

GEN. UMBERTO NOBILE
EMERITO DELL' UNIVERSITÀ
DI NAPOLI

July 13th, 1970

00195 ROMA
VIA SABOTINO, 45

Dear - Mr. Hermanson,

coming back from Seewis after having been stayed there for so long time, I found in Rome many little things to settle and many letters to answer. This is why I am answering your nice letter with delay. Besides, there is nobody to help me. My wife has gone to rest for some days in a quiet place near Florence, and Romanello is gone in vacation.

I have read also your letters to Gertrude and Cona; and I also in their name have to tell you that we enjoyed immensely your visit. For me it was very important to meet you personally. But bringing with you Mrs. Hermanson and your delightful children, you have made us a precious gift. Indeed has been a great pleasure for all of us to be acquainted with so nice and exemplary little family!

You ask me why I have received you as an old friend. It could not have been otherwise. Dedicating all your free time to find out the truth about the "Italian" expedition, you have showed me to be a real friend. After the death of professor Hoel there was nobody to defend the truth. But now you have taken the place of the dear Norwegian. And you have the advantage of being so young! Before to come in contact with you, I was afraid that after my death, nobody would take care of the two Polar expeditions which have been so great and important part of my life. Maria and Gertrud do not know all the facts, and neither Carla nor Humbert would be in condition to reestablish the truth if distorted. But you can do with all the authoritativeness of one that has studied all the possible documents.

With all my heart I wish that your interest for the "Italian" expedition and myself will continue, and ^{that} at last you will be in conditions to publish the book for which you have worked so hard. At any time, if you need more documents you may write to me, or if ~~now~~ I am dead, to Gertrude or Maria. One person that knows in whole place to find them is Miss Francis Fleetwood with whom you may come in contact through Gertrude.

And now some little news. Yesterday I went to see the documentary film made in Prague, received by the director Mr. Karelík in the English version. There are many mistakes. In the whole I did not like it. Only the photos and films given by Russians seemed to me important.

Speaking of films, you remember how

much upset I was when we were showing you the documentary ^{film} ~~fil~~ given by

I perceived that the first puntata

the RAI -TV ten years ago , ~~was not complete~~ that the first puntata was not complete . In fact a good portion was missing which, I was sure, you would have found very interesting . But the fault was mine ,

because I had forgotten that the first part of the transmission was made of ~~two~~ bobines . Looking carefully in via Sabotino I found the one which you had not seen.

Another missing thing connected with the NORGE expedition was, if you remember, the watch given to me in Canada . I had thought to have lost it or in the garden, or at the bar in Sperlonga , while waiting for you. It was not so. After your departure Amabile and Maria had made a very accurate search without finding it. But , when ~~after~~

~~your departure~~ June twenty I went back to Scauri , one day I asked Amabile to get my eyeglasses in the bed-room. She went and reported to me to not have found anything , I insisted to look better , and she went again and came back with the watch and not the eyeglasses. She had found it under my bed ! . Thing of it ! . Both Amabile and Maria (the servant) have gone for two days looking in every corner of the garden , while they had it- so to say- under her eyes .!

(please turn over)

I was glad to have found this souvenir of the NORGE expedition,
although it costed me ten thousand lire, because Amabile, according
to her tradition, had promised in my name that amount of money to
Saint Antony, or to be more exact to the Parish for the poor people.

Good -bye, Mr. Hermansen. I hope I might see you again in Italy,
you and Mrs. Hermansen and your children, if they have not been dis-
appointed in making the acquaintance of the very old man in Rome and

Scauri!

My love to all of you

Yours affectionately

Lombardi

GEN. UMBERTO NOBILE
EMERITO DELL'UNIVERSITÀ
DI NAPOLI

Rome, 1st October 1970

00195 ROMA
VIA SABOTINO, 45

Dear Mr. Hermansen,

it is long time since I do not hear from
you. Give me news of your family and with them also the answer
to the following urgent question :

There is a good possibility to reprint "My Polar Flights"
in a paper back edition. Shall I get this opportunity to re-
write with more details the pages concerning the dispute with
Amundsen ? The book of memoirs of Amundsen still weighs very
much on my life, even today. Once I wrote a detailed answer of
about 100 pages which in "My Polar Flights" are reduced to only
five.

Cordial greetings to all of you also from Gertrud.

Umberto Nobile

OVE HERMANSEN

Elbagade 40, 4
Copenhagen S.
-2300 Denmark.

Copenhagen, October 8th, 1970.

Dear General, Gertrud, Maria and Carla.

I very much hope that this will be the very last time that you will have to write to me and ask for a reply, because we all feel so ashamed of not having written to you for such a long time. Please accept our most sincere apology for this ~~very~~ unpolite attitude towards you, who have been so ~~very~~ kind, understanding and hospitable towards not only this summer, but ever since you wrote to me for the first time some five years ago.

Everything here in Copenhagen is going fine, except that we are unusually busy and occupied this autumn due to several unexpected reasons. First of all we have had my grandfather living with us for a long time. He is 92 years old, very charming and lively, but of course taking a lot of our time, which we gladly gave away to him. Then I in September stopped my work as an active air traffic controller for a period of four months, during which period I have been selected as instructor for the elementary training for our coming controllers, educating them in aviation-English, air traffic maps and aeronautical teletype-understanding. I have never been an instructor before and was in no position to teach them these things, which I myself have forgotten all about, since I learned them 12 years ago as a trainee myself. This demanded a lot of home work for me.

This spring we bought an old house without any modern toilet and washing facilities just beside the airport as a replacement for the cottage, we had in the countryside outside Copenhagen for 15 years. In the autumn my wife decided to remove the old house entirely during the coming winter and let us have a real new and modern house built on the tomb of the old one. This is a heavy and important decision to take, because this will cost more than 25.000 US \$ (in Danish kroner). I preferred to stay in our apartment during the winter months and live in the old house during the summer season, but seeing that the welfare of all us will be better, if we follow the plans of my wife I agreed and this will be done this winter and spring.

The reason for my hesitation is also the fact that we like any other people in Denmark building their own house these days do not have any of ^{the} money for building expenses, so we will have a heavy debt in the future, however not bigger than my income with some sense will allow us to spend. So the boys are looking forward to move into their own separate rooms (like they had it during their stay in via Sabotino) and I look forward to have my own combined study and library, where I can keep all my files and 4.000 books that now are cramped away in boxes in our attic. This room of my own will enable me to continue my research work about the "Italia" and her master without disturbance from our youngest son Asger now being 2½ years old.

This explanation we hope that you will accept and that these details will enable you to forgive our long silence. By the way many thanks for the copy about the "Italia" monument of Tromsø, which I studied with great interest. It disappointed me only in one minor way - I missed your kind signature on the frontispiece. Please send me another one with your kind words, then I will give my present copy away to my friend Reichenberg in Stockholm. Thank you.

About your question concerning the eventual paper back edition you made me feel very flattered by asking me about ~~my~~ ^{my} opinion - however I felt immediately, when I read your question that I had the right answer, and here it is - still unchanged after some days of thought:

When I in Scauri read your memoirs in the English version one of the most impressive things about the book seemed to me to be the dignity and discreteness that you showed all the way through the book towards all these damned people, who through your long and outstanding life have tried to smear your reputation with false rumours and distasteful lies. This is the biggest impression I got out of your memoirs.

However after reading the Swedish version of "La posse di verita" some years ago I first really understood how disgraceful you have been treated by Amundsen and your other enemies. "La posse di verita" is unfortunately a rather heavy and juridical book for ordinary readers and is too complicated for most people to day. However I find that the few pages in "My Polar Flights" do not give you that ~~honourful~~ position back that Amundsen and many others took almost away from you.

Still I do not find any good reasons for opening another dispute with the still living supporters of Amundsen. I will therefore suggest you the ideal solution, which of course must be some sort of a compromise. Take the opportunity to defend yourself against the accusations and torments of your sad years 1927-1944 and give the English readers the first real answers to all these false statements, but do not mention the names of those persons, who made them whether publicly or in the hidden.

Of course defend yourself, before it is too late, against the accusations, but let ~~the~~ those second class people, who made them, rest with their heavy conscience. In your memoirs you are all too kind, but this is the way that your personality is, and this is one of the reasons that so many persons besides us also love you so much.

To those readers of the paper back edition that want to know the real facts and persons you can enable them to this material via a bibliography at the end of the chapter concerning the never forgotten dispute.

I will very much suggest to you that you follow my advice though I am in no position to demand such a thing, being so young and unknown. Let me help you in any way that you may need, and I will of course do anything for you. I look forward with great interest to your attitude to my proposal.

The letter you wrote us back in June after we left you in Rome, we very often reread, and every time we conclude that we never received any document that gave us so much pleasure and delight. That you offer me to take over the vacant seat of professor Hoel of Oslo is too great honour, I will however together with Tandberg and Reichenberg of Oslo and Stockholm do my best to defend the reputation of your two important polar expeditions and of your reputation of being an honest and respectable man of science and bravery.

We send you all our warmest
greetings and thoughts:

Bente, Jesper, Henrik, (Asger)
and

=0403

GEN. UMBERTO NOBILE
EMERITO DELL' UNIVERSITÀ
DI NAPOLI

Rome, 10 November 1970

00185 ROMA
VIA SABOTINO, 45

Dear Mr. Hermansen,

thanks for the cutting of the Japanese newspaper
about the film "The red tent". Of course I object to the following
two statements :

- 1) "The behaviour of Nobile was ignominious"

I did what I thought to be my duty. Never I had been tortured by
any remorse.

- 2) "The ITALIA Expedition was motivated by his vanity"

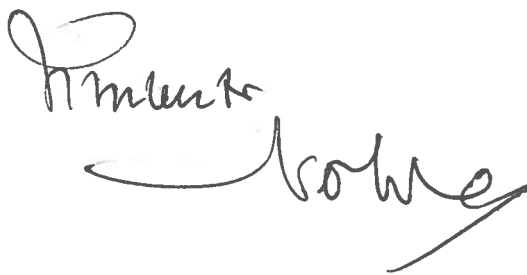
False. It was the fulfillment of a project of a Polar expedition
to which I was thinking since the year 1924. Besides that, it was
the only way of escaping from Fascism.

Today I am in a hurry. Later on I will write you.

Most affectionate greeting to your children. Regards to Mrs.

Hermansen. Gertrude joins me.

Very yours truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Umberto Nobile', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the bottom.

= 0404

GEN. UMBERTO NOBILE
EMERITO DELL' UNIVERSITÀ
DI NAPOLI

Rome, 18 Novembre 1970

00195 ROMA
VIA SABOTINO, 45

Dear Mr. Hermansen,

if I rightly understood what you wrote me at the beginning of page 3 of your letter dated October 8, you suggest that I should answer to all accusations made in the Amundsen's book "My life as an explorer" without mentioning who made them. Is it so ?

My answers will occupy about 40 pages. The problem is : where and how to publish them ? Of course the right place would be my book of memoirs, suppressing in it the chapter titled "Amundsen" (which occupies 30 pages) and putting in its place the 40 pages which another convenient title.

Now as a matter of fact, all attempts made by Mondadori to have the book published in English till today have not succeeded. The chances to succeed in the next future are practically null, since Muller the Editor of "My Polar Flights", will reprint the book making a paper-back edition.

I have thought about the possibility to publish the book of memoirs in one of the Scandinavian languages, but Bonnier of Stockholm already refused it last year, and so, I believe, has happened also with a Norwegian publisher. Thus, it remains only the possibility to publish my indirect reply to Amundsen in a magazine, but ^{all} this would be ~~too~~ difficult.

I send you a photocopy of the page of Miss Mitford's book in which she referred to Amundsen and to myself, and the note I send her about the flags at the Pole. You will see that even ten years ago Amundsen was quoted against me. Anyhow Miss Mitford has apologized writing me a very charming letter.

Also from me very hearty greetings
to Jesper and Henrik and to the
little one, whom we did not yet meet;
above all to you and Beate !

Cordially yours
Gerhard

Umberto Nobile

1. It is a pity that when you wrote "The Water Beetle" you did not have the opportunity of reading my book "My Polar Flights", published by me a year previously (Frederick Muller, London). In that book I dedicated five pages to the unfortunate dispute with Amundsen. Enclosed is a photostatic copy of those pages, so that under point (2) you may read about the Kivalina episode.

Amundsen was not a witness of this episode, because at the time it occurred he was sleeping in the posterior part of the pilot's cabin. Nevertheless he affirms that I was crying ("tears were streaming down his face") while I ordered two Norwegians to rush to the bow of the airship in order to balance it with their weight. In my long life I have had to face dangerous situations many times and had to act quickly, but surely nobody has ever seen me crying instead of taking action. Such strange behaviour is completely foreign to my nature. It is possible that I get angry and shout, but cry - no! This is a lie, and Commander Gottwaldt (one of the Norwegians to whom I gave the order) has confirmed that it is so.

2. As to the flags that were dropped over the North Pole, please read the account written by me, attached to this letter. You will see from it that the 'great banners of every shape and hue fluttering down around the NORGE giving her the appearance of a circus wagon of the sky' were 3 little pennants, each weighing 20 or 25 grams, with a total surface of about $2\frac{1}{2}$ square feet - too small indeed for a 'circus wagon of the sky!'

Amundsen says that he, as a good explorer, had "a sense of humour," but it seems to me that I myself am not with this same quality, otherwise I could not have endured reading the 95 pages of his Memoirs. Imagine, in those pages not less than 50 attributes have been ascribed to me, such as: arrogant, silly, fatuous, ignorant, maniacal, petulant, presumptuous, callous, etc.

However, Amundsen, in spite of his faults, was a brave man, who died in his attempt to rescue the survivors of the airship ITALIA two years later.

I have taken the liberty of writing to you, because I hate to see old lies still enduring, after so many years. Perhaps, if you ever come to Rome, you might like to call on me, when I could show you ever more clearly from the

books at my disposal how gravely mistaken Amundsen was.

Ove Hermansen

Flyveleder I

Ibrogade 3, DK-2770 Kastrup

Telefon (01) 51 0226

Copenhagen, November 29th, 1970.

To Our Dearest Friends

General Umberto Nobile and Madame Gertrude.

It is with great pleasure and thanks that I hereby send You my combined reply to Your letters of November 10th, 18th and 25th.

Your first letter was concerning the Japanese newspaper-cut, which is no further discussion worthwhile. Nobody can expect any Japanese newspaperman to write nothing but the facts, when one thinks of what European journalists have been writing from time to time.

In Your second letter mailed from Rome on my birthday the 19th You want a more and detailed reply from me concerning my view about a rewriting of the chapter in "My Polar Flights" about the fight between You and Amundsen. My opinion is unchanged, I suggest You give a list of the books in the chapter of those, who have stated lies about your deeds and behaviour and then denounce each lie in detail referring to among others the book of Willy Meyer. Though he deserves do not attack the reputation of Amundsen too hard, otherwise this will start a new debate instead of stopping the old one. Concentrate more about what the lies and rumours told and how they were wrong than stating who fabricated them. On the other hand promise me that such chaps as Balbo and captain Romagna are receiving a full blow and also the members of the Commission of 1929. I find no reason to save their either their names or reputations, because they did their dirty work against a member of the same Italian nation. I do not suggest that you omit the Amundsen's name, but what I mean concerning him and other non-Italian offenders is: Do not attack the persons - concentrate your attack against their wrong statements. Please let me hear further from you about this, but anyway if I was married to such a lovely and intelligent woman as Gertrude I would trust her opinion more than a dump air traffic controller up in the North - especially as Madame Gertrude can help you being a non-Italian.

I am so awful sorry to hear that I still will have to miss the opportunity to see a copy of Your lovely memoirs in an edition from a country, whose language I am able to write. How Bonnier can refuse I simply do not understand, there is an ever-living interest in that country about You and Malmgren. Also in Norway there must be a market for your memoirs - the publishing firm Norsk Gyldendal has already published three Arctic books in their paperback serials, why cannot Yours be the fourth?

page two.

Of course I should like to see the book both printed in an English, a German and a Scandinavian edition, however I do not see, how I shall be able to convince a Danish publisher, when Norway and Sweden hesitates. Another thing which irritates me, is the fact that none of Russian pictures are shown in Denmark. We have still not seen any trace of "The Red Tent", neither the Norwegian-Russian production about Fr. Nansen or the Swedish-Russian production about the 1.000 railway locomotives that Sweden sold Lenin and Soviet in 1920.

It was very interesting reading to see the false statements of Nancy Mitford. She is a rather well-reputed British author, mostly working with humouristic literature of her own, likewise the illustrator Osbert Lancaster is also a well-known cartoonist. However it does not mean so much, what such a lady writes, because if any Englishman wish to know about you and your flights, they always go for a look in the library in Griersons two books about Polar-aviation, where fairness is shown fully to your credit. Do not worry about minor books. You must understand that the latest and best books about Polar-flights have been almost more than fair towards you and please be happy about this, because it is in such books that your deeds and your reputation will live unshattered. Such books cannot be turned down as your own books with the phrase, that he is just trying to clean himself. These English books are strictly independent and historical sound.

Please thank Gertrude most warmly for her personal greeting in the letter of Nov. 18th. We still feel a little sorry for all the things she has to master, both her difficult job and also being a too hospitable great man's wife. You must allow her to be tired sometimes.

Concerning the article about you "Descent to Hell" in the magazine "AIR CLASSICS", then I have asked our mutual friend in Stockholm to mail direct to you a photo-copy of the article, giving you an opportunity to see, whether you want to have a copy from the States or not. Anyway the number was from February 1970, vol. 6/no. 3.

Mr. Johansen of the "Fram" and the successful Norwegian expd. to the Geo. South Pole I do not know his date of death. However you remember still that I told you this summer that Johansen was so maltreated by Amundsen on the Antarctic expd. because of jealousy that he forever after was a broken man walking on the border to the land of insaneness. I will write to Tandberg and request details about the end of Johansen.

page three.

May I end this letter by asking for some assistance if possible. From where did you obtain that wonderful Russian book in English language "Wings over the Arctic" written by M. Vodopyanov, Moscow 1960. Do you have any Russian connections, which can help me to such a copy?

Please promise me that if you ever finally close down the apartment in Via Sabotino and then have to reduce the amount of books of yours that you not will sell any of the following books without letting me give you an offer first, all the books I here speak of are of now connection with your expeditions, otherwise I would ~~not~~ course not mention such a thing at all. The list is:

Mikkelsen, Ejnar:

"Conquering the Arctic Ice", London, 1909

Fiala, Anthony:

"Fighting the Polar Ice", New York, 1906.

Peary, Robert E.:

"Nearest the Pole", London, 1907.

Rüdiger, Hermann:

"Die Sorge-Bai. Aus den Schicksalstagen des Schröder-Stranz Expedition", Berlin, 1913.

Please do not misunderstand the above-mentioned notes, you may find this inpolite of me and maybe you are wright, but any true collector of Arctic books have a difficult conscience, when he looks in the library of your standars and value. These books are all collector's items, which I still have not met on the shelves of the libraries of Copenhagen.

May I end this letter by wishing you all including Maria, Carla and Umberto II a nice winter season. The boys of ours are still talking of their wonderful days in Via Sabotino and Scauri. Bente and I can only join them in their gratitude for such a holiday.

Asger, Henrik, Jesper, Bente and