

PIRATVIRKSOMHET I NORDOMRÅDENE

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Basert på et foredrag under Pomorfestivalen 2013 i Vardø.

Denne versjonen inkluderer et engelsk sammendrag:

Struggling with pirates in the extreme North, 17th Century

En ung sjøgutt fra Island fikk se et forferdelig syn da han kom til København høsten 1615.

Det han så var de hengte, stinkede kroppene til tre av Europas mest beryktede sjørøvere. Der hang de i området ved Kongens Nyhavn fullt utrustet i sine silkedrakter og gullbroderte sko, forteller islendingen. Og slik ble de hengende en god stund for å utnytte henrettelsens preventive effekter.

Piratene var tatt etter en dramatisk jakt som fant sted i Nordområdene sommeren 1615. Mens sjørøverkapteinen Jan Mandaus og to av hans nærmeste ble hengt i København, kastet den dansknorske marinen 55 sjørøvere over bord, mens 24 mann ble skutt på stedet. Det endelige oppgjøret pågikk i Barentshavet ved innseilingen til Kvitsjøen. Dette var utgangen på det største sjørøverslaget i dansknorsk historie. Piratvirksomheten langs kysten av Nord-Norge og Nord-Russland er lite kjent i vår historie.

Nordkapp-ruten

Sjørøveriet representerte en økende trussel mot datidens kommersielle sjøfart. I kjølvannet av handelsinteressen for å seile fra Europa, via Nordkapp til Nord-Russland fikk sjørøvervesenet et oppsving i nordlige havstrøk fra slutten av 1500-tallet. Piratene gikk til angrep på denne langdistansehandelen. Jektefarten mellom Bergen og Nord-Norge var dessuten utsatt for omsegripende piratvirksomhet. Som det framgikk av rapporter til styresmaktene i København, drev sjørøverne med plyndringstokter også på land og var fryktet i nordnorske kyststrøk. I kildene fra Finnmark finner vi fra tid til annen vitnesbyrd om lokal innsamling av midler for å få løsgitt fanger.

Kystværet Vardø sto sentral i denne utviklingen ikke minst fordi den nordområdeinteresserte kongen, Christian IV, ønsket å gjøre Vardøhus festning til et slags Kronborg ved ishavets

kyst. Fiskeværret Vardø var tiltenkt rollen som et Helsingør i nord. Tilstedeværelse nordpå med velutrustede marinestyrker kom til å bli viktig for monarkens beskyttelse av hans utsatte nordrike. Dermed ble Christian IV en konge som satte hardt mot hardt overfor piratenes lekegrind i nord. Nordsjøen og Barentshavet skulle renskes for røvere, og farvannene gjøres tryggere for handel, fiske og sjøfolk. Marineinnsatsen til sentralmakten var betydelig, særlig de første tiårene av 1600-tallet.

Okkupert av pirater

I 1602 herjet Philippos Defos fra Frankrike utenfor kysten av Nord-Norge. Han var til stor skade for bergensernes handel og fiske i landsdelen. Piratene gikk ikke bare til angrep på norske handelsmenn og sjøfolk, men slo til mot hollendere og engelskmenn utenfor Finnmark. Handelsskutene ble strippet og robbet for gods og gull. I mai 1602 ble kjøpmann Petter Robertsen fra Bergen plyndret ved Ingøya i Finnmark og fratatt båt, penger, kleder, kjøtt, øl, krutt og annet gods. Dette var forsyninger som skulle transporteres til Vardøs befolkning.

Slottsskriveren på Vardøhus, Søren Bondesen, innga rapport til København om piratenes herjinger på stedet. Sommeren 1602 kom Defos og hans pirater med en kapret englander til Vardø. Det engelske handelsskipet hadde blitt angrepet og bordet like utenfor fiskeværret, ved innseilingen til Bussesundet. Kapteinen på det engelske handelsskipet samt en del av mannskapet ble ”ihiell skutt” og deretter kastet over bord i havnebassenget i Vardø. Handelsskipet ble plyndret og all varene losset over på sjørøverskuta.

Under oppholdet i Vardø kom det til et voldsomt rabalder. Defos og hans sjørøvere skjøt med kanonkuler ut over bebyggelsen ”saa att Kulerne fløy om folckens Ørenn”. Festningen var ikke i stand til å hindre piratene å innta fiskeværret og herje som de ville. I mangel av våpen og mannskap kapitulerte festningen. Vardø var i realiteten okkupert av voldelige sjørøvere. I Vardø kunne piratene fritt kidnappet en ”Varangerfind” samt to fiskedrenger og seile av gård med dem.

Nordsjøens skrekk

På begynnelsen av 1600-tallet herjet den forferdelige sjørøverkapteinen Jan Mandaus og hans medsammensvorne verre enn noen sinne – de røvet alt av verdifullt handelsvarer, tok gisler og svidde av hele kystbygder i hans. Mandaus sjøl hadde rykte på seg for å ha jernpigge og skarpe kniver som vokste ut av knærne og albuene. I stedet for negler bar han lange kvasse klør, og fra munnen sto det svovel og lange ildkuler.

En dramatisk sjørøverjakt sommeren 1615 endte med en knusende seier til den dansknorske marinen. De fleste piratene ble drept på stedet, mens selve sjørøverskipet ble stukket i brann ved Kapp Kanin etter at alt røvet gods var ført over på de danske orlogsfartøyene. Slik var utgangen på et organiserer sjørøveri som hadde pågått over en periode på 15 år i Nordområdene under ledelse av «nordsjøens skrekk» Jon Mandaus.

Etter sjørøverslaget i Barentshavet rundt Sankthans 1615 ble store mengder verdier beslaglagt og brakt til København. I samtiden ble det sagt at aldri hadde det tidligere kommet et skip til København med så store rikdommer som da orlogsskipet Victor kom tilbake til datidens norske hovedstad. For øvrig går det fortsatt sterke rykter blant folk i Vardø om at piratene har gjemt unna verdifulle sjørøverskatter en eller annen plass i nærheten av Hamningberg!

Struggling with pirates in the extreme North, 17th Century

By Rune Blix Hagen

(English Summary)

In 1602, Philippus Defos from Dunkerque harried shipping beyond the coast of Northern Norway. He inflicted great harm on the Bergen shipping trade and fishing in this part of the country. The pirates went on the attack against Dutchmen and Englishmen off the coast of Finnmark. The trading vessels were stripped and robbed of their goods and gold. In May 1602, a merchant named Petter Robertsen from Bergen was plundered at Ingøya in Finnmark and his boat, money, cloth, meat, beer, gunpowder and other goods were seized. In the summer of the same year, Defos and his men came to Vardø with captured Englishmen. The English ship had been taken just outside the fishing village. The captain of the English trading ship, together with some of his crew, was “shot dead” and afterwards thrown overboard. During his stay in Vardø there was a tremendous uproar. Defos and his pirates shot cannonballs over buildings “so that Shots flew about people’s Ears”. The fortress was unable to prevent the pirates from occupying the fishing village and harrying whomever they wished. The fortress capitulated for lack of weapons and manpower. In Vardø the pirates kidnapped a “Varanger Finn” and two fishing hands and sailed away with them. It appears that Defos was caught in 1605 – the harassed merchants from Bergen received a message concerning his arrest in a letter dated Copenhagen 3 October 1605. In a lengthy answering letter dated 30 November 1605, the citizens of Bergen made a tremendous claim for compensation.

From 1580, part of the function of Danish-Norwegian expeditions west to Iceland and north to Vardø was to keep a lookout for pirates, capture them and bring them to Copenhagen for justice. Special royal punitive expeditions against the marine pirate problem seem to have been sent out annually from 1612 onwards, when we hear of frigates abandoning the Kalmar War (1611-1613) against Sweden to pursue pirates in the North Sea. At times the pirates represented a greater security threat to the Danish-Norwegian King and his supporters than the arch-enemy, “the bad neighbour” Sweden.

In tempo with the interest in the North Cape route between Europe and Northern Russia, and the generally increasing trade traffic in the northern regions, piracy, too, accelerated in northern sea areas from the end of the sixteenth century onwards. As was evident from many reports to the authorities in Copenhagen, the pirates were concerned with

plundering activities on land as well, and were feared in many Northern Norwegian coastal areas. It could come to veritable skirmishes between coastal farmers and pirates. Fights on the beach, with armed pirate attacks and hostage-takings, struck fear into the hearts of the coastal population.

Depictions of the pirates' merciless plundering on land and sea were frightful. They acquired huge fortunes and riches by sinking trade ships and through the torture of prisoners. Seamen and coastal farmers were taken prisoner and sold as slaves in Algeria – at that time known only as Barbary. In several instances during the first half of the seventeenth century, Christian IV was forced to pay large sums of money to release Norwegians, Danes and Icelanders from Barbary imprisonment.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the terrifying pirate captain Jan Mandaus and his associates were harrying worse than ever before – capturing any trade goods of value, taking hostages and burning down all the coastal buildings in “His Majesty's lands and tides” in the northern regions. Mandaus himself was rumoured to have iron spikes and sharp knives growing out of his knees and elbows. Instead of nails he had long sharp claws, and from his mouth spurted brimstone and great balls of fire. For many years he had practised large-scale piracy over large areas of the North Sea and Norwegian Sea.

A well-equipped naval expedition led by Denmark-Norway's most experienced sea captains was sent northwards to disarm Mandaus and his pirate band. The mission from King Christian IV in 1615 was to bring Mandaus and his men to Copenhagen, dead or alive. His own royal ship Victor was made available for the pirate hunt. The ship was known to be fast-sailing and, with its 44 cannon, stood out as an extremely effective naval vessel. His Imperial Majesty had himself utilized Victor in his journey north in 1599. Following a difficult and stormy voyage of pursuit in the Norwegian Sea via the Faroe Islands and Vardø, a decisive battle took place off the Kola coast in the summer of 1615. The most feared pirates in Europe ran foul of a well-equipped Danish-Norwegian naval coast-guard fleet.

The most comprehensive and most dramatic pirate pursuit in northern sea areas was, then, Admiral Jørgen Daa's and Jens Munk's expedition of 1615. The encounter ended with a decisive victory for the Danish-Norwegian naval coast-guard expedition. As Daa says in his report to “my most gracious lord”, King Christian IV, 55 pirates were thrown overboard, while 24 men were shot at the scene. The pirate captain, himself, Jan Mandaus, and a few of the other pirate leaders were taken to Copenhagen and hanged there, to the great excitement of a large number of spectators. On its way back to Copenhagen after the pirate raid of 1615, the Danish-Norwegian naval fleet additionally confiscated the cargo of Basque fishermen who were hunting whale illegally off the coast of Finnmark.

It seems in fact as though the pirate hunters succeeded in overcoming sea-based criminal activity in Northern Norwegian coastal areas during the course of the seventeenth century. Vardø was cast in the role of a center of information as far as piracy was concerned, providing information about which sea routes the pirate ships took. From source materials it is further evident that individual pirates were taken prisoner in Vardø and sentenced there.

Intelligence reports about the piracy played only a small part, however, in Vardø's significant role as the state's foremost listening station in the North. The coastal fishing village's central role as a monitoring center was more important than the purely physical defense of sovereignty that the fortress structure itself could offer. Vardø as a point of departure for espionage, supplies of intelligence material and of diplomacy, to a certain extent, were of fundamental significance during the final two decades of the sixteenth century and well into the seventeenth century. In addition, there was the central location of the place and heavy-handed fighting against elements of the population who were perceived as the enemy within.