



Фритъоф Нансен

## THE FRAM VOYAGE 1893-96: A PATIENCE TEST

When Fridtjof Nansen presented his plans for an expedition across the Polar Sea (1893-96), he listed the following factors as essential to a success: the existence of an ocean current across the polar basin, the construction of the vessel, and the provisions and equipment.

Regarding his crew, he merely stated that they must be "strong and otherwise well-chosen". He gave but one reason: In calm weather, they must be strong enough to operate the windmill-powered generator in horse-walk fashion.

After his lecture in the Geographical Society in London (Nov 1892) only one person, Sir Jos. D Hooker, raised the question about mental pressure: "Have the depressing influences on the minds of the crew, resulting from long confinement in very close quarters during many months of darkness, extreme cold, inaction, ennui, constant peril, and the haunting uncertainty as to the future, been sufficiently taken into account? Per-funactory duties and oc-cupations do not avert the effects of these conditions; they hardly mitigate them, and have been known to aggravate them." He advised dr. Nansen to use his "ad-mirable courage, skills, and resources" in "less perilous attempts to solve the mystery of the Arctic Area".

Nansen quoted Sir Jos. objections in his account of the voyage, but without any comment! Based on the accounts by Nansen, Otto Sverdrup, Hjalmar Johansen and Bemhard Nordahl, the present author discusses the mental pressures which occurred, and how these were handled. The first strains were caused by the uncertainty about the ice drift and whether the ship would withstand the ice pressure.

Later, monotony and the continuing social contact

between the same twelve persons led to more serious tensions. After Nansen and Johansen left Fram in 1895, heading for the North Pole with sledges, the two men faced the constant uncertainty whether they would meet people on Franz Joseph Land or Spitsbergen.

Their extra wintering in a stone hut - two men alone - did not ease the ordeal.

Of the four writers, Nordahl gives most space to social and mental strains. Prior to the third wintering on board, he speculated whether the risk of cracking under a mental strain might be a greater danger than external perils. Activities for hand and brain were

his favourite prescriptions.

"He who wants to take part in a trip to the North Pole must test himself thoroughly, calculate his own strength of character, his patience and his robust sense of humour. If lacking in any of these qualities, he should rather stay at home, regardless how qualified he might be for the voyage otherwise." Fortitude and a strong character carried greater weight than other qua-lifications.

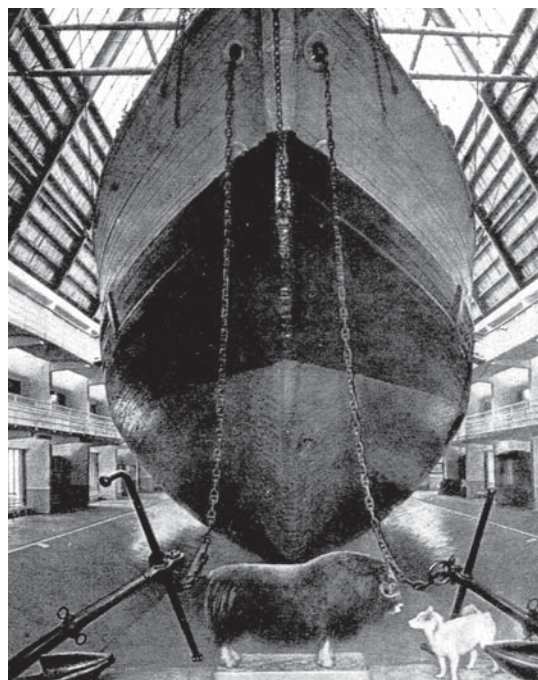
Prior to his and Johansen's departure from Fram, Nansen greeted the crew with an Irish proverb: Be happy!, and if you cannot be happy, then be as carefree as you can! In addition to this "think positive" philosophy, a will

to stay loyal, to square up and ask for forgiveness if any harm had been done, were decisive factors. Facing adversity all the way, they were tested in one virtue: Patience. According to Nansen, the voyage was "one continual training in this useful subject."

Dag

T. Elgvin

Dag T. Elgvin



Последняя стоянка "Фрама" в музее города Осло  
Last resting place of the "Fram", in museum in Oslo