

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-07220-5 - On the Polar Star in the Arctic Sea: Volume 2
Luigi Amedeo Di Savoia Translated by William Le Queux
Excerpt
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REPORT OF
COMMANDER UMBERTO CAGNI
ON THE
SLEDGE EXPEDITION
TOWARDS THE POLE

CHAPTER I

Preparations for the Expedition. Departure for
the North. Return to the Hut

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CHAPTER I

*PREPARATIONS FOR THE EXPEDITION. DEPARTURE FOR
THE NORTH. RETURN TO THE HUT*

THE most difficult, and, at the same time, the most important problem to be solved with regard to the expedition towards the north was that of food; and we all busied ourselves—and Dr. Cavalli more than the others—with the most scrupulous care in getting our provisions ready.

The rations which had been originally settled, afterwards underwent some slight changes with the object of rendering them more easy to distribute, and the following estimate was at last decided on:—

	oz.	dr.
Biscuit	14	1
Tinned meat	8	12
Pemmican	10	9
Butter	3	4
Milk	1	2
Liebig's Extract	0	5
Desiccated vegetables	0	14
Italian paste	1	12
Sugar	1	6
Salt	0	7
Tea and Coffee	0	13
Petroleum for cooking	3	8
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	lb. 2	14 13

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The expedition required :—

For the first detachment, three rations for 30 days, or	90 rations
For the second detachment, three rations for 60 days, or	180 „
For the third detachment, three rations for 90 days, or	270 „
Total number of rations	540

To carry out the idea according to which the expedition had been organised by detachments, these 540 rations were divided in the following manner :—

For the three detachments for the first 15 days	. 135 rations
For the return of the first detachment	. . . 45 „
	180 rations

to be given to the first detachment.

For the second and third detachments for the second fortnight 90 rations
For the return of the second detachment	. . . 90 „
	180 rations

to be given to the second detachment.

For the third detachment for the third fortnight	. 45 rations
For the return of the third detachment	. . . 135 „
	180 rations

to be given to the third detachment.

By dividing them in this manner each detachment would have to carry very nearly the same weight of food, and would have come to the end of it by the time that its special duty should have been performed.

The meat, the butter, the Liebig's Extract, and the milk in their respective cases were put all together into bags which held exactly forty-five rations; the biscuits, the Italian paste, and the vegetables

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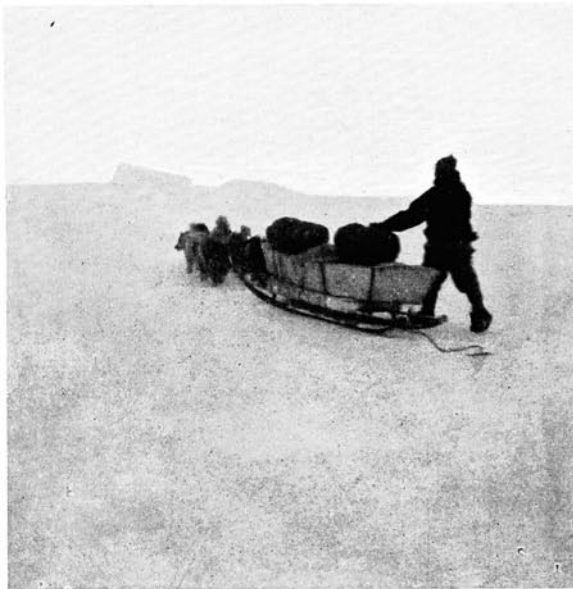
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into tin cases which held thirty or forty rations, and were hermetically soldered ; the tea, the coffee, the sugar, and the salt into old cigar boxes, which held thirty rations, and were closed with wax. A part of the pemmican for the men was left in its original tin cases of the net weight of 44 lb. 1 oz. ; and the rest, amounting to forty-five rations, into bags holding 29 lb. 11 oz. 14 dr.

The petroleum was contained in strong iron tanks, made in Norway,



CAGNI'S DEPARTURE

to which a cock could be fitted, and holding 23 lb. 2 oz. 4 dr., or 105 rations. As the food intended for the first detachment would be exposed to the air for only a short time, it was put into small bags, each containing three whole rations ; the meat had been taken from the tins, left outside the tent to freeze, then wrapped up in paper and put with the biscuits.

To these provisions were added 3 lb. 4 oz. 14 dr. of compressed

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THE PROVISIONS OF THE FIRST DETACHMENT

(For the Journey back)

	No. of Rations.	Weight.	Total.
		lb. oz. dr.	lb. oz. dr.
Half case of pemmican for the men	45	29 12 3	
A case with tinned meat, biscuit, vegetables, and groceries	36	70 8 12	
Bags with meat, biscuit, Italian paste, vegetables, and groceries	9	19 13 7	
A bag with butter, milk, and Liebig's Extract	45	17 10 3	
Two cases of petroleum	50	12 2 0	
A bottle of methylated spirits to light the lamp	—	1 15 11	
Onions, matches, and a pound of tobacco	—	2 6 12	
		154 5 0	154 5 0
FOR THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD DETACHMENTS <i>(First Fortnight)</i>			
	No. of Rations.	Weight.	
		lb. oz. dr.	
Forty-five bags containing biscuits, Italian paste, meat, and vegetables	135	198 6 10	
Two bags containing butter, Liebig's Extract, and milk	135	50 10 0	
Four boxes and a half of groceries	135	28 10 8	
Two boxes of pemmican for the men	135	91 7 13	
A case of petroleum and three lamps filled	141	36 6 0	
		405 8 15	405 8 15
Total			559 13 15

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THE PROVISIONS OF THE SECOND DETACHMENT

(For the Journey back)

	No. of Rations.	Weight.	Total.
		lb. oz. dr.	lb. oz. dr.
A case containing biscuits, Italian paste, and vegetables.	60	70 1 11	
A half case with biscuits, Italian paste, and vegetables.	30	39 3 13	
Two bags with meat, butter, milk, and Liebig's Extract	90	90 0 6	
Three boxes of groceries	90	19 2 14	
A case of petroleum.	105	28 3 8	
A case and a half of pemmican for the men	90	61 11 10	
A bottle of spirits	—	1 15 11	
Onions, matches, and two pounds of tobacco	—	4 13 9	
		315 5 4	315 5 4
FOR THE SECOND AND THIRD DETACHMENTS <i>(Second Fortnight)</i>			
	No. of Rations.	Weight.	
		lb. oz. dr.	
As above, with the exception of the spirits, the onions, the matches, and the tobacco	90	308 10 5	308 10 5
Total			623 15 9

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THE PROVISIONS OF THE THIRD DETACHMENT

	No. of Rations.	Weight.			Total.		
		lb.	oz.	dr.	lb.	oz.	dr.
Three cases containing Italian paste, biscuits, and vegetables	180	212	5	10			
Four bags with meat, butter, milk, and Liebig's Extract	180	179	10	12			
Six boxes of groceries	180	38	5	12			
Two cases of pemmican for the men	135	91	7	13			
One bag of pemmican for the men	40	27	8	14			
Two cases of petroleum	210	56	3	7			
A bottle of alcohol	—	1	15	11			
Onions, matches, and three pounds of tobacco	—	6	9	13			
		614	3	12	614	3	12
Total weight of the men's provisions					1,798	1	4

onions, divided among the three groups in proportion to the time during which they were to be away.

When the various packages had been thus distributed, their coverings, whether of canvas or of tin, were painted with stripes, which were :—black for the first detachment, green for the second, and red for the third ; they were also stamped in large figures, with the number of rations they contained and their gross weight.

CLOTHING AND CAMP EQUIPMENT

It would have seemed at first sight more logical to have allotted a greater quantity of clothing to those who were to pass a longer time on the ice-pack ; but to do so, it would have been necessary to assign to each individual his place in one of the detachments from the outset.

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This would have been both dangerous and impracticable, since none of us had as yet been tried by such a severe and continuous strain as the march towards the north would probably demand. Moreover, even if it were possible to make a choice before this trial took place, it might happen that, during the march, some illness or accident might cause individuals belonging to different detachments to be substituted for one another. For these reasons, therefore, it was decided that no difference should be made between the members of the expedition with regard to their clothing or their other personal effects.

The clothing and the camp equipment were selected with the same scrupulousness and precision as had guided us in the preparation of the provisions.

When the principal articles of clothing were given out, each one had them adapted to his own measure; but, with the exception of some insignificant variations, it was forbidden to make any change in them which should not be considered useful, and should, therefore, be prescribed for all.

On setting out, the men were obliged to put on and to wear :—

<p>Woollen stockings.</p> <p>Woollen drawers.</p> <p>A woollen vest.</p> <p>A second woollen vest or a flannel shirt.</p> <p>An Icelandic or sailor's jersey.</p> <p>A complete Jaeger suit.</p> <p>Double boots of reindeer-hide.</p> <p>A knitted woollen helmet.</p> <p>A flannel cap with flaps to cover the ears.</p> <p>Woollen wristlets, or bands of wool round the wrists.</p>	<p>Gauntlets with separate thumb or woollen gloves.</p> <p>Thick woollen gauntlets.</p> <p>A smock frock of thin linen with a hood.</p> <p>A handkerchief.</p> <p>A belt carrying a knife with a fixed blade, a compass, a slow match, and a whistle.</p> <p>A box of matches, a bandage, and a tube of vaseline.</p> <p>Two Dum-Dum cartridges.</p> <p>A knife with several blades.</p>
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CAMP FURNITURE AND ACCESSORIES FOR EACH DETACHMENT

	No.	Weight.		
		lb.	oz.	dr.
Complete tent with its bamboo poles	1	33	1	1
Sleeping-bag of reindeer-skin ¹	1	48	8	0
Cooking-stove	1	7	4	12
Two pots	—	2	14	3
A <i>Primus</i> lamp	1	1	15	6
A spare burner and two ejectors	}	0	8	13
A jointed key for the ejector				
A key for the burner				
Washers of leather and indiarubber	}	3	0	10
Eight needles for cleaning				
Two spare rings				
A tin funnel	}	3	0	10
Three glasses and three mess-tins				
A ladle and three spoons	—			
Double-barrelled gun '303 calibre, 20 bore, with a waterproof canvas case ²	2	19	13	7
Sixty cartridges	—	1	12	5
A medicine-chest ³	—	6	13	5
A bottle of rum or cognac	2	3	15	7
Carried forward		129	11	5

¹ There was some difference in the weights of the different sleeping-bags; 48 lb. 8 oz. represent the average weight.

² Instead of two guns, the third detachment had a double-barrelled gun of '305 calibre and 20 bore, and a '303 calibre rifle which weighed 7 lb. 4 oz. 6 dr.

³ The medicine-chest contained:—

Two packages of cotton wool.	A piece of soap.
A package of gauze.	Two splints for fractures.
Eight gauze bandages.	A medicine-dropper.
Three starched bandages.	Diachylon plaster.
Two flannel bandages.	A wax taper.
A piece of linen.	Sticking plaster.
Three Esmarck bandages.	A waterproof.
Cotton with perchloride of iron.	Vegetable pills.
Two trusses.	Calomel pills.
Two pairs of spectacles.	Salol pills.
Pins, needles, and silk.	Tannin pills.