

Resource Policy of Russia and Norway in the Spitsbergen Archipelago: Formation of Coal Production Before World War II

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Abstract—The article is devoted to the relationship between the USSR and Norway at the time of the formation of coal mining in Svalbard before the Second World War. An analysis has been made of shifting the focus of attention of countries interested in the archipelago from the priorities of military security to resource aspects. Changes in the geopolitical status of the archipelago in the XX-XXI centuries are investigated. The article presents materials that characterize the development of relations between countries around Svalbard.

Keywords—Russia and Norway; archipelago Spitsbergen; Svalbard; coal mining; geopolitical status; demilitarization; resources; fishery; oil and gas industry

I. INTRODUCTION

In the twentieth century, the focus of attention of Russia, Norway and other interested countries to the Spitsbergen archipelago shifted from the priorities of military security to resource aspects. Before the First World War, the territory under consideration was perceived by the states concerned as a no-man's land, which must first be occupied and then organized the extraction of mineral resources [1].

The Treaty of Paris of 1920 was called upon once and for all to eliminate the contradictions of all interested countries around the rights to the Spitsbergen archipelago and to exclude it from the list of problematic issues on the international agenda. The regime and status assigned to Spitsbergen within the framework of this treaty became a unique phenomenon in the international legal practice of those years and made it possible to start coal mining in the archipelagoes of both the USSR and Norway [2].

II. FORMATION OF THE COAL COMPANY "ANGLO-RUSSIAN GRUMANT"

Russian industrialists began coal mining in Svalbard on the basis of research materials conducted by V.A. Rusanov, in respect of certain coal-bearing areas. For the development of coal mining was organized mining partnership "Grumant A.G. Agafelov and Co.", which in 1913 began to operate the coal mine in the archipelago. The owner of the mine was a group of high-ranking Russian officials, who issued V.A. Rusaniv during the expedition of 1912, was given the power of attorney to file applications in the coal-bearing areas of Spitsbergen [3].

After the revolution, the Russian emigrant G. M. Nakhimov bought out the company's shares from A.G.

Agafelova. Thus, immediately after the revolution, a new coal mining company "Anglo-Russian Grumant" appeared on Svalbard with a nominal capital of sixty thousand pounds sterling [4]. It was this company that began supplying coal to the Murmansk and Arkhangelsk regions, where the need for solid fuel was highest. The government of New Russia has come to the conclusion that it is very expensive and unprofitable to continue to supply coal from England. According to Soviet economists, it turned out that supplying Spitsbergen coal to Kem would cost the USSR 38.85 shillings per ton, and Donetsk coal, 48.9 shillings; the delivery to Petrozavodsk is 41.54 and 45.95 shillings, respectively [5].

Nevertheless, on July 29, 1920, a draft resolution of the Council of People's Commissars on the development of coal deposits in Svalbard was prepared. It was signed by the three first persons of New Russia - the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars V.I. Lenin, V.D. Bonch-Bruевич and Secretary of the Council L. Fotieva. This decision was a documentary confirmation of the beginning of the Soviet development of Spitsbergen [6].

On June 20, 1920, the Council of People's Commissars issued a resolution on the organization of a specialized association of the timber industry of the Severo-Belomorsky region "Severoles", which was supposed to deal with issues related to coal mining in Svalbard.

In August 1923, an agreement was signed between the "Severoles" association and the shareholders of the English company "Anglo-Russian Grumant" on the creation of a new joint-stock company "Russky Grumant" with shareholding of Soviet capital.

From a legal point of view, quick processing of the transaction with "Grumant" turned out to be impossible, since the diplomatic relations of the USSR with the Kingdom of Norway had not yet been established. Therefore, the Charter of the new joint-stock company "Russian Grumant" was approved by the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR only in September 1925, that is, after the official establishment of diplomatic relations with Norway. The Charter of the company specifically stated that its main goal is "the study of mountain and all kinds of commercial (fish, animal, etc.) wealth of Spitsbergen, as well as the study of the conditions for the development of coal and other mineral deposits" [7].

In April 1931, M.I. Evzerov was appointed director of the "Grumant" mine. On the initiative of the group led by I.N. Kozlov, during the final stage of the negotiations, work was carried out on the training of personnel, the purchase of food, materials and equipment for the accelerated development of coal production in Svalbard. The selection of personnel for work on Svalbard was approached very cautiously, since nobody knew then how the Arctic climate would affect the health of people engaged in mining. On May 19, the first equipment of the future polar miners was completed, the group of which included 50 Muscovites, 150 residents of Arkhangelsk, 180 Leningraders and 25 specialists from Donbass.

At the end of World War I, Dutch entrepreneurs founded the Spitzbergen company "Nespico", which acquired a site on the coast of Gringarbur and began building a large mine, later named Barentsburg, in honor of Willem Barents. In the same area, the "stationary" lip of Ivan Starostin was located in its time, here Soviet archeologists discovered whole pomor villages. Later, whalers actively settled in this area. Initially, in terms of construction pace, Barentsburg was ahead of Longyearbyen - the first radio station on Svalbard was opened precisely in Greenbergura. During the years 1921-1926 the Dutch actively exploited the Barentsburg mine. During this period, the company "Nespico" mined and exported from the archipelago at least three hundred thousand tons of coal. In its Charter, it was recorded that she began to work from the date of the royal permission and was liquidated on December 30, 1999 [8].

III. TRUST ORGANIZATION "ARCTIKUGOL"

After purchasing "the Grumant mine", the USSR acquired four more land plots with a total area of about 260 square meters km. on the archipelago. Two of them were purchased in August 1927 from the Dutch company "Nespico" for 2.5 million guilders (including the settlement of Grumant-City on the shore of the Isfjord Bay). Two others were purchased from "Anglo-Russian Grumant" [9]. The global crisis and the refusal of the government of the Netherlands to provide financial assistance forced "Nespico" to close and sell the mine to the trust "Arktikugol".

By November 7, 1932, the enterprises of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk received the first batch of coal from "the Barentsburg mine". During the Arctic winter, two overpasses were installed and commissioned. The works were carried out in strong winds and at a height of 20 m, which indicates a considerable heroism of the builders who installed the structure. In addition, for the first time in the world, in the conditions of the polar night, exploratory drilling was carried out to clarify the boundaries of the coal seams and rock reserves¹ [10].

The Resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of July 29, 1920 "On the Development of Coal Mining in Svalbard" was in contradiction with the fact that Svalbard was not part of the Soviet sector in the Arctic, which was defined by the Resolution of the Central Election Commission and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR on February 15, 1926. "On declaring territories Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, lands and islands in the Arctic Ocean".

Fearing possible accusations of expansion, the Soviet government used in the Spitsbergen question a proven strategy of the tsarist period. It consisted in the fact that companies that were not formally owned by the state had to deal with affairs in the archipelago. Therefore, long before the official entry of Soviet Russia into the parties to the Paris Agreement on Spitsbergen, the chairman of "the Soyuzlesprom" association S. A. Bergavinov proposed the idea of creating a specialized trust that could purposefully deal with issues of regulating coal mining, but did not formally belong to government institutions. According to S.A. Bergavinov, such an enterprise could be organized in Arkhangelsk, after which he would be charged with coal mining in Svalbard and in the Pechora coal basin. On September 25, 1931, this proposal was submitted to the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, which issued a Resolution on the organization of "the Arktikugol" Trust on October 7. At the same time, the charter of the company was approved and the structure of the board was determined: 1. The administration of the trust. 2. Arkhangelsk office. 3. Murmansk logistics base. 4. Pechora mine administration. 5. Svalbard Mine Management [11].

Immediately after the organization of "the Arktikugol" Trust, more thorough studies were begun of coal deposits in "the Grumant" areas in Barentsburg, as well as the coal-bearing areas of Mount Pyramid. These works expanded the information obtained by S. Malyavin and V. Reineck, as a result of which a detailed map of the Grumant deposit was compiled, on the basis of which coal mining operations were carried out from 1931 to 1961. However, in the form of an independent organization, "the Arktikugol" Trust existed for only three years, and by the Decree of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR dated September 1, 1934, it was transferred to the Main Directorate of the Northern Sea Route, organized two years before¹ [12]. In addition to the trust, all the institutions and organizations of the USSR that dealt with Arctic issues, which made it possible to simplify the system of management of the Northern regions, were subordinated to the State Administration of the Northern Sea Route.

The first Manager of the trust "Arktikugol" was L. K. Likhterman, his deputy S. M. Zolotarevsky, assistant V. N. Shcherban, the Manager of Spitsbergen ore management was appointed M. I. Evzerov, his deputy became M. E. Plisetsky. K. L. Likhterman during the year, achieved the introduction of the supply of Soviet mines in the archipelago and system of wages. From 1933 to 1936 the trust was managed by M. E. Plisetsky. With it, the annual coal production increased 3.6 times and reached 475 thousand tons, and in Barentsburg the first million ton of Spitsbergen coal was produced. In order to increase efficiency and simplify the organization of the Soviet mines in the archipelago, in 1936 the Murmansk base of the technical supply was transformed into the office of the trust "the Arctic coal" and its first head was I. A. Belozersky [13].

IV. CONCLUSION

In 1937, 1,230 people were employed in the mines in Barents, while the Norwegian population in the archipelago was about 700 people. In 1940, the Manager was to agree with the British Navy on the evacuation of Soviet miners and their

families from the archipelago in wartime. In 1946, he led the restoration of Soviet coal mining in Svalbard [14].

Thus, by the beginning of the war, the trust owned 26 land plots with a total area of 250 square kilometers, including deposits on mount Pyramid and in the tundra of Bohemia. In addition, the Barents and Grumant mines were put into operation, which made it possible to expand the scale of Soviet coal mining in the future. The active activity of Moscow allowed in the pre-war years to provide for the Soviet side four coal-bearing areas, two of which were already in operation (Barentsburg and Grumant city), on the site of the Pyramid was preparing for industrial production. However, the work of "Arktikugol" was interrupted by the war.

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