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**The University Centre in Svalbard**  
**Written exam SH-201 The History of Svalbard**  
**Monday 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2015, hours: 15.15-18.15**

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.	When is the name "Svalbard" first mentioned in historical sources?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1094	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1194	<input type="checkbox"/> 1294
2.	Who built the Smeerenburg whaling station?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dutch	<input type="checkbox"/> British	<input type="checkbox"/> Basques
3.	Approximately how many whales were caught during whaling before 1800?	<input type="checkbox"/> 10,000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 100,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 1,000,000
4.	Which of these Arctic scientists wintered on Svalbard during the International Polar Year?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N. Ekholm	<input type="checkbox"/> F. Nansen	<input type="checkbox"/> O. Torell
5.	How many times did Walter Wellman attempt to reach the North Pole starting from Svalbard?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 time	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 times	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 times
6.	Who proposed to annex Spitsbergen in 1871?	<input type="checkbox"/> Norway	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sweden	<input type="checkbox"/> Russia
7.	Where did Soviet-Russians first start mining?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grumant	<input type="checkbox"/> Barentsburg	<input type="checkbox"/> Pyramiden
8.	When was the German military attack that destroyed Barentsburg and Longyearbyen?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1942	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1943	<input type="checkbox"/> 1944
9.	When was coal mining in Ny-Ålesund closed down permanently?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1962	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1963	<input type="checkbox"/> 1968
10.	Which of these species was protected in 1972?	<input type="checkbox"/> Reindeer	<input type="checkbox"/> Walrus	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Polar bear
11.	When did the first cultural heritage regulations on Svalbard enter into force?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1925	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1974	<input type="checkbox"/> 1992
12.	When did Soviet-Russia become a signatory member of the Svalbard Treaty?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1920	<input type="checkbox"/> 1924	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1935

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

**A. Post-war Svalbard**

*In May 2015 it is 70 years since the Second World War ended. Describe the main lines of development in Svalbard's local communities in the post-war period and until today. Discuss how the events during and after the war changed the political situation of Svalbard and influenced this development.*

*Development of local communities*

Before the war there were four larger settlements on Svalbard; the Soviet coal mines Grumant and Barentsburg and the Norwegian mines Longyearbyen and Ny-Ålesund. All these were evacuated in the fall of 1941. During the war the settlements were completely or partly destroyed, particularly as a result of the German attack in September 1943. Rebuilding started in 1945 in Longyearbyen and Ny-Ålesund, while the Soviet-Russians reestablished Grumant

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and Barentsburg from 1946 and also started building up Pyramiden as a coal mining settlement.

Longyearbyen had few standing buildings left after the war. Also the coal mine infrastructure had to be reconstructed and expanded. Rebuilding went fast and mining started almost immediately. In the first decade after the war the private company Store Norske had coal production as its highest priority and spent few resources on welfare and social infrastructure. Workers were predominantly single males, who had to share small rooms in barracks. Although there were a few families, Longyearbyen was by no means a family community in this period – this was still a “company town”. A local welfare council was established in 1948 on the initiative of Sysselmannen, but had little real influence. It was not until the 1970s that social development gained momentum. The Norwegian state nationalized Store Norske in 1976 and started a process to modernize – or “normalize – Longyearbyen. The state took over responsibility for the school and the hospital. An extensive housing programme made it possible for more families to settle. The opening of a permanent airport in 1975 was a watershed; isolation during the winter was broken. Also telecommunications were much improved. Government services expanded and state employees were encouraged to bring families to Longyearbyen. During the 1990s the local economy diversified greatly by private enterprise, in particular tourism and service industries. Public activity also expanded. Research and higher education (UNIS) became important elements in transforming the former company town into a modern family community containing many nationalities. In 2002 local democracy (Lokalstyret) was inaugurated, thus removing one last difference from mainland society. The population of Longyearbyen has almost doubled since 1990 and is now over 2,000. The population is younger and mobility higher than on the mainland, but in many ways Longyearbyen has indeed become a “normal” community.

Ny-Ålesund had suffered limited damages during the war. Preparations for new coal mining started in 1945 and production soon was under way. Kings Bay was a state owned company and a competitor to Store Norske, but significantly smaller. Although not a full-fledged family community, the percentage of women and children was higher in Ny-Ålesund than in Longyearbyen. Coal mining was more complicated, however, and a number of serious accidents resulted in an extensive investment and modernization program in the 1950s. This did not prevent a major accident in November 1962, which initiated a legal and political process that ended in the Labour Government stepping down in 1963 – the so-called Kings Bay Affair. That same year the coal mines were finally closed and Ny-Ålesund evacuated. From 1964 the place was turned into a research station, starting with the ESRO telemetry station and gradually expanding with more scientific institutions. Today, Ny-Ålesund is a modern research base with multi-national presence, but not a normal family community in any sense. During the winter, there are usually no more than 40-50 people permanently there.

When the Soviet-Russians came back to Svalbard in 1946, both Barentsburg and Grumant were rapidly rebuilt and expanded. Also Pyramiden was built up for coal production in the 1950s. Production went on in all three places until 1962, when Grumant was closed down. Still, there were more Soviet citizens than Norwegians on Svalbard in the 1960s and ‘70s – at some point more than twice as many. Neither of the settlements were family communities, but there were kindergartens and primary school for children and a comparatively high proportion of women, most of whom were employed by the state mining company Trust Arktikugol. The Soviets invested much in social infrastructure and welfare for their workers, and the living standards were for a long time higher than in Longyearbyen. This balance changed from the mid1970s, however. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 created huge problems for the Russian coal mining activity, which was much reduced. Serious accidents like the airplane crash in 1996 and mine explosion in 1997 were severe blows. In 1998 Pyramiden was abruptly closed down. For some years, children were absent in Barentsburg. They are now back, but the total population is only 4-500. The Russian communities did not copy the

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modernization and economic diversification of Longyearbyen in the 1990s and remained company towns, although hotels were built. Recently, Barentsburg is being renovated and prepared for expansion of other activities than coal production, primarily tourism.

#### *Events during and after WW2 and political development*

It was Hitler's attack on the Soviet-Union in June 1941 that triggered the decision to evacuate Svalbard. The Soviets became an ally in the war against Germany. They needed supplies to maintain their war effort on the eastern and northern fronts, and these supplies had to be shipped from the UK. The shipping route went from the West and to Murmansk or Arkhangelsk, passing north of the coast of Norway, which was occupied by German forces. To avoid attacks from German airplanes and submarines the convoys sailed far north, close to Svalbard. Consequently, the Svalbard area suddenly became strategically very important. The Germans established a number of manned and automatic weather stations, and from 1942 the Norwegians maintained a small garrison on Spitsbergen that also sent weather reports. There were few regular combat situations until September 8 in 1943, when a strong German navy fleet attacked Barentsburg, Grumant and Longyearbyen. The settlements were severely damaged, a number of soldiers were killed or wounded on both sides, and some Norwegian soldiers were taken prisoners.

In November 1944 Soviet minister of foreign affair Molotov met with his Norwegian colleague Lie in Moscow. In this meeting Molotov demanded an annulment of the Svalbard Treaty, full Soviet control over Bjørnøya and a shared responsibility with Norway for the future defense of Svalbard. This affair is known as the "Svalbard Crisis" of 1944. A hard pressed Norwegian exile government in London considered a revision of the treaty to comply with the Soviets, but after the war, in 1947, the national assembly (Stortinget) rejected this policy. Two years later Norway became a member of the NATO alliance.

During the Cold War Svalbard was a peaceful corner of the world, but still strategically important with its geographical location. The Treaty was respected in the sense that no military bases were established. The archipelago's military potential diminished as intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear submarines were developed. Norway followed a policy of low tension, not challenging the Soviet Union unnecessarily. The Soviets refrained from obvious military presence in the area. Both sides, however, deemed it necessary to keep up civil activity and presence on Svalbard. This explains why coal mining was continued in spite of great economic losses – it was a strategic requirement to keep people there.

During the Cold War contacts between the Soviet and Norwegian local communities were limited and strictly controlled. Norwegian authorities did not interfere with Soviet activity at all for a long time. This changed in the 1980s, particularly after Soviet president Gorbatschov introduced the *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (reconstruction) policy. Barentsburg and Pyramiden opened up for visitors and there was a more pronounced readiness to comply with Norwegian regulations.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 was perceived as the official end of the Cold War. This also had bearing on Norway's political attitude with regard to local community development. As foreign and security policy concerns diminished there were fewer arguments against a more natural development and a higher degree of self-determination. This explains the opening for more private enterprise from the 1990s and not least the introduction of local democracy in Longyearbyen in 2002.

**B. Winter hunting and trapping in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

*Describe the development of winter hunting and trapping on Svalbard after 1900 with regard to participation, distribution and organization. Discuss to what extent this activity has been sustainable from an economic and environmental point of view.*

*Development of hunting and trapping after 1900*

In the late half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were only a dozen winter expeditions on Svalbard, but from the turn of the century winter hunting and trapping activity increased. Most of the trappers were Norwegian, but also other nationalities were represented – Swedes, German and Russian, for example. 5-10 % of the trappers before World War 2 were women, always in companionship with men. Only a handful of those taking part in winter hunting and trapping can be characterized as professionals, in the sense that this was their main career through life. More than half of the trappers took only one or two winter seasons on Svalbard. This indicates that spending a winter trapping in the Arctic was by many perceived as an adventure, a single opportunity, rather than a possible profession. Many of them were young people that were recruited by relatives or friends who were older and more experienced, often coming from the same local community on the mainland.

Interestingly, some of the trappers started out as workers in the various coal mines on Svalbard and changed profession. On the other hand, quite a few of the experienced trappers took full or part time jobs in the mines in order to save money to fit out a new expedition. Although a trapper's life was quite primitive, buying outfit and provisions for a whole year was expensive. Those who could not afford it themselves were dependent upon getting equipment on credit or loan from an outfitter, often a merchant house in Northern Norway, particularly in Tromsø. Some of these merchant outfitters also financed and owned huts and boats that were let to the trappers on contract for a share of the catch. The trappers were almost invariably poor people who hoped to get lucky with a good catch once in a while; this was by no means a profitable business as a rule.

Early in the period a trapping expedition could consist of 6-8 people, but the normal size was two or three persons. Some of the more professional trappers, like for instance Arthur Oxaas, preferred to be alone. From time to time even the small expeditions split up and the trappers stayed in different huts, either for personal reasons or the sake of more effective trapping. By customary practice Svalbard became divided into different districts or trapping terrains, eventually more than forty, with only one party operating in each at any given time. In this way, unnecessary competition among the trappers was avoided. However, there was external competition in the form of summer expeditions and also trophy hunting by tourists. Also, the mining companies claimed exclusive rights to all game within their areas. After the Svalbard Treaty entered into force in 1925 and the property rights were settled, these exclusive rights were codified. People who lived and worked in the settlements also engaged in hunting and trapping and thus competed with the wintering trappers to some extent.

The traditional pattern of organization of winter trapping expeditions was to establish a main station during summer in one of the terrains, usually a small hut or house on the coast that was accessible by boat. A number of smaller huts, so-called by-stations, were located other places in the terrain, usually within the distance of a day's march during winter time. Here, the trapper could rest and spend the night safely when he or she was touring the district looking after the traps, hunting and gathering. In this way a large area could be covered during a week's excursion from the main station. In the short summer season small boats were used to distribute materials and equipment to the huts and to gather firewood. In the winter transportation took place on foot or skis. Some trappers, but not the majority, used dog teams and sleds. Fur trapping for fox and bears took place during winter, when the fur quality is best. In spring, seal hunting was a main activity, and in the early summer collecting eider

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duck down and seabird eggs was done. In the autumn they engaged in reindeer and goose hunting.

Although Svalbard is large and there were numerous available terrains, there were rarely many expeditions in any given winter – a dozen at most before World War 2. Some specialized on polar bear hunting, particularly in the south and east of Svalbard. All the trappers were also evacuated to the UK in August-September 1941. After the war, only a few of the “old-timers” returned to carry on trapping, and there was little new recruitment. A few new trappers came from the mainland, and some from the coal mining settlements on Svalbard, but by 1970, only a few were left. In practice, the activity came to a halt as a result of the polar bear protection in 1973. Since then, only two or three trappers have continued the tradition of winter hunting and trapping on a more or less permanent basis.

#### *A sustainable activity?*

By 1900 hunting and trapping on Svalbard had been going on for some 200 years already. This must have taken its toll on the game resources, but we lack precise information or statistics to say anything definite. We do know that scientists expressed worries about the excessive hunting even before 1900, and that they proposed measures of protection in connection with the discussions on a treaty for Spitsbergen.

For the winter trappers that we are concerned with here, the two most important species were polar fox and polar bear. It was the furs of these animals that provided the basis for an economic return. In addition they could make good money on collecting eider down. For their own livelihood during the season char, reindeer, seals, geese and seabirds were important resources. How did their exploitation of these species impact on the stocks, and was hunting and trapping sustainable in an ecological and economic sense?

To take the last question first, the broad picture is that hunting and trapping in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was *not* economically sustainable except to a few hardy individuals. Evidence of this is the ever diminishing number of actors taking part in winter trapping through the period, and also the fact that many of the trappers only spent one or two seasons on Svalbard. In other words, Svalbard’s game resources were not large enough to sustain more than a handful of people. Those who chose to carry on all the same never became rich over time, in spite of a lucky season every now and then.

One reason that only very few people were able to make winter trapping a viable business is competition from summer hunting and fishing expeditions, tourists and trophy hunters, people in the settlements and not least the crew of the meteorological stations at Kapp Linné and Hopen. They all exploited more or less the same resources and the total load on the stocks became too high. Again, we lack complete statistics, but we know for sure that reindeer stocks were near depletion around 1925 when they were finally protected by law. We also know that winter trappers took only about 25 % of all the polar bears that were killed until protection came in 1973. With regard to char, geese, ducks, seabirds and eggs the relatively few winter trappers harvested mostly for their own subsistence, not for commercial purposes. The same goes for seals and reindeer. In this perspective, it is likely that the winter trappers’ harvest by itself was ecologically sustainable. However, their effort combined with the hunting and harvesting of others was obviously not sustainable over time. Thus, until the environment protection regime was introduced in the 1970s Svalbard was yet another example of “the tragedy of the commons”.