collection of archaeological objects from the “East Cape” area, that is, from somewhere in the vicinity of Naukan; it is described in the expedition reports (Mathiassen 1927:177–178; 1930; 1945:107). Regarding other objects presumably obtained by Rasmussen in Chukotka, see Schwalbe et al. (*this issue*) and Bronshtein (*this issue*).

Nikolai A. Galkin, representative of the Soviet trade organizations in the area, described Rasmussen's visit in a short entry in his diary dated September 18, 1924:

The schooner *Teddi bear* [sic] arrived from the American shore. Knud Rasmussen, a Danish traveler and ethnographer arrived [on it]. From 1921, he has been studying Greenlandic Eskimos and has now arrived here with the same goal. He submitted a request to Moscow for permission [to enter] but started travelling before receiving it; therefore, the local authorities suggested to him to go for two or three days to Naukan accompanied by a militia man, but he refused and returned back. (Galkin 1929:44)



Figure 6. The Yupik village of Naukan at East Cape. Photo taken on September 18, 1924, from the *Teddy Bear*. Photographer undetermined. Danish Arctic Institute, RS157612_25099.

Galkin's statement contradicts Rasmussen's own report that he was ordered to leave Chukotka the next day. Obviously, Rasmussen's record reflected the situation more accurately: it was highly doubtful that he would have declined a visit to Naukan, his ultimate destination, even if for a short period of time. Another inaccurate and highly politicized statement is available in a short 1926 report by Vladimir G. Bogoraz (Waldemar Bogoraz) following the 21st International Congress of Americanists in 1924, at which Rasmussen's partners, Kaj Birket-Smith and Therkel Mathiasen, presented the preliminary results of the FTE (Lowie 1925:172):

In 1924, Rasmussen on an American whaler did indeed approach the Eskimo settlement of Nookan on Chukotsky Cape. At that time, our relations with the Americans were escalated because of a bold attempt by American commercial hunters and traders to occupy (Soviet) Wrangel Island, devoid of human population but full of natural riches. The Russian steamer *Dekabrist* removed the American poachers from Wrangel Island. Since the other whalers had felt that they had broken the trade rules, they became more cautious in approaching the Russian shores. Thus, in the end, Rasmussen was not able to come ashore on the Chukotsky Cape. (Bogoraz 1926:125)

Rasmussen rightly linked the cautious attitude of Soviet authorities toward his visit with Vilhjálmur Stefánsson's recent activities related to Wrangel Island, and he regretted that without knowing it he got caught in a "political wasps' nest." The Soviet removal from Wrangel Island of the small American "colony" of one American and 13 Inupiat Eskimo from Nome indeed took place during the same days in the late summer and early fall of 1924 when Rasmussen tried to visit Naukan to study the Yupik Eskimo.

THE LAST DAYS OF DEZHNEVO

Rasmussen visited Dezhnevo on the eve of rapid social transformations that eventually turned this economic hub of international connections into a backwater Native hamlet of the Soviet era. Its location in a snug bay, the cohabitation of Russians, Americans, and Chukchi in the same community, the influence of the Yupik from nearby Naukan, and contacts with sailors and Alaska Natives contributed to transforming Dezhnevo into a peculiar "little Uelen" open to various cultural influences. As Soviet authorities imposed a tight grip on all interna-

tional contacts and started to expel traders like the Karaev brothers, Carpendale, and Kossygin, that spirit of cultural connection was short-lived.

Nikolay Galkin, who arrived in Dezhnevo prior to Rasmussen's visit, offered a detailed description of everyday local life in his diary from 1924–1925 (Galkin 1929). He lived and worked at the Karaev Brothers' former trading post that was transferred to the Soviet commercial trust called Okhotsk-Kamchatsk Industrial Fisheries Society (OKIFS). He described trade with the Chukchi and Yupik and the arrival of hunters from both the nearby and remote communities such as Uelen, Naukan, Inchoun, Yandagay, Akkani, and others. He noted that the presence of the Soviet trading post in Dezhnevo had an influence on the traditional lifestyle of local people.

In 1926, OKIFS ceased to exist (Kaltan 2008:318). Then, for a short time, the trading post was under the management of another Soviet agency called Dal'gostorg (the Far Eastern State Trading Bureau), and in 1927, it was transferred to the Kamchatka Joint Stock Company that existed until 1945. Dezhnevo also served as a site for coal supplies for steamships, apparently created during the Russian Hydrographic Expedition of the Arctic Ocean (1911–1915), that explored sea ice and navigation regimes in the Chukchi and East Siberian Seas. In October 1924, the steamer *Red October* (*Krasnyi Oktyabr'*), while returning from its mission to Wrangel Island, obtained coal from piles stored on shore in Dezhnevo (Galkin 1929:50–51).

In the 1920s, a distinctive Native walrus tusk carving tradition developed in Dezhnevo (see Bronshtein, *this issue*). In 1931, a small carvers *artel'* (Russian for workers' cooperative) was established in Dezhnevo as a part of the Uelen carving workshop. At that time, it included 10 carvers, all Chukchi. One of the best-known art products of the Dezhnevo carving school was a four-sided tusk made by carver Stepan Ettugi featuring an image of the settlement with eight trading post buildings on the spit and 14 Chukchi skin houses (see Fig. 7). It is signed (in Russian) "Chukotsky. Peninsula. Ca[pe]. Dezhnev. 1926, Dal'gostorg trading post. Stepan. Fachele. Walrus. Kliku. rapoti" (Kaltan 2008:336–337; Tishkov 2008:28–41). According to the online catalog of Chukotka Native carvers, out of the 276 carvers listed, 26 Chukchi and Eskimo carvers originated from Dezhnevo.³

Starting in 1931, a hunting cooperative was established in Dezhnevo, and around 1933–1934 it was transformed into a collective farm (*kolkhoz*) called "New Path" (Russian *Novyy Put'*). At various times it had one or two



Figure 7. Chukchi tents (yarangas) in Dezhnevo, ca. 1930s. *Heritage of Chukotka, Museum Center, Anadyr, Russia.* #2755-240-01.

marine hunting crews (“brigades”) of six to eight hunters. During a September 1936 meeting in Uelen, Ettugi, the carver, reported that “it was very difficult to organize a collective farm; people did not want to join.”

In 1932, the USSR participated in the activities of the second International Polar Year. As a part of this international program, meteorological observations were started in Dezhnevo on October 1, 1932. For this, three round prefabricated residential buildings and a separate structure of the same type for a magnetic pavilion were erected on the spit for meteorological, aerological, and other observations. In August 1933, the Dezhnevo meteorological station structures and installations were moved to Uelen; however, parallel observations continued in Dezhnevo until August 1935 (Leont’eva 1937:89–92).

In the late 1930s and the 1940s, Dezhnevo varied little from other small Native coastal settlements in Chukotka. The 1947–1951 minutes of the monthly Village Council meetings (preserved in the Chukchi Area archives⁴) contain discussions of issues typical for this era: the organization of marine mammal hunting, winter trapping for Arctic fox, work of the village el-

ementary school, the functioning of a small village shop and a reading room, the sanitary conditions of the settlement and of individual skin-covered houses, preparations for Soviet holidays (March 8, May 1, and others), etc. As was typical everywhere else in coastal Chukotka, hunters from the Dezhnevo small collective farm had annual plans to catch a certain number of marine mammals and fur-bearing animals, and the implementation of these plans was duly discussed at the Village Council meetings. Even a socialist “competition” with the neighboring collective farms in Uelen and Naukan was debated. It is difficult to say to what degree these discussions had influenced the fulfillment of the annual catch output. The 1948–1949 decision to achieve “total literacy” with the help of one local schoolteacher and scores of school students was another ambitious project. Heavy drinking was a perennial problem, including that of a Russian store manager. Following customer complaints, the Village Council adopted a resolution prohibiting the store manager and warehouse manager to “participate in drinking” during working hours (SACHAO, col. R-176, inv. 1, file 14, pp. 11, 56).

It is difficult to determine from the Village Council documents how Dezhnevo inhabitants lived because these documents were compiled in accordance to the boiler plate language of the time (Shokarev 2017). Between 1930 and 1950, the population of Dezhnevo remained below 100 people; there were 96 people in 1930 (Kaltan 2008:296) and 91 in 1939 (SACHAO, col. R-15, inv. 1, file 7, pp. 19, 90). It dropped to about 80 people in 1950 (73 Chukchi, 6 Russians) (SACHAO, col. R-15, inv. 1, file 18, p. 57), mostly due to the continuous movement of individual families and school-age children to nearby Uelen, a much larger community that had a boarding school.

When the Soviet policy of Native settlement consolidation (“enlargement”) began in Chukotka in the early 1950s, the residents of Dezhnevo were quickly moved to the community of Uelen some 15 km to the north-northeast. It happened sometime in late 1951 or early 1952. According to the minutes of the Village Council meeting, the idea of closing the settlement and moving to another community did not encounter any opposition in Dezhnevo.⁵ Apparently, long-standing family and economic connections with Uelen played a decisive role. As the site of Dezhnevo became vacant, the authorities for a short time entertained the idea of using it to build new housing for the neighboring Yupik community of Naukan, which was also scheduled to be relocated. That plan got no traction; instead, in 1958 people from Naukan were moved farther south, to the Chukchi community of Nunyamo (Krupnik and Chlenov 2013:273–278).

DEZHNEVO TODAY

After the Chukchi settlement was closed, a Soviet border guard post remained in Dezhnevo for several more decades, but in 1995 it burned down, and only a lonely watchtower remains today (Fig. 8). One intact wooden house is still standing; this is all that remained from the former trading post structures and other buildings built in their stead. There is another rather sturdy house on the slope. Hunters from Uelen who come here to hunt marine mammals keep the house in order. In contrast to many other hunting cabins, it has two stoves, bunk beds, and a small amount of food on the shelves and is kept rather clean and cozy. During the last few years, the number of visitors to this place has increased during the summertime, as Uelen hunters and fishers come on four-wheelers and along the coast, and there is a tourist walking tour route from Lavrentiya Bay to Cape Dezhev (Naukan) and Uelen.

Rusty barrels, bricks, and other debris litter the shore next to the house, and an old border guard watchtower is still towering nearby (Figs. 9, 10). Barren tundra is all that is left around, and the dark overlooking chain of Dezhnevo Mountains is seen to the northwest. It is hard to imagine that at some point in the past, life was once bustling here. Polar bear skins were drying, Alexander Karaev conducted his weather observations, Charley Carpendale read the Bible to his children, and Knud Rasmussen came ashore to complete his FTE. It is here where his long-held dream to travel across “the Eskimo’s land” from Greenland to Northeast Asia finally ended.



Figure 8. View of Dezhnevo from the sea, summer 2018. Photo: Sergei Shokarev.



Figure 9. View of Dezhnevo, summer 2018. Photo: Sergei Shokarev.



Figure 10. The ruins of Dezhnevo, summer 2018. Abandoned border guard tower is to the left. Photo: Sergei Shokarev.

NOTES

1. Translated from Russian by Katerina Wessels.
2. A Russian blogger “Odynokiy,” author of an online blog, collected and published a lot of valuable information about Carpendale, his family, and his descendants (including Amundsen’s so-called “Eskimo girls”).
3. State Archives of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug (SACHAO), col. R-176, inv. 1, file 14, 15 (City of Anadyr).
4. Online source <http://remeslachukotki.edu87.ru/prideuelen-bone-carving-workshop/127> (accessed June 7, 2020).
5. Decision to approve this consolidation was made during a general meeting of all residents of Dezhnevo on August 24, 1951 (SACHAO, col. R-23, inv. 1, file 22, pp. 1–2).

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