The Russian Polar Expedition. Summary Report for 1901

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soundings across the Pacific, in as high southern latitudes as you can traverse with safety, and thence home.

13. In conclusion, we desire to express our confidence that you and all under your command have zealously and energetically done your best to secure all the objects of the Expedition. His Majesty the King has expressed anxiety to have any news communicated to him that may, from time to time, be received regarding the Expedition. And from His Majesty downwards, all classes in this country have shown the interest they take in the welfare of their antarctic explorers. We all look forward anxiously, but hopefully, for news of your safety.

(Signed) WILLIAM HUGGINS,

President R.S.

CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM,

President R.G.S.

Thus it will be seen that every contingency has been provided for as far as possible, but the circumstances may be such as to call for independent action on the part of Captain Scott or Captain Colbeck, or both. But there is perfect confidence in the intelligence and judgment of both commanders. In his last report Captain Scott more than once asserts that no anxiety need be felt if the *Discovery* is not met with; it will probably mean that the progress of the Expedition has been much more successful than was expected. In that case of course the *Morning* will return to New Zealand, and it is possible that the *Discovery* might come out of the ice independently, perhaps on the American side. If she did not, of course the *Morning* would return to look for her in the following antarctic summer. But for the present we may be satisfied that all has been done that possibly could be done, and we can only wait with patience till the spring of next year, when we may expect to receive news of the Expedition.

THE RUSSIAN POLAR EXPEDITION.

SUMMARY REPORT FOR 1901.

By BARON ED. TOLL.

ON April 18, 1901, immediately after the Feast of Easter, Lieut. Kolomiezzoff and the zoologist, A. Birulja, set out with two sleighs, each with a team of eight dogs, the object of the first being to reach the Yenisei and establish coaling stations, while the second was directed to accompany it as far as Cape Sterlegoff, some 200 versts distant. Two days later began my excursion with Lieut. Koltschak to the Chelyuskin peninsula, accompanied by a sleigh with a team of twelve dogs, and laden as lightly as possible.

On May 1 we reached that point on the bay where we had established a depôt the previous year (1900). The provisions and

fish here buried were to complete our supplies, which barely sufficed for just one month. But we were unable to dig out the deposit from the deep snow.

On May 7 we started from this place in an east-north-easterly direction, with the intention of pushing on to St. Thaddaeus bay on the east coast of the Chelyuskin peninsula, and returning thence along the coast. After traversing the tundra for 40 versts in this direction, we again came unexpectedly on an inlet, which grew narrower towards the west-south-west, where it assumed the form of a narrow sound or river-mouth. The position as determined by Lieut. Koltschak on the off side of the bay was $76^{\circ} 17' N.$ and $99^{\circ} 29' E.$

On May 12 we gave the tired dogs a day's rest at a place fixed by Lieut. Koltschak at $76^{\circ} 20' N.$ and $101^{\circ} E.$ Thence I made a day's march, half a degree eastwards, on Canadian snow-shoes. The prospect of any successful hunting was very slight, while our supplies were becoming seriously less, and could no longer hold out for more than eight days. Hence nothing remained but to retrace our steps. Hitherto we had to contend with almost constant difficulties caused by fog and the deep snow already softened by the sun. But henceforth we had to struggle with contrary snow-storms, which lasted almost without a break for fourteen days. The consequence was the loss of five dogs which broke down one after the other through exhaustion. On May 30 we reached the *Sarya*, the excursion having lasted forty-one days. Of these we had to pass nine in the sleeping-sack during the fiercest snow-storms; four were uselessly wasted at the dépôt; and during the remaining twenty-eight days we covered 500 versts, the routes surveyed by Lieut. Koltschak being determined by nine astronomical observations. At the *Sarya* I found all the members of the expedition in good health, except Dr. Walter, who was suffering from rheumatism of the joints. But he was otherwise well, and soon regained his full strength.

A. Birulja was back by May 6, after accompanying Lieut. Kolomeizoff as far as Cape Sterlegoff, $75^{\circ} 29' N.$ and $89^{\circ} 25' 24'' E.$ He made an accurate compass survey of the section of the coast traversed.

The day before my return, A. Birulja, together with F. Seeberg, a member of my excursion, had gone off on a trip in the district of the *Sarya*, their objective being a mountain which was 35 versts distant from the winter harbour. As it was the highest point in this coast region, his intention was to place a minimum thermometer on the summit. At the same time Birulja carried out a topographic survey of the intervening tract, while Seeberg made local astronomical determinations and magnetic observations. On June 7 both savants were again on board the *Sarya*.

Meanwhile summer was rapidly drawing nearer. At the end of June was opened the first great crevice in the ice of the *Sarya* roadstead, about 2 versts from the ship. The surface ice which, during the

winter, had increased to a thickness of 1·82 meter, grew daily thinner, melting away from the surface downwards. Hence we expected that at the beginning of August the *Sarya* would be released from her winter fetters. But in the interim there was still to be solved a geographical question, namely, to discover the mouth of the Taimyr river.

According to the maps hitherto published, the Taimyr was supposed to discharge in the first or the second of the larger bights lying to the east of the Taimyr sound. Both of these were twice explored by Lieut. Kolomeizoff, and in the first was, in fact, found the mouth of a considerable stream; but its configuration was not at all in accordance with the contour lines given by the topographer Wagenoff on Middendorff's chart. In the second bay no indication could be detected of any river-mouth. As these researches had been undertaken in winter amid fogs and snow-drifts, there still remained a doubt, which could only be removed by fresh investigations carried out in clear summer weather. Should these also lead to negative results, the only remaining assumption would be that the Taimyr discharged into that bight which, during our journey to the interior of the Chelyuskin peninsula, Lieut. Koltschak and I had crossed, since no considerable stream assuredly entered that other inlet where the depôt lay.

The survey of the first two bays was now undertaken by Birulja and Dr. Walter, while I decided to proceed with Seeberg to the farther inlet. As dogs are not available for travelling in this season of the year, there remained only one possible plan, that was for ourselves to take in tow the sleigh, on which a kayak had to be conveyed.

The excursion of Birulja and Dr. Walter lasted from July 20 to August 15, 1901. Respecting the question of the mouth of the Taimyr, the two savants came to negative results. Still, they confirmed Kolomeizoff's discovery of a large estuary in the first of the two bays. Seeberg and I left the *Sarya* on July 18. The bay which formed the objective of our journey was completely free of ice, and after visiting Baer island, which lies in the bay, we were able to certify that this inlet is the mouth of the Taimyr river. On August 24 we were again on board the *Sarya*.

Next day a stiff east wind sprang up; the fissures in the ice of the roadstead expanded; the whole of the ice-pack round about the *Sarya* was set in motion. We drifted first right in the direction of the cliffs of Station island, and then the ice trended to the right clear of the island. We were slowly carried beyond the island, and after six hours the *Sarya* was driven through the Fram strait into the open sea.

During the night we reached the little island at which the previous year further progress had been arrested by a strong ice-barrier. Now, also, the barrier stood firm, and prevented our getting through. We therefore withdrew behind a cape at Nansen island to await the drifting

away of the ice-pack. On August 30 the water-way was free, and the *Sarya* began its voyage. On September 1 we doubled Cape Chelyuskin. On September 4 we sighted the east coast of the Taimyr peninsula, and then set our course straight for Kotelnoi island.

Without meeting any ice we drew near the New Siberian archipelago in favourable weather till September 7, when a strong south-easter began to blow in our teeth, and against this we made very slow headway. I therefore changed the course to the north-east. On September 9 we reached the edge of the pack-ice in $77^{\circ} 9' \text{ N.}$ and 140° E. Here we encountered a southern gale, which, acting in concert with the marine current, drove the *Sarya* 30 miles to the north-west. The storm veered round to west-south-west, and I thought it better again to make the most of the wind and now direct our course south-eastwards for Bennett island, instead of trying under these circumstances to penetrate into the ice in search of land. On September 11 the imposing headland of Cape Emma at Bennett island suddenly loomed up before us out of the fog, and presently became again wrapped in fog.

We had approached to within 12 knots of the island, when our further advance towards it was barred by a belt 14 feet thick of impenetrable pack-ice. Here we remained two days in the hope that the ice might shift, but in vain! Yet the engine was in urgent need of repairs; the boiler wanted cleaning, and the pumps putting right. But here no landing was possible, and no option was left but to return. I wanted again to make for the point from which we had been driven by the storm, and accordingly directed the course along the ice-fringe, first westwards, and then north-westwards. In this direction we reached $77^{\circ} 32' \text{ N.}$ and $142^{\circ} 17' \text{ E.}$, but had then to yield to the ice bearing down from the north to avoid being closed in. Now I gave orders to steer for Kotelnoi island, and on September 16 we cast anchor in Seal bay, where we were received by K. A. Wollosovich, leader of the rescue expedition. On September 24 the *Sarya* was ready to set sail; but on that day the temperature of the atmosphere was 21.7° F. , and of the water 30.2° F. , and the drift-ice was forming a continuous crystallization round about the vessel. On this day the second wintering had begun, after a period of thirty days' open navigation.

The station where the hourly observations had begun, on November 1, 1901, was erected under more favourable conditions this year than in the preceding. The accumulations of drift-wood at the bar on which the station stands made it possible to build the necessary structures of wood instead of snow. They moreover yield us such an abundance of fuel that we are all able to keep our living-rooms and the laboratory warm and dry, which will certainly have a favourable influence on the crew, and the same may be said of the now finished Russian vapour-bath. It is further of great importance that we are provided with fresh reindeer meat for the whole winter.