

Unconscious Dream of Heaven - Visions of an Arctic Utopia

- Nobody can deny that our life is largely at the mercy of
dreams and visions, which we cannot account for logically.
- Virginia Wolfe

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I was bound for North. Straight up from where I was, two lengths of my long country. As one goes north enough is the destination pretty much straight upward from where ever one stands. I gathered all the literature dealing with the Arctic I found at my local library. Three or four volumes from the fifties were all I found. In the black and white illustration photos men were sitting in log cabins wearing rugged outfits and often smiling, scientists experiencing the uncommon. I figured that there must also be those engaged with hunting and fishing and then, of course, those mining coal, but books are written by those who study life and not by those who live it.

The August night was warm in Oslo. There was still some time to kill before my flight up and I sat down to read my book. Soon I got the feeling that I was in a wrong place. Men around me wore suits or something else neat, women wore even some high heels. Typical airport folks all in all. I gathered my things in order to go and find the right gate, but came soon back to the seat I had already warmed up. I was in the right place. I pulled my dirty and clumsy military boots with 1942 tattooed on them deep under my seat and kept on wondering about the place I was heading to.

One often flies to Spitsbergen at night when airliners can be spared from other routes. Time plays anyway a smaller role up there than in places where sun gets up and goes down every day. In the North it is pretty much dark at all times at winter while never at summer. As one boards on a flight in Oslo on a dark late summer night and reads a book for a chapter or two one notices that the horizon ahead is turning red. It is difficult to take eyes off that mystical midnight glow. Soon one is able to see the outline of the wing behind the window, then the clouds. It is a journey into light. Having reached Spitsbergen light appears to be like on an overcast day and when the aircraft penetrates the solid layer of clouds the open sea and the dark land and the light patches of the glaciers become visible. Sun hits the eye shining red and low.

It was half past one at night. The bare landscape was soaked with grey and shadowless light. Bus was raising dust from the road. In the village there were people on streets also apart from those returning from bars. It really felt like time had lost some of its meaning here. I was the last to get off the bus as I had been reserved a room up on the back of the small town above a local gallery and a handicraft centre. I treated my lungs with wonderful cool air, span around at the