

Primitive and Aboriginal Dog Society

Dear members of the Russian Branch of Primitive Aboriginal Dogs Society!

This is a 2-Year Anniversary of the funding of our Society and publishing of R-PADS Newsletter.

In this issue, we publish two large articles. The first of them is written by Vera Vasilyevna Valkova “Forgotten expedition”. In this article, she tells a story about unique in history expedition of her husband and a wildlife biologist M. G. Volkov who selected and shipped reindeer herding dogs from Yamal Peninsula to Kamchatka.

The second article is written by Zaur Bagiev “Faithful and Fearless” about aboriginal Caucasian Mountain Dogs. This article reveals a wealth of variation and historically different specialization among aboriginal dogs of this type in Caucasus. Both the Caucasian Ovcharka (Caucasian Mountain Dog) and the Central Asian Ovcharka were established as purebreds by lumping of several types of more or less similar types of dogs.

We will continue publishing articles about interesting aboriginal dogs and we thank all members of R-PADS for their continuous support, which makes publication of our R-PADS Newsletter possible.

Sincerely yours,
The curator of the Russian Branch of PADS
Vladimir Beregovoy

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FAITHFUL AND FEARLESS

Zaur Bagiev

Since time immemorial, this amazing creature from the slopes of the snow-capped Caucasian Mountains has lived side by side with people and it has earned their well-deserved respect.

These dogs were known under the collective name of “Caucasian Ovcharka”. They shared with people their difficult life in the mountains separating Europe from Asia.

Zaur Bagiev, “Arsh” wrote: “Only the late night and the trees are witnesses of those vicious fights with countless foes, in which this remarkable breed of dog was forged. It is impossible to count how many of them died from a wolf’s canines while defending their human friends and their property. They defended exactly their friends, not masters. Only a fearless dog that did not know slave-like submissiveness and with an unbroken spirit could go into the darkness full of glowing hostile eyes and snapping hungry jaws.”

Powerful, undemanding, fearless and beautiful, this dog is a real masterpiece of Mother Nature, who was so generous in creating it!

The origins of this remarkable breed began among Tibetan dogs living on the plateaus of this lost country since ancient times.



V. A. Karabelnokov in his book “Legends and truths about dogs” wrote:

“There, a few millennia BC, cattle breeding tribes tamed remote ancestors of these Tibetan dogs. Their innate qualities perfectly meet the requirements for protecting wild herds from wild animals. In Tibet, until now, the primitive Tibetan Dog is preserved. This is a large enormously strong dog, with heavy short head, broad muzzle, with wrinkles on the forehead, loose lips and eyelids; the ears are small and pendulous and the hair is coarse and long. There are also relatively shorthaired individuals. The coat color is black and tan or black with white on legs and chest. Two groups of breeds originated from this dog. One of them is a group of Asian Ovcharkas which is the closest to its ancestor in appearance: Tibetan, Mongolian, Central Asian, Caucasian and other Ovcharkas.”

Gradually expanding their range from Tibet, these dogs got into Central Asia and, under the influence of new natural and social changes, the new group of Central Asian Ovcharkas was formed.

E. N. Mychko and V. A. Belenkiy in their book “Central Asian Ovcharka” wrote: “It is impossible to think of a nomadic cattle breeder without a dog. The dog protects his herds from predators and robbers, helps to herd animals and to move them to a new place. Now, try to imagine how many of these nomadic tribes traveled across the Great Steppe during its history, how many of them settled, dissolved among other tribes, which had settled there before. Each new wave of nomads brought new dogs somewhat different from those already existing there. The populations of new migrant dogs and local dogs mixed to produce new combinations relentlessly screened by natural selection for suitability to a life under not balmy conditions. People always wanted one thing from dogs and that was excellent service, with no compromise. Thus, during centuries on the vast Central Asian territory, a magnificent breed was developed, the Central Asian Ovcharka. Because of the complexity of the history of the population of this geographic region during 4,000 years and the close association with animal breeding activities, several breed types are still preserved.”

The best representatives of Central Asian dogs, Turkmen Alabai.

Please, pay attention to the structure of the dog’s head; the smooth transitions and rectangular proportions; in the frontal view the forearms are shifted forward; all are breed characteristics of the Central Asian Ovcharka. Coat color is associated with geographic distribution; white dogs are typical of dogs from Turkmenistan.

Among Central Asian dogs, shorthaired dogs are most common, but dogs with medium long hair also occur. The loyalty of “Asians” to people is well known. This is explainable, because dogs that were aggressive to humans were shot for centuries. If raised correctly, the “Asian” is well adapted to life in society and literally is capable of all kinds of service.

At a later time, these dogs reached Caucasus from Asia, with migrating tribes. Here, again, they adapted to local requirements and became what is known now as the Caucasian Mountain Dog (also known as Caucasian Ovcharka).

V. A. Karabelnikov, in his book “Legends and True Stories about Dogs” wrote: “Ancient tribes populated the southern regions of Russia called Scythians who used war dogs. The name Scythians was applied to one group of tribes, but in ancient times, the general name Scythians was also used for adjacent Sarmatian tribes”.

At a later time, under the name “Alan dogs” they came to Europe.

Further, Karabelnikov wrote: “From the Scythians, these dogs came into Eastern Europe to the Alans. The fame of the Alan dogs remains alive in the memory of people until the present. Among the Alan dogs there were guarding dogs, hunting dogs and war dogs. The hunting dogs of the Alans were par force hunting dogs; during hunting, scenthounds and sighthounds chased the game and the Alan dogs were used at the end for dispatching big game, which other dogs could not do. Those hunts included such game as bison, aurochs and bear. The Alan dogs gave the start to several breeds of large strong dogs. In the period of the Great Migrations, between ancient and medieval times, some groups of Alan tribes migrated far to the west. Alan tribes took part in battles on territories, where today are France and Spain and even in North Africa. Together with their masters, Alan dogs spread all over Central Europe.

E. N. Mychko and B. A. Belenkiy, in their book “The Central Asian Ovcharka” wrote: “Another branch of medieval Iranian nomads, ancestors of the Osetins, was known to early Russian historians under the name of Yassy; in Western Europe they were known as Alans. Those were Alans with dogs, which gave origins to the several Mastiff type dog breeds of Western Europe”.



Bernard S. Bakhrakh, “Alans in the West”, wrote: “In the upper class of medieval society, hunting on horseback was popular. This kind of hunting was part of the way of life of the Alans during the nomadic part of their history and it is very likely that when they had settled and became agriculturists, they still hunted deer and wolves, but now they did it rather for fun than for necessity. They used strong and fast hunting dogs. One of the most famous hunting dogs was called “Alan”. According to one expert in the history and breeding of hunting dogs, the “Alan” originated from the Caucasus, where it followed with rough, blonde and aggressive Alans.

Similarly to the Alan horse of ancient times, the Alan dog in the Middle Ages became very popular. At a later time its image was used on heraldic symbols and also found its place on the city emblem of Alano, in Spain, on which until now two Alan dogs are depicted.”

During the Asian period of the breed history, it was divided into two branches. The very term “ovcharka” used by Caucasians and Asians does not mean a dog for protecting animal herds. They meant Ovcharka as a yard dog, whose purpose was to guard the yard, where sheep were also confined. A herding dog is a dog working and protecting animals in fields and researchers of the Caucasian Mountain Dog (Caucasian Ovcharka) focused their

attention precisely on this aspect of their job. There are physiological, temperamental and physical differences between these two types of dogs united as one breed.

Caucasian Mountain Dog
Property Protection Type

The Caucasian Mountain Dog is a large dog; males are at least 65 cm at withers, and females are at least 60 cm at withers, with powerful bones and a thick coat. The desirable size is 72-78 cm at the withers. They have almost always a dark coat color. The character is aggressive towards people.

Thick and long hair is a necessary adaptation under conditions of a tethered or chained way of life! This is particularly important in the mountains, where fluctuations of day and night temperatures are very wide.

The dark coat color is a camouflage to facilitate the dog catching a thief at night.

The large size and weight are indisputable merits for catching a human. Aggressiveness and mistrustfulness with unfamiliar people is a result of many centuries of intentional selection. However, this type of dog is not well

adapted to fighting predators, because the dog of this size and weight is not agile enough. Its physical endurance is not very high. The ratio of the dog's strength to its weight does not allow it to fight predators. Dogs of this type have insufficient agility and became narrowly specialized for guarding property.

A working quality of the Caucasian Mountain Dog is that it obeys only its master. The dog is intelligent, but has an independent character. The major aboriginal regions of the distribution of these dogs are in Transcaucasia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

The excellent pastures with plenty of forage on the Southern slopes of the Caucasian Mountain Ridge permit raising animals all year round on relatively small plots. Here, there is no

need for herding dogs to protect and drive animal herds. However, dogs for guarding the property are vital. The very way of life of the peoples of Transcaucasia is different from that of peoples living in the North Caucasus. In the high mountain villages ("auls"), where the roof of one house serves as the yard of another house above, it was physically impossible to keep many dogs, but for the protection of houses against thieves the importance of the dogs has been indisputable.

It is very hard to find another dog breed, which requires so little for the so valuable service that it provides. The psychological makeup of the Caucasian Mountain Dog does not permit any formal training, but personal attachment to the master is a key factor for the dog's control. The best guarantee of the dog's good behavior is socialization from its early puppy age. The transfer of already mature working dog to a new owner can bring unpredictable consequences.

Once the "master" is chosen, the dog does not tolerate frivolous treatment from other people, even from other family members, with which it lives. If taken outside of his protected territory, the dog becomes dangerous to other people. These qualities make the Caucasian Mountain Dog an uncompromising protector of property, and its guarding stance cannot be negotiated.

In the displayed pictures typical representatives of highbred property protecting Caucasian Mountain Dogs are shown. They are well adapted to live in the property yard and are unsurpassable guardians of the property of their owners.

"The best type of property protecting Caucasian Mountain Dog is the Georgian type. These dogs are distinguished by their powerful bone and are the largest among all types of Caucasian Mountain Dog (T. Yagodkina, "Caucasian Mountain Dog in your house")

Caucasian Mountain Dog
Wolf Fighting Type (or Herding Type)

There is a totally opposite picture in the North Caucasus. Here, people keep many dogs in areas of the mass concentration of small animals, such as sheep, in "kosharas". Poor pastures permit keeping animals only under conditions of seasonal migrations to better pastures. Seasonal migrations over long distances, camping under



harsh conditions and considerable numbers of animals requires four-legged assistants, without which this kind of animal husbandry would not be profitable.

Therefore, a pack of dogs resembling a pride of lions is present with each animal herd. The leader of the pack is always a mature male, which is always the first to meet the danger. His grown up sons form the second line of defense, which secure him from back. The last line of defense consists of adult females with grown up daughters, which provide protection to their helpless puppies.

Dogs were kept absolutely unconfined. Even feeding the dogs was done occasionally. The dogs obtained the major part of their food on their own. The relationship between humans and dogs was rather a partnership than a master-slave relationship. This helped to maintain the independent character of the dogs, which would be impossible with dogs working under total control. Wolf packs run over several kilometers around the “koshara”, in which wolf fighting dogs (or they could be named herding dogs) were present. The duties of the dogs included not only protecting, but also controlling the herd. The dogs perform their job voluntarily being guided by their own instinct. If the herd was at the campsite, the leader of the dog pack takes his vantage point on the most elevated place, from which he watches the surroundings. At the same time, two-three dogs run around the herd to prevent the animals from straying.

During the migration, the dogs run ahead of the herd, and the people walk behind.

O. Krasnovskaya in her book “The Caucasian Mountain Dog” wrote: “For centuries, chobans selected the most intelligent dogs as their assistants, which could understand a human just by looking, evaluate a situation independently and take right decisions. The territory under the responsibility of a working dog is vast and shouting commands is impractical. Therefore, dogs capable of working independently were always preferred.”

The desirable size of herding dog (or wolf fighting dog) is as follows: males are at least 70-82 cm at the withers and females are 60-78 cm at the withers. Males are 50-70 kg, females – 36-56 kg. Of course, there are no limits on the size and weight of wolf fighting dogs, but they must be recognizable at a glance.



The point is that the size and weight of the herding dog should be in a correct proportion to its strength. This is a minimal requirement. The ideal dog is when its strength to its weight is at 50%. This is explained by the need for a dog with professional coordination. During a fight with a wild animal, size and weight do not matter as much, although their importance is not denied. On this occasion, a major factor of survival is agility, which would be impossible with other combinations of these two components. For example, ovcharkas specialized in protecting owners' property do not need much agility, which would be vital during a fight with a wolf. Extraordinarily developed bone, which muscles cannot carry well in necessary regimen, or too bulky muscles that damaged joints could cause a lethal outcome of the fight.

Therefore, the description of the appearance a wolf fighting dog is opposite to the description of the appearance of a property protecting dog. A narrow head, long neck, the front legs closer together, creating an impression of a narrow chest, and the hind legs wider apart are most typical. The rib cage should not be too round for retaining certain flexibility. The body format index is slightly longer than square and the chest is deep. Short hair with a well developed undercoat is a must. The explanation that a thick coat protects the dog from canines during a fight is incorrect, when we know that in a fight sometimes millimeters may be important and long hair can result in a lethal outcome. Wolves are the major competitors of the dogs and do not attack singly. The coat color of herding and wolf fighting dogs is always light. This feature was also selected for centuries, because light, better still white color coat, helped people to find their wolf fighting dogs. It also helped them to recognize the dog in the midst of the fight, especially at night.

One professional quality of the character of the wolf fighting dog is its absolute loyalty to man. Here, the human is the friend and assistant and the wolf is the foe. Therefore a correctly raised wolf-fighting dog is a perfectly socialized dog. There is one iron rule: a wolf fighting dog should never live isolated. This dog must be

raised among people from puppy age, learning correct reactions to situations by the emotions of the master. It is absolutely not allowed to nurture a dog's aggressiveness by training it for specialized guarding service. Mistrustfulness, necessary aggressiveness and protective qualities will develop naturally. The problem is how not to distort dog's psyche and not to raise a crazy monster. If this happened, the dog should be shot. This is a very strong animal and we usually do not understand fully its real capabilities.

A wolf fighting dog, when it discovers an unfamiliar person on its territory, it does not bark in excess though it is angry, but it warns by growling: "do not move!" If the trespasser attempts to flee, the dog tries to stop him by the minimal necessary actions, remembering the taboo against biting a human. The whole procedure continues until the master shows up. Even when alone on the street, a wolf-fighting dog follows its instinct and never turns aggressive until it is forced to do so. It will not fight even a dog, if the opponent is equally strong and tough, but will only assert its status rituals. If the other dog shows signs of lacking the desire to fight, a psychologically healthy wolf-fighting dog would not fight but would leave the place, where they met. It could not be another way. Imagine, what would happen, if free roaming wolf fighting dogs were to one another. This breed would become extinct. Therefore, a healthy wolf-fighting dog would never harm a puppy; in its mind every smallish dog is like a puppy, and a male does not show aggression towards a female that bit him or even caused small injuries.

I will repeat that, just as with the property guarding Caucasian Mountain Dog, specific training of the wolf-fighting dog is meaningless. It is an independent animal and does not tolerate mechanical orders. The dog will simply ignore them. The best guarantee of complete control of your dog is unconditional love to you. Just personal contact with the dog produces amazing results, if you start from an early puppy age. The dog will simply feel your wishes and immediately execute them without voice commands. The transfer of an adult dog to a new owner requires the development of special relationships.



The wolf-fighting dog will make a perfect family dog under conditions of raising it correctly. Outside the dog pack and its natural conditions, where life itself and the example of older dogs are his wonderful teachers, its character can be spoiled by people who do not take into account the specific psychology of this dog. Achieving submissiveness can result in make a shy dog, not capable of protecting anyone; if you spoil the dog, the result will be an unruly and selfish dog. It would ignore even the orders of his master, if the dog's privileges were taken away. It would be impossible to get rid of such a dog, even if it became intolerable. It can be transferred only to a

specialist.

Speaking of fighting abilities of wolf fighting dog, one should not forget that Mother Nature created this breed and inhibitions fixed genetically do not allow this dog to realize all possibilities in occasional fights. For comparison, one should try a competitive breed of dog at fighting a wolf. The result, of course, is quite predictable; the poor competitor would be killed in a few moments. The structure of the wolf's canines allows it

not only to grab and hold, but also to cut skin and flesh. Even for a wolf-fighting dog the chances of winning are only 50:50. If the dog were able to neutralize the wolf's jaws by taking a precise hold, he would win. If he were to overlook the wolf's strike at a vital place, the death of the dog is only a question of time.

Local type of herding dog (or wolf fighting dog)

A. Krasnovskaya in her book "The Caucasian Mountain Dog" wrote: "The population of dogs from Northern Osetia is phenotypically most uniform. As the breeding of Caucasian wolf fighting dogs was done only according to their working ability, there were no purebreds in this breed group, but some genealogical lines sometimes can be traced.

Dogs from Northern Osetia have genealogical roots leading back to Old Butuz (owner Temirov), Gabo and Khoda (owner Akhpolov) and Elbars (owner Karaev).

Among the offspring of Old Butuz, most known are Bolkor, Bogal, Butuz, Bucha and Bich. The pale red large Elbars produced several sons: Elbars, Medgar and Argus.

The red, not tall but stocky Khoda turned out to be a good breeding dog. His offspring, White Khoda, Khan, Khapur, Koba, Kadji and Ded turned out to be rather of the same type of dog".

This is well confirmed by photographs showing typical representatives of the Osetian type of Caucasian Mountain Dog. On the first picture is White Khoda from Red Khoda, a Champion of the Commonwealth of the former Soviet Union Republics and twice Champion of the Caucasus. White Khoda is one of the best dogs of his generation and only unfortunate circumstances did not let



him to become a Champion of the Caucasus; he got a silver medal. Mr. L. Pliev is one of the best breeders in Osetia. He does his best for the preservation of the line of shorthaired white wolf fighting dogs of Osetia.

On the second picture below, Khapur is shown. He is also out of Red Khoda, owner F. Akhpolov who has also contributed a great effort to the preservation and promotion of the Caucasian Mountain Dog. Khapur also left a lasting impression on field trials rings, where he showed virtuoso technique.

I should also mention such breeders who are known not only in Osetia, but also all over North Caucasus as E. Margiev who raised several high class fighters; B. Mamiev who raised Tugo, a Champion of the Caucasus; V. Karaev, who brought to the ring such Champions of the Caucasus as Gabo and Aptar; and also T. Temirov who was at the beginning of the revival of the popular status of the Caucasian Mountain Dog. Listing all the Caucasian Mountain Dog breeders of Osetia would take too much space. I want to emphasize that Osetian breeders, while trying to improve the breed, did not mix their dogs with outside lines, trying to increase their size. While preserving their authentic lines, they preserved the unique package of true herding quality Caucasian Mountain Dogs. Today, in Osetia, it is still possible to see true herding dogs, but without a plan of future development, without involving wolf fighting dogs as a breed, in the practical activity of the people, its restoration will stop and the breed will vanish into oblivion.



Conclusion

The future of this breed is rather vague. Without test trials and without financial incentives, the breeding of dogs is in the hands of only individual amateurs, who are not able to preserve the breed as whole.

Without organized breeding, personal interests often outweigh communal interests and attract criminal elements, and this eventually results in the decline of this dog breeding.

In the North Caucasus, nomadic animal breeding has become fragmentary. Industrial activity in the mountains has stopped, because of the general decline of the economy and the population and keeping wolf fighting dogs has become sporadic.

Without a professional approach, the involvement of the Government and centralization, under conditions of the existing realities of life, the Caucasian Mountain dog of the wolf fighting type with all its unique qualities may become a myth. This would be a big and irreversible loss to the world.

Today's homegrown pacifists do not condone bloody dogfights, where vanity rules, and test trials, which are supposed to preserve the wolf fighting dog of our country, and do not allow putting the preservation of the breed on the national government priority list. Actually, this is a rejection of a most valuable breed of dog with unique national traits of the peoples of North Caucasus that have survived for millennia.

On the other hand, "scientific" dog lovers, striving for improvements, attempt to establish physical standards for the dog while ignoring its psychological makeup and working qualities; this is how they have already damaged dozens of breeds.

It is funny to see how a huge "Asian" trots in the show ring with its tail between its legs while looking back over its shoulder on bent legs to the delight of its owners who are housewives.

I hope that despite huge problems, the wolf fighting type of the Caucasian Mountain Dog will be preserved to provide a service and give joy to people. Possibly we will be able to see in the light of the setting sun a noble dog standing on the mountain cliff, guarding the quiet sleep and peace of mind of his human friend.



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FORGOTTEN EXPEDITION

By V. V. Volkova

VERA VASILYEVNA VOLKOVA

Was born and grew up in a large peasant family; she was accustomed to hard work since childhood and she learned how to read from an early age.

The open steppe of Orlov Province and strong family traditions of holding all together helped children to grow up loving freedom, being curious and supporting each other. She went hunting with her brothers from the age of twelve. She liked to run in the fields with dogs and in ravines overgrown with thickets.

In 1930 she enrolled in a Factory school in Moscow. She often went to the zoo and became a member of the Young Biologists Hobby Group, which was supervised by P. A. Manteifel. After graduation, she worked as a factory turner and then the Young Communist Party sent her to build the first line of Moscow subway. In 1935 she was enrolled as a student at the Fur Institute in Balashikha, where she met her future husband M. G. Volkov.

She graduated from the Institute in 1940 and became an instructor for a kennel running a pedigree project in Kamchatka. M. G. Volkov was its Director. During WWII, she worked as a research worker of the Far Eastern Regional Station in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky and as a wildlife biologist taking over the former position of her husband, who was sent to the frontline. After WWII, Volkov became a Director of Kronotsky Nature Reserve and Vera Vasilyevna was a leader of its Research Department. After six years, she returned to Moscow and worked as a wildlife biologist in the Ramenskoe Hunting Society and as a wildlife biologist of Ivanovo Province. She was a public library manager. When her husband died, she was reading his diaries and published about 300 articles in local newspaper. She published articles in the "Okhota and Hunting Industry" (Okhota i okhotnichye khozyajstvo, in Russian) journal. At present, she lives in Ilyinskoe near Moscow.

My husband, Mikhail Georgievich Volkov, was born in 1910 in a family of a railroad worker. In early 1920s, during hunger and turmoil, his father died of typhoid. He was a boy of ten years when he was left with his sick mother. A small pension and the assistance of his older sister allowed him to complete his middle school education. The husband of his other sister was a passionate hunter; he taught Mikhail to hunt and gave him his first hunting dog; his mother bought for him a hunting gun. During that time, Ivanovo was surrounded by thick forests and there was plenty of space to hunt. Mikhail read a lot of serious literature; he loved nature and dogs, Laikas and scent hounds were his favorites. Contacts with noted biologists and cynologists of the country, such as Zvorykin, Manteifel, Buturlin, Pakhomov, Vakhrushev and others, enriched his knowledge of wildlife biology and cynology. These scientists recognized his outstanding knowledge of animals and his sure "eye" in evaluating the conformation and working ability of hunting dogs. They suggested he should enroll in the Balashikha Institute for the Fur Industry.

Thus, Volkov became a student at the wildlife biology department. He also had to help his elderly mother; therefore, Misha held a job as an assistant at the Department of Biology, Taxonomy and Technique of the Hunting Industry.

He was energetic and curious, participated in many expeditions and accepted the offer of the Peoples Commissariat of the Russian Federation to head an expedition to Yamal Peninsula with a mission to run a survey of the Nenets Reindeer Herding Laikas, to purchase several of them and to ship them to Chukotka Peninsula for breeding them there as irreplaceable assistants of the reindeer breeders. At 26 years of age, he was recognized as an expert in the area of hunting dogs. Therefore it was not surprising that he was chosen for this job as he was very much interested in it.

In April 1937, Mikhail took time off from his work, signed a contract with the Peoples Commissariat, took his notes, said good-bye to his friends and me and left for Yamal.

The expedition that had been initially planned for one season took two years. However, the mission was accomplished!

Mikhail Georgievich left me with a few thick notebooks full of small handwriting. They contained records of almost every day he spend in the harsh northern country. I consider it my duty, as long as God gives me strength, to tell the story of this forgotten expedition and about the man who was dedicated to his assignment and wanted to facilitate the work of the reindeer breeding peoples (Kamchadals, Lamuts, Koryaks and Hukchis) by providing them with wonderful Olenegonkas, which they never had before.

After my husband's death, I was reading and rewriting his diaries, one day after another and one year after another. I relived the excitement of those early years, when I was waiting for a message from my friend. Under those harsh conditions of life, any day could become a fatal one for him.

I do not know to which genre my story should belong. It cannot be called a special article and I did not consider this as my goal. I simply rewrite most of the records and the particularly interesting records I preserve in their entirety with dates and quotations. Some of them I remember well, because it was my very life! My husband and I had the same profession; we shared the same passion and were involved in the same projects. Our fate gave us a long life together and I said goodbye to Mikhail Georgievich a year after our golden wedding anniversary...

TO YAMAL FOR REINDEER HERDING LAIKAS

The way to our destination was full of great difficulties, but Volkov did not waste his time but conducted surveys of Laikas at dog shows or simply examined local dogs at any community on the way to Salekhard.

The fast approaching spring of 1937 mixed up all the initial plans of the expedition. "... April 29. I am in Tobolsk. On the night of 28/29 April ice began drifting on the Irtysh River. During the last ten days the ice became very weak and any traffic was stopped. Old-timers said that in 10-15 days shipping would become possible as far as Samarovo (on the Ob River). The Ob River clears of ice much later than the Irtysh River."

A two-month delay made impossible the organization of a Reindeer Herding Laika kennel during the present year and it was postponed until next year. Volkov used his time to familiarize himself with Tobolsk, visited museums and the library, where he found many rare and valuable publications. On June 9, he embarked on

the steamer "N. Dolgirev", which after two days in Beryozovo dropped anchor near Salekhard on 13 June

Upon arrival, Mikhail Georgievich began making contacts with workers of the Territorial Executive Committee, Fur Agency Office, Northern Seaway Office, and the Secretary of the Territorial Communist Party Committee and with local newspaper publishers. Each of them promised some help.

The Assistant of the Secretary of the Territorial Executive Committee, I. F. Nogo, was an ethnic Nenets. He was well familiar with the local environment. When he learned about the goals of the expedition, he decided that this work should be postponed until winter. In winter, roads become passable and reindeer owners drive their herds

closer to human communities, supply sources and trading points, where it is easier to survey the reindeer herding dogs. The Territorial Executive Committee (I. F. Nogo personally) and Northern Seaway Office sent a telegram to the People's Commissariat asking for their permission to postpone the purchase of dogs and hiring of reindeer caretakers until winter, because in the summer it would be difficult to reach reindeer owners and get to Dixon Island by August. During the summer, Volkov would work for the Northern Seaway Office.

People knowledgeable about local conditions, particularly workers of the Northern Seaways, suggested he should work with Reindeer Herding Laikas in Yamal District (the northern part of Yamal), because they knew that in northern Yamal, like nowhere else, authentic dogs were pure. These dogs were kept pure because of their isolation by vast regions of tundra. Besides, the way of dog keeping by the reindeer owners of the Northern Urals were an example of typical Nenets traditions and have remained unchanged since ancient times. Volkov received the answer from the People's Commissariat allowing him to postpone the purchase of dogs and their shipment until winter and he began working for the Fur Office. The Fur Office offered him to run a research project on polar foxes in the northern half of Yamal Peninsula, near the trading post at Se-Yakha, during the hunting season 1937-1938.

Concurrently with this project on polar foxes, Mikhail Georgievich investigated Reindeer Herding Laikas of this region, because it fitted his original objectives in northern Yamal.

He had to familiarize himself with local data on hunting polar foxes, supervise their feeding, construct bait-feeders and observation cabins, procure special clothes, equipment, etc. The People's Commissariat also wanted him to gather materials on breeding reindeer herding dogs and to investigate methods of their use in reindeer husbandry.



“... Over the entire Yamal Peninsula, from south to north, in its central part, closer to its eastern shores, there is a watershed called locally “khoi” (elevation). Northwards it is less noticeable; here, the upper parts of the Yakhadeyakh River subdivide into several smaller watersheds running northwards. In winter, strong northern winds blow snow off into ravines and lowlands causing considerable damage to the local economy. The population density here is 3.9 per 1,000 square kilometers. The local population is represented by Nenets registered clans (last names), among which the most numerous are Okatetta, Vanuita, Serotetta, Khudya, Puiko, Venkha, etc. Each of them makes a living by reindeer breeding, fishing, hunting on land and sea and carrier trading, for which reindeer are most important. The yearly seasonal cycles of activity of typical nomadic reindeer farming of the peninsula are as follows:

Summer. Reindeer herding near places convenient for fishing and hunting waterfowl. At the Kara Sea shores and in the Ob River mouth, it is hunting sea mammals.

Fall. Accelerated migration to winter pastures. Gradually approaching the final over-wintering destination, the reindeer keepers slow down their pace and stay for a longer time at certain places. They start polar fox hunting in early November. When polar night sets in, a new job emerges and this is to protect reindeer from wolves for 24 hours, every single day.

Winter. In early winter, the nomads are busy dividing their time equally between reindeer herding and hunting. In December, the snow cover is thick enough, deer do not scatter much and the attacks of wolves diminish. From December to March, intensive polar fox hunting and fishing continue. The latter is particularly important along the shores of the Ob River mouth. Near carrier places trading is going on.

Spring. From middle to late March, nomads start migrating back to summer pastures. This continues until late May-early June and it is accomplished not as fast as the fall migration was, because during this time, the reindeer are exhausted, females are pregnant and when calves are born, they cannot move fast. During this time, nomads are busy attending their reindeer herds.”

The diary tells us that during the first ten days of August, he was busy with preparation and in a hurry for the departure for winter with a caravan of ships; his ship was named “A. Mikoyan”, which dropped anchor near Arkhangelsk cape in the morning on August 9. By night of the same day, August 9, he completed embarking and by night on August 11, “A. Mikoyan” announced with its low pitch buzz that the caravan of about 20 ships left the shore into open part of the Ob River mouth heading northeast. On August 30, they arrived at Novyi Port. There, “A. Mikoyan” led a part of ships in the Taz River bay, returned and took the rest of them to Napalkovo. Here, the ships were awaited by the local people and the Nenets who had arrived here for the occasion with their friends.

Prior to departure in the “A. Mikoyan”, there was much work to do and there were problems especially with feeder-traps, box traps and observation huts. The work was delayed and its quality was below expectations.

On August 22, at eight a.m, the caravan dropped anchor near Seyakha River mouth, about 1.5 km off shore.

On the next day, upon their arrival, at the meeting of the Neitin National Soviet, Volkov reported about their future work and its importance. I will give the information about the Reindeer Herding Laikas collected by M. G. Volkov as it was described in this report:

“...The Reindeer Herding Laika is distributed in vast regions of the tundra zone, everywhere where northern reindeer keeping occurs. It helps different ethnic peoples of this region to herd and protect reindeer herds.

Within the limits of our Soviet Union, Nenets Reindeer Herding Laikas derived from a fossil form of jackal-like dogs of the late Paleolithic (turf dog) and carrying their distinctive characteristics are widely distributed. This type of Laika was domesticated by man and bred pure during many centuries by people of the northern tundra. Their major range covers Malaya Zemlya, Bolshaya Zemlya, Timan tundra and Yamal Peninsula. In the east, they occur in Hanty tundra and in the west they occur up to the border of the Kola Peninsula. In the latter area, they occur together with dogs of the Lapps, which differ little from dogs of the Nenets people.

Some peoples breeding Nenets Reindeer Herding Laika in the forest/tundra zone also use these dogs for hunting.

According to my observations, there are two varieties of the Nenets Reindeer Herding Laikas. One of them is a longhaired type called “Erre” and another one is a relatively shorthaired type called “Yando”. Nenets reindeer herdsman see no differences in their work on reindeer, but they consider Yando type dogs older than the Erre type. Among dogs of both types there are outstanding reindeer herding dogs and some of them are exceptionally good at polar fox and waterfowl hunting. Most typical Yando dogs can be found only in the most remote parts of the arctic tundra of northern Yamal, hundreds of kilometers away from trading posts. Guard hair of the Yando is shorter than in hunting Laikas, but the undercoat is extraordinarily well developed. It is not a large dog.”

I return to the diary.

“...September 7. We are heading into the tundra in order to survey as many chum (a teepee-like house of the Nenets people) as possible. I visited chum of the Yaptik and Naricha; described six Laikas. Lemmings migrate south.

... September 9. Nenets gave me a ride in sleds pulled by reindeer across shallow water across Turma-Sale River; we were standing in the sleds. Arrived at the chum of Ser-Piva Nyniku. There are many dogs inside, their own and other dogs belonging to some Nenets who had arrived. As a rule, when leaving home, Nenets take their dogs to search for stray reindeer.

... We took off in two kaldankas (boats) downstream the Turma-Sale River (a tributary of the Ob River mouth) and in 30 minutes arrived at the mouth of the Soily-Se River and visited the chum of Ser-Piva Khasov (25 km from trading post). This Nenets recently killed three sea hares. One of them lies on dry shore covered with grass. It is done for aging, so that the hair would come off. The skin would be used to make belts for harness. Some men of the chum cast a small net and pulled out about 10 kg of fish, *Coregonus lavaretus*. There is plenty of fish in the river, but they catch very little of it, just enough to feed the family. There are five dogs in the chum. Two of them are tied up outside. Birch bush and willow are used as fuel. We drank strong tea and ate raw *Coregonus autumnalis*. It turned dark and we stayed overnight.

There are many geese in the tundra foraging in the grass”.

Volkov made his way from one chum to another studying the situation and surveying the dogs. Polar foxes occurred quite often. Geese allowed us to get as close as 50-150 m. The trip led to the north. Arrived at a large lake - Yumarto. Red sedge vegetation could be seen in the shallow water, like blood spots on the gray-green background of tundra. Walked from the southern end of the lake to its northern end. Far away to the northeast, beyond the lake, Golovnaya Mountain could be seen. There were polar foxholes on the hill near the shore. On the hill, far away, three heavily loaded sleds were seen. They contained the belongings of Nenets traveling across the summer pastures, mainly winter clothes, winter parts of the chum, etc. There are no thieves in the tundra. Indeed, cases of thievery are very rare. On the slopes of the hills, polar fox traps are set up.

“...We arrived at three chum and stayed with Ser-Piva Yanga. He is an average reindeer keeper and has about 300 reindeer. His ten dogs are mainly white; they met us with enthusiastic barking. On the banks of the Ob River mouth, there are plenty of polar fox tracks. Polar foxes have left their dens and wander about singly. There are lemmings. The polar fox harvest is considered good. Here, in 1936, there were attempts to use smelly bait, such as rotten meat, fish or eggs. Polar foxes were attracted best only with rotten eggs. Therefore, Nenets collect eggs beforetime and hide them in dirt.

On September 10, 26 Reindeer Herding Laikas were described; among them 21 males and 5 females; 23 longhair and 3 shorthair dogs. Seven puppies were examined. A common trait of all the examined dogs is their large ear size (compared with hunting Laikas) and a wider distance between the ears. The latter does not occur at the expense of a broader forehead.

At night I went out to enjoy watching the aurora borealis. According to the host of the chum of Ser-Piva Yang, it indicated a snowfall coming soon.



...September 11. Sunny morning, wind from the SE. After morning tea, I went out of the smoky chum into the tundra, to the slopes of the lake valley, which was to the north of the chum. I sat down under a windshield to enjoy watching the limitless tundra. The lakes (there are many lakes here) shine in the sun, flickering. The lakes are surrounded by hills slightly crossing the plain. The tundra is limitless, and the air is clear; it smells of the fall and dying vegetation. All night long geese flew over the chum, one flock after another and now, they are heard no more. Only the call of a gull (*Larus argentatus*) or the moaning of a loon ...”

Describing Reindeer Herding Laikas, Volkov mentions the following:

Height is not great, 40-50 cm.

Head is light with elegant muzzle, stop is steep and weak.

Eyes are straight, large, moderately protruding and shiny.

Ears are wide apart and relatively large.

Shoulders are oblique and the angles of the hind legs sufficiently developed.

The tail is usually carried in a tight ring.

Elongated hare foot with slightly splayed toes and strongly sloping pasterns.

Many dogs have dewclaws. Longhaired dogs are more frequent than shorthaired ones. The predominant coat color is white, white with black and black with white.

The distance from the chum to trading posts is long, five winter “stages” (20-25 km each) or ten good summer “stages” (10-12 km each). In the summer, without snow on the ground, transportation by deer is difficult and the deer need rest.

Almost every day is the same, in any weather, in frosty weather or in a blizzard, Volkov is riding in deer pulled sleds from one chum to another, taking measurements of dogs, checking polar fox baited traps, adding bait in them, making notes about these animals and in his diary new records appear:

“... Turning dark. We are in a chum of Okatetta Lipchi. A wood fire is burning bright in the middle of the chum. Dwarf polar birch is crackling faintly and smokes heavily. We saw some dwarf polar birch forests during these days, when on the road. The height of these shrubs is up to 20-30 cm. It is hard to see people sitting next to you, because of the smoke. The flame licks a black pan covered with soot, in which venison is cooked, and also a large black kettle. It is hard to measure the dogs, they are wild and do not allow themselves to be touched. However, they obey their master.

... September 13. Cold day, gloomy weather, wind, tundra looks dreary. Nenets sleep long. They caught riding deer with difficulty, sorted them out and harnessed them up. We were riding back to a trading post. The Nenets find their direction well in the tundra. There are many geese, polar owls and snipe. There are many polar foxes. Lemmings are few. Ermine is seen. By night ice builds up on the covered stanchions of the sleds.

... September 14. Sunny morning, abundant hoar-frost, thin ice at edges of the water of Khanye Madacha Lake (it is connected with the Seryakha River, on the bank of which stands the chum of Sattaki. We stayed overnight here; Sattaka gets sleds ready. On the other side of the lake (about 250 m from the chum), there is a polar fox. There is a convenient place for hunting using the “Talara” method. Hunts are organized there every year.”

Thus, M. G. Volkov did both research on Olenegonkas and research on polar foxes. By the middle of September, they caught 12 polar foxes, and he wanted to increase their number to 20. The Nenets bring in some polar foxes they caught alive and get 20 rubles for each. Every fox is tagged with a metal button with a number.

During a trip from 8 to 16 of September, Volkov visited 21 chum and examined 98 dogs. Among them, 73 dogs were described and measured. He recorded onset of migration of polar foxes, polar awls and lemmings south.

“... September 25. We took off from trading post SW, along the bank of the Seyakha River. Steep hills, wind is drifting the snow. Thick, fast flying snow cuts our face and ...there is sunshine. We are riding along a line of polar fox traps; reached a chum between Yaunkhoto Lake and the Ob River mouth. Nenets call the Ob River mouth a “sea” and for a good reason, because this is a sea gulf dangerous for sea ships.

About 10 meters from water, there is a chum. The bank is low. Surf. The snow does not melt. Small patches of water are completely covered with ice. Here are good pastures for deer in the summer and fall and a few winter pastures. This is a summer chum used by herdsman; four adults in it. They are representatives of four different chum from Serotetta and Va-nuita... There are 9 dogs inside: 6 males and 3 females, three of them are puppies. We ate raw venison, and then we ate cooked venison. We were drinking tea. There was a candle lit up as a sign or respect to the guest. (Nenets are very hospitable people. They will always offer food and drink, night or day. They usually eat without salt).

September 29. About seven a.m. I went out of the chum. The skies were gray, but a morning copper red dawn covered the horizon. The reflection of the dawn on the boundless Ob River mouth is an unforgettable sight. It was frosty.

... Examined closely over 100 Nenets dogs and came to the conclusion that they have correct legs, with a few exceptions. The foot is usually a "hare" foot, well coated, with loose toes and proportional to the dog's size. Nenets dogs have good bone. The shorthaired and longhaired Laikas have heads of two types: with a pronounced stop and a short muzzle and with a weak stop. A rounded forehead is rare and it occurs in dogs with an abrupt stop. A domed skull is quite common. A convex skull is normal. A head with a weak stop seems, at first glance, as if the muzzle is as long as the skull, but measurements produce a different result. The skull is always longer than the muzzle. The eye is deceived because of the convexity of the skull. The "Yando" type of Nenets shorthaired dog only occasionally resembles the type of hunting Laika.

... Besides the size, the Yando type dogs have a peculiar structure of head, size, shape and setting of the ears, large, slightly convex, shiny and very dark eyes set straight. The coat differs from that of the hunting Laika. I noticed that in some dogs one or both ears are cropped. Nenets said it was a punishment for killing a fawn. "

In the middle of October, electoral officials arrive to prepare the local people for elections in Supreme Soviet. Workers from the trading post were recruited for the trip into the tundra to meet the local people. Volkov joined them, because it was helpful for his work.



They visited the chum, organized meetings on elections to the Supreme Soviet, examined dogs, took measurements and made notes. The number of dogs inside the chum usually determines the number of deer in the herd: the poor have fewer dogs and the rich have more dogs.

"...November 4-6. Khad-blizzard was raging, hissing and howling for three

days. Small, dry snowflakes blew with high speed and it penetrated through the smallest holes inside the winter buildings. The stormy breath of the khad is scary...The window glass is rattling, the wind makes it hard to breath and pulls you down. It is cold and gloomy inside the house. Because of the snow dust, looking from the entrance door, it is impossible to see the school, which is a few meters away. Sometimes the blizzard subsides, but it is usually happens only because the wind is changing direction. I have never seen such a blizzard in my entire life, but V. A. Pudovkin (a meteorologist) said that in this country, blizzards stronger than this occur. People are nearly crawling from one building to another. The wind tore down the antenna of our radio station and we lost contact with the outside world. The air temperature does not exceed 5 degrees C, but it is cold, the wind is blowing through the clothes. Because of the cold, the tundra during these days is lifeless. Animals lie in snow dens. The Nenets are in their chum.

...November 16. The morning in the tundra is quiet and gloomy. Today, we started to work on the deer herd early, maybe because I did not hurry. During sorting out the herd, one Nenets was teaching a Laika. He tied the dog on a tyanzyan, the Nenets screamed like at deer (Ya-ya-ga-gai! Yaa-ga-gai! Gai! Gai! E-oga-o-ga-gai! Gai! Gai!) and sometimes accelerated or slowed down his pace (sometimes he ran), moved around the herd, periodically slackening or tightening the tyanzyan and sometimes letting the dog run at the full length of the tyanzyan.

The Nenets Reindeer Herding Laika always works around the edges of the herd, but never works inside of it and never cuts into the herd. A bad dog might do it and scatter deer in all directions. The task of a true

Olenegonka is to keep the deer as a compact group and to head it in the direction desired by the master. The dog drives the deer from behind and keeps the flanks even. All this is done at a fast gallop. The deer quickly reacts to the dog, if the dog is at work. When the dog does not work and he is near the master or near the chum, the deer wandering nearby do not react to the dog and do not show any signs of fear. The deer walk near the dogs, come up immediately close to them and to the chum and sometimes even try to gore or strike with their hooves the chum wall, etc. The Reindeer Herding Dog is never a constant scare for the deer. The dog is trained to act in such a way so that the deer would react to it only during its work, which is performed at the order of the master.

On the same day, after the meeting, we took off to the north, to the chum of Vanuita Mollo. We saw the fresh tracks of wolf. Some ptarmigans flashed out of bushes covered with snow, where they were foraging on twigs. We were met hospitably in the chum of Vanuita Mollo. This is a summer roomy and cozy chum.

We had a good meal of raw frozen and very tasty fish. Bread and salt were served with the fish for the guest. Then, we drank tea with bread, sugar and fat (a mixture of fat of different waterfowl species), very tasty with a slight flavor of fish oil.

I describe the dogs. There were five dogs, all males. Dogs are loved here; each of them can do something, when begging for food. "Yando" is laughing, "Blacky" is standing on hind legs, "Nalto" gives his paw, etc.

From here to the trading post is 5-6 "stages". The wind blew and a blizzard began. At 11:42 a.m. the tea party was over and at the same time talk about the new election law ended. Despite the blizzard, at 5:50 p.m., Nikolai and I took off to the NW. The wind is from the left. It beats on us strongly with snow; the snow melts on the face and water drips under the collar of our malitsa (local style winter coat). It turned dark. The first resting stop for deer. At 8:07 p.m., the second stop. The blizzard subsides and sometimes gains strength again. There is a white mass of snow around. The terrain is rugged, the sleds are banged hard. The deer run and run. We descended onto the river ice and entered the deer herd; the deer were lying down and they were being covered with snow. Once again I was struck by the exceptional ability of the Nenets to find their direction. At night in a strong blizzard and in an unfamiliar place, Nikolai having had only one signal, which was by Mollo waving his hand, drove without error for 40 km and arrived exactly at the deer herd and then at the chum. There are no roads or signposts in the tundra. The winter tundra is harsh, when the weather is bad.

... Both bulls and cows were selected for harnessing; the latter are particularly agile. Herding Laikas are also fast; they never lag behind the deer and turn stray ones back to the herd. Dogs not participating in the work, being tired out, are excited, bark, howl and are deeply concerned. Working Laikas organize their work themselves: one of them is on one side of the herd and another one on the opposite side. If one deer runs astray, "Blacky" gives chase until the deer enters the area controlled by "Yando". "Yando" picks it up and returns it to the herd. This is how they bring a stray deer back to the herd.

... The migration of the polar foxes is ending, the time of releasing fed foxes so they would detain the still remaining foxes. Nights are dark, both Nenets and dogs sleep in the chum. The deer are grazing alone.

... The number of polar foxes in captivity is 29. We decided to release four more foxes. Almost all of them have become white.

... November 19. We are in the chum of Topchi. In a neat den made out of deerskin, there is a black shorthaired bitch with four puppies of the same coat color. They are all males.

November 20, 9:40 p.m. Some Nenets left to look for deer. It is calm. Sparse fluffy snow is falling. Vanuita Mollo examines the puppies. He talks with the women telling them that all his dogs work well. A puppy with a well protruding occipital ridge and hair close and smooth on the lower side of the tail is considered the best. The Nenets always leave puppies with dewclaws – "Terencha". They believe that this is a sign of a good Olenegonka.

I talked with Solinder about dogs and he told me many interesting things. Thus, he confirmed that when choosing a puppy, Nenets pay attention to the head. It should be lean and with a pointed muzzle, with good eyes, a well developed occipital ridge and the presence of dewclaws is also a good trait. Intelligent, energetic and agile puppies are preferred. Bitches in the litter are killed for population control. Males fight over females on heat, which is counterproductive during work with the herds. The best dogs work well for five years, average dogs work well for three-four years and poor (weak) dogs work well for one-two years. They start teaching the dog early, the sooner it learns deer herding "science" the better. Training puppies is not complex. One should work with the puppy often and find reindeer that are most conveniently distributed. The puppy is directed towards the deer with words: "Hus, hus, hus! Prrrr, prrrr!" – get it! If the puppy (or an adult dog already working) chases a deer without need, the owner screams rudely: "geee, geeee, geeeee!", "lya-lya, lya-lya", which can be translated as: "Stop it, come here!"

The Nenets divide dogs into following categories according to their working qualities: the first category includes "working dogs", which are very fast, tireless, capable of catching up to three polar foxes per day as well

as waterfowl and at the same time working well on reindeer and never killing the fawns. This kind of dog is considered the best, “the first grade ones”. For such a dog, the Nenets would not hesitate to buy with a reindeer bull. The second category includes so to speak normal dogs. It works on deer very well, but not all of them work on polar fox and cannot catch more than one fox per day, they “do not endure running very much”. The dog gets exhausted catching a polar fox,. The third category includes mediocre dogs. These dogs do not work either on foxes or on birds or they work on them poorly. They work on deer two-three times per day, but cannot work all day long, because they get tired. The fourth category includes bad dogs suitable only for making collars for malitsa (Nenets winter coat).

Speaking of shorthaired (“Yando”) Laikas and longhaired (“Erre”) Laikas, Solinder told us that the Nenets know “Yando” since very old times and that this is a peculiar variety of the Nenets Laika and not a mix with a Russian dog. The Nenets do not see any difference in work between the two types. Both types constantly interbreed with each other and both appear among offspring. I asked him, whether they thought that their dogs became worse than they were in the past and if they noticed any degeneration in them. Solinder answered negatively. In the past, there were good and bad dogs.

... We moved fast. The deer run well without encouragement and without using “khorey” (a long wooden pole with rounded tip for poking the deer to encourage it to run faster. Near the chum of Nobe there is a reindeer herd. Dogs began barking. We approached two figures sitting on the snow. With folded legs, retracted heads and hands inside the clothes (they were dressed in white gus (heavy fur coat for sleeping outside or riding in sleds for a prolonged time), the Nenets were sleeping quite untroubled by the strong frost. A pair of two longhaired Laikas were lying nearby on the snow and guarding them. The dogs heard the noise of our sleds and started barking. The Nenets were guarding the deer against wolves. When the dogs barked, one Nenets woke up and started talking with Nikolai. We headed towards the chum and the Nenets walked behind our sleds.

... After the following meeting, while gathering deer, I examined the dogs. Serotetta Vyrya had four dogs (two males and two females); three of them were white longhaired dogs and one was a black “Yando”. Vanuita Endov had three dogs, all longhaired white males. Serotetta Nobe had four dogs (in two chum), all males; two of them were white longhaired and two were gray shorthaired dogs.

... December 9. We arrived at the chum of Pappa Vanuita at 10:20 a.m. He has four dogs. Vanuita Mandeku and Serotetta Nenchenku also have four dogs each.

... 12 December. With translation by Latai, we talked with Khatiku. He told us about polar foxes and about dogs. According to Khatiku, the Nenets call their dogs by different names. A dog that works on deer is called tanyrgi veniku (reindeer herding dog); a dog that works poorly on deer is called voivo veniku (bad dog); a dog that works on birds is called khanina veniku (hunting dog); and a dog that works on polar fox is called nogona meto veniku (fox hunting dog).

1938 began. On the first day of February, a trip to Belyi Island was planned.

“It is a quiet, soft day. Sleds ordered yesterday arrived about noon. Until 2 p.m. we had a last conversation with some overwintering people, got ourselves ready and had a farewell talk. I am riding with a Nenets whose



name is Yar Sabo. We have to ride over a distance of four stages until the Yantikyakhe River. I paid him 20 rubles for the ride. My further route would lead from the chum of Vengi Wyrana (on the Yantikyakhe River), on to the chum of Yaptika Naiki, where we had stayed overnight, then towards Malygin Straight to the chum of Vanuita Abole, and finally straight to the Polar Station on Belyi Island (six "stages" across Malygin Straight and across Belyi Island to the station on Belyi Island over 17-18 "stages". If we traveled only during daylight, it would take three days.

We left Drovyanoy at 2:30 p.m.. I headed towards the sleds, when I was stopped by a message: Nenets Vengu Tem had brought a seal puppy, which he obtained yesterday at Drovyanoy cape. Seal give birth to young somewhat earlier than reindeer.

... I spent the night in the chum of Verona and at daybreak headed to the chum of Okatetta Myaru on the Yadyyakhi River. The distance as long as five stages we covered in a normal time (one stage took a little longer than one hour)... Okatetta Myaru offered tea and gave me a ride to the chum of Serotetta Pannoki. Serotetta Pannoki harnessed deer at once and gave me a ride to the chum of Vengi Sadoma (in one stage). We were riding well. Sadoma is a young lad, well capable of finding the direction despite the absence of moon and stars; he arrived at the chum of Abole without a mistake. Here there are five chum set up in a line over equal intervals from each other; there are many sleds around them. There are many dogs in the chum; some of them are very interesting.

We had some rest in the chum of Abole and took off at 4 a.m. on February 10 towards some chum on the bank of the Malygin Straight. Sadoma gave me a ride; he was going to replace his deer at some chum on the bank of the Straight. At 4:40 p.m. we arrived at three chum of Vanuita, on the bank of the Straight. We replaced the deer; the Nenets carefully selected deer for harness, choosing strong bulls, because travel to the island is very difficult and deer, after a long run to the polar station in the NW part of the island (near Rogozin) would have to return without food. After dawn, we hit the road.

The Nenets never travel to Belyi Island in one sled, always in several sleds, because crossing the Straight is dangerous. The shore slopes gradually to the Straight. In the beginning, the ice is smooth, but then rows of hummocky ice appear. We crossed the first row, then the second and the third one. The first two rows of hummocks took half an hour of careful riding and the deer were working hard. After the third row, the narrowest strip of hummocks, there was a vast ice field and further there were large hummocks all the way to the horizon. We are crossing Malygin Cape in order to get out to western shore of the island. The Nenets got lost in the large hummocks. The time when we were supposed to get on the shore of the island expired long ago. After almost six hours on the ice, among the hummocks, the deer were exhausted and many of them lay down, when we stopped. I took out a map and a compass and tried to find the direction, showed the Nenets the direction and in about one hour we got out of hummocks to the shore.

The island, where we traveled, is flat, white and monotonous like a table. We were riding along the shoreline heading north. Tracks of polar foxes leading from the island to the shore ice and back to the tundra are frequent. Traps set up along the shoreline appeared.

An overwintering team met us with joy. They knew about my arrival by radio, but they did not expect us so soon. The distance from the station to the trading post at Drovyanoy is 240-250 km and normally it takes 3-4 days to cover it. I had been riding a little longer than 2 days, including the loss of time in the Malygin Straight and wandering during the first day.

The equipment at the research station on Belyi Island differs from that of trading posts in Yamal in the accommodations and especially in the personnel. They left a very good impression. There was a large library at this station, over 1,000 books. There are sled dogs.

As a result of two years of overwintering on Belyi Island (1934-1935), the biologist Leonov has put together a map for use by hunters and biologists. He marked areas of large concentrations of seals near Schubert Cape (the SE part of the island). Among the hunting animals of Belyi Island, Leonov listed wild reindeer, polar fox, arctic wolf, polar bear and seal. It would make sense to create a nature reserve on the island for the preservation of wild reindeer.

... February 20. The Nenets arrived and in two days we took off back. We crossed tracks of wild reindeer twice. We reached the Straight and started crossing it. Here the hummocks are smaller and scattered more sparsely, the deer run fast, sometimes galloping. At noon we are in Yamal, in the area of the Mogcheyakha River, and came to the chum of Okatetta Khate and Okhatetta Takun. I examined and measured dogs from both chum. The total number of dogs is eight. They are smallish and of the same type and all are longhaired. In the chum of Abale are two dogs, both have a beautiful head and both males are interesting and of different types..."

From September 1937 to March 1938, Volkov investigated in detail and described 179 Reindeer Herding Laikas from 60 chum in areas of the trading posts of the Northern Way, including Se-Yaga, Tambei and

Drovyanaya. He filed his data on individual cards on each dog. He also made a brief description of 336 Reindeer Herding Laikas in chum of the northeastern part of Yamal.

At this point, the survey of dogs was over and he began preparations to purchase dogs and ship them to Chukotka Peninsula.

Research workers of the Zonal Biological Station (ZBS) became interested in the work of Volkov and suggested he prepared the publication of a popular book about Reindeer Herding Laika. Mikhail Grigoryevich completed his assignment on baiting and trapping polar foxes. He submitted his research material to S. D. Pereleshin. Pereleshin published it without acknowledgements or any reference to the source of the publication.



Way to the Far East

In spring, 1938, Mikhail Georgievich bought 23 breeding quality Reindeer Herding Laikas for the foundation stock of the State Kennels in Chukotka National Province of the Far Eastern Territory.

The plan to move to Chukotka by the northern sea way failed for a variety of reasons. According to an order from Moscow, the expedition should start by the river ways, then by railroad and then by sea from Yamal to Kamchatka.

The first stage of the journey was Gornyi Khamanel – Salekhard.

The departure from Gornyi was postponed for several days even after the Ob River mouth had cleared of ice. The cause of the delay was a breakdown in a fishing convoy that occurred between Puiko and Gornyi. They took off only on June 9. Together with Volkov, a family of Nenets Vanuita Nol and 37 Reindeer Herding Laikas were in the party. There were 23 adult dogs and 14 puppies. We embarked on the fishery vessel “Shchuka” that had been damaged by a storm and was towed by a launch named “Volkov”. First, it was taken into Puiko for repair stern first. The storm had caused a strong lateral swinging motion and waves sometimes rolled over the deck. Therefore, all the dogs were transferred from the deck into the hold, where the bitches with puppies had been accommodated earlier.

In Puiko, they moved into a large wooden barge “Shchuka” that was towed to Salekhard by the steamer “Simakov”. The dogs were very comfortably placed in the spacious stern and the people were in the huge vast hold. The dogs were fed with fresh fish and bread procured while in Gornyi. In the morning of June 11 we arrived in Salekhard.

The second leg of the trip was Salekhard- Omsk, 2,750 km.

In Salekhard, the expedition spent 12 days. Volkov submitted reports to the Fur Office and to the Yamalo-Nenets TKZU. He evaluated the dogs at the 11th periodical review of the Laikas. The steamers were held up for three days. Early in the morning, on June 24 we took off on the express steamer “Communist”. Besides the guide Nolya Vanuita with his wife and son, we temporarily hired veterinary doctor I. A. Nedozrelov. They were all put in the third class passenger compartment. The dogs were accommodated in the stern, which was very small, plus there were also one hunting Laika and two cows.

It was very hot. The steamer moved fast and lots of smuts came out of its chimney, falling on the stern. Smuts were everywhere, in the stern on the dogs and in some dogs the eyes became irritated. In one male named “Taiku”, the skin on the neck and shoulders was also irritated. However, the general condition of the dogs was satisfactory. The dogs were fed twice a day and offered water often. The dog food consisted of scraps of fish (heads), fresh beef and rye bread. The meat was washed several times to retard spoilage. The dogs had a good appetite. In nine days we arrived at Omsk. The third leg of the trip was Omsk- Vladivostok (6,617 km).

In Omsk, the expedition stayed for 28 days because of transportation problem. During all this time, the dogs were kept in very good conditions. They were placed in facilities of the Department of Omsk Veterinary Institute and were under the supervision of research workers of the Department of Parasitology. “Taiku’s” coat

was shorn off and after a few days of rubbing with a special ointment, the skin irritation was gone. During July none of the dogs got ill and all the dogs had been dewormed.

On July 31, at last, they got a freight railroad car. It was well equipped for shipping dogs; it was washed, disinfected, with tie rings and with special ledges for the handlers to rest on. The dogs' food was horsemeat and bread. On August 1, the car took off from Omsk and during the first two weeks we moved at a normal speed with a fast freight train. On the second half of the trip we moved very slowly. Prolonged stops occurred at each station until Khabarovsk. In Khabarovsk our car stayed for two days, because a flood had washed away the railroad. For the same reason, trains moved very slowly between Khabarovsk and Vladivostok. The train stayed for a long time in Bikin and then traveled for four days to Vladivostok. Inside the car, the dogs were accommodated comfortably; the bitches with puppies were placed separately under the benches for the people. Food for the dogs taken in Omsk came to an end and the handlers bought mainly bread and milk at railroad stations. The dogs were fed twice a day and offered water four times a day. Cleaning out the car was adjusted to the movement of the train, because at stations throwing out garbage was not allowed. The heat was tiresome for the dogs and they all were molting. Sometimes they had liquid stools, perhaps because of the water quality. Veterinary examinations at stations were superficial and there was no help in procuring food. Not far from Vladivostok four puppies died. Only those puppies, which were fed by lactating mothers, survived. On October 6, we arrived at Vladivostok.

The fourth leg of the trip was Vladivostok-Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky (2, 467 km).

In Vladivostok, our expedition spent 3.5 months, because of the lack of transportation. Dogs were placed on the land of a recycling plant. The food was good: fresh cooked meat, fresh fish and bread. During this time, the dogs did not fall ill. We made an agreement in advance with the captain of the steamer "Kiev" heading to Petropavlovsk on taking the dogs aboard. On the boat-deck, we built a very convenient shelter for the dogs. It was a large wire cage, which was used formerly for chickens.

On December 16, the dogs were loaded on the steamer, and on the 21st of December we took off. To feed the dogs, we purchased 113 kg of fresh fish and 40 kg of bread. During the trip, the fish was fed both fresh and cooked (every day two buckets of soup was cooked). Sometimes table scraps were fed to the dogs, but it was done very carefully. In the Okhotsk Sea, during a storm, the condition of the dogs became worse, but they did not lose their appetite and weight. On December 29, 1938, we arrived at Petropavlovsk.

During the 1,300 km travel to Petropavlovsk, we continued our dog-breeding program.

While still on the Yamal Peninsula, in April-May, four bitches gave birth to puppies. The total number of puppies was 14. They were transferred to the Yamalo-Nenets OKRZU, Salekhard. While on the steamer "Communist", the fifth bitch named "Nalto" gave birth to four puppies. In Omsk one more bitch gave birth to five puppies.

As a result, the number of the expedition's Olenegonkas was doubled. The young dogs were transferred to appropriate organizations for breeding and introduction of the Nenets Reindeer Herding Dog into reindeer breeding establishments. Thus, in Vladivostok, three puppies and three adult Reindeer Herding Laikas were transferred to the Chukotka Trust of Glavsevmorput (Northern Way Head Office). They were sent to Anadyr. Thus, we brought to Petropavlovsk the same number of dogs as we had on the day of departure from the Yamalo-Nenets National Province, though three adult dogs were replaced by puppies.

"... For the first time in the history of the breeding of polar dogs, Reindeer Laikas were shipped over such a huge distance, over latitudes over 30 degrees southwards from N Yamal. For the first time in cynological history, pedigree work was organized and conducted under such harsh conditions and with successful results. This allows us to hope that later work on reindeer herding dogs would accelerate the reconstruction of the reindeer establishments of the Far Eastern North."

In the newspaper "Kamchatskaya Pravda", Volkov published an article "Herding Dogs for Reindeer Breeders of Kamchatka", in which he described how the Reindeer Herding Laika works, its endurance, dependability and obedience. He attempted to write a brochure "The Herding Dog in Yamal Reindeer Farming", but it was rejected by OGIZ in 1939.

New dogs were placed in Khutor, Petropavlovsk District and all necessary conditions for them were secured: good food, general care and good veterinary service. Local authorities (leaders of the Provincial Fishing Trust) were planning how to reorganize local reindeer husbandry in the area, preparing instructors for breeding reindeer herding dogs and herdsman and making new local foundation kennels. They listened to recommendations given to them by Volkov and distributed dogs according to the condition of each reindeer-breeding establishment.

At this time, Volkov got a new appointment as Director of Kamchatka State Pedigree Kennel of Reindeer Herding Laikas. However, because he needed some rest and had health problems, he was offered a vacation from

June 25 to October 25, 1939. The duties of the Director for this period were transferred to the reindeer specialist A. K. Grechnev.

Thus, the mission assigned by the Peoples Komissariat was accomplished. Reindeer herding Laikas had been shipped to Koryak National Province and to Chukotka and, as I mentioned above, several Laikas were also transferred to reindeer breeders in Vladivostok.

These travelers made 13,000 kilometers and now, they were in Kamchatka (Khutor, Petropavlovsk District, May, 1938).

It is amazing how the man under such complex and prolonged travel managed to create favorable conditions for the normal maintenance and even breeding of dogs!

I should admit that the Headquarter of the Far Northern Branch of the Peoples Commissariat did little to help this expedition and did not send any orders to local authorities to assist Volkov during his trip by purchasing foodstuffs and better accommodation for the dogs. Funding was very poor during the entire year, from August 1937 to June 1938; the Peoples Commissariat did not pay a penny. However, there was an order to Volkov to buy biscuits and feed them to the dogs during the trip, which contradicts all animal science recommendations about feeding dogs. Most importantly, Volkov had got an order about changing the destination of the dogs. Instead of Chukotka, it became Koryak National Province, Kamchatka, which was very different climatically.

In Moscow, Volkov in co-authorship with I. I. Vakhrushev, published a book - "Hunting Laikas", which sold quickly. He also found time for improving his health and to extend his vacation time at his own expense. At this time, I passed my exams and had got the Diploma of Wildlife Biologist.

In the end we are both on the road heading to Kamchatka. For almost half a year we were making our way to Slautnoye, Penzhinsky District. During December, in blizzards we were riding for 900 km in dogs sleds along the eastern shores of Kamchatka, over white snowy silence unpopulated by people. Travel during bitter frosts and a blizzard was not without troubles; we arrived to Slautnoye exhausted and with frostbite. After we had a little of rest and looked around, we were horrified! It could not be worse. Purebred breeding stock dogs were living under open skies; lumps of hair were hanging off emaciated Laikas that had not completed their molt. The barn used for raising young dogs was transparent because of large gaps in its walls.

Nolya Vanuita with his wife Nastya had stayed here to live together with the dogs. He was had been forced to take lactating bitches and their puppies inside his home to save their lives. They lived with 20 dogs in one room with their own kids, dirty, cold and with nothing to eat... There were difficulties with food. To feed his family, Nolya was hunting hares and ptarmigans with loop traps. A single store in the area did not have any food products; therefore we were forced to hunt. Ptarmigans often alighted on bushes near our house. When the Smutnaya River cleared of ice (it was a few steps from our house), Nolya caught enough fish with nets for both our families and for the dogs.

It is hard to understand how Grechnev, who did not know even elementary things about cynology, could take such a responsibility. The dogs were in a pitiful condition. He had lost a few breeding stock Laikas during the trip from Khutor to Slavutnoye. People told us that he tied dogs to deer sleds and the poor dogs could not keep up with deer, they fell and were dragged; some of them were injured under deer hooves.

We quickly started to work; Mikhail Georgievich as Director of the Foundation Kennel and I as an instructor on pedigree work. There was no vacancy for a wildlife biologist. Volkov took from Grechnev only his own Olenegonkas originally from Yamal and their puppies, of whose pure origin he had no doubts. Then, he asked RAIZO of Penzhino to move the Kennel to a different place, from which it would be easier to communicate with reindeer farming people and to supply them with trained adult Reindeer Herding Laikas and puppies assisted by an instructor for their training. There was no reaction. Then, Volkov took his own decision and relocated the kennel to Kultbaza at the mouth of the Penzhina River. In June, during the spring flood, when the sun did not go beyond the horizon, workers of the State kennel loaded all the dogs onto three secure boats and moved downstream first on the Sla-ugnoy River and then on the Penzhina River. They had to move over 500 km. It was unbearably hot during the day. Therefore, they traveled mainly by night. The Laikas behaved excellent.

Our appearance in Kultbaza was unexpected and the authorities of the community had no choice but find a place for the kennel.

We started to work immediately. We established contacts with the reindeer establishments, planned breeding combinations and put together a checklist for puppies for transferring them to reindeer farms.

The breeding stock dogs from Yamal were few and they were precious. We created for them the best possible conditions, a place for exercising and the best food.

Vanuita Nolya traveled to reindeer herds and taught herdsmen how to train Reindeer Herding Laikas. During this time I was busy with taking care of the dogs, traveling by boat on the Penzhina River and taking fish out of the nets for feeding the dogs. Nastya helped me.

It was wartime. There were reductions of working stuff and soon I had to say goodbye to my work, but I still helped my husband in the running the State Kennel. There was plenty of spare time and I shot birds with a shotgun for the collection of the Zoological Museum of Moscow State University, with which we maintained constant contacts. This is how we got permission for shooting birds for scientific purposes.

Volkov continued his work and wrote to both economic and Communist Party officials about the need to organize additional kennels on reindeer breeding farms and to educate herdsmen in working with Reindeer Herding Laikas. If this were accomplished, the investment made by the Peoples Commissariat into the Foundation Kennel of the Reindeer Herding Laika would be justified and the four-year-long work on Reindeer Herding Laika would be productive.

There was a plan to improve the facilities of the kennel in such a way that visiting herdsmen from collective farms could learn by watching how to keep and train Reindeer Hunting Laikas and how to save on food, fuel etc.

Requests asking about the organization of breeding kennels of Reindeer Herding Laikas on collective farms were coming in. Reindeer breeders realized how effective the assistance of Olenegonka was. There was a plan to move the foundation stock kennel to other locations closer to collective farms.

However, the war continued and it required ever increasing funds. Volkov was released from his position and transferred to Kamchatsky OblZO. He became Senior Wildlife Biologist in the Kamchatka Hunting Industry Office, but he soon left for the frontline. I worked for sometime as a Wildlife Biologist, replacing my husband and then, with my little son and a hunting dog named "Duminar" I returned in Moscow and worked as a wildlife biologist in Ivanovo Province.

After the War, Volkov was appointed as Director of Kronotsky Nature Reserve. We were back in Kamchatka! It was a different area of work, but it was not less complex and challenging. Through rumors, we knew that Reindeer Herding Laikas had got recognition and were gradually introduced in reindeer breeding farms.

After a few years of work in the Nature Reserve, we returned to Moscow. Volkov got a new job as Chief of the kennel of working dogs DOSAAF in Ilyinske, not far from Moscow. Then he got other difficult appointments, which were detrimental to his health and Mikhail Georgievich retired at the age of 54 years by reason of disability. However, he continued work as a cynologist and got the rank of All-Union Expert in Hunting Dogs; he conducted dog shows and field trials, published and lectured.

He was a dedicated supporter of aboriginal Laikas and insisted that taking aboriginal breeds from the peoples who created them was not permissible. However, his voice is a "voice in the desert". Contemporary cynologists were ignorant and could not sort out aboriginal Laikas of our vast country and grouped them in a few breeds.

A stroke disrupted the active life of Mikhail Georgievich for six years and he passed away in June 1990.

Trying to fulfill his will to describe the expedition to Yamal and Belyi Island, I several times offered these materials to publishers, but always hit a wall of indifference. To them, it was an old and forgotten deal and nobody knew if Reindeer Herding Laikas survived in the Far Eastern north and it was interesting only to a few.

Olenegonkas are alive!

There are many people in the world, whose interests are limited only to their personal well being, but the world is not based on them. There are other, different people, whose enthusiasm results in important accomplishments!

I was anxious to find out if the work of my husband has produced lasting results and if true Reindeer Herding Laikas do exist in Chukotka and Kamchatka.

Based on facts, I can tell yes, they do exist! "Okhota and okhotnihye khozyaistvo" convinced me that they do. In No. 3, 1995, they published my appeal to everyone who knows about reindeer herding Laikas to write to me.

And letters were coming in... The sender's address on the envelope reads: Beringovsky, Chukotka National Province, from Margarita Kozachenko: "...We have lived in Khatyrka for four years. Reindeer Herding Laikas are highly valued by Chukchi reindeer breeders. There are dogs in the tundra teams. About 8-10 years ago, they brought from Vayech, Markovsky District several pure white puppies to the Soviet Farm "Khatyrsky" and distributed them among reindeer herding teams. There is a kennel in Markovo, where they are bred. Good purebred Olenegonkas occur in the tundra, in remote reindeer herding teams and in Meinypylgino. We have one Olenegonka named "Shturman". I am sending his photograph. He is 2.5 years old; height at the shoulder is 48 cm. If it is not difficult, please, describe the detailed standard of these dogs. August 13, 1996".

Boris Ivanovich Shiroky writes from Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, President of the Russian Club "Northern Dog": "In Chukotka, by 1960, Reindeer Herding Laikas were well introduced into collective farms of the eastern

tundra. At this time, there was the Anadyr regional kennel of Reindeer Herding Laikas. I. Kustova was its director. In Markovo, a similar kennel still existed in 1987. Pockets of good reindeer herding dogs on reindeer farms remained south of Markovo. Now, typical Olenegonkas are present in some herds in southern Chukotka (Anadyr District) and in the north of Kamchatka (Penzhino and Olutor Districts of Koryak National Province). In Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, some dog lovers have these Laikas.

Because of their unique qualities and versatility, Olenegonkas appear in Moscow and Leningrad and one kennel exist in Irshava, Transcarpathia. Some dogs entered Western Europe. Some enthusiasts discovered other special features. Thus, in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, one male became the best search and rescue dog and in Transcarpathia they worked as good hunting dogs. Because no private reindeer herds appeared and because of the incentive to save on herdsmen, the Government of Kamchatka Province promised its support for the organization of a kennel of Olenegonkas in Bystrinsky District (Anavgai) This letter was received on August 3, 1996.

I hope this is not all the information about Reindeer Herding Laikas, which wildlife biologist M. G. Volkov studied so thoroughly in their home country in Yamala Peninsula and Belyi Island and then shipped with great difficulties over 13,000 km to the northern peoples of the Far East.

I heard the President of Russia recently signed a law about the restoration and of the reindeer industry in the Far North. Possibly this would somehow benefit kennels of Reindeer Herding Laikas and help to improve the conditions of life of these remarkable assistants of reindeer keepers.

In conclusion I would like to thank from my heart those people who helped me to fulfill my commitment to tell the story about this remarkable expedition to a wide reading audience.

Moscow, Ilyinskoye, March, 1997.

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All spitz, especially Nordic.

France

Association «Danse avec les chiens»
f.bivel@tiscali.fr

Ponomareva V. Lada

Russian and east aboriginal borzoi.

Russia

Moscow Society of Hunters and Fishermen

All questions, suggestions and comments will be accepted with gratitude. E-mail them or send them as snail mail to: Marina G. Kuzina mail box 12, Moscow, 115407 RUSSIA

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