Written exam SH-201 The History of Svalbard
Monday 10th of February 2014, hours: 14.00-17.00

Permitted aids: none, except dictionary between English and mother tongue

The exam is a 3 hour written test. It consists of two parts: Part I is a multiple choice test of factual knowledge. This sheet with answers to part I shall be handed in. Part II (see below) is an essay part where you write extensively about one of two alternative subjects. You may answer in English, Norwegian, Swedish or Danish.

Part I counts approximately 1/3 and part II counts 2/3 of the grade at the evaluation, but adjustment may take place. Both parts must be passed in order to pass the whole exam.

Part I: Multiple choice test. Make only one cross for each question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. When was the first European map that definitely showed Spitsbergen published?</td>
<td>□ 1569 □ 1580 □ 1598</td>
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<td>2. When did whaling start at Svalbard?</td>
<td>□ 1603 □ 1611 □ 1642</td>
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<td>3. What did the Russian Pomors call Svalbard?</td>
<td>□ Pomorye □ Maly Broun □ Grumant</td>
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<td>4. In 1827 a new farthest north record of nearly 83 degrees was set – by whom?</td>
<td>□ Phipps □ Parry □ Peary</td>
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<td>5. Who was the first to attempt to fly from Svalbard to the North Pole with an aircraft?</td>
<td>□ Andrée □ Wellman □ Amundsen</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. When was the “Mining Code” for Svalbard put into force?</td>
<td>□ 1920 □ 1925 □ 1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Where was the first Soviet Russian coal mine?</td>
<td>□ Grumant □ Barentsburg □ Pyramiden</td>
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<td>8. When, during World War II, was Svalbard’s Soviet population evacuated?</td>
<td>□ 1940 □ 1941 □ 1942</td>
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<td>9. When was the coal company Store Norske taken over by the Norwegian state?</td>
<td>□ 1933 □ 1976 □ 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. In 1952 an animal species was totally protected on Svalbard – which one?</td>
<td>□ Reindeer □ Walrus □ Polar bear</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. How far (nautical miles) is the borderline of Svalbard’s territorial waters?</td>
<td>□ 4 nm □ 12 nm □ 200 nm</td>
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Part II: Choose and answer one of the following questions:

A. The Russians on Svalbard

Russia has long traditions on Svalbard. Describe the development of Russian activity on the archipelago from its beginning until the present. Discuss which interests Russia might have on Svalbard today.

Russian activity on Svalbard spans a period of at least two centuries and includes hunting and trapping, scientific exploration and coal mining. Russians were the first to winter on a regular basis on the islands, and they still maintain permanent settlement today, although at a much lower level than during the Cold War period. Their long-time presence suggests that Svalbard has been and still is of significant interest to the Russian state.

Hunters and trappers

Russian exploitation of Svalbard’s resources started with the Pomors’ hunting and trapping. “Pomory” means “people living by the sea”, i.e. the White Sea. Pomors originate from the South of Russia and colonized the White Sea region from the 12th century on. They developed
a versatile economy consisting of farming, fishing, hunting and trade. Sea mammal hunting was a speciality, particularly walrus. Following this prey the Pomors expanded into the Arctic – the Pechora Sea, Kara Sea, Novaya Zemlya and eventually Svalbard. It is disputed when they established themselves. According to Russian tradition they arrived early at Svalbard – or Grumant, as they called it. Archaeologist V.F. Starkov maintains they came before Barentsz, in the 16th century. Western scientists believe they came at a later stage; Archaeologist T. Hultgreen says after 1700, when tsar Peter I initiated Arctic whaling and trade.

There were both summer and winter expeditions. The latter probably numbered fewer men, but the activity was extensive. Remains of Pomor trapping stations are found all over Svalbard. While the summer expeditions primarily hunted sea mammals, the winterers could also hunt or trap fur animals and collect eider-down and eggs. Although a few trappers stayed voluntarily or by mishap for more years (e.g. the famous Ivan Starostin stayed 39 winters), the regular pattern was seasonal. The winterers were collected by the summer expedition the following year.

We lack exact information about the organization and results of Pomor hunting, but it seems it peaked before 1800. Often the expeditions were fitted out by merchants, townships or even monasteries. The last expedition returned in 1852. There are numerous possible explanations as to why the activity stopped, but probably structural changes in the Pomor economy are important. Fishing and trade received more attention in the 19th century.

Scientific exploration
One of the first scientific expeditions to explore Svalbard and the North Pole region was organized by Russia. This was the so-called Chichagov-expedition 1764-66, inspired by the great scientist Lomonosov. The main objective was to seek a passage across the Polar Sea north of Svalbard, which was a failure. However, the expedition established a winter station at Tomtodden in Recherchefjorden, where two winterings and a scientific program were carried out.

The Russian Academy of Sciences also took part in the great Arc-of-Meridian measurement project on Svalbard 1899-1901, in cooperation with Sweden. In the Soviet period Russian scientists have focused on geosciences on Svalbard, in particular geology. The helicopter base at Heerodden near Barentsburg was built up from the 1960s to support geological field work, including petroleum exploration. Today, Russia maintains a permanent research facility in Barentsburg and there are many Russian students and scientists at UNIS.

Coal mining
Russian interests in coal mining on Svalbard started before the revolution, e.g. by the Anglo-Russian Grumant Co., which started the Grumant mine. During World War I most of the mining activity was abandoned. After the war the mine was run for a few years, but had to give in during the economic crisis in the 1920s.

The Soviet Trust Arktikugol started coal mining in Grumant and Barentsburg in 1931-32, expanding rapidly. Also the Pyramiden estate was acquired from a Swedish company. There were a few women and small children, but nothing like a family community. From 1949 Pyramiden was built up. Grumant closed in 1962, Pyramiden in 1998. From the 1960s the Russian settlements had a well-developed welfare infrastructure, including cultural centres, schools and kindergartens – on par with or better than Longyearbyen at that time. All the same, none of these towns were comparable to ordinary local communities. For example, there was a large majority of males, there was only one employer in each settlement, housing and catering was organized by the company and so on. There was even a local monetary system, both in the Russian and Norwegian towns.

At the most there were some 3,000 people working in the Soviet coal mines on Svalbard – twice or three times as many as in Norwegian. After the breakdown of the Soviet Union in
1991 the number of inhabitants decreased, and there are now only 4–500 left, mostly Ukrainians working for the Russian company Trust Arktikugol.

Political development
In 1871 the Swedish government inquired European states whether they would object to an annexation of Spitsbergen to Norway. Russia protested, and the initiative was abandoned. The question of administration arose again in the early 20th century. Russia took part in the conferences that took place in Kristiania (Oslo) in 1910, 1912 and 1914, but no agreement was reached. After World War I the question of sovereignty was taken up at the peace conference in Paris in 1919, but the new post-revolutionary regime in Russia had not been recognized by the Western states and hence did not take part in the negotiations. On 9 February 1920 the Spitsbergen Treaty was signed, giving Norway “full and absolute sovereignty” over the archipelago. Soviet-Russia protested, although Russian interests on Svalbard were explicitly recognized in the Treaty (article 10). Before taking over sovereignty of Svalbard in 1925, Norway recognized the Soviet government and in return Soviet Russia formally accepted Norwegian sovereignty on Svalbard. The Soviet Union became a signatory to the treaty in 1935.

The Soviet settlements were evacuated in 1941 due to the war, and in 1943 German ships bombed and heavily destroyed the mines in Barentsburg and Grumant. In November 1944 the Soviet foreign minister Molotov demanded an annulment of the Svalbard Treaty and expressed that the responsibility for the archipelago should be shared between Norway and the Soviet Union. The Norwegian government started a process to prepare a renegotiation of the treaty, but this was called off by the Storting in 1947.

In 1946 the Russians started reconstruction of their coal mining on Svalbard, now including Pyramiden. Recurring marked crises and economic problems made coal mining unprofitable, but for political reasons it was important to uphold activity for Norway as well as for the USSR.

Svalbard was in the periphery of the Cold War. The Arctic in general was strategically very important, particularly as an operation area for nuclear submarines of the Soviet North Fleet and for military intelligence. Svalbard, however, was largely spared by military activity. This was in the interest of both Norway/NATO and the Soviet Union. Norway kept a low profile – the so called “low tension policy” was intended not to provoke negative reactions from the Soviets and was quite successful. There were only a handful of issues that represented a real strain on the relations: e.g. the airport matter (1960s), the petroleum exploration (1960s), the ESRO radars (1967–74) and the Hopen airplane accident (1978).

Present and future interests
A limited coal mining is still going on in Barentsburg. However, the Trust Arktikugol needs to develop new coal resources if the activity is to continue. Alternatively, they must venture into new areas like for example tourism, service industries, and increased scientific activity to keep up the activity. Pyramiden and Grumant are still Russian properties. From a political and strategic point of view, it is probably important for Russia to maintain a permanent presence on Svalbard. Firstly, it is a close-lying region where Russia has economic interests of long standing. Russian vessels fish regularly in Svalbard waters. Possible future exploitation of mineral and petroleum resources will be of interest, as well as shipping in the Arctic Ocean. Secondly, Russia still has a major part of her military capacities in the Kola region and this region is obviously important for Russian security. Presence on Svalbard thus represents both a basis and a watch-tower for Russian interests in the Arctic.
B. Svalbard from no man’s land to part of Norway

Svalbard’s legal status has changed over time. Describe the main lines in the political history of the archipelago. Discuss how and why Norway got sovereignty over Svalbard.

For more than three hundred years, from its discovery in 1596 and until 1920, the Svalbard islands were a no man’s land – a terra nullius. The Spitsbergen (or Svalbard) Treaty of 1920 changed this status, granting sovereignty to Norway, who formally took over in 1925 and proclaimed Svalbard an integral part of the kingdom. Although seriously challenged by World War II, the treaty has held its own for nearly a hundred years.

Terra nullius

A Dutch expedition under the leadership of Willem Barentsz discovered Bjørnøya and Spitsbergen in June 1596. The Dutch did not, however, claim any kind of sovereignty over the area at the time. When whaling started in Svalbard waters in the second decade of the 17th century, there were some conflicts over access and rights among participating nations. In 1613 the English insisted on exclusive rights to whaling, partly because they started the activity and partly because they – falsely – claimed to have discovered the islands in 1553, during Hugh Willoughby’s expedition. To underpin their claim, Svalbard was called “King James His new Land” in honour of the king of England. The Dutch protested heavily, both against the alleged British discovery and against the very concept of annexation of a remote area like this. Relying on Hugo Grotius’ principles of mare liberum, the free open seas, they denied that anyone could claim sovereignty over these waters. The Danish-Norwegian king Christian IV also maintained a general sovereignty over the “Northern Seas” based on ancient historical rights on Greenland and in the North Atlantic. He also sent a few naval ships to Svalbard to try and collect taxes from the whalers, but was largely ignored. Following a local agreement among the whaling fleet commanders in 1618, Svalbard became in practice an international commons and acquired over the years a legal status as terra nullius. This situation remained unchanged for some 250 years.

The Spitsbergen issue

Based on an initiative from A.E. Nordenskiöld, who sought the protection of the king for his planned colony at Kapp Thordsen, the Swedish government in 1871 inquired European states whether they would object to an annexation of Spitsbergen to Norway. At this time, Norway and Sweden were in a personal union under the Swedish king. Norway was somewhat sceptical, whereas most other governments were either positively inclined or uninterested. However, Russia protested and the initiative was abandoned.

During the 1890s public opinion in Norway leaned more towards an annexation, probably inspired by the polar expeditions of Nansen. When the union with Sweden was dissolved in 1905, this became a part of the foreign policy program of the young, independent Norwegian government. Preliminary conferences were called in Kristiania (Oslo) in 1910 and 1912, where Norway, Sweden and Russia were supposed to draft an international treaty. The proposed a joint administration by the three states, a so called condominium. Finally, in 1914 an international conference assembled in Kristiania to solve the “Spitsbergen issue”, but no agreement was reached.

During World War I Norwegian economic interests on Svalbard grew, and the question of sovereignty was raised at the peace conference in Paris in 1919. On 9 February 1920 the Spitsbergen Treaty was signed, giving Norway “full and absolute sovereignty” over the archipelago, but granting excessive rights to citizens of the signatory states. The treaty of 1920 gave sovereignty to Norway, but did not envisage a particular regime or administration – that was up to Norway to decide. I took the better part of five years to work out an arrangement. Norway formally assumed sovereignty on 14 August 1925, at which point the treaty and the associated Mining Code, as well as the Norwegian Law on Svalbard, was put
into force. Svalbard, as the Spitsbergen archipelago now was renamed, thus changed status from a no man’s land to an integral part of Norway.

**Economic crisis and war**
The economic crisis in the 1920s resulted in a contraction of coal mining, and from the 1930s only Soviet and Norwegian mines were in production. In this period Svalbard had virtually no strategic importance and very little economic significance. The settlements were evacuated in August-September 1941, and during World War II there were only a handful of German weather stations on Svalbard, and also a small Norwegian garrison. In September 1943 German warships attacked the main settlements and destroyed them. Svalbard was important in the “weather war”; meteorological data were vital for both sides’ war operations in the Northern Atlantic and the Barents Sea.

In November 1944 the Soviet foreign minister Molotov demanded an annulment of the Svalbard Treaty and expressed that the responsibility for the archipelago should be shared between Norway and the Soviet Union. The Norwegian government started a process to prepare a renegotiation of the treaty, but this was called off by the Storting in 1947. In 1949 Norway joined NATO, and Svalbard was included in the NATO defence area in 1951.

**Post-war period**
Svalbard was in the periphery of the Cold War. The Arctic in general was strategically very important, particularly as an operation area for nuclear submarines of the Soviet North Fleet and for military intelligence. Svalbard, however, was largely spared by military activity. This was in the interest of both Norway/NATO and the Soviet Union. Norway kept a low profile – the so called “low tension policy” was intended not to provoke negative reactions from the Soviets and was quite successful. There were only a handful of issues that represented a real strain on the relations: e.g. the airport matter (1960s), the petroleum exploration (1960s), the ESRO radars (1967–74) and the Hopen airplane accident (1978).

Due to developments in the Law of the Sea Norway has been able to expand its sea territory greatly, and in 1977 also declared a 200 NM fishery protection zone around Svalbard. Norway claims full sovereignty over sea and continental shelf in this area, but this is disputed by other states. Considering also the potential petroleum development in Arctic areas, and in view of climate changes, this explains why the High North has become top priority of Norwegian policy.

*Why Norwegian sovereignty?*
From 1905 to World War I Norway worked carefully, but steadily to gain influence on Svalbard. It was the Norwegian government that initiated the political process to solve the question of administration, clearly with an ambition to take a dominant position – hopefully, even gain sovereignty. This proved to be an unlikely or impossible outcome before the war, as particularly Sweden and Russia wanted a hand on the steering wheel. The Spitsbergen Conferences 1910–14 indicated that full Norwegian sovereignty was unrealistic.

The events during and after the war changed the political situation. Norwegian economic interests on Svalbard had grown and become predominant. At the Paris peace conference in 1919 Norway put forward a claim of full sovereignty. Norway’s merchant fleet made a significant war effort on the allied side, and so Norway enjoyed considerable good-will among the victorious great powers. Germany and Russia, who had both opposed Norwegian pretentions before the war, were barred from taking part in the negotiations. There was a general will at the peace conference to solve remaining territorial issues, of which Spitsbergen was but one. As long as the treaty secured the acquired rights and interests of the various nations’ citizens and the area kept out of big politics, it seemed a practical solution to grant sovereignty to neutral Norway, who had forwarded a claim as the only state. There is an element of compensation as well, in view of Norway’s losses during the war.