

PREFACE

It all started in late autumn 2001 when I was asked about the possibility of writing a history book about the Barents Region. The Olof Palme International Centre in Stockholm and the Norrbotten County Administration Board were occupied with the northern dimension of Europe during the very final moments of the 2001 Swedish chairmanship of the European Union. At that time the Social Democratic Foreign Minister, Anna Lind, a young dynamic woman, was very involved in the Barents Region, a new transnational region established in 1993 that emerged from the range of possibilities that followed the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The Barents Region was a European hot spot.

THE NEED FOR A HISTORY BOOK

I must, however, admit that I was rather sceptical. There was no funding for the work and no ideas about how to write the history of thirteen counties, spread over four states on opposite sides of the earlier Iron Curtain. On the other hand I saw the need for such a book. Hardly anyone in the southern part of Sweden knew anything about the Barents Region, not to mention people in other parts of Europe and the rest of the world. Many were not even aware of its existence. Nordic historians knew very little about the history of the Russian entities of Nenets, Arkhangelsk, Murmansk, Karelia or Komi, and the Russian historians knew very little about the history of the northern counties of Finland, Sweden and Norway. University students within the Barents Region had some idea of the regional history of their own country, but scarcely of the history of the northern provinces of the neighbouring countries. In many ways history writing stops at the border of one own's own country because the nation state has been such a strong force in building identities.

The establishing of the Barents Region is a new kind of region building that challenges earlier ways of regarding the construction of nations and regions. It is not a new nation of the kind that was established in Finland in 1809 and 1917, and it is not a region within an existing nation state or empire. It is a transnational political entity that aims to integrate the regional policies of both the national subregions and the four states involved. It resembles the kind of macro-regions that have been created within the EU, but in this case Norway and Russia are outside the EU while Finland and Sweden are Member States. The Barents Region is, therefore, a unique transnational macro-region but is also typical of the globalisation process and of postmodernity. Politically it is divided between the former Communist Soviet Union system and the democratic Western European system. This part of the world is extremely rich both in natural resources and environmental pollution. There are many indigenous peoples and national minorities, forming a mosaic of manifold cultures, but at the same time they are threatened with assimilation and extinction. We are now aware that global environmental changes are most evident in the northern hemisphere, with repercussions on the rest of the world, especially regarding the effects of the melting polar icecaps. The Barents Region is really a world hot spot.

The establishing of the Barents Region also challenges the writing of history in our time. This new kind of macro-region building demands new methods for writing about it. It is not only a question of mastering the four national languages involved and the sources needed, but also that the different perspectives call for the involvement of authors from the different parts of the region. In many ways the Russian and Nordic parts of the region were like strangers to each other before the opening up of borders after 1993. The regional history of the north was fragmented; the subarctic parts of the states were never made the basis for big narratives. In the teaching of history no textbook was ever written that examined the northernmost dimension of Europe from a broad regional and multinational perspective. The regional narrations of the north have always been limited to the nation state perspective, to a Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish or Russian perspective. No author has tried to transcend the northernmost boundaries of the European nation states and write the subarctic history of Europe. This is somewhat inconsistent in a part of the world where historically transnational co-operation has long been the rule rather than the exception. We have now been living for a long time in a globalised world and must open our historical eyes to comparisons across national borders.

In 2013 this young region celebrated its twentieth anniversary. It was not our initial intention to publish this history book to coincide with the anniversary, it just happened that way, but I think it is well timed. The Barents Region has left behind the labour pains of its initial phases and is moving into a period of consolidation. There is now a need for a historical analysis, both to bring understanding of the similarities and differences between the various parts of the region and to help the search for a new kind of northerly direction. Such analyses are also important for the quality of future political decisions.

The establishing of the region has influenced the Nordic community profoundly through including the old East and West blocs in a unique, transnational and transregional co-operation. At the same time it has detached part of the Nordic community. The former North Calotte co-operation between the northernmost parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland has now been superseded by the Barents co-operation. The Russian part of the region has also experienced a period of reorientation. For the four states involved, and for the people living in this new political entity, a centuries-old north-south pattern of centre and periphery has given way to an east-west perspective. The northern parts of the states within the Barents Region have often been marginalised in historical writing, despite the sometimes dramatic and ground-breaking events that have taken place there. Such neglect should also be contrasted with the cultural richness of the region. There is thus a great need for knowledge about this area, which would open up new ways of interpreting Europe's historical heritage that not only embrace the Mediterranean, or the central Continental or Baltic parts, but also the northern Russian and subarctic Fenno-Scandinavian parts of the continent; the entity that has now been established as the Barents Region. In other words there is a real need for a history book about the Barents Region.

ESTABLISHING THE NETWORK

The first strategic task was to create a network of historians who could analyse the potential aim of the book. After accepting that mission I booked tickets to Petrozavodsk and Arkhangelsk together with two colleagues in order to extend our contacts with Russian historians. From the very start we have had two major aims: first to incorporate the most recent interpretations of the regional history of the north; secondly to compare, transnationally and transregionally, the history of the different parts of the Barents Region.

To achieve these two aims it was necessary to bring together the historians of the region, which leads to the third aim. It was necessary to write this history from below with the help of historians from all parts of the region. No single historian could accomplish the task of writing the subarctic history of four nation states and thirteen national regions as a comparative unified narration.

This was not the first northerly network of historians. A bilateral network of Finnish and Swedish historians had already been set up in the 1970s focusing on the transnational history of Tornedalen. In the 1990s there were also various networks of historians from the universities of Umeå, Tromsø, Oulu and Arkhangelsk, and a successful Sámi history network. Significantly, however, most of these networks were dominated by Nordic researchers. We did not actually know very much about Russian history of the north, especially the regional history, and I suppose the same could be said of Russian knowledge about northern Fenno-Scandinavia.

In 2004 the project received funding from *NordForsk*, under the Nordic Council, to establish a three-year postgraduate network, the *Modernisation Process in the Barents Region* (2004–2006), involving the departments of history at the universities of Luleå, Umeå, Oulu, Tromsø, Arkhangelsk, Murmansk, Petrozavodsk and Syktyvkar. It was a breakthrough for co-operation among the historians in the Barents Region as from then on all departments of history within the region were part of a joint network. During those years three conferences were held; *The Use and Abuse of History* in Luleå (2004), *The Industrialisation Process* in Arkhangelsk (2005) and *Regional Northern Identity: from Past to Future* in Petrozavodsk (2006). I created a new series, *Studies in Northern European Histories*, at the University of Luleå in order to publish the papers presented at the conferences, which resulted in five volumes of proceedings. Historians and social scientists from the universities of Stockholm, Lund, Helsinki, Rovaniemi, Joensuu, Bergen, Bodø, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Freiburg (Germany) and Duluth (USA) and from the Aleksanteri Institute in Helsinki also became involved in the co-operation. The result must be characterised as a success. More than 230 graduate students and senior researchers from all over the Barents Region participated in the conferences.

The aim of the conferences was to investigate and publish the historical research of doctoral students and senior researchers within the Barents Region. The ultimate tasks were to discover the different regional and ethnic interpretations of the history of the Barents Region, and also to decide who should write the history book. The creation of the network was not only

ground-breaking in bringing historians of this subarctic part of Europe together, but also in bringing Russian historians of the north into contact with each other and in discussing the history of Russia from both a northern and East-West perspective.

During these meetings the idea of writing an encyclopedia, parallel to the history book, came up, so that together these would constitute a major European knowledge project. After a workshop on this issue in Petrozavodsk in 2006 the decision was made to produce such an encyclopedia. An interim steering group was created, composed of Professor Einar Niemi, Tromsø University, Doctor Urban Wråkberg, the Barents Institute, and myself at Luleå University of Technology. The first constitutive meeting was held in Tromsø, 25 April 2007. Later the group was enlarged to its final form with the inclusion of Associate Professor [Docent] Matti Salo, Oulu University in 2007, and Doctor Carina Rönqvist, Umeå University in 2009. Doctor Mats-Olov Olsson was appointed the chief editor of the encyclopedia, and myself the chief editor of the history book.

METHODS FOR THE WRITING OF A TRANSREGIONAL HISTORY BOOK

At the first workshop, held in Kirkenes in October 2007, historians from all the universities involved were invited to discuss the content of the history book, the way it should be written and how the work should be organised. One of the first discussions was about the time period to be covered by the book. We all agreed that we should not limit it to the period of the creation of the Barents Region in 1993 and after, but should we concentrate on the modernisation period after the middle of the 1800s or should we start earlier? The need to describe the incorporation of the northern areas in the formation of the states, and also to provide a background for the many ethnic groups in the Barents Region, led us to decide on the year 800 as a starting point and 2010 as the furthest we could stretch history into the present. The main focus, however, was to be on modern history, covering the changes after the Napoleonic Wars, the Russian Revolution, industrialisation, the growing welfare system, World Wars I and II, the formation of the Nordic co-operation, the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the creation of the Barents Region. In this way the periodisation of the eight chapters would follow an agenda of political macro history.

It was necessary to draw up a very general periodisation when trying to find the turning points for each chapter that had a bearing on all the

subregions of the Barents Region. We have tried to avoid essentialist constructions by not using the label 'the Barents Region' so much in the description of periods before 1993. This means that the book actually compares the national and subregional development within the present-day Barents Region from the year 800 to 2010, but within the context of a northern dimension of earlier political constellations. What is common to all the periods is the northern dimension of the region, which had been discussed at the different workshops. This dimension is not easy to grasp analytically but has been something of a 'guiding star' for comparisons and for the method of writing. At the same time we traced changing regional formations and strategies over time, a process in which the region, not the nation state, was the focus. One important point of departure is the fact that many ethnic groups live in the Barents Region. We have tried to describe comparatively the changed minority policies and ethno-political mobilisations across the national borders in order to generate an understanding of the ethnic dimension in the formation of nation states, and also an understanding of the history of the present-day minorities.

The main, but also the most difficult, task has been to move beyond national borders. Written historical sources, and the history writing of different times, were mainly produced within the context of the nation state, making it very difficult to compare sources from different parts of the Barents Region. At the beginning of the project two young researchers were engaged to compile different kinds of sources in Norway and Finland, as a kind of pilot project. We used some of their results and were also given a good picture of how different sources could be used, but the method was not useful for covering the whole region. This does not mean that we have avoided comparative statistics, but we have used them with care and focused instead on written thematic narratives that cover the different viewpoints in the Barents Region. In that way the method could be characterised as a comparative narrative method, but using a macro rather than a micro perspective. We have tried to compare common turning points and formative processes in the history of the subregions of the Barents Region. The regional differences often coincided with national differences, but not always.

In the history book 27 historians have contributed to a narration that covers more than 1200 years. All the historians have their own specialities regarding periods and kind of history writing. It has therefore been a challenge to combine the different ways they interpret and write history and to mould what they produced into one single text. To cover the four countries one author from each country has been involved in each chapter,

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INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the map of northern Europe changed dramatically. As a result of the Russian-Swedish War from 1808–1809, also known as the Finnish War, Sweden lost Finland to Russia. In 1814 Norway was forced into a union with Sweden. In addition to the new national border, which now separated Finland from Sweden, boundaries were also established between the Russian Kola Peninsula, Norwegian Finnmark and Finnish Lapland. With the outbreak of the Crimean War (1853–1856) northern Russia and northern Finland were committed to entering the war on the Russian side. The peoples of the border regions, especially the Sámi people, were badly affected by the gradual closing of the borders between Finland, Norway and Sweden in the middle and at the end of the century. Highly controlled borders broke down the old economic, social and cultural networks of the territory.

From an economic point of view, in the early nineteenth century the northern areas were deeply agrarian and socially divided class societies. Undeveloped and undiversified agriculture resulted in years of disastrous crop failure, causing both internal and external migrations involving thousands of the poor in what is now the Barents Region. The urbanisation process started to dismantle the agrarian way of life, but at the same time governments tried to keep their frontier regions colonised and supported the establishment of hundreds of new pioneer farms beyond the Arctic Circle hand in hand with helping the growing industrialisation.

Power conflicts, closure of borders, emerging industrialisation and competing nation state projects made the identities of minorities a matter of national loyalty. The period also saw the strengthening of nationalist movements and a state emphasis on ethnic national homogeneity. At the same

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time people's awareness of their political and national rights and duties was aroused and gave rise to many new forms of collective activity, such as the launching of political associations and movements.

TRANSFORMATION OF NORTHERN BORDERS

The borders of the northern areas were redefined and stabilised during the nineteenth century. New regional entities were founded and urbanisation took on its modern shape. At the same time roads were built and improved and central national railway systems reached the north. Many modernisation features were quite similar throughout the northern areas, such as the industrialisation process and the increase in population but other trends, like consequences of the wars and the new border demarcations, differed in line with the geopolitical position of each region.

THE TURMOIL OF THE NAPOLEONIC WARS

The Napoleonic Wars (1799–1815) had a great effect on northern Europe as Russia and Denmark became allies of Napoleon while Sweden maintained its alliance with Great Britain. The balances of political power and military



In the Battle of Revonlahti (Swe. Revolax) in Finland in April 1808 the Swedes attacked the Russians who had entrenched themselves in the village. In the summer Sweden counter-attacked but the war once again turned in favour of Russia. The last fighting took place in Västerbotten in the vicinity of Umeå. Drawing by August Malmström.



*The epic poem *The Tales of Ensign Stål* (Swe. *Fänrik Ståls sägner*) was written by the famous Finnish author Johan Ludvig Runeberg, first part being published in 1848 and the second in 1860. They were written in his mother tongue Swedish and translated to Finnish. It was obligatory reading in both Finnish and Swedish schools, expressing both patriotic pride and sentimental mourning over the lost war. The poem became an important part of Finnish national identity. In the drawing the imaginary character of Ensign Stål recounts his war memories at the market.*

force changed dramatically in the north when Russian troops attacked Finland over the Kymi River in February 1808. One month later Denmark-Norway declared war on Sweden, forcing it to commit troops to the borders of Russia, Denmark and Norway. Russia occupied Finland very rapidly: the capital city of Turku was captured as early as in March 1808 and the most powerful fortress of Sveaborg (Fin. Suomenlinna) on the road to Helsinki surrendered at the beginning of May. Most of the battles were fought in Ostrobothnia, in the western part of Finland.

After twelve encounters the Swedish troops, comprising both ethnic Finns and Swedes, scattered and were forced to retreat to the region of Tornio. An armistice was signed in November 1808 which entailed the withdrawal of the Swedish army behind the Kemi River. The Swedish forces arrived in the town of Tornio in late November. The Russians followed hot on their heels and the first Russian Cossacks appeared in Kemi three weeks later. Although actual hostilities had ceased, the march to Tornio was gruelling and marked by a shortage of supplies. The lack of means of transport

implied that men had to travel on foot in the blustery, freezing weather of late November, when at times the temperature fell to nearly -30°C . The soldiers were exhausted by hunger, wounds and disease, and the situation got worse after the troops reached Tornio. At the beginning of December there were already about 8,000 sick soldiers and over a period of three months more than 2,000 of them died of disease in the Tornio area. Moreover, the local inhabitants of the coastal region were fatally infected with dysentery, typhus and typhoid fever brought by the soldiers causing the worst demographic catastrophe of the nineteenth century in the area, unparalleled even by the famine years of the 1860s. The crises were exacerbated by the years of crop failure in the area and the primitive medical care available. As a result the mortality rate in the Tornio area rose from 4 to 21 per cent in 1809. The population of the parish of Umeå fell by 19 per cent, from 8,400 to 6,800 inhabitants. In the summer the Russian forces advanced into the Swedish county of Västerbotten, to the town of Umeå. Several battles were waged, most of them ending in Swedish defeats.

Even before the war ended, in March 1809, Alexander I of Russia (1777–1825) invited Finnish representatives of the four leading estates to the small eastern town of Porvoo (Swe. Borgå) for a constitutive meeting about the future status of Finland. At the meeting he proclaimed Finland an autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia, and also its elevation to that of a nation among other nations. The decision implied that over 600 years of Swedish rule was now ended and Finland was given an autonomous position in the Russian Empire. At the same time Alexander confirmed the fundamental laws, privileges and rights that Finland had formerly possessed under Sweden, and the right to practice Lutheranism. The final terms of the treaty between Russia and Sweden were signed in September in Hamina (Swe./Rus. Fredrikshamn Treaty) in Finland. Sweden formally delivered Finland to Russia and the states affirmed their intention of avoiding future hostilities towards each other. According to the peace negotiations Sweden ceded to Russia the Åland Islands in the Baltic Sea, which now became part of the new Grand Duchy of Finland. Moreover, the north-eastern part of Swedish Lapland became part of North Finland. The western borderline between North Sweden and North Finland was now drawn along the Torne, Muonio and Könkämä Rivers, dividing the Finnish-speaking Tornedalen between two nations; Sweden and Finland.

The course of the war also had consequences for Norway. The new Swedish crown prince, Carl Johan Bernadotte (1763–1864), reconciled himself to the loss of Finland, and reached an agreement with Tsar Alexander

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MAP 9. THE RUSSIAN-SWEDISH WAR 1808–1809 AND THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN WAR 1807–1812



The Russian-Swedish War from 1808–1809, also known as the Finnish War, started at the Kymi River in February 1808 when Russian troops attacked Finland. Swedish troops fought over the territory of Finland until summer 1808, but in winter 1808–1809 they gradually retreated round the Gulf of Bothnia. In the treaty of Hamina (Swe. Fredrikshamn) in September 1809 Sweden formally delivered Finland to Russia. The war also affected northern Russia as a result of Russia's commitment to the Continental Blockade against Great Britain, which led to the Anglo-Russian War 1807–1812 and several British attacks on northern Russia, including the Royal Navy's destruction of the town of Kola and fishermen's camps on the Murman shore.

I of Russia in 1812 to form a Swedish-Russian brotherhood in arms in the struggle against Napoleon. In return Russia promised to contribute both politically and militarily to uniting Norway with Sweden. The agreement



During the Napoleonic Wars, from 1807 to 1812, England and Russia were at war, which resulted in British military expeditions to the Barents Sea. During one of these, in 1809, ships of the Royal Navy sacked the Pomor settlements of the Kola Peninsula and destroyed the fortified city of Kola (as in the picture).

was later endorsed by Great Britain in the Kiel Peace Treaty of January 1814, which forced the Danish King, who had been a loyal ally of Napoleon, to cede Norway to Sweden. In the summer there was a rising in Norway against the Kiel Peace Treaty, and the Danish prince, Christian Frederick, was proclaimed King of Norway by an assembly of elected Norwegian representatives at Eidsvoll. On the same day the assembly adopted a new Norwegian constitution, which was among the most democratic in Europe. After a brief war in November, Christian Frederick was forced to hand over the throne to Carl Johan, the new Swedish king. The Eidsvoll interlude was not fruitless, however, since Carl Johan, as Norway's new king, promised to rule according to the new constitution. In contrast to the restructuring of counties in North Finland and North Sweden the counties in North Norway remained the same.

The war also affected northern Russia as a result of Russia's commitment to the Continental Blockade against Great Britain. This led to the Anglo-Russian War (1807–1812) and severed commercial relations between Russia and Great Britain. The war led to several British attacks on northern Russia. The Royal Navy destroyed the town of Kola and fishermen's