

Tasmanian Historical Research Association

(Incorporated)

PAPERS AND PROCEEDINGS

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TASMANIA THROUGH RUSSIAN EYES (Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries)

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On 18 May 1823 two Russian ships, the frigate *Kreiser* and the sloop *Ladoga*, sailed into the port of Hobart. This was the first visit of Russian sailors to the young English colony, but Russian-Tasmanian connections had begun much earlier. The first acquaintance, though indirect, of Russians with Tasmania was established before the end of the eighteenth century.

An account of the voyages of Abel Tasman, and reports of visits to Tasmanian shores by ships of James Cook's second and third expeditions, with stories of the original inhabitants of the island, were first available to the Russian reader in translated reviews. The *Historical and Geographical Monthly* (St. Petersburg) in 1779 printed an article entitled 'Brief accounts of voyages in the South Seas in the search for new lands and islands', in which the discovery of Tasmania was described. In the 1780s descriptions of Cook's voyages by G. Zimmerman, A.F. Preyo d'Exile and E. Kippis were translated into Russian.

In 1796 and 1808 publications of Cook's own diaries appeared, which included accounts by T. Furneaux and W. Anderson, who also visited the shores of Tasmania. During 1809-10 the *Journal of New Travels* published material from Baudin's French expedition which included very valuable information from his visit to the island in 1802, and of contacts with the Tasmanians.²

I.F. Kruzenshtern's 'The Discovery of Tasmania' could be called the first solely Russian investigation devoted to Tasmania, with appended essays on the position of Ontong-Java and the Takii islands.³ This outstanding Russian voyager started this work during a circumnavigation of the world between 1803 and 1806. Using all the sources available to him, from Tasman and later explorers — mainly Cook — Kruzenshtern painstakingly followed the route of the Dutch navigator and precisely verified the position of the bays, capes and islands Tasman had discovered. In 1815 Kruzenshtern undertook the compilation of *An Atlas of the Southern Seas*.⁴ In his accompanying *Collected Essays Serving to Amplify and clarify the Atlas of the Southern Seas*, he devoted a section to Tasmania and Bass Strait.⁵ This capital work gives a very detailed and thoroughly confirmed account of the entire Tasmanian coastline: every cape, peninsula, inlet and coastal island is given, together with its discoverer, its coordinates as given by all visiting mariners, with those considered most reliable, and a history of the naming and re-naming of geographical features. It is noteworthy that though he used material from Tasman, Furneaux, Cook, D'Entrecasteaux, Freycinet and others, he considered Matthew Flinders' data the most reliable. Kruzenshtern's work was also published in French and was long considered an essential aid for mariners. Even today it can be very helpful when working with the reports of the early navigators.

F.F. Bellingshausen, the Russian circumnavigator and Antarctic explorer, collected interesting information about the history and make-up of the colony of Van Diemen's Land. As commander of the 1820 expedition in the sloops *Vostok* and *Mirny* he

stayed a long time in Port Jackson, where he gathered material. He was the first to tell the Russian reader of the tragic shooting of the Tasmanian aborigines who had approached the colonists with friendly intentions, and of their stubborn resistance to the seizure of their land. Bellingshausen tells of the establishment of ports and settlements, of the system of government and of the shipbuilding industry. Noting that the armed forces of the colony were weak, he wrote 'for this reason numerous convicts escape, and in six or seven years have committed all sorts of crimes with impunity — they have even written threatening letters to the Vice-Governor and other officials and burnt their estates'.⁶

When the *Kreiser* and *Ladoga* dropped anchor in Hobart, they were bound for the Russian colonies in America. The commander of the expedition was the captain of the *Kreiser*, Captain of the second rank M.P. Lazareff, already on his third circumnavigation of the world. He had earlier visited Port Jackson, in 1814 and 1820. Among the officers were midshipmen P.S. Nakhimov and E.V. Putiatin, both later to become admirals, and the future Decembrists, midshipman D.I. Zavalishin and Lieutenant F.T. Vishnevski. The *Ladoga* was commanded by Lazareff's elder brother, Captain-Lieutenant A.P. Lazareff.

Although the expedition had no scientific goals, M.P. Lazareff's instructions from the Admiralty recommended that he keep a journal of their travels in which should be described 'works of art and of nature, trade, and all rare and interesting sights that you see'.⁷ The officers were also expected to keep their own commentaries of the voyage.

A significant part of the material gathered by members of the expedition was published. M.P. Lazareff left no memoirs so we have to be content with his brief reports.⁸ A.P. Lazareff, as well as a short account, published *Circumnavigations in the sloop Ladoga in 1822, 1823 and 1824*.⁹ Zavalishin's memoirs are also well known, and the author of this article recently brought to attention his little-known essay 'Australia and Polynesia'.¹⁰ He based this essay on his own letters to his relatives, which he found in the 1880s, and which provide a fuller description.¹¹ A.P. Lazareff's book includes an account of the natural history of Tasmania, compiled by Pyotr Oglevski, doctor on the *Ladoga*. F.G. Vishnevski is also known to have kept a diary but this has not been found.

The Russian ships spent about three weeks in Hobart, from 18 (30) May to 9 (21) June,* allowing the crews to rest, repair gear and take on provisions, water and coal. 'We got to know many of the local people', wrote Lazareff, 'I tried to learn about this little-known land, now visited for the first time by Russians'.¹² The penal colony of Van Diemen's Land was then barely twenty years old, and the population of the capital was about 7000. The mariners first heard about the make-up, development and problems of the young colony on the second day of their stay, at dinner with Governor William Sorell. 'We were treated', says Lazareff, 'with all respect.' The Governor received the officers 'with sincere friendship and was ready to help in any way'.¹³ The whole world of Hobart attended the dinner — the Bishop, the Mayor, the chief doctor, the commander of the military and so forth. Zavalishin recalled 'the conversation was exclusively business-like and extremely interesting, especially to me as I was already involved in the development of Siberia as a place of exile'. Zavalishin considered Tasmania superior to Siberia in that from the very start there were free

* All dates are given in the old Russian (Julian) Calendar, with the European (Gregorian) date following in brackets.

immigrants alongside the convicts, attracted by the temperate climate. His informant considered that the penal colony was holding back the development of agriculture, as the settlers were afraid to establish farms far from Hobart. 'Only the courage of these sailor-farmers enables them to emigrate to us', Zavalishin quotes the Governor, 'We are obliged to have a sort of local police, but the impudence and cunning of our runaways is such that they even strip the copper sheathing from the ships anchored in the harbour.'¹⁴

Zavalishin observed not just the economic reasons for the successful colonisation of Van Diemen's Land but considered the ethnopsychological aspect as well: 'the character and habits' of the English 'carrying out this successful colonisation'. In his writings he included a number of 'instructive' examples to show the vast difference between the English and the Russian approach to colonisation. When sent to inspect a party of sailors collecting firewood and coal forty kilometres up the Derwent from Hobart, Zavalishin became lost. Apprehensively he asked the way from a man he met on the empty river bank, thinking at first that he was a runaway convict. He turned out to be the first resident of a newly founded township, which Zavalishin had not noticed. The colonial authorities had ordered that there should be a town here, the settler told him, they had planned the site, divided it into holdings, and laid out the streets and squares. The settler started work on his plot by putting up a fence. 'It seems to me that this is not our way', Zavalishin concluded.

His story about a local blacksmith is illuminating from a psychological point of view. After the blacksmith had completed M.P. Lazareff's order, he appeared before the amazed sailors as a real gentleman, and at first they did not recognise him. Moreover, in the smith's home (where his wife had never seen him in his working clothes) Zavalishin found a good library of English classics in pocket editions, and this in a colony so recently established. The future Decembrist found it quite extraordinary that the citizens of Hobart unanimously regarded the clergyman, the doctor and the police chief as their friends. It is hard to imagine a more bizarre notion for a Russian than that the police chief could be a household friend.¹⁵ Zavalishin, drawing conclusions from the facts presented in his article, which incidentally he wrote after serving a twenty-year sentence in Siberia for his part in the Decembrist uprising, expressed thinly veiled criticisms of the self-perpetuating bureaucratic system of Tsarist Russia.

Now I understand the success of the colonisation and development of those parts, where the authority neither stifles nor exploits, but protects and co-operates, where people work sensibly . . . where education and culture can live alongside the roughest and heaviest work.¹⁶

Regrettably his criticisms remained relevant for Russia for another 160 years.

Both Lazareff and Zavalishin showed a lively interest in the measures taken by the authorities for the return of convicts, who had served out their sentences, to normal life. To Lazareff's distress a White Russian fellow countryman that he met in Hobart proved to be incorrigible. The man had found himself in England, and had been transported to Van Diemen's Land in 1804, where, after completing his term of imprisonment he had not distinguished himself by good behaviour. The sailors left him the New Testament in Russian — perhaps the first Russian book in the colony. Lazareff also mentions three people he met in Hobart who knew the Russian language, but does not tell of their fate.¹⁷

The arrival of two Russian warships in Hobart roused great interest in the townspeople. 'Literally the whole colony turned out', wrote Zavalishin. The Russian sailors enjoyed

describing the friendly welcome accorded them: there was none of the 'coldness and hauteur we had grown to expect from the British'.¹⁸

We were invited out to dinner every evening, and this would last from 6 till 11 o'clock. Such protracted sessions at the table were accompanied by the exchange of compliments. We found these long drawn out sessions fatiguing, but the courtesies shewn us demanded this tribute.¹⁹

On the 4 (16) June the people of Hobart and the farmers of the district gave a splendid dinner for the Russian sailors. Omitting any detailed description, we will note only that here, for the first time in Van Diemen's Land, Russian songs were heard, from the choirs of the *Kreiser* and the *Ladoga*. The banquet was a great success and a few days later the Russian sailors gave a party on board the frigate. Before the ships sailed, the townspeople asked for a Russian flag as a memento of the visit, and it was decided to keep it in the government offices.²⁰

Zavalishin recollected that during their stay he was more interested in the natural history of the island, which was quite new to him, than in the attractions of the town. Soon after their arrival, he and Doctor Aliman of the *Kreiser* were able to arrange an expedition on horseback to the interior of the island. They spent three days in the saddle, well armed against the natives and the convicts, sleeping under the stars. They met no one during their trip; virgin nature began immediately they had passed the last farms near the town. Zavalishin described the varied Tasmanian flora and fauna in detail. Aliman collected botanical specimens, and Kurkov, the sailor-huntsman who accompanied them, shot many birds for the taxidermist. The Russians were particularly interested in eucalypts. 'We were the first to bring to Russia information about the virtues of this tree in curing fever caused by the malignant exhalations of swamps', wrote Zavalishin.²¹ However the writings of the doctors P. Aliman and P. Ogievski, and Zavalishin's own publication after his return from exile, passed unnoticed, and Russian knowledge of the properties of eucalypts became general only after their successful introduction into Algiers.²² In this same article Zavalishin mentions that this expedition first brought to Russia the black swan, the white hawk, the New Holland eagle-owl and other birds. He himself delivered to the Academy of Science 'seven huge boxes of different types of coral' but there was 'too little attention paid to the scientific endeavours of the Russians, and no mention was made of these and other specimens we brought in'. Yet despite this apparent neglect, there is an official record of Zavalishin's ethnographic collection, compiled when it was confiscated at the time of his arrest.²³

P. Ogievski, doctor of the sloop *Ladoga*, also spent his spare time in trips to the surrounding countryside. He compiled a full description of the flora and fauna of the island, its climate, soil and useful minerals, at a time when such exploration was only just beginning. His writings were included in Lazareff's book.²⁴ Ogievski's account was based both on his own observations and on those of W. Anderson, who sailed with Cook's third expedition. During their voyage and while at anchor, the officers of the *Kreiser* and *Ladoga* kept meteorological and hydrographic records which were later published.²⁵ It is not known if continuous records were kept in Van Diemen's Land in 1823, but the meteorological data compiled by the Russian sailors is distinguished by its fullness and reliability. Observations were made seven times daily: wind strength and direction, barometric pressure, air temperature, weather conditions, precipitation.

Apparently the members of the expedition did not succeed in meeting any Tasmanian Aborigines, they had at that time been driven into the interior of the island. A. Lazareff

includes in his book the traditional view of aboriginal life and tells of unsuccessful attempts to civilise aboriginal children taken from their parents.

During their stay in Hobart, some of the crew of the *Kreiser*, sent to gather firewood and charcoal north of the town, mutinied due to their cruel treatment by the First Officer, I. Kadyan. The direct cause of the strike was apparently contact of some of the sailors with escaped convicts. Zavalishin recalls that Governor Sorell was very concerned by the event, as the alliance of a significant number of mutineers with the runaway convicts would be a serious threat to the colony, which had few troops. Zavalishin, sent to hold talks with the sailors, managed to settle the dispute. Four of the ringleaders surrendered, but the fifth, Helmsman Stanislav Stankievicz, an educated and proud man, ran away with the bushrangers. Zavalishin waited for him for six days, but his subsequent fate is unknown.²⁶

In the 1820s and 1830s independent articles about the colonisation of Van Diemen's Land were published in Russian periodicals, such as Henry Widowson's exhaustive survey, which relates in detail the tragic history of the bushranger Howe, and includes a report on the Aborigines. Regarding the latter, Widowson wrote:

we must admit that if they showed themselves to be cruel in their dealings with the colonists living in the land, they were only repaying the equally cruel treatment meted out by these same colonists to some of the indians. I know for a fact that the colonists sometimes shot them just to indulge their taste for tyranny.²⁷

The author also mentions that the Tasmanians were splendid trackers and cunning hunters.

Along with scientific articles and travellers' descriptions, the Russian press showed an early interest in Tasmanian literature. The author of this article was fortunate enough to find a number of such early publications. Thus in 1850, one of the most famous Russian magazines published anonymously Charles Rowcroft's *Tales of the Colony of Van Diemen's Land*.²⁸ Later this work was issued several times as a separate book, edited by A. V. Archangelskaya.²⁹ It has been so far impossible to establish the authorship of another work which appeared in 1835, when literary work from Tasmania was just emerging. There was also a very characteristic narrative, 'Convicts and Settlers', which artistically describes the adventures of the Castle family who set off to settle in Van Diemen's Land. Among the characters are convicts, bushrangers, farmers and aborigines. Everything comes to a traditional happy ending, and advice to new settlers is given.³⁰ 'The Exile', re-printed in the *Muscovite* in 1853 from Dickens' magazine, is also partly set in Van Diemen's Land. These publications in popular magazines undoubtedly acquainted a wide circle of Russian readers with far away Tasmania.

In the 1860s and 1870s progressive Russian magazines began to print many accounts of the shameful history of the European colonisation of Tasmania: the black war and the cruel massacre of the indigenous people. Among the writers were historians such as C.V. Eshevski, Y.L. Paper, and the socialist P.L. Lavrov.³¹ Polemicising on current opinion, Eshevski described the round-up of the Tasmanians and their transplantation and concluded 'such facts prove that the main reason for the dying out of the indigenous tribes is their conflict with the Europeans, rather than any natural inability to accept Christian European civilisation'.³²

In 1870, after a long interval, a Russian ship appeared once more in Tasmanian waters. This was the corvette *Boyarin*, commanded by Vassily Feodorovich Serkov, en route from Adelaide to Sydney. The captain's report contained nothing of interest about the ship's stay in Hobart.³³ However, three crew members — Lieutenants Wilgelm

Andreevich Linden, Alexander Egorovich Konkevich and Cadet Ilya Andreevich Boratinski — left recollections of their visit. Their writings are not of equal interest, but together give a valuable picture of life in Hobart in 1870. Most interesting is Linden's account, which is in two parts: a description of their stay in the port, their reception and meeting with local residents; and a general survey of Tasmania, based on information he was able to gather during his stay.³⁴

The townspeople gave the Russian ship a very warm and friendly welcome. The ship stayed in Hobart nearly three weeks, from 13 (25) May to 31 May (12 June). On the very first day, when the *Boyarin* was open to the public, there were some 2000 visitors. 'Everywhere in the town we were welcomed with open arms', wrote the young cadet Boratinski, 'there were balls in private houses nearly every day'.³⁵ 'One could say that the households competed amongst themselves in their attentions and welcome to our officers', added Linden.³⁶ Among those showing the greatest hospitality he mentioned the headmaster of the High School, J.H. Poulett-Harris, the President of the Legislative Council, F.M. Innes, and the Colonial Treasurer, T.D. Chapman. He also told of meetings with Governor Du Cane (whose house, outside the town, seemed a real palace to the sailors), with the Colonial Secretary and Premier, J.M. Wilson, the Governor's secretary, Chichester, and the Mayor, Dr Smart. Another member of the voyage, A.G. Konkevich, writing under the pseudonym 'A. Belomor', related the events in a literary and humorous style, and considered that the main 'instigator' behind the warm welcome they received was the Governor's wife, 'a real Lady, who had only two years before left England'. She visited the *Boyarin* and took the crew under 'her high and special protection'. The ice was broken, and her example followed by all the ladies. 'Soon we were made at home in many households and could already listen — not very attentively — to the older members' views on politics and future relations between Australia and Russia as a consequence of the last war with Great Britain'.³⁷

The *Tasmanian Times* and the *Mercury* devoted much attention to the Russian corvette. As recompense for this attention and the sympathy shown by the press to the interests of the *Boyarin*, the officers held a reception on board for the editors and staff.³⁸ Incidentally, Konkevich attributes the warm attitude of the Tasmanian press, not without irony, to the fact that

they were at daggers drawn with the South Australian papers. As the Adelaide papers had abused us, both the Hobart papers elevated us to the level of sailor-heroes, suffering this rudeness. And our old corvette was declared to be the best ship of all the fleets of Europe.³⁹

Altogether this was a time of goodwill between Russia and the Australian colonies, and the observant Linden found only one interesting reminder of the recent hostilities — a Russian cannon, a trophy of Bomarzund — standing by the memorial to former governor Sir John Franklin. For the occasion of their visit it had been carefully covered up. Linden quotes a newspaper item as evidence of a new attitude to Russian-Australian relations.

The presence in our port of a ship from a distant country, which has had practically no previous contact with the colonies, and which was quite recently regarded with fear and enmity, must undoubtedly be useful. It broadens our horizons and acquaints us with new subjects and people. As recently as 1854 we feared the appearance on our river of a Russian cruiser, as heralding destruction and the horrors of war.

Today we welcome the visit of the "Boyarin" as a happy event and offer her our sincere friendship.

F.M. Innes was similarly optimistic.

Through the visit of the corvette, we are getting to know the Russians, whom we had previously never met. True we have as yet no trade with Russia, but who knows, with the rapid advances in Russia, when this may begin. It may be very soon, sooner than we suspect.⁴⁰

Innes anticipated the real course of events by more than 100 years, but it seems that now, in the years of *perestroika*, the development of multilateral contacts between Russia and Tasmania is really happening.

Linden left an interesting description of the mariners' visits to governmental and charitable institutions — Parliament, the Town Hall, the Supreme Court, museums, the hospital, the prison, an old people's home and an orphanage. Not everything made a good impression on the Russians, and we have to assume that Linden's criticisms were fair:

the hospital did not distinguish itself by its cleanliness or its ventilation . . . The prison cells were damp and unheated and the dining room of the old people's home had holes in the roof.⁴¹

But the small number of residents of the orphanage sang several hymns and gave three hearty cheers for Captain Serkov, which so touched the Captain that he sent them two poods (33 kg) of sweets.

There was a surprise for the mariners at a concert given by the musical society in the Town Hall: the Russian anthem 'God save the Tsar' and two Russian songs, 'Along the Danube' and 'Troika', were performed, and the Colonial Treasurer's son read some farewell verses dedicated to the *Boyarin*. The departure of the Russian sailors was clouded by the death of Gunner Belavin, 'an honest and capable man'. Linden tells of a Mr Portsmouth, who, not knowing that the officers had already collected the money for a tombstone, offered to open a subscription among the townspeople for this purpose.

The parting from the hospitable people of Hobart was very warm. Konkevich recalled:

I really don't know how this lotus-eating interlude of being spoilt in Van Diemen's Land would have ended if our captain had been less resolute and energetic. After a three week stay he hoisted anchor in spite of a delegation of Hobart ladies with what they thought was irrefutable argument of the necessity to stay longer in Australian waters.⁴²

Linden not only kept his own notes of his travels, but also compiled an almost encyclopaedic collection of information gathered in Tasmania. As well as chapters on geography, he made an analysis of the aftermath of transportation on the economic development of the island. He suggested that the abolition of transportation

undeniably caused a diminution in trade, because the Government had previously spent significant sums of money on the upkeep of the convicts, and also because the colony had lost its supply of cheap labour.

But he also noted — justly — that eventually the system of transportation and the associated government subsidies had given birth to a mood of dependence in the young colony, rather than a sturdy self-reliance on its own resources, and that the cheap convict labour had nurtured inefficient, immoral and predatory management. In

comparison with the other Australian colonies, Linden noticed a decrease in the trade and in the agricultural purposefulness of the whole Tasmanian economy. He was probably the first to acquaint the Russian reader with the problems of the proposed economic unification of the Australian colonies, which Tasmania supported. 'A trade federation might lead to a subsequent political federation', he wrote in 1871.⁴³

Linden collected interesting information about the government and electoral system of Tasmania, and of the system of land allocation which allowed an influx of free settlers, noting that questions connected with the development of new territories were also important at that time in Russia.

He gave a detailed account of the extermination of the indigenous Tasmanians. In particular he didn't spare Governor Sorell, who was so warmly praised by the sailors of the *Kreiser* and the *Ladoga*. Under his administration, Linden wrote, 'the theft of aboriginal children and the merciless treatment of aboriginal women went unpunished'.

Unlike other writers, Linden drew attention to the ambiguity of the actions of George Augustus Robinson, he who managed the transshipment of the remnants of the Tasmanians to Flinders Island.

Robinson, in describing his actions, claims that he used only his powers of persuasion on the aborigines. It was hardly so. It wasn't persuasion that made the indigenous Tasmanians leave their native forests — it was their hopeless situation. If they had known what awaited them, they would doubtless have chosen to die of hunger like hunted beasts in their dens, rather than to yield to Robinson's persuasions. Their life on Flinders was no better than imprisonment.⁴⁴

* * *

Edward Romanovich Zimmerman's 'Journey to Tasmania' appeared in 1883, in *Homeland Notes*.⁴⁵ The author, from Moscow, had travelled extensively during his long life; all over Europe, and to America, North Africa and Central Asia. But indisputably the most interesting of his journeys was the one to Australia and Oceania in 1881-82. In many of his descriptions he exhibited an independent and often critical view of life in the distant lands, striving to find something instructive in even the least noteworthy places and events, and revealing a desire to visit not just the centres but also less well known places, off the beaten tourist track, and a love of trifles and details. He visited Tasmania in 1881, planning his route as follows: from Melbourne by steamer to Launceston, then across the island by train to Hobart. After viewing the town and its surroundings, Zimmerman went by train and post-carriage to New Norfolk, before returning to Melbourne.

In his travels in Tasmania, Zimmerman considered two questions; the history of the colonisation of Tasmania with particular regard to the consequences of transportation, and the economic situation of the colony. Telling of the extermination of the indigenous Tasmanians, Zimmerman writes:

one is in doubt as to who were the barbarians — the English administration with its free settlers and convicts, or the black indigenous peoples. Before the court of history, the latter will certainly be acquitted, not only because of their lack of responsibility, but even more because their actions were in self-defence, protecting themselves and their families, and the land they had peacefully occupied for many centuries before the uninvited civilised invaders.

It was the harshness of the administration, he considered, that forced the convicts into new crimes, and drove them to run away. The beautiful buildings of Hobart, of local stone, which Zimmerman saw, the splendid roads and highways, had all been built with convict labour, they had worked the farms and cleared virgin lands, the Mother country sent soldiers to protect the population, and financially subsidised the colony. Zimmerman commented:

It is not surprising that the colonists made great use of the fruits of crime and were very proud of their brilliant and rapid success and very quickly brought their part of the world to a comparatively flourishing condition.

Visiting the colony nearly thirty years after the end of transportation, Zimmerman saw neglect on all sides:

we nowhere met any new settlers, such as usually appear in a new country, generally along the railway lines . . . On the contrary we often saw decrepit and ruined buildings, farms deserted by their owners, who had found it unprofitable to work the land with labour that had to be paid.

He even saw two abandoned churches in the Hobart district, converted into farm houses, evidence of the fruitless work of missionaries.

Zimmerman dwelt on the efforts of the colony to attract new settlers, but really saw more hope in the discovery of tin ore. At the same time agricultural production in this mountainous and heavily wooded colony could not compete with the boundless level plains of mainland Australia. Zimmerman correctly predicted that the future would lie in fruit orchards. But at that time the export of agricultural produce to the mainland was hampered by heavy customs duties. 'A place of splendid natural beauty, where the indigenous peoples have been starved out, now drags out a sleepy unproductive existence like a ruined plantation owner deprived of his slaves', was his unsympathetic conclusion.

One way to liven the economic life in Tasmania was already appearing — tourism, primarily holiday trips from neighbouring Australia. The author recognised the beauties of the island and made many excursions from the towns he visited. In his observations on life in Hobart he remarked on the devoutness and piety seen in Tasmania. Zimmerman made the acquaintance of the Anglican Bishop, and at his invitation attended a session of the Synod, in which about 100 clergy from all parts of the island took part. There were about 50,000 members of the Church of England at that time, and such a numerous gathering of their clergymen amazed Zimmerman. He concluded that Tasmania in general had preserved English morals and the English way of life and other features of the English character. He considered, however, that this applied only to their piety and their housekeeping — they had not mastered the enterprise and energy of the English.

Zimmerman described a visit to the Hobart High School. In spite of a letter of introduction, the headmaster questioned him closely about the object of his visit, 'exactly like an English factory owner who lets no one into his factory for fear of competition'. The headmaster's embarrassment became understandable when Zimmerman was eventually admitted to the classes.

We found ourselves in a low ceilinged room with a greying ceiling and walls of indeterminate colour. Long old fashioned tables and benches stretched the length of the room — not only dirty but carved all over, done of course in boredom by several generations of students. Students from 12 to 15 years old were solving

problems on broken-edged slates. The teacher was correcting them, which in our presence seemed to be the limit of instruction.

Zimmerman was able to guess the subject being taught in the next room only by peeping into a student's textbook: 'Cicero himself, whose was speech was being read, would certainly not have understood a word, as the words were being pronounced in the English manner'. The headmaster explained to the puzzled visitor that no-one knew how Latin was pronounced, and so Frenchmen, Germans and Englishmen were free to pronounce it in their own way. He explained the necessity for a classical education by the fact that some of the students were hoping to go to Oxford or Cambridge. Because of this, according to Zimmerman, 'no independent system of education emerges and the local schools slavishly follow the long outmoded paths of English so-called classical teaching'.

After his visit to the Mental Home at New Norfolk, Zimmerman made the discovery, surprising to himself, that

prisons, hospitals, mental homes — in general institutions devoted to the elimination of physical diseases and moral deficiencies — here receive greater attention than educational institutions aiming at the development of the normal, healthy members of society. This shows the enthusiasm of the English for Philanthropic endeavours.

When Zimmerman was leaving Hobart, he never imagined that within a month a whole Russian naval squadron — the cruiser *Africa*, Captain E.I. Alexeev, and the clippers *Vestnik*, Captain F.K. Aveland, and *Plastun*, Captain P.A. Polianski — would appear in the Derwent. The visit to Hobart was scarcely mentioned in the official reports of the commanders. We have only the not very interesting accounts of the doctors of *Vestnik* and *Plastun*.⁴⁶ But thirty years later appeared the diaries of a young midshipman on the *Africa*, V.F. Rudnev, later the commander of the heroic *Varyag*. Unfortunately there was no real historian of the calibre of Linden of the *Boyarin* in the squadron, and we have only a few fortuitously recorded facts about this visit by Russian mariners to Hobart.

The ships arrived in Hobart from Sydney on 5 (17) and 6 (18) January 1882 and stayed till the 14th (26th). 'On the 7th [19th] we were already dancing at a ball in honour of the squadron, in a fine hall, to poor music — one consolation was that there were more women than men here', wrote Rudnev in his memoirs. Because of his youth, Rudnev's attention was concentrated mainly on the local ladies. He describes, not without humour, a picnic organised by Mrs Scott, at which he and his friends were 'landed with' the not so youthful Mesdames Watchorn. However, the splendid house they later visited — 'a mass of enormous magnolias in flower, and a fine supper' — restored the spirits of the young sailors. Rudnev also recollects the ball at Government House, and quotes the florid service record he obtained.⁴⁷

Vice Admiral A.V. Baslanbegov, who commanded this squadron, reported to the Ministry of Marine that the recently appointed governor, Sir John Strahan, postponed his official tour of the colony in expectation of the arrival of the Russian ships. Baslanbegov observed that the governor was

a young, businesslike and energetic man. By virtue of having been Gladstone's private secretary, he could do much for the colony, although he often complained that the colony was very small and so showed that he hoped to be transferred to a more significant post.

The Russians had competed in, and won, sloop races in Sydney, and they were now invited to take part in the annual race in Hobart, held on 12 (24) January. These races were described in the naval newspaper *Kronstadt Herald*, as were the praises of the Australian papers for the musical concerts given by the Russian sailors in Tasmania, and it was recorded that it was thanks to the visit of the Russian ships that Tasmanians first became acquainted with the new technology of electric light.⁴⁹

G.I. Bogoslovski, the doctor of the *Vestnik* left a short statistical description and concentrated on the advantages of the Tasmanian climate. He also described a visit to the Hobart Hospital.

A large two-storey building, surrounded by gardens, it is situated on the outskirts of the town, and is of no interest as it is of the old system, though tidily built and maintained. Here I first met in foreign parts, the nurses who were no doubt responsible for the pedantic cleanness and tidiness of the building.⁵⁰

The last Russian vessel to visit Tasmania was the clipper *Vestnik*, Captain V.I. Lang, en route from Melbourne to Wellington. At first it was intended to call only at George Town for coal, but when it was learned that the coal had to be brought from Launceston, it was decided to continue, with the help of a pilot, up the Tamar to Launceston. There the ship stayed for ten days, 23 April to 3 May (5-15 May) 1886, loading coal. The officers and crew occupied themselves with maritime studies.⁵¹ The *Vestnik* was the first European naval vessel to sail up the Tamar to Launceston. Lang gave a hydrographic report of the river, and described the port and town and the transport systems between Launceston and the remainder of Tasmania, and with the mainland. In his account he noted that all the coal there was from Newcastle, although coal mines were beginning to be developed in Tasmania: 'the surroundings of the town are rich in minerals — there is gold, lead, tin, nickel and iron. But because of the lack of labour and capital, they are not yet much exploited.'⁵² The Tasmanian papers reported that Lang and six of his officers made a short visit to Hobart.

A. Maximov, in a short article in the popular illustrated weekly *Neva*, published after the *Vestnik*'s return to Russia, wrote, 'in all the Australian ports we visited, the clipper received the warmest of welcomes', and, of Launceston, 'the town has a totally European appearance, and lies among picturesque shores, here hilly, there level, caressing the senses with a splendid variety of native vegetation'. The magazine printed an engraving — from photographs — of the *Vestnik* at anchor in the Tamar River.⁵³

* * *

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, Russian interest in the technical, economic and political achievements of the Australian colonies increased. Various organisations sent their experts to study the Australian experiment more and more frequently. Some of these visited Tasmania. Thus in 1892, the mining engineer L.A. Perre, of the Department of Mines, came here. Among his duties was the study of 'methods of exploiting gold deposits and the processing of gold bearing ores and sands'. The information that he collected should have led to the perfection of the Russian gold industry. Perre described the geological characteristics of gold deposits in Tasmania, the history and equipment of a number of mines, and he touched on the economic reasons for the abandonment of gold mining evident at that time. His account is illustrated with geological sections and drawings of equipment. Tasmanian mines described by Perre included the largest one, the 'Tasmania' at Beaconsfield,

and the 'Volunteer' and 'New Pinafore' in the Lefroy district. He also included material on the Mount Bischoff tin mine.⁵⁴

In 1902 and 1903 a famous Russian agricultural expert travelled to Australia. He was N.A. Kriukov, an economist and the head of the Department of Agriculture. He made a thorough investigation of all aspects of the agriculture of the young Australian Federation, which was becoming one of Russia's main competitors in the world market for primary produce. Much of his account is devoted to Tasmania. The reader will find here a general description of the natural conditions and of the economy of Tasmania, information about the budget and about government measures for the development of agriculture on the island, the system of land ownership and land usage, and the development of sheep farming.⁵⁵ His book includes an outline of conditions on farms which he visited, among them Waverley Estate, Dennistoun at Bothwell, founded in 1822, Glenora Farm in the Derwent Valley, which specialised in hop growing, and Berguess (Burgess?) Farm in the same district. Kriukov also discussed the conditions for the hired labour and the make up of the crops and the sheep flocks,⁵⁶ and dwelt on the export of apples from Tasmania, and the production of fruit jams.

Unfortunately the preparation is done very primitively. I visited two factories and was amazed by the dirt and slovenliness everywhere. It was as if I had come into a smithy or a metal workshop rather than a conserve factory where products for the table are processed.

In an interview he gave to the local press Kriukov mentioned these deficiencies, but his remarks were not printed. The Sydney and Brisbane papers, however, enthusiastically published his criticisms, forcing the Tasmanian papers to defend their industry, which they described as the best in the world. Kriukov concluded 'the press of the state under discussion has an unwritten agreement to print only favourable comment and to conceal the rest'.⁵⁷

Apparently the last Russian traveller to leave some remarks about Tasmania was the famous poet-symbolist Constantine Balmont. In 1912 he set out for the lands of the South Seas — Australia and Oceania — in the hope of finding there a harmonious, happy world. In Tasmania, his first port of call, he was disappointed. In public lectures after his return he said:

The English exterminated the beautiful dark complexioned Tasmanian tribes and no trace of them remains. The savagery of the English exceeded even that of the Spaniards in their subjugation of the last Mexicans. The creators of political freedom were unable to comprehend simple human freedom. . . But the English honoured the last representative of the Tasmanian race, their last queen, mockingly called Lalla-Ruk. They preserved her skeleton and, together with her portrait, it may be seen in the Hobart Museum.⁵⁸

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries there was much written in Russia about social reforms in the Australian colonies, including Tasmania. However, these were based on foreign reports and not on personal experience. There were also geographical and historical articles which touched on Tasmanian themes.⁵⁹

As well as travellers and visiting experts, there was another category of Russians who had their own opinions of Tasmania. These were Russian immigrants, cast up by Fate on the Tasmanian shore. By 1911 there were over forty such immigrants registered in Tasmania.⁶⁰ The Yearbook of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs attests that

from 1912 until the 1917 revolution, there was in Hobart an unofficial Russian Consul, Alfred Henry Ashbolt.

Thus we have viewed a century of Russian-Tasmanian contacts. One could say that this is a facet of Tasmanian history virtually unknown to Tasmanians themselves. Some of this history, for example the list of Russian warships which visited here and the publications resulting from their visits, we have succeeded in establishing fairly completely. Other pages, like the names of all the Russian travellers who visited the island, will probably never be fully clarified. And there are themes as yet untouched by researchers, such as Russian immigrants in Tasmania. Certainly the establishing of a complete picture of Russian opinions on Tasmania calls for further research in the archives and for reference to Tasmanian publications. At this stage it is already clear that Russian society always followed events in this distant island with interest, news of them appeared in popular literary and political magazines with a wide readership. Tasmanian themes were also printed in special trade association publications. The achievements of the young colony at all stages were studied by Russian academics and specialists.

Russia never had any strategic, economic or political interest in Tasmania, nor in the rest of Australia. Let us hope that the times of mistrust, misunderstanding and political confrontation have gone for good, and that the optimistic words of F. M. Innes, when he welcomed the sailors of the *Boyarin*, will come true.

NOTES

Editor's note: This article was translated from the Russian by Dr George Shenman of Collinsvale, to whom we extend our thanks for his considerable efforts.

* * *

1. E.V. Govor, 'Bibliography of Australia (1710-1983)', *Science*, nos. 996-998, 1000, 1001, 1005.
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3. *Technological Journal*, 1806, part 3, pp. 134-85; part 4, pp. 110-58. Ontong-Java and the Takii Islands are just north of the Solomon Islands.
4. Published in Saint Petersburg (SPB), 1824-26. See chs. 1 & 2.
5. Published SPB, 1823. See section 3, pp. 1-3.
6. F.F. Bellingshausen, *Two explorations in the Antarctic Oceans, a circumnavigation during 1819, 1820 & 1821, in the sloops Vostok and Mir* (3rd ed.), Geographic, 1960, p. 364. (1st ed., SPB, 1831.)
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12. A.P. Lazarev, *Circumnavigation of the sloop Ladoga*, SPB, 1832, p. 32.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
14. Zavalishin, *Australia and Polynesia*, no.21. [There was of course no 'Mayor' of Hobart Town in 1823 - ed.]
15. *Ibid.*, no.23.
16. Zavalishin, 'The circumnavigation...', no.9, p. 45.
17. A.P. Lazarev, *Circumnavigation...*
18. Zavalishin, *Australia and Polynesia*.
19. A.P. Lazarev, *Circumnavigation...*, p. 63.
20. Zavalishin, *Australia and Polynesia*, no.23
21. *Ibid.*, no.21.
22. With regard to the cultivation of eucalypts in Russia, specialists such as A.N. Krasnov, N.A. Kriukov and N.F. Zolotnitski were consulted.
23. Zavalishin, *Australia and Polynesia*, no.21; V.M. Pacetski, *The geographical researches of the Decembrists*, Moscow, 1977, p. 79.
24. A.P. Lazarev, *Circumnavigation...*
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41. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-6.
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