

The University Centre in Svalbard
Written exam SH-201 The History of Svalbard (re-sit)
Monday 11th of May 2015, hours: 13.00-16.00

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 $\frac{1}{3}$ and part II counts $\frac{2}{3}$ 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.

1.	How many ships took part in the Dutch expedition of 1596 that discovered Svalbard?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
2.	When did regular whaling at Svalbard start?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1607	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1611	<input type="checkbox"/> 1618
3.	When did the Pomor hunting activity end?	<input type="checkbox"/> Ca. 1750	<input type="checkbox"/> Ca. 1800	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ca. 1850
4.	A famous scientific expedition visited Svalbard in 1838-39. Under which name is it known?	<input type="checkbox"/> Chichagov	<input type="checkbox"/> Phipps	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recherche
5.	Which nation operated a station on Svalbard during the first International Polar Year?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sweden	<input type="checkbox"/> Norway	<input type="checkbox"/> Poland
6.	When was coal for the first time mined on Svalbard for commercial purposes?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1869	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1899	<input type="checkbox"/> 1905
7.	When did the Svalbard Treaty enter into force?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1920	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1925	<input type="checkbox"/> 1927
8.	Which animal species was the first to be totally protected by regulation on Svalbard?	<input type="checkbox"/> Polar fox	<input type="checkbox"/> Eider duck	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reindeer
9.	Which settlement was closed down in 1998?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pyramiden	<input type="checkbox"/> Grumant	<input type="checkbox"/> Coles Bay
10.	When was the coal company Store Norske nationalized by the state?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1963	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1976	<input type="checkbox"/> 1989
11.	How far does Svalbard's territorial border extend (nautical miles)?	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 NM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 12 NM	<input type="checkbox"/> 200 NM
12.	When was local democracy introduced in Longyearbyen (Lokalstyret)?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1973	<input type="checkbox"/> 1991	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2002

Part II: Choose and answer one of the following questions:

A. 17th Century whaling at Svalbard

Describe the development of whaling in the Svalbard area during the 17th century with regard to participation, geographical distribution and technology. Discuss to what extent the whaling activity was organized like a capitalist industry.

In the 16th century the population of Europe was growing, particularly the urban population. This expanded the markets for commercial crops and foodstuffs, including oils and fats. By the 1580s the imports of oil from the Basque whaling at Labrador were diminishing and alternative hunting grounds had to be found. The discovery of Svalbard in 1596 created new opportunities: in summer the North Atlantic population of Greenland whales concentrated in this area.

From 1611 the British started regular whaling at Svalbard, employing Basque experts. They were soon followed by the Dutch, and a few years later other nations took part as well –

Danes, Norwegians, French, Spanish and German. During the first half of the century the activity was land-based, that is dependent upon processing the whales on-shore. Whales were caught and killed in the bays or close to the coast and then towed to the shore. Land stations with tryworks (oil factories) were built many places along the coast. After initial competition among the whaling fleets during the first decade, the hunting grounds around Svalbard were more or less divided. The Dutch settled in North-West Spitsbergen, whereas the British established stations further south on the west coast of Spitsbergen, e.g. in Magdalenefjorden, the Kongsfjorden and Bellsund region and in Hornsund. Whalers from other nations had to make do with localities in between or put up make-shift tryworks on convenient beaches. Remains of such processing facilities have also been found on the north and east coasts of Spitsbergen and near Edgeøya.

The technology was simple in the sense that it was manual, but the methods and tools were highly specialized. The huge whales were harpooned at close range from small boats. When eventually the animal was exhausted by dragging the long line and the boats fastened to it, a chase which could last for hours, it was killed by the stabbing and cutting of lances. As long as there were land stations, the whales were towed to shore and flensed while floating outside a beach. The blubber was cut into small pieces and melted in large coppers on a fireplace onshore. The train oil was then cooled and rinsed in water vessels and filled on casks. In the pelagic whaling (see below) flensing took place along the shipside; the blubber was normally put directly into casks and produced when the whalers returned home. The main products of whaling were oil extracted from blubber, but also baleen was a commercial product. The meat, however, was not exploited for food.

The first few decades of whaling is often called “the company period”, because the activity was regulated through chartered companies that were granted privileges by national authorities, such as the British “Muscovy Company” (founded in 1553). Thus, the industry was – in principle – monopolized. There were, however, private enterprises as well, so-called “interlopers”, that took part. In 1642 the Dutch abolished their “Noordsche Comagnie” or cartel and whaling practically became open to everybody. After this the activity rose sharply. Catch pressure increased and the hunting grounds became crowded. This stimulated a transition to pelagic whaling, which developed in the latter half of the 17th century. By 1700 most of the land stations at Svalbard were abandoned and the whalers operated in the whole area between Cape Farewell (Greenland) and Svalbard. Whaling in the Davis Strait was also commenced, and by the mid-century 250-350 whaling ships were fitted out every year.

The estimates of the initial North Atlantic stock of Greenland whales vary from around 24,000 animals (IWC) to twice as high. During the 17th and 18th centuries more than 100,000 were killed. Whaling was probably really sustainable only during the first few decades in the 17th century. After that, and particularly after the expansion from the 1640s, the whale stock was over-taxed. The Greenland whale stock collapsed well before 1850 and was in practice hunted to extinction.

A capitalist industry?

Although Arctic whaling developed in the pre-industrial era, it resembles a capitalist industry in a number of ways. First, it was expensive to fit out a whaling ship with a crew of some 40 whalers, sailors and workers. Also big investments were needed to build oil factories, first on Svalbard and later on the European mainland. A profit could only be made if the voyage was successful, i.e. a good catch and no accidents. Indeed, not every voyage was a success; for every good season there might be three or four with small returns. In order to raise the required capital whaling expeditions were usually organized as part-ownerships, and the parts could be bought and sold – much like the shares of a capitalist company. Thus, virtually anyone with money to spare could invest in a whaling expedition.

Second, the whaling industry was large-scale and complex in the sense that it involved many trades and businesses that had to cooperate in an organized manner. In addition to the whalers themselves, there were the outfitters that provided labour, equipment and provisions,

the yards that built and maintained the ships, the factories that produced the oil and the merchants who put the products to market. There was a quite refined international finance and credit system that made this system work – much like a modern market economy.

B. The Svalbard Treaty

Describe the political and diplomatic process that resulted in the Svalbard Treaty of 1920. Discuss why Norway was given the sovereignty over the area and which limitations the treaty imposes on Norwegian rule.

During the early decades of the 17th century there was some controversy regarding supremacy over Svalbard, or Spitsbergen as the area was called. The British claim of sovereignty was opposed both by the Danish-Norwegian king, who himself claimed sovereignty, and by the Dutch who maintained that this area was part of the open seas and could not be claimed by any state. In practice, Svalbard soon became internationally recognized as a no man's land – *terra nullius*. This status prevailed for three hundred years.

Based on an initiative of the scientist A.E. Nordenskiöld, who sought the king's protection for his planned colony at Kapp Thorsden, the Swedish government in 1871-1872 inquired among a number of European states whether they would object to an annexation of Spitsbergen. At this point Sweden and Norway were unified states, and the government found it most appropriate that Spitsbergen be annexed to Norway due to the geographical proximity. Most nations were either positive or disinterested. Russia, however, wanted to uphold the archipelago's political and legal status as *terra nullius*. Therefore the diplomatic initiative was abandoned.

During the 1890s public opinion in Norway leaned more towards an annexation, possibly inspired by the polar expeditions of Nansen. When the union with Sweden was dissolved in 1905, this goal became a part of the foreign policy program of the independent Norwegian government. The start of mineral exploration and exploitation on Spitsbergen soon made question of administration and jurisdiction acute. The Norwegian government used this as a pretext to propose an international conference to solve these issues – in Norway's favour.

Preliminary conferences were convened in Kristiania (Oslo) in 1910 and 1912, where Norway, Sweden and Russia were supposed to draft an international treaty. They 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 particularly the United States and Germany opposed the idea of a condominium and 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. It gave sovereignty to Norway, but did not envisage a particular regime or administration – that was up to Norway to decide. It 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.

Why Norwegian sovereignty?

From 1905 to World War I, Norway had 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 1910-1914 indicated that full Norwegian sovereignty was unrealistic at that point.

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 Norway enjoyed considerable good-will among the victorious great powers. Germany and Russia, who had both opposed Norwegian pretensions 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.

The treaty of 1920 gives Norway "full and absolute sovereignty" over the archipelago, but grants excessive rights to citizens of the signatory states. Most important are the principles of equal rights to access to the area and to exploit resources, and limits to taxation: all taxes must be used for the benefit of Svalbard. Norway is the sole and sovereign legislator, but the treaty prohibits discrimination on the basis of nationality. It also prohibits the establishment of naval bases and military fortification, the so-called "demilitarization" principle. Thus, the treaty imposes some limitations on Norwegian governance. Historically, the principles of equal rights, non-discrimination, low taxes and demilitarization may be viewed as a trade-off for accepting Norway's claim of sovereignty in 1919-1920.

In practice, Norwegian regulation of Svalbard is not challenged today, meaning the land territory and the territorial waters. However, there is a legal and political dispute whether the Svalbard Treaty principles also should apply in the economic zone beyond 12 nautical miles.