Foreword

One hundred years ago the union between Norway and Sweden was peacefully dissolved. After centuries of domination—first by the Danish kingdom, then by Swedes—in 1905 Norway stood on its own two feet at last.

The trajectory of Norway's modern development has been dramatic. Dire economic straits spurred Norwegians, especially farmers, to leave in droves. By 1900 half a million people had emigrated, chiefly to the United States; this was out of a population which by the end of the century was not much more than two million. Today Norwegians enjoy the highest standard of living in the world, by the reckoning of the United Nations Development Program. The good life is in large part thanks to the rich oil and gas deposits discovered offshore Norway's long, rugged coast.

Norway is marking the centennial with diverse exhibits, festivities and other activities which highlight the nation's history, its values and its modern role and responsibilities in a global context. These events are being held throughout the country, and even internationally—the Norwegian Embassy and The Smithsonian Associates are collaborating to present a series of cultural events and seminars in several US states, for example.

Fridtjof Nansen's Greenland expedition, 1888–1889. Nansen's team, which comprised five other Norwegians (among whom were two Samis), crossed Greeland on skis in 42 days. (All photographs courtesy of the Norwegian Polar Institute Picture Library.)

An important centennial happening took place at the opposite side of the world (almost) from where I sit now. On 12 February, the Queen of Norway, Sonja, the Norwegian Minister of the Environment Knut Arild Hareide and his Swedish counterpart, accompanied by Norwegian Polar Institute Director Olav Orheim, inaugurated Troll as Norway's first permanent, year-round research station in Antarctica. The station is located in Dronning Maud Land, to which Norway laid claim in 1939, roughly a quarter of a century

Roald Amundsen's South Pole expedition, December 1911. In the tent, Amundsen left behind a note to American explorer Robert F. Scott, a letter to King Haakon VII, some scientific instruments and a few clothes. The journey from the *Framheim*, at the edge of the continent, to the Pole and back took 99 days.

after Roald Amundsen planted the Norwegian flag at the South Pole. The territory comprises approximately a sixth of the continent's total area and is seven times larger than Norway. Upgrading Troll from a summer station to a year-round facility greatly expands the possibilities for climate and other kinds of research. It also strengthens Norway's international role as a polar nation, lending it more weight among the signatories of the Antarctic Treaty and making Norway an even more significant participant in international efforts to preserve the southern continent as the world's most pristine wilderness.

Back here in Tromsø, one of the ways the centennial is being observed is *The White Adventure* (*Det Kvite Eventyret*), an exhibit jointly produced by the Norwegian Polar Institute, the University of Tromsø, the Polar Museum in Tromsø and the Regional Archival Services of Tromsø. *The White Adventure* touches on various aspects of Norways polar activities, reflecting on how these have contributed to the development of modern Norway. The show explores such themes as polar exploration, marine mammal hunting, the role of the Sami (Norway's indigenous people) and current research into the effects of climate change and ecotoxins on the Arctic environment. Photographs, journal extracts and objects like the blood-stained jacket of a seal hunter aim at provoking questions and reflection rather than furnishing dry facts and pat answers. The exhibit will be at the Tromsø Museum until the autumn of 2006. A specially designed version goes on tour in 2006–07 and will make stops in several countries, starting with Russia and the US.

As a modest and somewhat ironic contribution to the celebration of Norway's 100-year anniversary as an independent nation, this issue of *Polar Research* includes a piece by Steinar Aas in which he describes a treasure trove of his-

torical material recently donated to the Norwegian Polar Institute by Ove Hermansen. The cache comprises letters, manuscripts, clippings and photographs relating to Umberto Nobile, an Italian polar pioneer once villified in Norway for his (inadvertent) role in the death of Amundsen, Norway's national hero. Just as the less sterling aspects of Amundsen's life and character have recently been examined by Norwegian authors and film-makers, Nobile is also being reconsidered from a more balanced perspective. Hermansen's collection, once analysed, will undoubtedly contribute enormously to this.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to Janet Holmén and Rudi Caeyers for their fine work producing the journal during my 11-month leave of absence.

Please note that *Polar Research* will henceforth be issued in January and July rather than June and December. To make the transition, this issue is numbered 1-2. The next issue will be published in January 2006.

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The official inauguration of Troll as Norway's permanent, year-round station in Antarctica, Februrary 2005. Norwegian Polar Institute Director Olav Orheim is at the far right; Queen Sonja is in the red hat.