

Russia finds last-days log of famed 1912 Arctic expedition

September 13 2010



A picture taken on July 27, 2010 shows members of an expedition digging on the coast of Franz Josef Land in Russia. Russian explorers said they had found a sailor's log from aboard a legendary Arctic expedition that vanished as it sought to forge through the ice-choked Northeast Passage in 1912.

Russian explorers Monday said they had found a sailor's log from aboard a legendary Arctic expedition that vanished as it sought to forge through the ice-choked Northeast Passage in 1912.

For decades mystery clouded the fate of the adventurer Georgy Brusilov -- captain of the first Russian crew to seek the elusive Arctic trade route from Asia to the West -- inspiring a generation of books and films.

But the famed voyagers' remains and a journal -- dated to May 1913 from aboard their vessel, the Saint Anna -- were found this summer on

the icy shores of Franz Josef Land, Europe's northernmost land mass.

"There is no doubt that the skeletons and notebook pages we found at the end of July on Franz Josef Land are the remains of Georgy Brusilov's [expedition](#) -- which were thought forever lost," Oleg Prodan, who led the mission in the expedition's footsteps, said.

Midway into its epic journey along the Siberian coast, after navigating the perilous Vilkitsky Strait into the Kara Sea, the expedition ran aground on thick ice floes.

One of its only two survivors, navigator Valerian Albanov, described in his memoirs two gruelling winters clinging to the doomed ship and floating ever closer to the North Pole.

Albanov was one of 11 of the 24-member crew who abandoned the ice-locked vessel and set out across the snow drifts seeking firm land in a desperate trek romanced in Soviet author Veniamin Kaverin's popular novel "Two Captains."

Until now, the Saint Anna and the rest of its crew had vanished without a trace.

But pages of the sailor's log, found well-preserved in the frigid north, offer glimpses into the lingering fight for survival aboard the ship.

"Today we got our last brick of tobacco; the matches ran out long ago," it reads, adding the crew hunted polar bear as they struggled on low supplies.

Other traces of the ill-fated expedition were found nearby: a watch, snowshoes, a knife, a spoon engraved with a sailor's initials and sunglasses made from the glass of empty rum bottles.

"It was so overwhelming to find those sunglasses, which we had all been able to imagine so well after Albanov's description," mission-member Vladimir Melnikov said at a press conference in Moscow.

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Citation: Russia finds last-days log of famed 1912 Arctic expedition (2010, September 13)
retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-09-russia-last-days-famed-arctic.html>

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