

THE USSR - NORWAY: ECONOMIC RELATIONS IN 1917 – 1940.

First of all, this subject is interesting because many people still do not believe in the existence of strong trade relations between the USSR and the kingdom of Norway. It has been traditionally considered that large-scale economic relations between our two countries and peoples had existed only before the First World War. Even in the recent film, devoted to the anniversary of the Norwegian yacht «Paulina»'s arrival in Arkhangelsk, it was said that the revolution of 1917 cut all human and trade contacts between us «like a guillotine knife».

Meanwhile, this idea is totally incorrect, at least as regards the trade and financial ties. In the time between the wars our two countries had to fundamentally reorganize their trade relations twice, but it doesn't mean that they didn't exist. These large-scale changes took place in 1921-1925 and then in 1929-1932.

The first change was connected with the principle of state monopoly on foreign trade, introduced by the Soviet government. Norway was among the first Western countries that agreed to these new "rules of the game", established by the Soviet Russia.

The second time it happened at the turn of the 20-ies and the 30-ies, when the Soviet Union made a determined attempt to change the nomenclature (list) of imported and exported goods, which was connected with the beginning of industrialization.

This report is aimed at considering these utterly important trade and political issues from the history of the relations between the two countries.

The diplomatic and trade responsibilities of pre-revolutionary Russian ambassadors, consuls and their staff in Norway, according to a pre-war Russian diplomat count A.A. Ignatiev, "were not heavy".¹ Their life at the periphery of Europe was rather quiet and regular. The Imperial Russia never aimed at providing state monopoly of foreign trade. Its basis was market economy. The fundamentally different

economic ideologies resulted in practical differences in commercial activities of old consulates and Soviet trade delegates.²

The reconstruction of relations between the Bolshevist Russia and the West started first of all with the establishment of trade ties. It proves that traders (merchants) are the best ambassadors for establishing peace relations.

It was only the state or specially licenced organisations who could export or import goods in the post-revolutionary Soviet Union. All commercial and financial operations of the Soviet Russia abroad were controlled by trade delegates ("torgovoe predstavitelstvo", "torpredstvo" in short). This notion itself was new for the international relations practice. Employees of the trade delegates possessed many of the usual diplomatic privileges.

It should be mentioned that the trade delegates in Christiania was one of the first Soviet establishments of this kind. And although we can't name it between the central ones, such as those in Berlin or London, still it took an active part in working out ways and methods for this element of state foreign trade policy.

On October 16, 1922 there was issued a special Decree by the Soviet government, devoted to the work of newly organised trade delegates. In 1923 it was further developed and distributed around the USSR.³ These documents stated that Trade Delegates were "the major trade organisations" of the state abroad and acted "in the name of strengthening the state foreign trade monopoly".

The general task for trade delegates was "to work out and to perform basic activities, aimed at developing trade relations between the Soviet Union and the country of residence".⁴ This was politically managed by an embassy ("plenipotentiary representation" or "polpredstvo"). In this way trading and diplomatic activities of the USSR gained their legal basis, and the pre-revolutionary legal system was changed.

The diplomats of the Tsar Russia never got such tasks from the state. Before the revolution of 1917 trade was mostly done by individuals. The majority of Norwegian and Russian consuls were businessmen themselves. It was not prohibited. They used their status and position not only to protect the interests and the citizens

of the country they represented, but also in their own commercial interests. Almost all vice-consuls of both countries were shareholders and even owners of enterprises and trade companies. Besides Russian vice-consuls could be of foreign citizenship as well. It was rather popular in Norway (a particular example is the Russian vice-consul in Tromsø Conrad Holmbo.⁵).

As for Soviet trade representatives, they provided only for the economic interests of the state. Because of this they had no right to carry out commercial activities for their personal profit. They could only be citizens of their own country.

According to the first paragraph of the trade agreement of September 2, 1921, Norway and Russia gave access to their territory “on equal conditions” to an official representative and trade agents of the other party, and their number could not exceed 20 people. Moscow put forward Lev M. Mikhailov (lived in 1872-1928) as its first representative. Lev Mikhailov was one of the oldest bolsheviks. He had been party member since 1896 and participated in the revolution of 1905-1907. He could take the initiative, was persistent in achievement of his goals and was well-educated.

In the beginning of September, 1921 Moscow and Christiania were defining the name for Mikhailov’s position. As the Soviet Russia was not diplomatically acknowledged at that time, Russian trade representatives were not included in the diplomatic corps. The year-book “Norwegian State calendar” of 1922 contained no data about the status of trade agents from Moscow. After numerous protests from People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs such information was finally published in 1923, but **beyond** the list of foreign diplomats. A special caption was created in this publication for the Russian mission: “Russian trade delegates in Norway”, and its head was named “plenipotentiary representative” (Befullmektiget representant).⁶

Practical work of the Soviet trade delegates in Norway began after October 28, 1921. On that day L. Mikhailov was received by Otto Blehr, the Prime Minister of Norway, whom he handed over his credentials.⁷ The return mission consisting of 3 Norwegian delegates headed by F. Jakheln left for Moscow on November 16.⁸

This allowed in the middle of November to start major negotiations of the first year of work – **negotiations about purchasing a large lot of Norwegian fish.**⁹ Since the end of 1921 and till 1928 the central trading-import task for Russia in Norway had been annual purchasing of fish and (since the spring of 1922) – obtaining credits guaranteed by the royal government for these purchases. It were fish operations that justified the existence of the trade delegates in the year 1922.¹⁰ Shipment of fish required a lot of work indeed. Large and spring herring was loaded from May 15 to July 26, 1922. During that time 30 ships from different Norwegian ports were sent to Russia.¹¹ The success of the first fish transaction had an important political meaning: it strengthened trust of the Norwegian ruling and business circles towards the Soviet Russia, and revived their hopes to use the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) as a constant market for selling fish.

Besides, starting from 1922/23 traditional supplies of bread grain and timber goods from Russia to Norway were renewed.

Grain products that were supplied by Russia to Norway in the beginning of the XX century prevailed over any other types of goods. They made up to more than 95% of their total cost in volume at that time. Oil and timber that took the second and the third places added only 3% to the cost of domestic export.

Russia constantly held the 1st place in supplies of grain to Norway in the pre-war decade. For example, in 1904 Norway imported 483 176 356 kilos of grain to the sum of 52 242 200 kroner, and in 1905 - 494 856 000 kilos which cost 56 24 100 kroner¹². This means that more than 66% of Norwegian grain import (excluding foreign import of flour and cereals) was delivered from Russia. Besides, our main competitor in Norwegian bread market in those years was Germany, which was itself the main consumer of Russian grain.

Selling grain in the beginning of the century allowed the Russian empire in the years between 1901 and 1905 to take the average fourth place in the list of approximately 40 countries that exported goods to Norwegian consumers. Russia al-

so took the same fourth place in the amount of Norwegian foreign trade with other countries. Besides the balance of trade in the first years of the XX century was constantly positive for our empire. It were large consignments of rye, barley, wheat, corn, oats and some amount of cereals and flour that created this positive balance.

After the First world war, the revolution, the Civil war and intervention Russia couldn't recover fast. But even in the 20-ies of the XX century the traditional raw products were again given the major role in the reconstruction of foreign trade. According to L.B. Krasin's statement, organisation of bread grain export was «one of the most important tasks for the state and the party»¹³. As the people's commissar of foreign trade Leonid B. Krasin had been fulfilling this task from 1918 and up to 1925. Only in autumn – winter of 1922 the country managed to find an opportunity to export a small amount of grain, which could only relatively be considered the “surplus” of the home market.¹⁴ Germany, Norway and Finland became the first buyers of the bread grain on sale.

Of course, Russian sales of grain in 1923 cannot be called large. The total amount of sales to all countries made up 3 520 000 tons during the first export year. For example, Norway was supplied by 14 930 010 kilos (almost 15 thousand tons) of Russian rye.¹⁵ The total grain import of Norway in 1922/23 came up to 502 824 tons.¹⁶ By this Moscow earned 3,5 million kroner which made up about 2,5% of the sum that was paid **to foreigners** for the grain in that year. And still, according to A.M. Kollontai, who was then beginning her career of a plenipotentiary representative and a trade delegate, the development of those supplies meant a change for the better in the relations between our countries¹⁷. This allowed to stress the importance of the Soviet Russia's being recognised de jure.

It was surprisingly easy how Moscow recovered the grain markets of not only Norway, but also of the whole Europe. Grain supplies from the Soviet Russia soon became traditional. In Norway by 1926 Russia managed to seriously press The USA, Canada, Argentina, Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Romania and even Germany. As in pre-revolutionary times, at first it was the Russian

specialization on supplying rye that Norwegians had a tendency to consume. But they started buying wheat as well since the operational year of 1925/26. During the next operational year of 1926/1927 already 102 thousand tons of it were supplied¹⁸. A joint-stock company "Exportkhleb" was created in Moscow on August 15, 1925 in order to provide exclusive foreign trade of grain. L.B. Krasin wrote about the principles of its work: «Surely "Exportkhleb" is interested in heavier buyers, and one of the first grain contracts to the amount of 30 million poods ("pood" - old Russian measure of weight, equals 16,38 kilos) of grain was signed directly with the German government. Another contract of the same kind was signed later with Norway, where there is a state monopoly on grain trade»¹⁹. The last circumstance was especially liked by the Soviet power, because the work of the Norwegian «Commonopoly» seemed to be based on similar principles of state-administered foreign trade. According to People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and the trade delegates in Christiania (Oslo), relations between the two equal grain monopolies made the process of negotiating and functioning of contracts most easy.

The trade delegates worked extremely thoroughly on researching the grain market of the country of residence and aimed at using its possibilities to the maximum. By the estimates of its staff done in 1926, the immediate demand of the country made up to at least 350 thousand tons of grain, and also 50 thousand tons of wheat flour. They constantly kept in mind that in the beginning of the century Russia satisfied up to 2/3 of this amount. It was the ideal which the Soviet trade officials in Oslo were striving to achieve. Guided by the past experience, they considered it natural to provide at least about 100 thousand tons of sales a year.²⁰ Moscow reacted to such calculations fast and positively. Already in the economic year of 1926/27 total supplies of grain from the USSR to Norway came up to 156 202 tons. This was a record amount for the whole interwar period and it equalled approximately 30% of Norwegian import in this sphere.

In the second half of the 20-ies the maximum variety in grain sales was achieved. It was not only rye and wheat, but also barley and corn. In the trade year of 1926/27 grain gave the Soviet Union 94,85% of all the cost of goods sold to

Norway and provided that the cost of export was five times higher than import from this country. That was the most profitable year for Moscow, when the positive balance of trade with Norway came up to more than 44 million kroner.

In terms of weight it equalled about 1/2 of the amount that the Russian empire sold to Norway in its best year of 1904, on the other hand, it was by 1/3 more than in 1913. This gives grounds to consider that generally by that time Russia had finished the process of regaining the Norwegian grain market. Later on it firmly held its positions until the very beginning of the Second world war.

The Soviet-Norwegian grain transactions in 1930 and 1931 became stabilized at the average level of 55 - 60 thousand tons. Their share in the cost of home export they were no longer as important as in the middle of the 20-ies and made up to 30 - 35% of it. Practically their trade importance temporarily became equal with that of White Sea pulpwood – the raw material for Norwegian pulp factories. After the year of 1932, when the USSR returned to the policy of accumulating currency reserves, the amount of grain transactions with Norway was again significantly increased. The period between 1933 and 1939 became the most stable for the grain business of the USSR in Norway. During the six pre-war years Norway bought from Russia 515 825 tons of grain products, i.e. 17% of its external demand. As compared to the general decrease in the level of our economic relations in industrial spheres and the drastic political coldness, grain trade remained the only factor of two-way business activity before the Second world war. The year of 1938 became the peak of sales, when the USSR supplied Norway with 128 023 tons of grain products, 89 605 tons of which was rye. Of course, the cost share of grain in our export again rose up to 65 – 85 % of all profit in foreign currency. In 1939, when pre-war moods were already in the air, the USSR accelerated the creation of strategic reserves of grain. It produced the most direct effect on our supplies to Norway – they were reduced ten times, and in 1940 stopped at all, although our countries were not enemies in the new world massacre.

The total amount of grain that was exported by the USSR to Norway in 1923 – 1939 consisted of about 1 million tons. This means that during the 16 years Nor-

way annually received approximately 62 500 tons or 12 – 15% of import of this product.

The sales of timber materials and small lots of sawn timber from the North of Russia also had a long history. Timber was an indispensable part of Pomor trade, when not only grain, but also logs and boards were delivered to the Northern regions of Norway from the White sea. In the beginning of the XX century timber goods from Russia firmly held the second place in terms of weight. In 1913, according to the Russian customs, 65 996 tons of timber were delivered to Norway, as for sawn timber (boards) there were 14 793 tons²¹. For Norway that was quite much. But the price for timber which was almost unprocessed was low. The total amount of profit for all the timber produce in 1913 was 4 813 thousand roubles,²² which is 3,5 times less than the export profit for grain in that year.

The recovery of foreign trade by means of timber goods was one of the most important tasks for the Soviet Russia. By the 30-ies the Union managed to become firmly established in the timber market of Norway as well by means of timber materials (mostly the so-called pulpwood). A major increase in the supplies of pulpwood took place exactly in the end of 1928 and in 1929, when they to a great extent compensated for the temporary break in the Soviet grain export. The maximum amount of supplies of timber goods from the USSR to Norway took place in 1930-1932 (126 505 tons, 107 653 tons and 188 437 tons respectively). In terms of cost this article of trade surpassed the parallel supplies of grain and left far behind the level of the year 1913, when only 85 883 tons of sawn timber and timber materials were sent to Norway.²³ Commissions for timber in the trade delegates became a valuable part of the whole Norwegian import of this raw material. The total import into the country in 1930 being only 525 thousand cubic metres, the share from the USSR equalled 293 thousand cubic metres (45,6%). Russia managed to seriously press the Finns and the Swedes. In that year the Finns could not sell to Norway a single cubic metre of raw materials of this type.

Another noticeable part of the Russian export to Norway in the years of the first five-year plan became: **oil and oil products, coal and ore**. It should be mentioned that before the revolution and immediately after it Russia itself was buying English and Norwegian coal. And only since 1929 the USSR first started to export it to Norway. The major sales took place in 1931 - 1933 (from 3,5 up to 5,5 thousand tons annually).²⁴ Besides, starting from 1930 and up to 1939 inclusive the USSR imported supplies of manganese and other ores into Norway to the amount of 7 up to 30 thousand tons a year.²⁵

But the main part of this group of goods consisted of oil and oil products (kerosene, gasoline, gas oil, black oil). Test supplies of them started arriving in Norway since the economic year of 1925/26. The major amounts were delivered from us to Norway in the years of the first five-year plan. From 1929 to 1933 this country altogether bought from the USSR 173 616 tons of oil products (in average it was 34 723 tons during each of the five years).²⁶ For comparison it could be mentioned that in 1913, for example, the Russian empire sold to Norway only 640 tons of oil and oil distillation products.²⁷ However, in terms of coal, ore, oil Moscow still hadn't become one of the key partners of Oslo, as compared to grain and timber.

The rest of export nomenclature of the 20-ies: skins of sea animals, iron bands for barrels, galoshes, tyres, salt, green peas, fruit, butter and even movie pictures were of no great importance.

As we can see, grain and timber purchases still prevailed in Norwegian import from the Soviet Russia both before the revolution and during the whole inter-war twenty-year period. This sphere turned out to be less influenced by sovietization and industrialization.

As for the change of character of Norwegian export to the USSR in the end of the 20-ies, it meant a complete change in the trading relations of the two countries.

In this respect it was the operational year of 1927-28 that marked the change in economic relations of the two countries. In 1928 the grain supplies of Norway were scarce (in 1929 there were none at all because of crops failure).

The balance of Russian foreign trade with Norway was drastically upset. It became necessary to find at least a temporary substitute for bread grain. Besides, the USSR no longer needed to import fish from the North of Norway to the North of Russia. When the Soviet Union refused to buy Norwegian fish Oslo was completely dissatisfied. This refusal was breaking the traditional commodity groups that had existed for centuries and served as the basis for the whole complex of mutual economic and – to a large extent – political interests. In 1928 the trade treaty that had been concluded in December, 1925 terminated. The parties had to find a solution to the problem of whether it was worthwhile to prolong it. A crisis of economic partnership was looming.

The years of 1928 and 1929 became the period of searching for new opportunities for cooperation, fresh principles of our economic ties and absolutely new commodity groups that could serve as the basis for Soviet import. It should be pointed out that this search was initiated by the Soviet Russia. As for Norway, it initially aimed at retaining the “status quo”, i.e. insisted on selling fish to Russia in the interest of its own fishermen. While the Russians since the operational year of 1927/28 began paying serious attention to the produce of Norwegian electric and metal manufacture. Moscow was beginning its industrialization five-year plans. That was why the Soviet government was interested in purchasing Norwegian aluminium, importing Norwegian nonferrous metals and other industrial goods. In the end of October, 1928 Politburo, Council of People’s Commissars and People’s Commissariat of Foreign Trade made a decision to direct the efforts towards Norway in what concerned purchasing of some nonferrous metals and ferroalloys. There are grounds to suppose that to a great extent it were the good personal relations and similarity of political views between the plenipotentiary representative in Oslo Alexandra M. Kollontai and the chairman of the USSR Metalimport Alexander G. Shlyapnikov (Belenin) that played a great role in this.

During the whole first five-year period Moscow was forced to import almost 100% of its demand for aluminium and nickel, because there was no domestic production of it.²⁸ **The Norwegian share in the Soviet import of aluminium during 1929 - 1933 came up to 58,49% (which equalled almost 34 thousand tons). In terms of nickel and zinc the numbers are more modest - 9,5 and 11,5 % respectively.** But even this can be considered a good result of commercial cooperation if we take into consideration the large number of competitors in the world. In the given years Norway took the second or the third place among the European partners of the USSR in terms of supplying nonferrous metals. Only Germany was ahead of it.

The years of 1931-1932 became the time of the highest level of two-way trade for the USSR and Norway of the interwar period. The Soviet Union took the third place in Norwegian export in terms of total cost of goods, as for import it was the seventh place out of ninety countries that traded with Norway. Norway took the 7th and the 5th places respectively in the list of the major trade partners of the Soviet Union.

Let us now examine the importance of exporting nonferrous metals (especially aluminium) to the Soviet Russia for Norway itself. The degree of Soviet participation in the total Norwegian export of nonferrous metals turned out to be no less than 16,42%. Besides, the USSR Metalimport paid its greatest attention to aluminium. The Soviet share in purchasing this metal in the above mentioned five-year period made up approximately from 34% to 36% of its total foreign Norwegian sales. And in some years - at the height of the economic crisis – became even bigger. **For example, in 1932, which was the toughest year for Norway, Russia purchased more than 60 % of the produced Norwegian aluminium.**

There is every reason to agree with the following conclusion drawn by the trade delegates according to the results of 1932: “From the above stated it can be concluded without doubt that the export and hence the production of aluminium in

Norway depends on our purchases”.²⁹ To develop this idea it can be stated, that owing to the USSR as the major client the Norwegian aluminium industry avoided financial and production collapse and only to a minimal extent reduced the man power in its plants in 1931 - 1932.

To a certain extent such dependence could be noticed regarding nickel as well. The USSR had been the most stable consumer of the Norwegian part of this material's production.

The trade delegates also were of great importance concerning purchases of some ferroalloys, especially ferrosilicon and ferrochrome. The production capacity of ferrochrome in Norway in the years of crisis was about 5000 tons a year, but there were no contracts for it. In the years 1930, 1932 and 1933 ferrochrome was smelt only and exclusively by requests of the USSR and from the ore that was also supplied from Russia. The total amount of this alloy that was delivered to the USSR from there during the period between 1929 and 1933 equalled 7634 tons, which made up to more than 60% of the whole Norwegian production.

The production capacity of ferrosilicon in Norway in the beginning of the 30-ies was a little less than 40 000 tons a year. As with ferrochrome, the USSR was not the exclusive, but one of the most important contractors of Norwegian companies. Import to Russia over the five-year period came up to 36 760 tons or 28,31% of Norwegian export.³⁰

The mutual economic interests between Norway and the Soviet Russia were also based on the fact that transportation of grain, timber produce, ores and metals required a large amount of merchant vessels. The USSR had almost no vessels of its own in the interwar period. Norway, on the contrary, was one of the leading countries in the world in terms of its merchant fleet. The Soviet Russia was eager to provide those ships with work. During the whole interwar period the USSR was actively freighting Norwegian vessels. Let us give examples of the importance of this chartering work. If we take the export volume from the White sea ports in

1913 as 100%, then we will see that in the operational years of 1921/22 this export made up only 6% of the whole year of 1913. In the operational years of 1922/23 it already made up 32,4% and in 1923/24 – 79,5%.¹ Such quick recovery of the amounts of timber export trade would be absolutely impossible without the trade agreement of 1921, which in its turn cleared the way to large-scale freight transactions. During the season of 1922 the Arkhangelsk port alone received 47 Norwegian ships.¹ The port came to life at once. The following table makes clear the comparative role of Norwegian timber ships.¹

Timber freight from the White sea ports

Year	Total number of chartered ships	Among which Norwegian	Percent of Norwegian freight
1923	230	188	81,7%
1924	340	225	66,2%
1925	451	242	53,7%

Although the share of Norwegian vessels had a tendency to decrease, but even in 1925 it still exceeded the half of their total number. It should be mentioned, that unlike the Finns and the Swedes, the Norwegians were not our competitors in the sphere of timber export. On the contrary, they helped the Soviet Russia to pave the way to the world timber market.¹

Affreightment transactions were quite profitable for Norway itself. Here is what A.M. Kollontai wrote about this in the article for “Izvestiya” (the issue of November 16, 1923): «Chartering of Norwegian vessels plays an important role in the trade balance of the country. The active part of the Norwegian trade balance is strongly supported by the money that comes through the cash desks of shipping companies... It’s not without reason that Norway is called «the world carrier».¹ During the economic crisis of the beginning of the 20-ies Norwegian government

and shipping companies were in constant search for an opportunity to use their 3740 vessels and 2610 thousand of gross tons.

Freight of ships produced a radical change of the total trade balance in Norwegian favour. For example, in 1935 the USSR paid Norway 1 816 860 roubles for goods, and for the freight – 4 589 032 roubles. **All in all in 1935 the USSR paid Norway 6 405 892 roubles.** If we subtract the price of goods sold by the USSR to Norway (2 514 000 roubles) from this sum, then the final balance will be 3 891 892 roubles in favour of Norway.

Taking this into consideration, the work of **“the Russian-Norwegian seafaring company”** from Bergen can be called most profitable. It was founded in February 1923 by the state association “Severoles”, with the participation of the joint-stock company “Arkos” and the Norwegian shipping company “Bergenske”. Its headquarters were situated in London and it acted in compliance with the English laws while chartering Norwegian ships for Russian clients and trying to reduce prices for freight. It mostly carried cargo of its constitutor “Severoles”. During the first year of its existence “Russonorse”, as it was also called, having 10 000 pounds of fixed capital got 9 076 pounds in profit, or 90,76 % of the invested capital. They managed to charter 469 ships during the season of 1923. In fact, it were the profits of “Russonorse” that partly paid for maintaining of the part of staff and other expenses of the Bergen company¹.

At the same time the same constitutors founded another transportation company **“the Russian-Norwegian joint-stock shipping company”** or “Norskrussiske”.¹ It hadn't become so well-known, although the task that it had got was not less important. “Norskrussiske” had to see to the creation of the own fleet with the carrying capacity up to 30000 tons, adapted for sailing in the White sea basin. In 1925 this company had already 6 ships, four of which were built in Norway. Two more new ships were ordered from French shipyards. Such was the beginning of recreation of Russia's own transport fleet. The Bergen company only dealt with

economic management of those ships for which it was rewarded with 12 thousand kroner for a ship annually.

Norwegian entrepreneurs also took the active part in performing concession work in Russia in the 20-30-ies. For example, the General Concession Committee of the Supreme Council of National Economy in 1923 and 1924 put into action the forestry concession of Frederik Prutz's group, the agrotechnical concession of Dr. Fritjof Nansen in Balashevski district, the whaling concession of "Vega" joint-stock company (initially called "Fishing concession Christiansen") near the shores of Kamchatka, agreement with the joint-stock company "Almen" which dealt with floating logs from Northern Finland by transit through the Russian territory to Murmansk, the concession for prospecting and mining of gold "Bergen and Holter" and others.¹

One of the earliest was the contract between the People's committee on provision with the Norwegian company «Vinge and Co». According to this contract 55 hunting boats could fish and hunt in the Soviet territorial waters from February 20 to June 15 every year. The annual payment for the licence was 200 000 kroner (10 000 roubles in gold). However, all those concessions didn't exist for a long time and were liquidated after 1928.

From the point of view of the Soviet government, they had a double role: firstly, attracted small foreign capital and by this helped to bring some enterprises out of collapse; secondly, they allowed to achieve compromise in solving the question of the foreign property that had been lost as a result of the Russian revolution. This directly concerned the relations between Norway and Russia. We have already mentioned before, that by the beginning of 1922 the governmental Norwegian committee for reparation of damages in Russia received 300 suits against Russia from Norwegian citizens and companies to the sum of approximately 250 000 000 kroner.

Concession agreements became a specific form of repairing those damages. One of the examples of this kind was the contract with F. Prutz's group. The for-

mer owners of plants documented their surrender of ownership rights in return for receiving the old stock of timber. The profit from selling it became the Norwegian share of the concession's nominal capital. The concession partnership agreement of "Rusnorvegoles" was approved by the Soviet government on July 3, 1923. During the first three years the concessionaires were allowed not to pay any taxes for the import of foreign machines and equipment.

"Rusnorvegoles" turned out to be the biggest economic manager of timberland along the Onega river and its inflows as compared to the two other mentioned concession organisations. It possessed 1 973 000 dessiatins ("dessiatina" = approx. 2 3/4 acres) of forests and also almost a million dessiatins of other territories. It was given 5 sawmills to be put into operation, two of which had to be reconstructed, 10 ships, barges and other equipment. The organisation was given full rights to sell the previously sawn timber. The official address of the Board was considered Christiania (Oslo). In Russia the organisation had the Main production office in Onega and representative offices in Moscow, Leningrad and Arkhangelsk. The head manager of the concession was a Norwegian captain F. Prutz.¹ The actual production work of the concession on the Onega began in autumn of 1923 and continued until the end of the 20-ies.

The most serious and the longest in terms of duration factor of Soviet-Norwegian concession economic relations became the agreement for the right of sea animals hunting in the waters of the Arctic ocean from Murmansk coast to the Western shores of Novaya Zemlya inclusive to Cape Zhelaniya along the whole coast of the continent and the islands.¹ This vast territory was introduced to the so-called Olesund group of ship owners («Aalesunds Rederiforenings Saelfaugruppe») on September 11, 1923. The most valuable hunting place was considered to be the White sea entrance, where in spring there gathered numerous amounts of beluga (white sturgeon) and seal.

Let us say a few words about the practical results of Olesund concession's activities. The amount of sea animals caught by its participants in our waters during the years of 1923 – 1939 made up to no less than 2 700 000 heads, according to the

author's accounts. In return the USSR received approximately 270 000 dollars of concession payments in prices of that time. It was only the year of 1939 that put an end to the work of the animal hunting company of the Olesund union of ship owners, seal-fishers group in the entrance to the White sea. In March-June of that year it was the last time that the Norwegian seamen were allowed to enter the territorial waters of the Soviet Union that had been specified in the concession.

On the eve of the Second world war (1935 - 1939) the commodity circulation between the two countries was neither rich in amount, nor in variety of goods. In 1939 the collapse of the trade relations took place. The Soviet export to Norway decreased almost to nothing. The same processes characterize the Soviet import: during 1939 - 1940 it decreased 10 times and equalled the minimal sum of 748 thousand roubles. In 1939 and in 1940 didn't purchase a single ton of fish from Norway. The year of 1939 became the last season of chartering Norwegian trade vessels for the transportation of timber and other export cargo of the USSR. So, the war that began in autumn of 1939 struck an irreparable blow on the mutual interests of our two countries in the sphere of sea trade shipping as well. Finally, by the year of 1940 the supplies of bread grain from the USSR to the Scandinavian neighbour also stopped.

In the early period of the Second world war (1940) the fact that Moscow was interested in supplies of such a strategically important metal as aluminium still somehow supported two-way trade. In 1939 it was the only type of goods whose purchase amounts were even higher in comparison to the previous year. In 1940 Moscow was eager to further increase the purchases of aluminium in return for fertilizers. In the beginning of 1940 it even became possible to deliver the first 500 tons of aluminium from Norway over the old contracts, but the German occupation of the country destroyed possibilities for any further trade.

To sum up, let us state, that the highest point of two-way economic relations of the interwar time became the period of 1929-1934. This was the time of the Soviet five-year industrialization plans and the world economic crisis, that caused radical changes in the character of the Soviet-Norwegian trade and economic rela-

tions. During those years the state-guaranteed Norwegian credits became qualitatively different: not “fish”, but “industrial”. The traditional fish products lost their significance as the main type of Norwegian export into Russia. They were replaced by such expensive industrial articles of goods as aluminium and doped alloys.

In fact, Norway played an important role in modernizing the Soviet industry during the pre-war five-year plans, and the USSR helped the Norwegian metal manufacture industry and the trade fleet to avoid the financial crisis.

During the last pre-war years there appeared a distinct tendency in the Soviet trade policy towards autarchy and accumulating foreign currency reserves. That was why Moscow broke its close trade connections with Norway and other countries.

Such a high level of partnership as in the years of 1929-1934 has never been achieved again since then.

Commentary

¹ А.А.Игнатъев. Пятьдесят лет в строю. Т.1. - М.,1955. - С.473

² Задачи старых и новых дипломатов совпадали в изучении состояния экономики страны пребывания, ее внутреннего и внешнего рынка, ситуации с финансами и валютой, составление справок о надежности и возможностях отдельных фирм и целых отраслей хозяйства, в установлении контактов с которыми заинтересованы были отечественные контрагенты.

³ Государственный архив Архангельской области (далее ГААО). Ф. 49. Оп. 1. Д. 227. Л. 65 - 65 об.

⁴ Там же.

⁵ Написание фамилии этого вице-консула в некоторых русских документах – Гольба не совсем точно передает звучание норвежского варианта. РГАВМФ, Ф. 418, Оп. 1, 3928, Л. 39.

⁶ Norsk Statskalender 1923. - Kristiania, 1923. - S. 67 - 68.

⁷ Архив внешней политики РФ (далее АВП РФ). Ф. 116. Оп. 4. Д. 6. Л. 12

⁸ АВП РФ. Ф. 116. Оп. 4. Д. 3. Л. 9, 13

⁹ АВП РФ. Ф. 116. Оп. 2. Д. 7. Л. 1, 3 - 5

¹⁰ ИВЭУ РФ. Ф. Торгпредство. Оп. 12136. Д. 4. Л. 147

¹¹ ИВЭУ РФ. Ф. Торгпредство. Оп. 12136. Д. 4. Л. 155

¹² Norges Handel 1905. - Kristiania, 1906. -S.2

¹³ Материалы для докладов. Вопрос об экспорте хлеба за границу. (Доклад Л.Б.Красина). – М., 1923. – С. 3.

¹⁴ Там же.

¹⁵ Norges Handel 1924. - Kristiania, 1924. - S. 120.

¹⁶ Norges Handel 1923. - Kristiania, 1924. - S. 2 - 3.

¹⁷ В.А.Шишкин. Цена признания. - С.Пб., 1991. - С. 82 – 83.

¹⁸ Внешняя торговля СССР 1917 – 1940 гг. – М., 1960. – С. 673 – 674.

¹⁹ Красин Л. Как рабоче-крестьянская власть восстанавливает вывоз хлеба. – М., 1924 - С. 19.

²⁰ ИВЭУ. Ф. Торгпредство. Оп. 12136. Д. 42. Л. 9.

²¹ Внешняя торговля СССР за 1917 – 1940 гг. – М., 1960. – С.670.

²² Там же.

²³ Внешняя торговля СССР за 1918 - 1940 гг... - С. 675-678.

²⁴ Внешняя торговля СССР за 1918 - 1940 гг... - С. 675-677.

²⁵ Там же. С. 675-682.

²⁶ Там же. С. 675-677.

²⁷ Там же. С. 670.

²⁸ Внешняя торговля СССР за 20 лет (1918 - 1937). М., - 1938. - С.19. Там сказано, что в 1932 г. нужды страны по алюминию были удовлетворены за счет импорта на 92%, а по цинку - на 43,7%.

²⁹ Там же. Л. 61.

³⁰ Вычислено автором на основе сопоставления нескольких источников. См., например, ИВЭУ РФ. Ф. Торгпредство. Оп. 12136. Д. 104. Л. 61; Внешняя торговля СССР за 1917-1940 гг. - С. 688; Norges Handel 1929 - 1933. - Oslo, 1930 - 1934 и др.