

1919

Arctic Warming started – 90 years ago – January 1919 - Does the Arctic scream, and why?

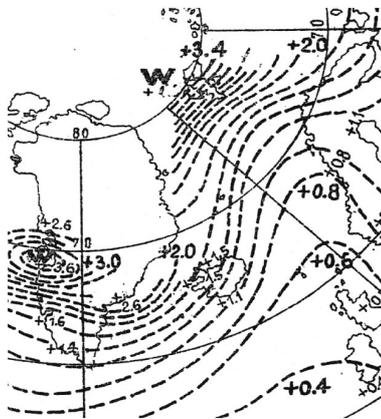
By <http://www.oceanclimate.de>, 10 January 2009



Suddenly, in January 1919, Spitsbergen a remote archipelagos between the North Cape in Norway and the North Pole had corresponding mean temperatures during January as 2000 km further south in Oslo, mere -5°C . That was a climatic 'bang'. It meant that the temperature differences between the two pre and post WWI January was 16° (sixteen) degrees¹. The extraordinary situation during this months went unnoticed. The event itself not.

Soon the Arctic started to warm. In 1930 the Norwegian scientist B. J. Birkeland² regarded the rise as possibly the biggest ever observed at a single place. Presumably Birkeland could repeat the claim today again with justification. In 1932 the New York Times reported: "Next great deluge forecast by scientists – Melting polar ice caps to raise the level of the seas and flood the continents"³. Only three decades after January 1919 the developments in the Arctic had been called: a climatic revolution⁴.

How dramatic the rise was is possibly best illustrated with few graphics, which indicate the extraordinary temperature jump. Particularly explanatory is the image showing the global situation in the years after the event from 1921 –1930, and how the temperature situation effected the Arctic and Europe toward the end of the 1930s, just before the warming ended and a three decade long cooling phase stated with WWII in winter 1939/40.



Spitsbergen with a plus of 3.4°C in winter 1921-1930

The question today is, what do we know about the January 1919 Spitsbergen event? Do we have any information whether the early Arctic warming from 1919 to 1940 has been in any way a source of the dramatic sea ice melting in the Arctic over the last few years? Unfortunately not. Science has shown little interest to provide explanation. Instead we are told that this is "one of the most puzzling climate anomalies of the 20th century"⁵.

Neither helpful is this explanation either: "The recent dramatic loss of Arctic sea ice appears to be due to a combination of a global warming signal and fortuitous phasing of intrinsic climate patterns"⁶

Recently a scientist said: "The Arctic is screaming"⁷. Presumably the Arctic is wondering why the Spitsbergen event in January 1919 and subsequent warming is not understood and explained after 90 years.

Graphic: Cut-out from 'Tafel 58'; Decade 1921-1930; Deviation of winter temperature (Nov-March) from long-term mean; R. Scherhag, (1936/Sept); Ann. Hydrologie & Maritimen Meteorologie, Sept. 1936, p. 397-407.

¹ The January temperature at Spitsbergen : 1917 -20.4; 1918-24.4; (mean: 22.4°C); and 1919 -5.7, 1920 -10.5 (mean: -8.1°C); <http://data.giss.nasa.gov/work/gist/emp/STATIONS/tmp.634010050010.1.1/station.txt>

² Birkeland, B. J. (1930) , Temperaturvariationen auf Spitzbergen, Meteorologische Zeitschrift, Juni 1930, p. 234-236.

³ New York Times; May 15, 1932.

⁴ Ahlmann, H. W. (1946); "Research on Snow and Ice, 1918-1940", The Geographical Journal, 1946, p.11-25

⁵ Bengtsson, et al (2004), The Early Twentieth-Century Warming in the Arctic—A Possible Mechanism, Journal of Climate, page 4045-4057.

⁶ Overland, J. E. (2008); M. WANG & S. SALO, "The recent Arctic warm period", Tellus, 2008, 60A, p.589-597

⁷ This was widely reported, e.g. Associated Press; 12 Dec.2007 by Seth Borenstein; "Ominous Arctic Melt Worries Experts".