

W. Barents was one of the first to plot the contours of individual sections of this archipelago onto a map of the Arctic. As recently as the last century, however, many arctic researchers, including, for example, the Scandinavians B.M. Keilhau (a Norwegian) and A. Nordenskjold (a Swede), while studying archeological data, came to the conclusion that Russian coast-dwellers arrived on Spitsbergen sooner than others and began opening it up to hunting and fishing activity.

For centuries the archipelago was a "no-man's-land"; it was only at the beginning of the present century that European, including Russian, industrialists were drawn here. Unwholesome wrangling vis-a-vis the coal deposits called for a solution to the question of Spitsbergen's status. Russia actively participated in the working out of the convention draft apropos the administration of the archipelago, but World War I interrupted this process. And only in 1920, during the Paris Conference, was a treaty signed whereby sovereignty over Spitsbergen was passed to Norway. The member-countries of the treaty were granted permission to prospect for, acquire and work mineral deposits on the archipelago.

In the 1930s the Soviet Union joined the treaty. And so our activity there is conducted on lawful grounds and is in strict accordance with this document. Today "Arktikugol'" is in control of a total area of 260 square kilometres of territory on the archipelago.

We have established good relations with Norwegian miners working on Spitsbergen.