

H I L M A R N Ø I S

by  
Rolf S. Tandberg

A short biography prepared for General Umberto Nobile  
on request.

Hilmar Andreas Nilsen Nøis is born March 8, 1891 on a small farm Nøss at the island Andøya in northern Norway (North-west of the town Harstad).

16 years old Nøis was with his father on codfishing off the coast of Finmark, and two years later - in 1909 -, he came to Svalbard for the first time, together with three of his uncles. Here they also met Hjalmar Johansen that had been Fridtjof Nansen's companion to the Farthest North - 86°14' N, in 1895 - and their wintering together at Franz Josef Land. Now at Svalbard, Hjalmar Johansen had been wintering there 1908-1909 together with the German Theodor Lerner, and from Johansen Nøis and his uncles got two dogs as a gift.- And now as youngman Hilmar Nøis started his first wintering in Svalbard 1909-1910 as trapper.

In 1913 Hilmar Nøis participated in his first rescue-expedition under the leadership of Captain Arve Staxrud to relief members of the German Polarexpedition that with its ship "Herzog Ernst" was frostbound in Sorgfjorden (Sorge-Bai).

Lit.: "Die Expeditionen zur Rettung von Schröder-Stranz und seinen Begleitern". Geschildert von ihnen Führern Hauptmann A. Staxrud und Dr. K. Wegener. Berlin 1914.

And in 1914 Hilmar Nøis came to Svalbard with his own expedition. He has altogether 38 winterings in Svalbard, and the last one being in 1962-1963.-

From all his years at Svalbard as Trapper, Nøis has very lifeful described this on paper. And there is probably no one

that knows this country better than he, or know how one can adjust oneself here to survive under miserly conditions through storms, frosts, snow and ice, and even squeeze some kind of living out of it. With his experience and knowledge about this part of the country, he has been of great help to expeditions and he is mentioned in books and magazines about Svalbard in many languages.

Biogr.: "Hilmar Nøis - Storjegeren fra Svalbard", by Odd Berset, Bergen 1953.  
Prof. R. Samoilowitsch in his book "S-O-S in der Arktis", Berlin 1929, 2. Auflage, p. 276-277 first 8 lines.

"The King of Sassen", he has been called, and there at Sassenfjorden he built a small house for a main station, and with a number of small huts as sub-stations spread all over the wide hunting field.

It so happened that the first person I met when I came to Svalbard my first time - June 6, 1923 - was Hilmar Nøis in the ice off Green Harbour, and coincidentally it was here Nøis arrived too when he came to Svalbard his first time, 14 years earlier, in 1909. During my years at Svalbard, I have also been traveling together with Nøis once in a while, and visited him sometimes in his huts as well as his main station in Sassen.

In 1928 Hilmar Nøis participated together with Rolf S. Tandberg in the rescue expedition with dog-team sent out from Svalbard at the request of the Norwegian Department of Defense in search for members of the ill fated dirigible "Italia". At that time <sup>he</sup> had already 12 winterings in Svalbard behind himself.

Lit.: Rolf S. Tandberg's report in the Norwegian Geographical Magazine Nos. 3-4, 1929: "Med hundespenn på eftersøking efter "Italia"-folkene". Title transl.: "With dog-team in search of the "Italia"-men".  
A German extract of this report by Prof. R. Samoilowitsch in his book "S-O-S in der Arktis", Berlin 1929, 2. Auflage, pp. 278-291.



And by the way, thinking of what you, General, mentioned that Albertini had written about Nøis as skirunner, reminds me of some personal observations I made during the same expedition, and which I described in my article about "The "Italia"-tragedy 40 years ago" in "Polar-Posten", Nos. 1-2, 1968, this way:

Transl.: It was however quite interesting to notice the contrast between our two Italian companions and the phlegmatic Nøis. When the going was good, the two Italians were high spirited and eager to press on, but they would fret at the monotony of a long march, and when meeting obstacles, would fight and tear their way through them, and naturally tired faster. Nøis, on the other hand, plodded along the same way, with rhythmic motions, wasting not a gramme of energy at any time, but "eating up" the kilometers, nevertheless.

In 1941, during the war, Nøis was evacuated from Svalbard to Scotland on board the "Empress of Canada". There he finally came in the Royal Norwegian Marine to their stores in Leith and Edingburgh as superintendant with the rank as quartermaster. A short time after the war had finished, Nøis came home to Norway, and in 1946 he went back to Svalbard again, where he started on a new wintering with his main station in Sassen.

Nøisbåen, Hilmarfjellet, Nøisbreen, Nøisdalen and Hilmarbekken are all named after him. (From "The Place-Names of Svalbard", Oslo 1942, and "Supplement I to the Place-Names of Svalbard", Oslo 1958).

4 For his work at Svalbard Hilmar Nøis is bestowed with "Kongens fortjenstmedalje i gull", (transl.: "His Majesty's Medal for merit in gold").

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Oslo, June 5, 1973.