

19th March 2008

Today we began our journey north aboard the Hansa, sailing from Hamburg. It is a strange feeling. Only two days ago I was sleeping in my own bed at home, while today I'm going to sleep in a cabin, inside a ship that sails to the North Pole. If I weren't hoping and wishing for it for so long, I wouldn't believe it myself.

The expedition, unlike others, was planned for this time of year, so we can sail a few days during the night and then some time during the day. Actually, the sun shines here for a few hours, but as we sail north, this time of the day should be shorter.

It's cold, but not as cold as I expected. The temperature here is around 0 Celsius degrees. Professor Ferret said that only a century ago, we would have experienced around two Celsius degrees less.

Anyway, it's cold, but manageable.

For the rest of the day, and tomorrow, we would be sailing in the open sea, free of any glaciers, a few kilometers away from the coast of Norway.

20th March 2008

The journey continues as we sail north west and far from the coast of Norway. Last night was the last time we saw the light on the horizon, and since then we haven't seen land.

It took me a while to get accustomed to living on a ship, but I think today I finally managed to do so.

The reason I'm awake so late at night, is that around an hour ago everybody were waken up and walked to the deck.

I looked up and was amazed to find that the sky was filled with red and green flashes of light, moving, changing shapes and colors.

It was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen.

The Professor told us that the polar light (or – Aurora) is caused due to magnetic “explosions” in our planet's magnetic field. The Sun fills the magnetic field with energy, and sometimes this energy erupts in magnetic storms and causes what we call the polar light.

It has occurred to me that most people may live a hundred years and never lay their

eyes upon this wonder.

I was so surprised by this event in the middle of the night, that I forgot my camera in my bag, and I couldn't take even one picture.

28th March 2008

We are a few days away from Greenland. During the last few days nothing special had happened.

The captain says that our journey is much shorter than the one the Hansa's crew had a century ago. Using the engines, we can travel the distance in about one week, instead of one month.

The Global Warming subject has been discussed again today. One of the kids asked the professor how it will be in the future, say in 2050.

“If the global warming continues the way it does,” he started, “and if the temperature continues to rise the way it does, then besides the obvious impact on the population of the arctic region (people and animals), it will have a great impact everywhere in the world.” “Last century the sea level had risen about 20cm, and during this century, it is predicted that it will rise another 50cm. Now that may not sound like a lot, but think about every person who lives on the coast, and will (if the prediction is correct) have 50cm high water where his garden used to be.

Think about the huge impact that something like this will have on the world's climate! Everything will be different, not only the coast line. Global Warming can cause anything from increasing fires in forests to causing species to shift and even being extinct”.

30th March

Today we have reached the coast of Greenland, the north east coast of Greenland, to be more specific.

We are around the place the Hansa got stuck in ice and sank one hundred years ago. “Is there any chance this ship is going to sink too?” I asked. “Well...” said the captain “there's always a chance, but we have two very important things that they

didn't have in the original ship - Engines, and dozens of ways to communicate with the rest of the world."

We have seen the first glacier at the beginning of the day. Describing it literally, it's just a huge pack of ice. Well, that's because it is. But this glacier was so enormous, and so beautiful, that it can't be described only by the word "ice". It is very hard to realize that most of this small floating mountain is under the sea, where you can't see it.

As we continued sailing towards the land, we saw that the coast line is not like our coast line. The coast was made of ice and glaciers and in some places was very high above sea level. There were moments, floating near the coast, we heard a mighty noise and a part of the glacier, in front of us, would collapse and fall into the sea, turning into a floating glacier' like the one we saw at the beginning of the day. "The glaciers are melting," said the professor, "earlier every year".

I took many pictures of glaciers today, and some of them are attached to this mail.

31st March

Today we have reached the place where the Hansa got stuck and finally sank, really creepy actually. Well, I can understand how an engine-less ship can have difficulties navigating through these waters; There was floating ice everywhere! I guess that if you are in the middle of a ring of ice, it's getting colder...

Well, it doesn't matter actually. After about three hours of navigating in the morning, we got to a place where we could have actually seen land. That was our destination. We dropped the anchor on the starboard, and made it to land.

Here we will stay for the next week. We stopped here to survey the Ringed Seals' population, which is, apparently, quite big in this area.

I thought we would have great difficulty to find any seals in this vast wilderness of ice, so I've asked the captain about it. "What are the chances of even seeing some?". He smiled and explained "actually, we know exactly where to look. You see, last time a scientist was here, he attached tracking devices to each seal he had captured, and the scientist before him had done the same. So all we have to do is to track them down, it shouldn't be very hard".

During the rest of the day we have constructed two big tents – one for us, the other for

the equipment. We are going to sleep on solid land for the first time in a long time, it will be better than sleeping on a ship, but still, I prefer sleeping in my cozy bed at home.

April 1st

We went seeking for seals today. We took a sledge with equipment, dressed well and went out. We started walking on the shore, where there was no ice, so we walked on land, not ice.

The professor held in his hand some kind of a beeping tracking device. It beeped stronger and more frequently as we got closer to the seals.

“During this time of the year the seals should have cubs, so it will be harder to find them, and when we find them, it will be harder to catch them” he said, “so be prepared and look around”.

“We are getting closer” he said when the beeping sound got stronger.

When we finally saw three seals, they noticed us too and began to make a big noise. One seal was much larger than the other two, probably a mom and its cubs. Very quickly they have disappeared. The professor showed no signs of being worried, but continued to follow the device beeping sounds. A short time afterwards, we walked towards a rather large hole in the icy ground, a lair. The professor looked in. “Yes,” he said “they are in there”. He took a rifle out of the sledge and shot one shot to the direction of the cave. “She should be asleep any minute now” he said.

Two of the crew members helped him pulling out the seal and its cubs. They laid them on the ice, and started measuring them. I could see the tracking device on the mom’s back. A few minutes after they had finished measuring the seals, I noticed a dim figure far away walking towards us. It was a big white polar bear. The rest of the group noticed it too. The professor hurried and returned the seals back into their cave, and we just walked back to camp. I have no idea whether the seals woke up in time to run away from the bear or not.

April 20th

We're in Germany again.

Within two hours I will get on an airplane to Israel, and I'll leave everything behind I have seen and learned in this journey, and all of it will turn into memories.

I've learned a lot during this month. This experience has, definitely, affected me deeply.

I had a lot of fun too, and I'm quite sad it's all over, even though it's always good to come back home.