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The limits to Soviet influence

**Soviet strategic interests in Norway
and Denmark 1944-47**

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Introduction

Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, Soviet strategic interests in the three Scandinavian countries were limited.¹ One exception to this rule was the recurrent Soviet interest in the Baltic Straits,² but this did not lead to any serious attempt to force a change in the existing rules for shipping through the Straits. The other exception was the Soviet fear - basically unfounded - that Sweden would join forces with Finland and the three Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) to create an anti-Soviet "bloc" in the Baltic area.³ Despite this connection to the troubled relationship between the Soviet Union on the one hand and Finland and the three Baltic states on the other, Scandinavia was clearly peripheral to Soviet foreign policy and strategic interests. The Soviet Union's military buildup and foreign-policy priorities in Europe were aimed at creating a system of political guarantees for the country's borders on the European continent, backed up by steadily increasing ground and air forces. The Soviet state showed no inclination towards expanding into an area where it was politically and militarily incapable of playing a prominent role.

During the 1920s and 1930s the Soviet Union gradually developed impressive land and air forces, but the restricted state of its navy left it with no other option than to accept the pre-eminence of Great Britain and Germany in Scandinavia. This was true for *Norway and its possessions in the Arctic Ocean* (Spitsbergen, Bear Island and Jan Mayen).⁴ Even on the eve of the Second World War, the Soviet Northern Fleet consisted mostly of coast defence vessels which were incapable of any ocean-going offensive operations and which were no match for Britain's *Royal Navy* or even the

German *Kriegsmarine*. *Denmark* seemed to find itself squeezed between German land power and British naval power. Industrially and militarily *Sweden* was much stronger than its two Scandinavian neighbours, and less inclined to look to the great powers for security guarantees. From the Soviet point of view Sweden was of strategic significance mainly because of its assumed ambition to act as a regional great power in Scandinavia and the Baltic area.

Up until 1939, Soviet policy in Scandinavia was defensive, aimed at using the limited Soviet leverage over the Scandinavian governments to impede real or imagined attempts by the other great powers to increase their own political and military predominance in Scandinavia. From the late 1920s on, Soviet propaganda focused on the issue of Scandinavian or Nordic cooperation, which up until 1934-35 was seen as a vehicle for British, and thereafter German, political and military penetration of the region.⁵ At no point did the Soviets signal any ambitions of playing a military role on Scandinavian territories or in Scandinavian waters.⁶

The Second World War, and not least Nazi Germany's use of Norwegian territory for attacks on the lines of communication between the Western Allies and the ice-free ports in Northern Russia, brought an end to this state of relative innocence. The immensely enlarged scope of Soviet strategic interests and capabilities in Europe which grew out of the offensive movements of the Soviet armies from 1943 brought the Scandinavian countries closer to the centre of Soviet strategic interests. As the war in Europe drew to a close, the

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Scandinavian countries became part of Soviet planning for the post-war order in Europe. The European upheaval also created the preconditions for strategically motivated initiatives which might entail a revision of the pre-war territorial and political order in Europe.

Sweden had been spared the ravages of war and, when the fighting in Europe ended, presented itself as a haven of political and economic stability. The country had also built up a strong military defence during the war, with impressive naval and air forces. Sweden offered few opportunities, if any, for far-reaching Soviet foreign policy initiatives. Neither Soviet policy towards Sweden as it was actually implemented in the immediate post-war period, nor the documents hitherto made available in Soviet archives, hint at the existence of plans which would have affected Sweden's territorial integrity or its status as a non-aligned country with no foreign military bases on its soil. Apart from the idea, expressed in particular by Alexandra Kollontai, the Soviet envoy in Stockholm, that economic pressure might be used to secure for the Soviet Union a degree of "political influence" in Sweden,⁷ there is no evidence that discussions of Soviet policy on Sweden in the early post-war years went beyond the defensive aim of resisting the further spread of what the Soviets perceived as the predominant Western influence there.

Norway and Denmark, on the other hand, did not escape the attention of Soviet foreign policy and military strategists. Soviet soldiers took part in the

liberation of both countries, and the Soviet foreign policy bureaucracy was not averse to the idea of using the presence of Soviet troops to achieve long-term political and military goals in these countries.

This paper will examine how the Soviets defined and partly pursued a set of strategic and political objectives in Norway and Denmark from 1944 to early 1947. These schemes ultimately failed, and in these years the ambitious ideas of the early post-war period gradually gave way to the traditional and basically defensive policy of finding ways of curailing the rise of Western influence and control over these two Scandinavian countries.

The focus of this paper is on the decision-making process *within one of the bureaucratic structures*: the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, renamed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in March 1946.⁸ In contrast to the established image of effective and deliberate centralisation, the picture I will sketch is one of a foreign policy bureaucracy marked by imperfection and indecisiveness, where confusion and misinformation was part of the policy-making process. I will also argue that the Ministry to a high degree allowed its middle-level staff to generate and pursue their own proposals for foreign policy initiatives. Some of these officials apparently became strongly attached to their pet projects, and continued to argue that they should be implemented, even when confronted with a lack of interest, or even disapproval, on the part of the political leadership.⁹

Soviet strategic interests in Denmark: the Baltic Straits and Bornholm¹⁰

Soviet strategic interests in Denmark and Norway were linked to the need for secure lines of communication between Soviet home waters and the Atlantic Ocean - part of Russia's age-old quest for secure access to the high seas. Denmark attracted Soviet attention because of the country's key location at the entrances to the Baltic Sea. Denmark guarded the Belts (The Great Belt and The Little Belt, in Danish territorial waters), which are, apart from the Kiel Canal, the only entrances to the Baltic Sea navigable by major warships. It shared the control over the shallow passage of the Sound (Öresund) with Sweden. Soviet strategic interests in Denmark also focused on the island of Bornholm, situated at the entrance to the narrow and westernmost part of the Baltic Sea.¹¹ With regard to Norway, Soviet attention focused on the remote Bear Island and the Spitsbergen archipelago in the high north of the Arctic Ocean, and on the eastern part of Finnmark county in the extreme northeast of the Norwegian mainland.

These factors induced Soviet foreign policy strategists to argue the need for Soviet military bases on Norwegian and Danish territory. They also led to demands for a revision of the rules governing the transit of warships through the Baltic Straits, and for abrogation of the 1920 Treaty on Spitsbergen, which defines Svalbard as a demilitarised area under Norwegian sovereignty. Thus, the Soviets wanted to gain control over the entrances to the Baltic Sea and the sea lanes from the Atlantic Ocean to Northern Russia. This complements their well-known attempts, starting in the spring of 1945, to gain command of the entrances to the Black Sea. However, far stronger pressure was brought to bear on Turkey than anything ever applied to Norway or Denmark.

A memorandum from October-November 1940 defined Soviet strategic interests in *Denmark* in the following simple terms:

Denmark's strategic significance is defined by its rôle as a country which [has] the real control over the shipping through the Straits, which are an important link in the general strategic situation in the Baltic theatre of war.

The power that controlled the Baltic Straits and the Kiel Canal could decide whether the Baltic should be an open or a closed sea.¹²

It seems reasonable to assume that this memorandum was written in connection with Molotov's visit to Berlin in November of the same year. In his discussions with Hitler's foreign minister, Molotov brought up the Baltic Straits, suggesting some sort of internationalisation of the passages. Ribbentrop refused to enter into a discussion of this issue, reminding Molotov that "Germany is at war with England, and therefore a number of questions cannot be solved now". Apparently, Molotov made no attempt to press the issue.¹³ After the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, the issue of the Baltic Straits became part of the ensuing Soviet discussions about the post-war order in Europe. When Anthony Eden came to Moscow in December 1941, Stalin suggested that he would like "a guarantee by certain Powers as to the entrances to the Baltic Sea". Apart from the issue of the Straits, however, Stalin indicated that the Soviets felt no interest in Denmark proper, hinting that Great Britain might want to have military bases there after the war. The island of Bornholm was not mentioned in the discussions.¹⁴

The evidence from the years 1941-1944 is still limited and inconclusive concerning the position of Denmark in Soviet thinking about the post-war order in Europe. However, from the very beginning of the formalised Soviet planning process, the issue of the Baltic Straits figured on the list of topics to be studied. One of the bodies responsible for preparing the Soviet position for

the international negotiations which would follow after the end of the war, was the so-called "Commission for the preparation of diplomatic materials", often called simply the "Litvinov Commission" (*Komissiiia Litvinova*). This commission, set up in early 1942 under Molotov's chairmanship, was in 1943 renamed the "Commission for the preparation for peace treaties and the post-war orders", and Litvinov was appointed its chairman. Although its direct influence on Soviet policy decisions is doubtful, the topics brought up by the commission and the arguments employed certainly reflected the attitudes of senior members of the foreign policy apparatus.¹⁵

In the spring of 1942, a memorandum on the Baltic Straits was prepared for the commission by Professor Vsevolod N. Durdenevskii, a specialist on international law.¹⁶ It is unclear, however, whether this paper came up for discussion in the commission. When the reorganised commission met for the first time under Litvinov's chairmanship on 8 September 1943, the issue of the Baltic Straits still figured on the list of topics to be discussed.¹⁷ However, it was not until 22 July 1944 that a plenary session of the commission was convened to discuss Soviet interests in the Baltic Straits and the western part of the Baltic Sea. The task, according to Litvinov, was to formulate a policy which could create maximum security for the Soviet Baltic coast. The Soviet Union would prefer to have the entrances to the Baltic Sea closed to warships of non-littoral states, and to internationalise the Straits and the Kiel Canal. Litvinov also held that the Aaland Islands ought to be brought under Soviet sovereignty. However, Litvinov was aware that the Soviet Union would hardly be able to achieve all this. In particular he was sceptical about the chances of achieving a straits regime which would close the Baltic Sea to the navies of the Western great powers.¹⁸

Deputy commissar Solomon A. Lozovskii argued that the Soviet Union would need military bases¹⁹ on the island of Bornholm. This idea was not mentioned in the original report prepared for the

commission. The Soviet Union, according to Lozovskii, needed additional strongpoints in the Baltic Sea between the Kiel Canal and the Aaland Islands. Both Litvinov and Lozovskii realised that it might be difficult to produce a legal basis for the demand for military bases on Bornholm, "which belongs to Denmark, with which we are not at war". In the end, it was decided to accept the text of the memorandum which formed the basis for the discussion, with an addition about the possibility of Soviet military bases on the German island of Rügen.²⁰

A few weeks later, similar views were presented to deputy commissar V.G. Dekanozov by the head of the NKID's 5th European Department, Pavel D. Orlov.²¹ Orlov stressed the Soviet Union's "particular interests" in Denmark as the guardian of the entrances to the Baltic Sea. Interestingly, Orlov's memorandum was based on the assumption that the Soviet Union would take part in the military liberation of Denmark from the Nazi forces.²² Orlov's subordinate, Tatiana Zhdanova, was more explicit in her interpretation of Soviet aims in Denmark. She suggested that Poland (i.e. the Lublin committee) and France should be invited to sign an inter-allied declaration on Denmark. The idea of such a declaration, to be signed by the three major allies, had been brought up by the British. In Zhdanova's view, bringing in the Poles would strengthen the Soviet presence in the areas adjacent to the North and Baltic Seas, thereby creating a counterbalance to the "Anglo-Americans" there. As part of this scheme, Polish troops (from Gen. Berling's army) might take part in the military operations in Denmark.²³ As of December 1944, therefore, no decision had apparently been made on the question of whether, or in what way, Soviet forces should take part in the liberation of Denmark. On the eve of the planned Moscow visit of representatives of the Danish Freedom Council - a visit that never took place - Dekanozov added to Orlov's list of materials to be prepared a memorandum "on the Danes' attitude towards an Anglo-American occupation of Denmark and to our participation in this matter".²⁴ In their contacts with Thomas Døssing, the

Moscow representative of the Danish Freedom Council, Dekanozov, V.S. Semenov and other Soviet diplomats repeatedly emphasised that the Soviet Union was not disinterested in Danish affairs. In January 1945 Dekanozov hinted to Døssing that Denmark's liberation from Nazi occupation and the country's future political order (*ustroistvo*) were of interest not only to the Western powers.²⁵

Thus, there seemed to be a high degree of concordance of views in the Soviet foreign policy apparatus about the need to change the regime of the Baltic Straits. In the final months of the war, the issue of security in the western part of the Baltic Sea was raised in several articles in *Krasnyi flot*, the navy commissariat's newspaper. Apart from analysing the significance of the Straits, the articles emphasised the significance of the islands of Bornholm and Rügen in controlling this portion of the Baltic.²⁶ Then, in mid-March, the idea of seizing Bornholm was raised by Vladimir S. Semenov, Kollontai's deputy at the Soviet legation in Stockholm who in the years to come was to rise to prominence as a leading Soviet diplomat. In a letter to Dekanozov Semenov wrote:

In relation with the evolution of the military operations in Pomerania, it would be appropriate for the Supreme Naval Staff to examine the possibility of landing our troops on the Danish island of Bornholm. Such an operation, if it is possible from the military point of view, would be absolutely justified politically, in view of the fact that the island is occupied by German troops and is used as a base against the USSR. However, in this way participating in the liberation of Danish territory and having control over the island (derzha v nashykh rukakh), we would acquire equal rights as the allies in the settling of all matters in Denmark, participating in the Control [...] Commission, if such a body is to be created [...].

The English persuade Danish politicians, that Denmark, allegedly, is altogether within the

western powers' zone of operations and interests and that the Danish questions are of no concern or interest to the Soviet Union. However, the delimitation of the occupational zones in Germany and the English control over the Kiel Canal enhance Denmark's significance from the point of view of the security of our Baltic coast.²⁷

It seems clear from the available elements of the ensuing correspondence that the issue had not been discussed between Molotov and Dekanozov, the deputy commissar primarily responsible for Scandinavian affairs. Dekanozov supported Semenov's proposal. On Molotov's instructions a copy of the letter was sent to N.A. Bulganin, the Deputy Commissar for Defence.²⁸

Unfortunately, the ensuing sequence of events is still unclear. According to a Soviet source, on 23 April the navy commissar proposed capturing Rügen and Bornholm to the General Staff. According to this source, the commander of the Baltic fleet received the final order to prepare for the capture of Bornholm only on 4 May.²⁹ On 7 May the Soviets urged the German garrison to surrender. The same day Soviet aircraft bombed the island. When the Germans refused to capitulate to Soviet forces,³⁰ Soviet aircraft repeated the bombing on 8 May. On 9 May a small force landed and received the German capitulation, and parts of a Soviet infantry division established themselves on Bornholm.

According to the official Soviet version which the Soviets presented soon after their arrival, Bornholm was seized simply because it lay to the east of the western limit of their zone of operations in Germany. Whatever may have motivated the Soviets to bomb and capture Bornholm, the local military commander was instructed to tell the Danes that the Soviet military presence was temporary and that the Soviet troops would be withdrawn when "military questions related to Germany" were finally settled. This was done in order to dispel any anxiety the Danes might have had about what the Soviets intended to do with

Bornholm.³¹ Declarations to this effect were made during the meetings between the Soviet commanders and the official Danish representatives in the weeks immediately after the Soviets captured the island,³² and they were repeated in a Soviet note of 24 July.

Two memoranda from July 1945 presented the views of the NKID bureaucracy on Soviet policy towards Denmark. Mikhail S. Vetrov, the acting head of the NKID's 5th European Department, and his subordinate Tatiana Zhdanova, in a memorandum to the deputy commissars Andrei Ia. Vyshinskii and S.A. Lozovskii, reiterated that the Soviet Union should demand a regime for the Belts, the Sound and the Kiel Canal which would close the Baltic Sea to warships of non-littoral states.³³ Vetrov and A.I. Plakhin, the newly appointed Soviet envoy in Denmark and former head of the NKID's Scandinavian Department, in a related memorandum repeated these recommendations for the Kiel Canal, but proposed a somewhat different solution concerning the Straits. A regime for the Straits, according to Vetrov and Plakhin, could be created by the signing of a Danish-Soviet treaty giving Soviet merchant and naval ships the right to pass through the Straits, while closing these passages to naval vessels of non-littoral states. Such a treaty should include the obligation of the Soviet Union "to assist Denmark in the upholding (*sobliudenie*) of the regime" established by the treaty. Other Baltic states should be invited to join the treaty.³⁴ Finally, in a memorandum from December 1945 Litvinov repeated the by now well-known arguments and proposals, by recommending that the Soviet Union should try to achieve the internationalisation of the Belts, the Sound and the Kiel Canal. Only the Baltic states should participate in the control meaning the USSR, Poland, Sweden and Denmark. "After a certain period of time" Finland and Germany might be invited to take part in the scheme. However, any effective control of the Baltic entrances and the Kiel Canal would presuppose the creation of a system of military bases along these waterways.³⁵

Internal NKID deliberations also suggest that the final decision to surrender control of Bornholm to the Danish government was made only in the winter 1945-46. In their memorandum to Molotov of 10 July 1945, Vetrov and Plakhin argued that Bornholm was "an important strategic spot" located at the entrances to the Baltic Sea, and that it might "be an important link in the safeguarding of our security" in the Baltic Sea. They referred to Danish and Swedish opinions that Bornholm might become "the Malta of the Baltic Sea". However, the Soviet declarations made in May 1945 had served to reassure the Danes. Therefore, Vetrov and Plakhin argued, Soviet troops could remain on the island "for an extended period of time" (*prodolzhitelnoe vremia*) without any risk of "political complications". They suggested reaching an agreement with the Danish government about the joint Soviet-Danish defence of Bornholm, with Soviet and Danish naval and air bases on the island. Such bases would serve two purposes. They would serve Soviet security interests in the region, but would also be important in securing Soviet "influence over Denmark's foreign policy". Negotiations about military bases should be initiated before the Soviet troops were withdrawn - in this situation the Danes could be expected to be more accommodating. The creation of naval and air bases on Bornholm should be complemented by the establishment of bases on Rügen.³⁶

The idea of establishing permanent Soviet bases on Bornholm reappeared in internal NKID documents throughout 1945. In December Litvinov suggested that hints of possible Soviet demands for military bases on Bornholm, and Rügen, could be used to make the Western powers more accommodating towards Soviet demands for the internationalisation of the Baltic entrances and the Kiel Canal.³⁷ The Soviet government's postponement of a planned visit to Moscow in September 1945 by a Danish government delegation apparently reflected the absence of a clear Soviet stance in the major issues of its policy towards Denmark: the Straits and Bornholm. The available Soviet documents give no direct answer to the reasons for this postponement. However, a letter from A.N. Abramov, newly

appointed head of the 5th European Department, and Vetrov of 9 October 1945 sheds some light on the Soviet reasoning. The Danish delegation, according to this letter, was supposed to discuss not only trade relations, but also "political issues, notably the evacuation of Soviet troops from the island of Bornholm" and repatriation questions. The "instantsiia" - the Politburo - had decided to defer the delegation's visit until the spring of 1946. However, the Danish government continued to urge the Soviet government to receive two of its representatives in Moscow. Abramov, Vetrov and Plakhin, the Soviet envoy in Copenhagen, supported this Danish proposal, partly because it would strengthen the "democratic forces" as opposed to the "reactionary" elements in Danish politics. However, the main reason behind Abramov's and Vetrov's support for the proposal was apparently to take the opportunity to bring up with the Danes, on a preliminary basis,

the initiation of an agreement on the joint safeguarding (okhrana) in the western part of the Baltic Sea (the creation of military bases on the island of Bornholm and the establishment of a regime for the straits).³⁸

The outcome is well-known: the Soviets decided not to present to the Danish government their demands for a revision of the regime over the Straits or for negotiations on the joint defence of Bornholm. Although the issue of passage through the Baltic Straits was brought up by Molotov and Stalin at the conference of ministers of foreign affairs in Moscow in December 1945, the Soviets made no attempt to press for a solution along the lines suggested in the numerous NKID memoranda. When Stalin expressed anxiety that the Soviet Union would be confined to the Baltic in the event of war, British foreign minister Ernest Bevin declared that the British would oppose the establishment of bases in this area. Stalin said that

"he did not refer to bases at all", and that he only wished to raise the question of free passage through the Straits.³⁹ The NKID's 5th European Department produced, however, a draft resolution stipulating that the establishment of a regime for the Baltic Straits should be the task of the Baltic states: the USSR, Poland, Denmark and Sweden.⁴⁰ The draft, apparently, was not presented to the British and US representatives.

The decision was taken to withdraw from the island. On 20 February 1946 the Danish envoy in Moscow, Thomas Døssing, brought up in a conversation with Abramov the issue of the continued presence of Soviet troops on Bornholm. Døssing declared that the Danish army, rebuilt after the war, was now capable of taking over the task which had been the rationale for the presence of Allied troops in Denmark. The Soviet troops on Bornholm had carried out their tasks, and should now leave the island.⁴¹ A formal note to the same effect was delivered a week later.⁴² The next day, i.e. on 5 March, Molotov received the Danish envoy and delivered the following message:

If Denmark is now capable of occupying Bornholm with its own forces and of setting up on Bornholm its own administration without any participation whatsoever of foreign troops or foreign administrators, the Soviet government will withdraw its troops from Bornholm and hand the island over to the Danish government.⁴³

The fast response of the Soviet government suggests that the decision to leave Bornholm had been taken prior to the Danish demarche. The issue had also been discussed by Vyshinskii and the Danish foreign minister, Gustav Rasmussen, in early February.⁴⁴ The Danish government agreed to the Soviet conditions in a message of 8 March, and the last Soviet troops left the island on 4 April 1946.⁴⁵

Soviet strategic interests in Norway: Svalbard and the northern borderlands

The Soviets never tried to coerce the Danish government in to agreeing to a revision of the regime of the Baltic Straits or a permanent Soviet military presence on Bornholm. Soviet-Norwegian relations evolved differently, however, and the internal deliberations of NKID bureaucrats resulted in a Soviet attempt to achieve the revision of the internationally recognised regime over the Svalbard archipelago. From November 1944, when Molotov introduced the matter during a conversation with Norwegian foreign minister Trygve Lie, and to February 1947, discussions of the international status of Svalbard were one of the formative elements in the Norwegian-Soviet relationship. Molotov demanded *inter alia* that Spitsbergen should be transformed into a Norwegian-Soviet condominium, i.e. come under joint Soviet-Norwegian rule, and that Bear Island should be transferred to Soviet sovereignty. There is no need to repeat the story of the ensuing Norwegian-Soviet negotiations: they have been discussed in detail by various authors.⁴⁶ I will limit myself to a discussion of the origin and the evolution of the issue within the Soviet foreign policy apparatus.

The idea of changing Svalbard's international status in favour of the Soviet Union had surfaced on the eve of the outbreak of war. Until then Soviet interests in the archipelago had been economic, not strategic. By 1939 and 1940, officials at the Soviet consulate in Barentsburg on Spitsbergen were arguing in favour of extending Soviet control over the archipelago, in order to prevent the British or the Germans from taking control. However, at that time their views did not seem to evoke much of a response in Moscow in terms of a profound re-evaluation of Svalbard's significance - whether economic or strategic.⁴⁷

The German occupation of Norway in the spring of 1940 gave substance to their warnings, and in the summer of that year the Commissariat for Foreign

Affairs' Scandinavian Department strongly supported the views of the Barentsburg group. In June and July NKID bureaucrats wrote several memoranda on Svalbard, stressing the area's strategic importance and providing proof that Norway's claims to the archipelago, and to Bear Island in particular, were weakly founded. The campaign culminated in early August when Pavel D. Orlov, the acting Head of the Scandinavian Department, recommended that the Svalbard archipelago should be occupied "by units of the Red Army" for the duration of the war and until the "period of complete stabilisation of international relations". In this he seconded strong appeals from the Soviet consul in Barentsburg, Petr I. Volnukhin.⁴⁸

However, the efforts of the Soviet consul in Barentsburg and of the employees of the Scandinavian Department failed to receive Molotov's support, although they were certainly brought to his attention. One reason for Molotov's lack of interest may have been that the Soviet military disagreed on the strategic importance of Spitsbergen and Bear Island. This, at least apparently, was the case in the summer of 1941, i.e. after the German attack on the Soviet Union. At the Soviet-Norwegian-British negotiations in July and August that year, the Soviets made no strong efforts to obtain their allies' agreement to the initial Soviet idea of an Allied occupation of Spitsbergen, and at no point did they hint at the possibility of independent Soviet action on Spitsbergen. Even the less ambitious idea of arming the Soviet population in Barentsburg evaporated. In the autumn of 1941 the Soviets took part in the evacuation of Norwegian and Russian civilians from Spitsbergen.⁴⁹ At the beginning of the discussions Maiskii had declared to Anthony Eden that the Soviet government had "no territorial claims of any kind upon Norway, nor would they ever have them".⁵⁰

Thus, until Molotov's initiative in November 1944, the Soviets had made no attempts on the state-to-state level to change Svalbard's international status in their favour.

When Molotov finally raised the topic with Lie in November 1944, this appears to have been a last-minute decision, and the immediate background was a number of memoranda which argued the necessity of securing a stronger Soviet presence on Spitsbergen and Bear Island. The arguments were summarised by Deputy Commissar Vladimir Dekanozov in a memorandum which seems to have been given to Molotov only hours before his meeting with Trygve Lie. In his memorandum, Dekanozov emphasised the Soviet Union's economic interests on Spitsbergen, but also underlined "Bear Island's exceptional (*iskliuchitelnoe*) strategic importance both for the security of the Soviet mines on Spitsbergen, and in order to safeguard Soviet communications in the North". Dekanozov recommended that the Soviet government should immediately reestablish its legal rights on Spitsbergen, but also

[...] reach an agreement with the Norwegian government that the Soviet Union should have the right, if it deems it necessary, to organise one or more navy and air bases [...] on the main Spitsbergen archipelago [...].

It would also be necessary to agree on

the building of a naval base on Bear Island in order to defend our rights on Spitsbergen and to safeguard the movements of Soviet ships of the Northern Fleet.⁵¹

Apart from the information contained in Dekanozov's memorandum, Molotov was not well acquainted with the topic. After Lie had objected to Molotov's argument that the Soviet Union had been "forced" to accept the Svalbard Treaty of 1920 by pointing to the fact that in 1935 the Soviet Union had acceded to the Treaty entirely voluntarily, Molotov in a brusque manner asked his subordinates to explain what had compelled Litvinov to make this decision.

The ensuing Norwegian-Soviet negotiations culminated on 9 April 1945, when the Norwegian Ambassador in Moscow delivered to the Soviet Foreign Ministry the proposal for a Norwegian-Soviet declaration. Article One of the draft declaration stated that "the defence of the Archipelago of Svalbard is the joint responsibility of Norway and the Soviet Union". From April 1945 until Molotov raised the matter again in the summer of 1946, Moscow made no serious efforts to finalise a Soviet-Norwegian agreement on Svalbard. Molotov apparently felt that the Norwegian government had agreed to his most important demand - Soviet military bases on the islands.

The same group of NKID officials who had been the driving force behind the Svalbard initiative presented and vigorously pursued a set of proposals aimed at securing a military foothold for the Soviet Union in Northern Norway. These proposals received much stronger support from the military leadership than the NKID bureaucrats' attempts to finalise the Svalbard negotiations.

In October 1944 a middle-level official in the NKID's 5th European Department, Tatiana Zhdanova, presented a memorandum which linked the Svalbard issue to the future of Northern Norway. In her view, Spitsbergen constituted

one side of the channel which connects the Atlantic Ocean with our arctic regions. This channel used to be a very broad one, but it has to a significant degree been "squeezed" by the evolution of aviation. In this way, the question of reviewing our border with Norway is closely linked with the review leading to a decision on the Spitsbergen question.

The fact that Petsamo (Pechenga) was ceded to the Soviet Union from Finland did not, in Zhdanova's opinion, solve the problem of the "channel" to the Atlantic. Thus Zhdanova argued along the lines which had been introduced by the Soviet Consul in Barentsburg in 1939 and 1940, but introduced the development of modern aviation as an additional reason to alter the status quo in the High North.

Zhdanova concluded:

Taking into account the foreign policy benefit which the Red Army's participation in the liberation of Northern Norway has brought us, it would be appropriate to exploit the Norwegians' need for a counterweight, through friendship with the USSR, to the English attempts to achieve a "portugalisation" of Norway. In the course of the war England has gained almost complete control over Norway. Thus it appears that it would not be difficult for us to reach an agreement with the Norwegians on cooperation on the defence of Northern Norway; on the building of navy and air bases, necessary railways etc. Otherwise the English will do this. The creation of this kind of close postwar Soviet-Norwegian cooperation, which would ensure for the Soviet Union appropriate permanent influence in Norway, would leave the possibility of raising the problem of a correction to the Soviet-Norwegian border at a more suitable moment.⁵²

In the months following the Norwegian draft declaration of 9 April 1945, international conferences and pressing global issues apparently removed the Svalbard question, and Norwegian affairs in general, from the Soviet decision-makers' main agenda. However, while Molotov was concentrating on the more important European and global questions, his subordinates continued to press for a more offensive Soviet policy towards Norway. A group of officials in the Foreign Ministry's 5th European Department made repeated attempts to convince Molotov of the need to finalise the Svalbard discussions. They based their efforts on the Norwegian government's draft declaration of 9 April 1945, i.e. on the idea of joint Soviet-Norwegian defence of Spitsbergen. From early June 1945 onwards, the same officials also took various initiatives to revive Zhdanova's October 1944 proposal for a permanent or semi-permanent Soviet military presence in the northern parts of mainland Norway. The key figure was Mikhail Sergeievich Vetrov, acting head of the Commissariat's 5th European Department.

A letter of 4 June from Rear Admiral Stepan G. Kucherov, the Chief of the Navy Staff (*Glavnyi morskoi shtab Voennno-Morskogo Flota*), provided Vetrov with an opportunity to press for a more active Soviet policy. In his letter Kucherov expressed concern about the activity of the significant number of Germans who remained in Northern Norway, and about the Norwegian military authorities' subordination to the British.

Kucherov proposed that the Soviet government should "create a special staff in Norway, which could then immediately start to work on the problems which have been accumulating there". This staff should include representatives from the Commissariat for Defence, from the Navy Commissariat, from the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, and from General Golikov's Repatriation Commission which was already working in Norway.⁵³ It should be noted that Admiral Kucherov did not suggest that the Soviet Union, for strategic or other reasons, should expand its military presence in Northern Norway by establishing military bases or by expanding the area controlled by Soviet troops.

Vetrov, when asked to comment on Kucherov's letter, reached his own far-reaching conclusions. Arguing that the Norwegian-Soviet agreement of 16 May 1944 on jurisdiction and administration in territories liberated by Allied troops "does not limit the areas which can be occupied by one or other of the Allied Powers", he supported Kucherov's plan to create a group of Soviet representatives in Norway. He also suggested, however, that the Soviet government should

give instructions to the General Staff of the Red Army to immediately move troops of the 14th Independent Army which are stationed in Northern Norway into the north-western part of Norway, up to and including Narvik.⁵⁴

On his own initiative Vetrov sent to Molotov a separate memorandum about Svalbard, suggesting that naval units should be sent to Spitsbergen to

“create garrisons” on the island. The aim should be to “finally resolve the Spitsbergen question.”

When the Commissar for the Coal Industry, Vasili V. Vakhrushev, suggested sending a group of specialists to Spitsbergen to prepare the reopening of the coal mines, Vetrov apparently felt that this much less ambitious plan contradicted his own intentions. Molotov, nevertheless, gave his approval to Vakhrushev’s proposal, and Vetrov was instructed to take the necessary steps to implement the plan.⁵⁵ It seems that Molotov did not respond to Vetrov’s initiative. Vetrov, ordered to implement a decision which might conflict with his own more ambitious scheme, made one further attempt to move the decision-makers in his direction. In a letter to Deputy Commissar Solomon A. Lozovskii of 19 June, he emphasised that his initiative had been taken independently of Vakhrushev’s letter, and that it had “political” rather than “economic” aims. Measures to secure Soviet economic interests should be employed “to implement on Spitsbergen and Bear Island initiatives of a political and military-strategic nature”. Vetrov warned against separating the Soviet economic interests “from the question of creating a naval base on these islands and of establishing our garrisons”, and concluded that implementation of Vakhrushev’s plan should be postponed.⁵⁶

Molotov’s failure to respond did not discourage his subordinates from taking further initiatives. Vetrov and Zhdanova continued to pursue their pet projects: a solution to the Svalbard question and the creation of Soviet bases in Northern Norway. One of their memoranda repeated (literally) Zhdanova’s arguments from October 1944, concluding that it would be easy to reach an agreement with the Norwegian government on the joint defence of Northern Norway and the creation there of Soviet military bases, strategic railways, etc. Once permanently established in Norway, the Soviet government could raise the need to revise the Soviet-Norwegian border at an appropriate time.⁵⁷ As for Svalbard, they argued that the agreement with Norway on joint

defence of the archipelago should be finalised and implemented.⁵⁸

At this point, Vetrov and his colleagues received welcome support from the General Staff on the matter of necessary changes to the Soviet-Norwegian border. In a letter of 14 July 1945 the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General N. Slavina, argued “the necessity (*neobkhodimost*) of improving our strategic situation” in the Northern border region. If the aim was to secure the important Soviet naval bases and ice-free ports on the Kola peninsula, the optimum solution would be to move the Soviet-Norwegian border to the river Tana and the Tana fjord - which would mean transferring the whole of the Varanger peninsula and the area south of the Varanger fjord (Varanger and Sør-Varanger municipalities) to the Soviet Union. Together with the presence of the Soviet military on Bear Island, this would create the preconditions for the establishment of a “huge land- and sea-based strategic defence area” (*bolshaia sukhoputnaia i morskaiia strategicheskaiia zona prikrytiia*), stretching from the Spitsbergen archipelago to the Kola peninsula. The minimal solution would be to lease the Varanger area from Norway for a term of 25-50 years.⁵⁹

When the Soviet Ambassador to Norway, Nikolai D. Kuznetsov, sent Moscow an alarming report about Norwegian activity on Spitsbergen, Vetrov reminded Deputy Commissar Lozovskii of his earlier message to Molotov, to which he had not received any response, and argued that the Soviet Union should “immediately return to Spitsbergen”, in order to establish military garrisons on the island. Molotov, however, was not prepared to make a decision on the joint declaration on Spitsbergen or on the strategic elements of the various proposals which had been put forward by his subordinates. On 6 August Vetrov brought to Lozovskii’s attention a list of “unresolved questions” which needed Molotov’s decision, among them Vetrov’s earlier proposals for Spitsbergen. Molotov apparently responded by giving his agreement to the Spitsbergen expedition proposed by Vakhrushev and the Commissariat for

the Coal Industry.⁶⁰ The expedition, which according to available evidence was a purely civilian affair, left for Spitsbergen in mid-September 1945.

Thus, as of July-August 1945 the bureaucrats in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs and the Deputy Commissars dealing directly with Norway had produced a number of proposals aimed at a more active Soviet policy for Svalbard and Northern Norway. Parts of their efforts had received strong support from the Soviet military authorities, but had failed to kindle Molotov's enthusiasm.

These ideas remained very much alive within the foreign policy bureaucracy. Throughout 1945 and 1946 the group of activist bureaucrats continued to press for a comprehensive solution involving both Northern Norway and Svalbard. However, there was a growing understanding within the foreign policy apparatus that Soviet proposals along the

lines urged by Vetrov and his colleagues would have repercussions far beyond the Soviet-Norwegian relationship. Increasingly, Soviet policy towards Norway was becoming caught up in the evolution of East-West relations, and the Soviets gradually realised that their room for manoeuvre was strictly limited. The plans for changing the Soviet-Norwegian border were finally rejected in the winter of 1946, when Molotov issued orders to prepare the demarcation of the new Soviet-Norwegian border according to the pre-war Norwegian-Finnish border. On the bilateral level the Svalbard issue was put to rest in February 1947, when the Norwegian Storting rejected the idea of joint Norwegian-Soviet militarisation of the archipelago. Although there were proposals, *inter alia* from the Soviet Ambassador to Norway, to accept the Norwegian invitation to start general negotiations with a view to "improving" the Svalbard Treaty, Soviet policy towards Svalbard rapidly changed towards the defence of the status quo.

Conclusion: the bureaucratic formulation of policy proposals, and the limits to Soviet influence in Scandinavia

The Svalbard initiative and the NKID bureaucrats' proposals for an expansionist policy towards Northern Norway illustrate the crucial role of the *foreign policy bureaucracy* in Soviet policy towards Norway in the early post-war period. Tatiana Zhdanova, a middle-level bureaucrat, produced proposals which would have had far-reaching and grave consequences for the Soviet-Norwegian relationship if they had been implemented. Although Zhdanova most probably wrote her memorandum of October 1944 on the order of or at least in full understanding with her immediate superior, Mikhail S. Vetrov, who was then acting Head of the 5th European Department, I have not been able to find any documentation to indicate that Zhdanova and Vetrov responded to signals from their superiors.⁶¹ There is evidence, however, that the ideas of Zhdanova and her colleagues in the NKID's 5th European Department were carefully studied on the level of the deputy commissars, and were reflected in the policy proposals which reached Molotov and the other top decision-makers.

The circumstances surrounding Molotov's meeting with Trygve Lie on 12 November 1944, and Molotov's behaviour during and after the meeting, leave the distinct impression that this was certainly not Molotov's own project. These ideas did not reflect a "grand strategy" on the top political level, and never received much attention from Molotov.

However, the bureaucrats who conceived and elaborated the expansionist schemes had limited access to comprehensive information about the overall priorities of Soviet foreign policy and the political realities in the foreign country in question, i.e. Norway. This can explain why Molotov did not react to the proposals from 1939 and 1940 to step

up Soviet control over or even occupy Spitsbergen: Molotov had no desire to annoy the Germans by an adventurist policy in the High North. This pattern repeated itself from 1944 onwards, when the expansionist ideas of the NKID bureaucrats conflicted with overall Soviet foreign policy priorities. The NKID bureaucrats were simply unable to realise the implications of their own projects.

The Svalbard initiative and the plans for Northern Norway also illustrate what was in all likelihood a common phenomenon in the Soviet foreign policy-making process: the weak coordination with other bureaucratic structures. Although the reasoning of the NKID diplomats and bureaucrats was replete with military-strategic terminology, it appears from the available documentation that the NKID bureaucrats *did not* seek the advice of the military authorities before the issue was brought up with the Norwegians. The General Staff was asked to present its opinion about the strategic value of Spitsbergen and Bear Island only afterwards, and seems to have been unaware of the Soviet-Norwegian discussions from November 1944 to April 1945.⁶² It then turned out that the military leaders were much more interested in Northern Norway than the distant Svalbard area, with the possible exception of Bear Island. Vetrov's attempt in the summer of 1945 to block Vakhrushev's plan of sending a civilian expedition to Spitsbergen, was yet another example of non-coordination of important policy initiatives among bureaucratic structures.

The absence of coordination between the military and foreign policy bureaucracies weakened the chances of Vetrov, Zhdanova and others of convincing the decision-makers of the need for a more forceful policy towards Svalbard. As for

Northern Norway, Molotov, as opposed to his subordinates, must have realised that a Soviet initiative along the lines proposed by Zhdanova, Vetrov, Dekanozov et al. would have repercussions far beyond the Soviet-Norwegian relationship. Even the fact that the General Staff supported the idea of a system of Soviet military bases in Northern Norway failed to convince Molotov of the need to put aside the political considerations which kept him from raising the issue.

The documentation of Soviet deliberations about the strategic significance of the Baltic Straits and Bornholm raises more questions than it answers.⁶³ There was, apparently, unanimity within the Soviet foreign policy bureaucracy about the need to revise the regime of the Baltic Straits, with the aim of closing the Baltic Sea to warships of non-littoral states. The idea of establishing permanent Soviet naval and air bases on the island of Bornholm meant an additional step in the direction of transforming the Baltic Sea into a *mare clausum*. The circumstances of the Soviet landing on Bornholm, seen in conjunction with the (admittedly meagre) evidence on the origin of the decision to send Soviet troops to the island, indicate that this decision was primarily motivated by political, not military, considerations.

However, Soviet policy towards the Baltic Straits and Bornholm does reveal the limits of Soviet power and influence in Denmark. Soviet strategic interests in the country were not sufficiently strong to warrant a policy which might prevent the realization of more important Soviet objectives elsewhere in Europe, and have the unintended effect of pushing a frightened Denmark even further into the orbit of the Western powers. The Soviets seemed caught in an insoluble dilemma: the Soviet military presence on Bornholm was motivated by the desire to create a means of influencing the Danish government. Any hints of Soviet intentions to use their troops in this role, however, would immediately compel the Danes to appeal to the Western powers for help and support. Only the achievement of superior foreign policy or military-strategic aims could warrant the use of military leverage.

Soviet interests in Denmark, as in Norway, were simply not of this magnitude. The potential threat inherent in the Soviet military presence on Danish and Norwegian soil proved useless. In a letter to Molotov of February 1946, Plakhin, the Soviet envoy to Denmark, hinted that the continued presence of Soviet troops on Bornholm provided the British and the Americans with an excuse to maintain a military presence in Denmark proper.⁶⁴ Similarly, the Soviets gradually realised that Soviet demands with regard to Spitsbergen provided the Americans with welcome arguments in support of their efforts to obtain permanent military bases on Greenland and Iceland.

Therefore, the pursuit of Soviet strategic objectives in Denmark and Norway gradually gave way to the traditional and basically defensive policy of confining the Western great powers' influence in and control over these countries. Soviet diplomatic reports from Denmark and Norway in the early post-war years reveal a curious disparity between the dire description of the "Anglo-Saxons'" overwhelming influence and activity in these countries, and the less-than-impressive proposals for measures to remedy the situation. In February 1947, for instance, Plakhin reported from Copenhagen that British and American post-war policy in Denmark aimed at "transforming Denmark into a bridgehead against us" and securing full control over the Danish straits. To underpin his argument, Plakhin presented examples of the feverish "Anglo-Saxon" activity in Denmark, in the political, military, economic and cultural fields. Although Plakhin was optimistic about exploiting "existing conflicts of interests" between Denmark and the Western great powers, his specific suggestions for initiatives which would "increase our influence in Denmark" clearly reveal that the Soviet envoy realised that the Soviet Union had strictly limited chances of influencing Danish affairs. Of Plakhin's 15 recommendations for Soviet initiatives, 12 were in the field of "cultural contacts and propaganda", one was of a strictly formal nature (to give the legations the status of embassies), and the final two concerned trade

relations. There are no hints that Plakhin at this point was considering direct active measures to counteract the US-British military presence in Denmark, by bringing up for instance the issue of the internationalisation of the Baltic Straits or a Soviet or joint Soviet-Danish fortification of Bornholm.⁶⁵ The aim of Soviet policy in Denmark, according to Plakhin, should be to strengthen

Denmark's ability to resist the British-US influence, and to develop economic contacts between Denmark and the socialist countries.⁶⁶ Similar reports came from Soviet diplomatic representatives in Oslo and Stockholm. These limited foreign policy aims were a far cry from the ambitious initiatives which had been discussed by the foreign policy-makers in Moscow in the preceding years.

Notes

¹ In contemporary terminology, Scandinavia comprises Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Finland and Iceland are part of the larger community of the Nordic countries. Needless to say, Soviet interests in Finland were of a different nature

² Cf. Kazimierz Grzybowski, "The Soviet Doctrine of Mare Clausum and Policies in Black and Baltic Seas", *Journal of Central European Affairs*, vol. 14 (1954-55), p. 344. For a discussion of the role of the issue of the Baltic Straits in Soviet policy towards Denmark in the 1920s and 1930s, see my study *Enemy springboard or benevolent buffer? Soviet attitudes to Nordic cooperation, 1920-1955*, in the series *Forsvarsstudier/Defence Studies*, Oslo 1992, pp. 25-27.

³ Cf. Patrick Salmon, "Perceptions and Misperceptions: Great Britain and the Soviet Union in Scandinavia and the Baltic Region 1918-1939", in *Contact or Isolation? Soviet-Western relations in the Interwar Period*, in the series *Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia*, Vol. 8, Stockholm 1991, pp. 415-430; and contributions in the excellent vol. 3 in the same series (Stockholm 1988), *The Baltic in International Relations Between the Two World Wars*.

⁴ There is some confusion over the terms *Spitsbergen* and *Svalbard*. In Norwegian usage (since 1969) the name Spitsbergen applies only to the largest island in the archipelago. Until 1969 this island was called Vestspitsbergen (Western Spitsbergen). Svalbard is the name of the whole of the archipelago as defined by the Treaty of 1920, including Bear Island which is located approximately halfway between Spitsbergen and the North Cape. In this respect Norwegian usage is in accordance with the letter of the Treaty. The important point to bear in mind is that the term Svalbard, in Norwegian usage and according to the Treaty, covers all islands within the area defined by the Treaty. English speakers tend to prefer the term *Spitsbergen* to the unfamiliar *Svalbard*, although for instance *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines the terms in accordance with Norwegian usage.

Russian usage is different. "Shpitsbergen" (old name "Grumant") is used in Russian to denote the "main" archipelago, while Bear Island (*Ostrov medvezhii*) is normally listed as a separate entity. Cf. the terminology used in L.D. Timchenko, *Shpitsbergen: Istoriia i sovremennost*, Kharkov, 1992.

Jan Mayen, an isolated island located in the Norwegian Sea approximately midway between

Norway and Greenland, is not part of the Svalbard group of islands.

⁵ Soviet attitudes to this issue, however, revealed some conflicting tendencies or lines of thought within the Soviet foreign policy establishment. Cf. my above-mentioned study *Enemy springboard or benevolent buffer?* For a discussion of the evolution of Scandinavian military cooperation in the 1920s and 1930s, cf. Tom Kristiansen and Sven G. Holtmark, *En nordisk illusjon? Norge og militært samarbeid i Nord, 1916-1940*, in the series *Forsvarsstudier/Defence Studies*, No. 6/1991, Oslo 1991.

⁶ As was so often the case with Soviet perceptions of the outside world, they misinterpreted Swedish attitudes. Despite Sweden's glorious past as a North European great power, Swedish "activists" had limited influence over the country's foreign affairs. Cf. Erik Lönnroth, *Den svenska utrikes politikens historia*, Vol. V (1919-1939), Stockholm 1959.

⁷ Cf. Kollontai's reaction when the Swedes in late 1944 offered to give the Soviet government a credit of one billion Swedish kroner for Soviet purchases in Sweden. AVPRF, f. 0140, op. 29, p. 128, d. 14, ll. 14-15., Kollontai to NKID, 30 November 1944.

⁸ The article is based on newly declassified documents from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gathered during numerous and extended visits to the Foreign Policy Archives of the Russian Federation (AVPRF) in Moscow. I am indebted to Dr Igor V. Lebedev, Director of the Ministry's Department of History and Records, and to his Deputies and the rest of his staff, for help and assistance during my research in the AVPRF.

⁹ I am well aware of the limitations so far of both the documentary basis of my research (in particular with regard to Soviet policy towards Denmark), and of its restricted power to make generalisations about the Soviet foreign policy-making process as a whole. The lack of access to the archives of Stalin and the Politburo and to the Russian military archives necessarily leaves some issues open. I am not suggesting that the materials and hypotheses presented in this paper will be representative of, say, the making of Soviet policy towards the United States or the emerging socialist bloc after the Second World War. Norway and Denmark are small powers, on the periphery of Soviet foreign policy interests. For strategic reasons they commanded a certain attention from the Soviet Union. However, it seems reasonable to assume that the input and initiatives of middle-level foreign policy

bureaucrats were more prominent in the elaboration of Soviet policy towards Norway and Denmark than they were in the formation of policy towards the major powers or key allies.

¹⁰ I am indebted to professor Bent Jensen, Odense University, for his useful comments on this part of the paper. I am aware that a study on a similar topic is about to be published in Denmark. Unfortunately, I did not receive the author's permission to make use of the materials in that article, which, like the present study, is based on research in the Foreign Policy Archives of the Russian Federation.

¹¹ The issue of the Baltic Straits and Bornholm is mentioned in the international literature on Soviet foreign affairs, cf. for instance Vojtech Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War. Diplomacy, Warfare, and the Politics of Communism, 1941-1945*, New York 1979, pp. 31, 269-70, 273, 278-79. A less reliable account is given in Gunnar Alexandersson, *The Baltic Straits*, The Hague/Boston/London, 1982. The most complete discussion to be found is in the following works by Danish authors: Mary Dau, *Danmark og Sovjetunionen 1944-49*, Copenhagen 1969; the same author's "The Soviet Union and the Liberation of Denmark", in *Survey. A Journal of Soviet and East European Studies*, No. 76, summer 1970, pp. 64-81; Bent Jensen, *Tryk og tilpasning. Sovjetunionen og Danmark siden 2. verdenskrig*, Copenhagen 1987.

¹² AVPRF, f. 085, op. 30, p. 123, d. 24, ll. 1-21, Zhdanova's and Adamov's memorandum "Baltiiskoe more i baltiiskie prolivy", most probably from October-November 1940. Cf. the discussion in Toivo Miljan, "The Baltic Sea: *Mare Clausum* or *Mare Liberum?*", in *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. IX (1974), pp. 19-28.

¹³ Pavlov's minute from Molotov's conversation with Ribbentrop on 13 November 1940, as published in *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* (Moscow), No. 5/1933, pp. 92-93. The German version of this publication is published in *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, D, Vol. XI, pp. 562-569.

¹⁴ PRO, Prem 4 3/8, record of Eden's conversation with Stalin on 16 December 1941.

¹⁵ To my knowledge, there has been no in-depth study of the commission, its tasks and influence. So far, Aleksei Filitov's paper "Problems of the Postwar Order in Soviet Conceptions of Foreign Policy during the Second World War" seems to be the most extensive examination of the topic. Filitov's paper was presented at the Ninth International Colloquium on "The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War (1943-1953)", organised by the Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli in Cortona, Italy, 23-24 September 1994. The commission met only once

under Molotov's leadership in 1942; only after the reorganisation in 1943 did it start regular work from September that year. Apart from Litvinov, the commission included senior diplomats Boris Shtein and Iakov Surits, the deputy commissars S.A. Lozovskii, the former Comintern secretary D.Z. Manuilskii, and the historian E.V. Tarle.

¹⁶ Information about Durdenevskii's paper in AVPRF, f. 0512, op. 2, p. 8, d. 6, l. 6. The paper itself has not been located.

¹⁷ AVPRF, f. 0512, op. 2, p. 8, d. 4, l. 1-7, minutes from the commission's first meeting, on 8 September 1943.

¹⁸ AVPRF, f. 0512, op. 2, p. 8, d. 4, ll. 89-98, protocol from the commission's 8th meeting, on 22 July 1944.

¹⁹ What Lozovskii had in mind was certainly naval or air bases, although this particular document uses the general expression "military bases" (*voennnye bazy*).

²⁰ AVPRF, f. 0512, op. 2, p. 8, d. 4, ll. 89-98, protocol from the Litvinov Commission's meeting no. 8 on 22 July 1944.

²¹ In the years covered by this paper (1944-1947), Scandinavian affairs were the responsibility of the 5th European Department, under the directors P.D. Orlov, M.S. Vetrov (acting head) and A.N. Abramov.

²² AVPRF, f. 085, p. 120, d. 5, ll. 17-19, Orlov to Dekanozov, 15 August 1944. The memorandum commented upon the British note to the Soviet government of 9 August about the elaboration of a common Allied policy during the liberation of Denmark. Orlov emphasised the need to strengthen the authority of the Danish Freedom Council, and to ask this body to take upon itself the administration of the country until the reestablishment of "constitutional power".

²³ AVPRF, f. 085, op. 28, p. 120, d. 5, l. 16, Zhdanova to Orlov, 29 August 1944.

²⁴ AVPRF, f. 085, op. 28, p. 120, d. 5, ll. 22-23, Semenov and Vetrov to Dekanozov, 15 December 1944, with Dekanozov's handwritten comments.

²⁵ Bent Jensen, "Døssing og Dekanozov - set fra Moskva", in *Struktur og funktion. Festskrift til Erling Ladewig Petersen*, Odense 1993, pp. 283-284, based on the Soviet minutes of Døssing's conversation with Dekanozov on 17 January 1945. According to Døssing, Dekanozov said that Denmark after the war would become the Soviet Union's "direct neighbour", and that there would be "no competitors to the Soviet Union in the Baltic Sea", cf. Bent Jensen, *Tryk og tilpasning. Sovjetunionen og Danmark siden 2. verdenskrig*, pp. 48-49. In the above-mentioned article, and based on the comparison with the Soviet

minutes, Bent Jensen questions the reliability of Døssing's reports from his conversations with Soviet diplomats in late 1944 and early 1945.

²⁶ Mary Dau, *Sovjetunionen og Danmark*, pp. 107-109.

²⁷ AVPRF, f. 06, op. 7, p. 32, d. 443, l. 2, Semenov to Dekanozov, March 1945.

²⁸ AVPRF, f. 06, op. 7, p. 32, d. 443, l. 1, Podtserob to Bulganin, 12 March 1945.

²⁹ A. Basov, "Desant na ostrov Bornholm", *Voienno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, vol. 8 (1966), no. 5, pp. 29-30.

³⁰ The German forces in Denmark, including Bornholm, capitulated to the British on 5 May. The British, however, deliberately sent no forces to Bornholm to receive the German capitulation.

³¹ AVPRF, f. 085, op. 30, p. 123, d. 24, ll. 49-60, Vetrov and Plakhin to Molotov, 10 July 1945.

³² Mary Dau, *Danmark og Sovjetunionen*, p. 118.

³³ AVPRF, f. 085, op. 30, p. 123, d. 24, ll. 46-47, Vetrov and Zhdanova to Vyshinskii and Lozovskii, 2 July 1945.

³⁴ AVPRF, f. 085, op. 30, p. 123, d. 24, ll. 49-60, Vetrov and Plakhin to Molotov, 10 July 1945.

³⁵ AVPRF, f. 085, op. 30, p. 123, d. 24, ll. 61-64, Litvinov til Molotov, 18 December 1945.

³⁶ AVPRF, f. 085, op. 30, p. 123, d. 24, ll. 49-60, Vetrov and Plakhin to Molotov, 10 July 1945.

³⁷ AVPRF, f. 085, op. 30, p. 123, d. 24, ll. 61-64, Litvinov to Molotov, 18 December 1945.

³⁸ AVPRF, f. 085, op. 29, p. 121, d. 8 l. 2, Abramov and Vetrov to Novikov, 9 October 1945.

³⁹ Knut Einar Eriksen, "Great Britain and the Problem of Bases in the Northern Area, 1945-1947", in *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 7 (1982), No. 2, p. 152; and Mary Dau, *Danmark og Sovjetunionen*, p. 122.

⁴⁰ AVPRF, f. 085, op. 30, p. 123, d. 24, l. 66, draft resolution for the conference of the ministers of foreign affairs.

⁴¹ AVPRF, f. 085, op. 30, p. 123, d. 32, ll. 11-12, Abramov's minute from conversation with Døssing on 20 February 1946.

⁴² AVPRF, f. 06, op. 8, p. 33, d. 518, ll. 1-2, Døssing's note of 28 February 1946, delivered to Vyshinskii on 4 March. Minute of the conversation in f. 085, op. 30, p. 123, d. 30, ll. 6-7.

⁴³ AVPRF, f. 06, op. 8, p. 33, d. 518, ll. 6-10, minute from Molotov's conversation with Døssing on 5 March 1946.

⁴⁴ I am grateful to Professor Bent Jensen, Odense

University, who made me aware of the Rasmussen-Vyshinskii conversation.

⁴⁵ Prior to their withdrawal, the Soviet troops on Bornholm consisted of one rifle division of 6600 men, with 170 guns and mortars, 7500 tons of munitions and supplies, and a number of transport vehicles. AVPRF, f. 06, op. 8, p. 33, d. 518, l. 16, Antonov to Molotov, 14 March 1946.

⁴⁶ For a more detailed discussion of Soviet policy towards Svalbard and Northern Norway during and after the Second World War, cf. Sven G. Holtmark, *A Soviet Grab for the High North? USSR, Svalbard, and Northern Norway 1920-1953*, published as No. 7/1993 in the series *Forsvarsstudier/Defence Studies*. Svalbard's role in international politics has been studied by a number of authors. For the period up to 1925, the basic work is Trygve Mathisen, *Svalbard i internasjonal politikk, 1871-1925*, Oslo, 1951. For the wartime period the most detailed study is Olav Riste's discussion in the second volume of his "London-regjeringa". *Norge i krigsalliansen 1940-1945*, Oslo, 1979. The best coverage of Norwegian policy in the years 1945-47 is in Knut Einar Eriksen, "Svalbardspørsmålet fra krig til kald krig", in *Historiker og veiledere. Festskrift til Jakob Sverdrup*, Oslo, 1989. Rolf Tamnes has given a synthesis of Svalbard's place in great-power strategy in a long-term perspective, cf. his *Svalbard og stormaktene. Fra ingenmannsland til Kald Krig, 1870-1953*, in *Forsvarsstudier/Defence Studies*, No. 7, Oslo, 1991. Another important synthesising study is Nils Morten Udgaard, *Great Power Politics and Norwegian Foreign Policy. A Study of Norway's Foreign Relations November 1940-February 1948*, Oslo, 1973. The most recent and comprehensive Russian work on Svalbard from the perspective of international law, is L.D. Timchenko's, *Shpitsbergen: Istoriia i sovremennost*, Kharkov 1992. For attempts at synthesis, see also various works by Willy Østreng, for instance *Det politiske Svalbard*, Oslo, 1975.

⁴⁷ Sven G. Holtmark, *A Soviet Grab for the High North? USSR, Svalbard and Northern Norway 1920-1953*, pp. 36-38.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-43.

⁴⁹ Volnukhin's report about the evacuation is found in the AVPRF, f. 0116, op. 23a, p. 123a, d. 1, ll. 1-12. Cf. also Martin Kitchen, *British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War*, London, 1986, p. 87.

⁵⁰ Olav Riste, *Svalbardkrisen 1944-1945*, in *Forsvarsstudier/Defence Studies 1981*, Oslo, 1982, p. 32.

⁵¹ AVPRF, f. 06, op. 9, p. 62, d. 936, ll. 40-48, "Po voprosu o Shpitsbergene i Medvezhem ostrove", 11 November 1944.

⁵² AVPRF, f. 116, op. 28, p. 20, d. 5, ll. 1-18,

"Kratkaia spravka k voprosu o russko-norvezhskoi granitse", signed by Zhdanova on 27 October 1944.

³³ AVPRF, f. 0116, op. 27, p. 127, d. 11, ll. 234-236, Kucherov to Dekanozov, 4 June, 1945.

³⁴ AVPRF, f. 0116, op. 27, p. 127, d. 10, l. 15, Vetrov to Lozovskii, 8 June, 1945.

³⁵ AVPRF, f. 0116, op. 23, p. 123, d. 13, l. 6, Vakhrushev to Molotov, 8 June, 1945.

³⁶ AVPRF, f. 0116, op. 27, p. 127, d. 22, ll. 7-8, Vetrov to Lozovskii, 19 June, 1945.

³⁷ AVPRF, f. 0116, op. 27, p. 127, d. 5, ll. 33-35, "Spravka. K voprosu: O sozdanii voenno-morskikh i vozdushnykh baz SSSR v Severnoi Norvegii, kak zvena v obshchei sisteme bezopasnosti", 3 July, 1945.

³⁸ AVPRF, f. 0116, op. 27, p. 127, d. 22, ll. 16-18, "Spravka. K voprosu: Ob otmene Parizhskogo Dogovora o Shpitsbergene i o sovместnoi zashchite Shpitsbergena i ostrova Medvezhii Sovetskim Soiuzom i Norvegiei", 4 July, 1945.

³⁹ AVPRF, f. 0116, op. 27, p. 128, d. 20, ll. 10-12, Slavin's memorandum of 14 July, 1945.

⁴⁰ AVPRF, f. 0116, op. 27, p. 128, d. 22, l. 30, Vetrov to Lozovskii, 6 August, 1945; and l. 31, Vetrov to Lozovskii, 9 August, 1945.

⁴¹ It is possible that Zhdanova wrote her October 1944 memorandum for the Litvinov Commission.

⁴² This judgement is based on the complete lack of

references to the military authorities in the MID documents, and on a letter from the General Staff from January 1945. In this letter the Deputy Chief of the General Staff supposed that the Soviet Union should demand "long-term lease" of certain Norwegian territories as compensation for Soviet losses during the liberation of Eastern Finnmark. Although the general included Bear Island on his list of areas where the Soviet Union ought to have military bases, there are no hints in the letter that Antonov was aware of the Soviet-Norwegian negotiations already in progress. AVPRF, f. 012, op. 6, p. 81, d. 168, ll. 6-9, Antonov to Dekanozov, 24 January 1945. Later correspondence between the General Staff and the NKID seems to confirm this impression.

⁴³ This may partly be due to the fragmentary nature of the archival source materials on Soviet policy towards Denmark in the early post-war years. This directly reflects the amount of time the author of this article spent in the AVPRF doing research on Soviet policy towards Norway and Denmark respectively.

⁴⁴ AVPRF, f. 06, op. 8, p. 33, d. 512, ll. 2-19, Plakhin to Molotov, 19 February 1946.

⁴⁵ AVPRF, f. 085, op., 31, p. 125, d. 4, ll. 8-14, Plakhin to Molotov, 16 April 1947.

⁴⁶ AVPRF, f. 085, op. 31, p. 125, d. 4, ll. 17-21, Katalev's "annotatsiia" on the legation's report for 1946, 20 June 1947.