

02. OUR LIFE AT BAMBURI in 1964

Mombasa Town is located on an island of some 13sqkm area with a direct access to the Indian Ocean due a wide gap in the East African reef. The island is encompassed by two creeks: Mombasa Harbour at north and Kilindini Harbour at south. The later is wider and deeper providing Kilindini quays and deep sea anchorages as well as access to the shallower Port Reitz at far creek end. The Old Mombasa harbour is still used for dhows or boats able to sail into the shallower creek part up to Port Tudor at its far end. Opposite to the Old Harbour is the jetty of Bamburi Cement silo station on the mainland at Mkomani. The Portuguese arrived at the East African Coast in 16th century and built the Fort Jesus holding it as from 1593 to 1741 until Sultans from Zanzibar took over. By 1888 the British triumphed over the last Sultan of Mombasa.

It is possible to access the Mombasa Island on three sides from the mainland. At the west there is the earth-fill barrier of Makupa causeway carrying the railway line and the main road in the direction to Nairobi. The causeway bypasses the slaughterhouse at Port Tudor that is recognized by its odour of “Perfume de Chamgamwe” – named after the large suburb west of Mombasa. Then one comes to a roundabout of the wide causeway and on the first right turn one gets to the Open-air cinema. Straight on the main road westwards one bypasses Voi and Mtito Andei on the way to Nairobi some 300 miles or 500km far. The access road to Mombasa airport is at first left junction and it passes through a native village there. Still on that roundabout at next right turn of is the access road to Kipevu that bypasses the Mombasa Power station first on its way to the warehouses at Port Reitz.



**This pontoon bridge linked the mainland in background with the Mombasa Island.
Whole traffic even the heavy lorries had to cross over this toll-bridge.**

The wide gap between the Leven Reef of Nyali at north and the Andromache Reef at Likoni at south of mainland is deep enough to enable large deep sea vessels to anchor in the Kilindini Harbour and/or to berth further up that creek too. One had to use the ferry-boats at Likoni that carry heavy vehicles up to a certain weight, buses and personal cars as well as pedestrians to get over to the South Coast of Mombasa Island. A ferry takes some 15 minutes to cross the Kilindini creek travelling to and fro at regular intervals except during tea-times. Ferry-boats work in pairs during peak hours at times of mornings, midday's and late afternoons – provided both are in working order.

The access to the North Coast became easier when a pontoon-bridge was constructed of military equipment to be used for the one-way road traffic at a maximum speed of 15km/h. A toll had to be paid for any vehicle and heavy vehicles up to a certain weight that could cross the Nyali pontoon-bridge one at a time only. Keeping straight on after Nyali Bridge for a few miles one gets to the Nyali Beach and Hotel passing through a developing residential Nyali Limited Estate. Turning left after the Bridge one continues on the road going north one bypasses the area used by descendants of freed slaves known as Freretown and passes by a native village of Kisauni. On that main road north is the cement factory some 12km at left first and the Bamburi Beach stretches at right side with several hotels on it. Further on comes the Shanzu Beach and Shimo la Tewa (State prison) prior to the Mtwapa Creek that one could cross either by a bridge (military relict) or on a human-driven ferry. Continuing north the main road follows the Kikambala Beach before it reaches the Kilifi Township after crossing the wide Kilifi Creek on a ferry-boat. The old town of Malindi is located some 125km north of Mombasa that is known by Vasco da Gama's Pillar and a number of hotels there too.



The toll-bridge over the Mtwapa Creek built from military parts known as the Bailey bridge.

Preceding brief geographic discourse describes what have had to learn about the places and the country in that we would spend almost three years. Our arrival to Kenya meant breaking up for good with the Tito's regime in Yugoslavia after we got through the "Gate to Freedom" that the Sudan meant be for us. However Kenya would turn to become our "Gate to the Golden Age" afterwards. The first few weeks passed fast until all three of us got used to the daily routine that would keep us fully busy on works' days. Still the new life style allowed for many hours of leisure as well as for days or weeks to learn more about the East African countries on the many safaris we had undertaken.

We have arrived to the Coast during the "cold" season that starts after the long rains usually after the monsoon changes from north to south. Typically at the end of February winds drop down almost too nil during daytimes and it becomes rather humid and sticky. After some 2 to 3 weeks from-the-sea coming wind "decides" to blow from now on as south-easterner. It brings heavy clouds and the main or the long rainy seasons begins as from March and ends mostly by May. The strong monsoon rains cool down the ambience making the humidity more bearable. Also the nights become cooler and the breeze from upcountry allows better sleeping even without air-conditioners.

We would experience this kind of coastal climate in a few months only. For the time being we have enjoyed the coastal coolness after the rather high heats in Khartoum. Mostly in November the short rainy season begins with the wind changing direction from south to north-easterly. After that follows the best part of the year with daily temperatures around 30C that drop to about 25C at nights. Despite the humidity of about 90% we have not used air-conditioners in our house because of the natural flow of air that was sufficient. The house stood on a coral outcrop some 10m above the shoreline some 100m far away allowing perfect crosswise normal ventilation.

We would get up with the sunrise that was almost at 6 AM most of the time. We had a perfect view looking out from our bedroom at first floor onto the Indian Ocean that was veiled in clouds. Sky colours would be change from a dark grey into a variety of pink to red hues as the first sun rays came out into sight behind a foggy curtain. It was time to get up, take a shower, dress and go down to have breakfast. Mgandi, our house servant, had arrived from his home at nearby village and busied himself in the kitchen already. Vesna and I had to leave the house at 06:45 latest for Vesna to get on the School bus waiting at the factory. The bus would be back from town with students who would have lunch at their homes or did not have any afternoon's lectures at all.

Sometimes I would take with me a basket containing the shopping list of items Ljiljana had prepared that I handed over to the driver of Factory's pickup truck who waited in front of the Head office. This driver would collect the baskets from the senior employees who had an open account with say the Dhalas' Groceries, an Indian wholesale shop in Mombasa. He also did other procurements according the other order lists and would return to the factory loaded with several full baskets and bags or boxes short of the lunch break. We had to collect our baskets and other ordered bits and pieces from that pickup truck then. However the driver took the bills straight to the Accounts where these would be deducted from our personal accounts at the month's end.



Ljiljana and Vesna inspect the coral rock garden that was below the house eastern front.

The factory had a Garden department with a large cultivated area next to the low-ranking employees' camp. René Haller a Swiss expatriate was in charge of this well functioning farm where one could get fresh vegetables and fruits, fresh eggs as well as chicken or lamb meat sometimes. There was a small shop attached to René's office where one could buy certain simple goods mainly "posho" (maize flour) that was the native's staple food here. Ljiljana ordered posho from Dhalas' when asked for by our

servants but she kept a certain quantity of hidden for emergencies too. Our servants often forgot to ask her on time so often one of them would turn up a short time before lunch displaying a miserable face explaining that they run out of posho. After Ljiljana's one more stern warning that she should be told to order posho in time – sympathizing she would bring a portion of maize from her hiding place. Normally we would pay for the posho but that caused some comments of being “socialists” from some people here.

Normally Ljiljana would buy some vegetables and fruits as well as poultry and eggs from an English couple who had a farm near Mombasa. Once in a week they would turn up with their small pickup touring around the recommended expatriates. Yet one had to pay in cash all the purchased items that had not been the safest way for the sale's couple though. Ljiljana took the chance to drive our “Rabbit” to the town on days when I was out of Bamburi inspecting the construction site at Wazo Hill near Dar-es-Salaam. On such an occasion she went to the European butcher to buy the best bits of meat for us and some to make soups of whereas sinewy meat had been shared between our servants where as bones got for our dog Knocker. Ljiljana went to the Mombasa central market place once weekly where she would choose vegetables and fruits if needed.

One of her stops was at the Dhalas' grocery shop so she has established friendly contacts with owners soon particularly when she brought handfuls of chilli-papers. It grew wild in our gardens but was by far too hot to be used for our meals. Mr. Dhala was always too happy getting chilly-papers from Ljiljana and he would devour a few of right away without slightest quiver of his eyes. This was the amazing habit we experienced in most Indians whom we knew from Khartoum already. In the course of time the Dhalas have introduced us to a few well known Indian families in Mombasa like of the dental surgeon Dr. Cassam who had taken good care of our teeth throughout our stay here. Vesna has been one of his favourite patients as well as me.



This is another view to the house from the north eastern garden corner.

The Shankardass' family was another one of with whom we have made friends too. They owned the musical shop where one could buy or order any LP records as well as some other items like toys etc. Some time later they had invited us to their daughter's wedding that followed up the traditional Indian customs. The ceremony itself as well as the party afterwards had been a real experience for us and we enjoyed in thoroughly.

Vesna did not have any problem in joining the 5th grade class in the Loreto Convent School of Mombasa during the 1964/65 school year. This school for girls only had been run by the Irish Sisters in a rather disciplined way though. Vesna made new friends fast although they were of different origin like Chinese, Italians, and a few British too – but almost no Kenyans at all. The students had to be dressed uniformly consisting of a white gown with red buttons and belt and had to wear white socks and full white shoes. During the school year there were a few sportive events too. Of course all the parents and families were cordially invited to the Christmas Holy Family Show. As the matter of regard and prestige one had to attend such events as the part of town's social life. The socializing at such gatherings was essential in the upper class community.

One had to learn a few new methods of preservation in this humid and hot climate. Ants were everywhere and anything containing sugar would be detected by them instantly. Chocolate sweets in a box left unattended would eat ants from the inside out within a few days and leave wrapping papers in the original form but empty. One had to keep anything that contained sugar or any other kind of sweets by placing them in a large bowl filled with water that surface of which to be wide enough for ants to “bridge” it. Of course, the fridge (we had one of 8cuft or about 250lt) with a large deep freezer was almost the safest place against ants. However it was a favourite place for geckos to hatch their eggs between the cooler ribs at rear side of. One had to check and clean such cooling places of the ventilation regularly otherwise the utilities would chock or overheat.



View up to the veranda with the open view towards the Ocean and Vesna waving.

Gerhard Schauderna nicknamed “Jerry”, the Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Works, had many good advices for us how one should keep sensitive in this rather humid climate. In average the air humidity was around 90% and during rainy seasons it got to almost 100%. We got some kind of electrical heaters that were small in size but dried the air in cupboards where would keep any optical instrument like cameras, films and

important papers. His wife Irmgard was a trained medical nurse for children. They had a girl Sybille of about 3 years who came quite often to play with Knocker or we met them on the beach during afternoon walks or so.

From them we learned about the two most common diseases that plagued the native folks. The first one was malaria and everybody here took some medicine as prevention to it. So Schaudernas took "Atebrin" daily whereas we were used to "Resorchin" that one took once per week only. Irmgard warned about malaria illness that is omni present at the Coast. The sanitary inspectors take regular control and penalize plot owners in case they find standing water around dwellings. One had to collect coconut halves and remove them safely as these filled easily with water giving mosquitoes best breeding places. Indigenous people suffered often from malaria and they felt miserably for a few days when the illness struck. Little could be done to them to get rid of this illness.

Irmgard has explained to Ljiljana about the bilharzias of that some natives suffered too. {Schistosomiasis alias bilharzias or snail fever is a parasitic disease transmitted by infected fresh-water snails with a fluke of the genus Schistosoma. It has a low mortality rate in humans but often causes a chronic illness that can damage internal organs and, in children, impair growth and cognitive development.} Soon Ljiljana found out that Ngoa, our gardener, has some symptoms of bilharzias and sent him for a check up to the Company's physician. Ngoa got some medicine that helped him during the time he stayed with us. As the prevention we arranged that our other two servants Mwachiro (gardener and in-house help) and Mgandi or Karissa later (our in-house helpers) went for such a check up too.



Ljiljana poses at the open market tents in Salim Road of Mombasa town centre.

Mgandi did not return from his home leave on the day we expected so Ljiljana had to warn him to be punctual or we would find a replacement for him. Mgandi told us that he has some problems to get his wife and that needs KSh300 to "buy" her free from her father. We lent him this amount to be deducted from his salary believing that Mgandi would get back from leave on time in future. However this did not work well as the wife became a member of some religious sect and Mgandi again late knew that Ljiljana would start looking for a replacement for him. So one day Mgandi coming back too late again brought with him his own replacement. Ljiljana accepted this friendly gesture and the new in-house helper became Karissa who stayed with us until we departed from Kenya in February 1967.

Late in September 1964 the Yugoslav m/s “Omiš” set anchor at the Kilindini Harbour for the first time. The new Yugoslav ambassador came from Nairobi on a visit and met Dick Roberts, the General Manager of BPCCo, to discuss the potential shipment of BAOBAB cement in future. Dick took this opportunity to talk to the ambassador about the loss of our two passports. He had promised to solve this problem as soon his office would be completely established. Truly this happened some weeks later but we had our Tripartite Passes already. Thus all three of us got the Yugoslav passports with an extended visa for a year – though this did not matter at all us after all. It was not likely that we would return to Yugoslavia after all what happened to us during our holidays in summer of 1963 there. During the coming years few more Yugoslav ships came to Mombasa Harbour like m/s “Matija Gubec” and “Jelsa” – the ship Ljiljana and Vesna had sailed twice with these vessels on their way to Port Sudan in the Sudan.

The short rainy season started as expected in November. It became rather cool and puddles of water gathered on any road particularly on non-tarmac surfaces. Roads with stabilized earthen surface called “murrum” turned into muck making driving hazardous and slippery. The rain turned the “black” cotton soil in a quack mare and the best way out of it was not to get caught into it. I caught my first cold and it was not pleasant to get around with a “running” nose in that rather humid climate – so different to the very dry one in Khartoum. Swimming in the seas was not so inviting now and the grey and cloudy skies did not encourage anybody to stay outside after all. With begin of the wet season starts an invasion of numerous kinds of “dudus” (dudu = in general is anything that creeps, mostly one meant the insects) that would descend upon anything edible to them. When the short rains stops everybody’s spirit would raise anticipating the best time of the year as from December until March.

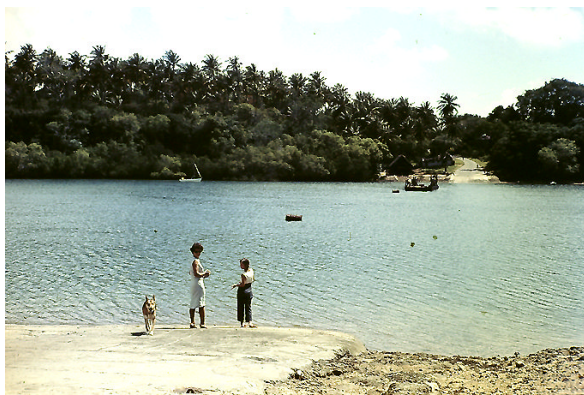


One of our first over-night-stay safaris was to the Kilaguni Lodge in Tsavo West. Here Ljiljana, Smolniker and Vesna sit at the veranda overlooking a waterhole behind of was the restaurant.

Some 20m far out from our plot boundary were the gardens of Dr. Mandl at right and the one of Werner Smolniker. Smolniker acted as the Chief draughtsman in the office I have taken over. He occupied a nice house at the beach next to the one of Dr. Mandl and it was the last one in a row of several houses belonging to the Company. There was a narrow access road to the beach between these two plots leading to the beach. When I have taken over the management of the Works’ Building department and I remembered Dr. Mandl’s wish to have a slipway next to his house. Without such a slipway it was not possible to get in any sailing or motor boat to the water. One could try

to push a boat in the sea during the spring high tide when the water level would reach the top of the sea wall. One constructed the existing sea walls along the beach plots out of concrete blocks filled with concrete for weight but one had to be protected these with large coral boulders from the quarry to prevent the erosion.

These boulders rested on the beach sand layer that thickness varied with year's time. Gradually these heavy boulders sank deeper into the sand until they reached down the coral layer beneath and got to a firm support. Often the Company sent more boulders to protect the sea wall fast otherwise spring tide waves would splash over it. The wave's energy and the seepage behind the sea wall would cause the under-washing of its foundation that generally resulted in a sudden and irreparable collapse. I have learned about this problem early enough and designed a new type of sea wall at the new house of the President Jomo Kenyatta later. For the slipway I designed two "U"-beams made of wood planks to be fixed on top of the sea wall and to rest on the foundation on coral layer at lower end.



Ljiljana and Vesna wait the south landing to cross the Mtwapa creek on a ferry platform. Several men moved the platform by pulling a chain (at right) drawn across the creek.

At the same time the builders constructed a massive staircase made of concrete blocks between the slipway two rails that rested direct on the coral rock too. After that the slipway had been used more often and it got acclamations from the sailing friends too. The staircase offered an easy entry to the sea even at high tides rough waves now. I found it convenient during my morning swims - something I started since the weather got warmer – provided there were enough seas to swim out into the lagoon some 50m or so. After a swim it was convenient to have a shower fitted next to the existing tape for garden watering at this far corner of Dr. Mandl's garden. Soon all these changes were approved by Bwana Mzee (as Dr. Mandl was known here) when he inspected the layout on his arrival a few weeks before Christmas.

Usually the Managing Director Dr. Felix Mandl and his wife Annie would arrive to Mombasa a few weeks before Christmas. Soon after Dr. Mandl told me that I would have to stay in Mombasa longer than he did anticipate in January during our brief visit then. He explained latest ideas regarding the largest factory extension mainly with the construction of a new rotary kiln line that included quite change to the plant general layout too. Therefore the Company gave me an allowance to replenish our household with what ever we would need for a longer stay like say bedding, crockery and cutlery, and other household tools. Also we got the good news about our crates that had arrived via Trieste to Vienna in a "sound and safe" condition. My uncle in Vienna had arranged with the local shipping company "Lagermax" to keep the crates in their stores until further notice.

On December 4, 1964 Vesna successfully finished the 6th Standard class and happily started her first school holidays in Mombasa. The winter school holidays lasted until January 12, 1965 and many expatriates expected their children from Kenya's boarding schools to join them for the Christmas' celebration. Thus Vesna met a few new friends who joined her to roam the Bamburi Beach along that most of Company's staff had their dwellings. Mr. White's children, he was Plant's Works Manager and Chemist, Jimmy (about Vesna's age) and Karen although elder than both of them met almost daily at the beach enjoying their freedom thoroughly. Karen had some job to keep two youngsters from making too much of nuisance or malevolence to themselves or to neighbours living along the beach.

For Kenya's Jamahiriya Day (= Independence Day) on December 12 there we had a 3day off. For this occasion the President Mzee Jomo Kenyatta arrived to the Coast and many official parties had been held at his Mombasa Town's residence. Of course the prominent people and high officials were invited to these parties so both Felix and Annie Mandl had to attend a few of too. Mrs. Annie has befriended Ljiljana soon after our long-term stay had been announced. She would visit her almost daily to have a drink of Turkish coffee that Ljiljana used to prepare seeing her coming up our garden stairs. When Annie did not feel well to "run up" our garden flight of steps (although they had a rather gentle rise) Ljiljana would bring the coffee to down to her house. Both ladies needed the coffee because of their low blood pressure. At such sessions Mrs. Annie was overly happy to tell Ljiljana stories from these meetings they have had to attend.



The arrival of M/S "Jelsa" passed by Ras Mzimle to berth in Mombasa Kilindini Harbour.

Since ages the dhows sailed before the Kaskasi (the north-east trade wind) to berth in the Old Harbour of Mombasa. These large ocean-going dhows "bagalas" with the high-pooed "booms" crammed in the old harbour bringing the goods from Red Sea, Persian Gulf and India. One day a friend invited Ljiljana to join her at the carpet auction held in the old Customs Landing Stage at Old Mombasa Town. When I came back home from the office Ljiljana called me unexpectedly. She asked me whether she could spend some KSh2.500 (that was K£125) or a little more as she was bidding for a carpet at an auction. I told her that our present savings would allow spending up to some KSh1.000 and I do not believe that we need to buy a carpet by now. Some time later she rang again informing that she auctioned a Buhara carpet of 3,6m x 2,7m for K£135 and she

must have that money. I had to respond with “Negative” and tried hard to persuade her to get out of this acquisition fast.

I did not hear anything more from her after until she returned home with a happy smile and without the carpet of course. The seller was pressing hard to get 65% of the price instantly as on account of full payment within 24 hours. He wanted to see the carpet Ljiljana had bid for so Ljiljana pointed to the reddish Buhara lying on a stack of carpets. The poor man got a real shock seeing it and straight away offered her some money if she would withdraw her offer. In fact the carpet minimum value was well above K£250 at least and it was the mistake starting the bidding at a lower price of that. Everybody was happy about the outcome after Ljiljana left the auctioneer’s store without the carpet and not having to pay K£135 as the price for it. Later Ljiljana told her bidding story to Dr. Mandl who advised her to turn to him next time in case she needs some financial support. It was also a kind of lesson to me – not to mix into financial matters I do not a clue of.



The Music band of British Portland Cement Co. Ltd. Mombasa marches in front of the Head Office of Bamburi Works as to open the Christmas party 1964.

The Management sponsored a party for the all staff members (except of the children of expatriate staff) including their families’ members cum children held on the afternoon before Christmas Eve. The Factory’s all Kenyans’ Brass Band in their splendid uniforms (they had trained hard for this event weeks before) marched in to the front of Head Office. There a large crowd had gathered already consisting predominantly of Kenyans workers and their families living in the camp next to the factory. Of course other co-workers and engineers as well as the administrative staff’s members were here too – an absolute mix of nations and various ethnic groups. The most numerous were the children who run around excitedly and with great expectations.

The commotion stopped instantly as the Band stopped beside the Office greens. Now everybody had been looking for the arrival of Santa Claus who arrived in a pickup decorated as a space rocket this year. The next year it would be a space landing craft like Apollo capsule etc. Santa Claus wearing his traditional dress (who ever was in this dress would have to perspire heavily!) got out of the “rocket” and approached gracefully Mrs. Mandl who was waiting on steps to the Head Office entrance. She gave him a list with children’s names and Santa Claus started calling one name after another. Slowly and timidly each child approached the two persons and saying aloud ones name added

muttering something like “Merry Christmas”. Annie Mandl handed over the present(s) to the apprehensive “toto” (“child” in Swahili) who turned around fast and run to its parent.



The Band leader Mr. Reichmanis conducts the Works Music Band.

The list contained names in the alphabetic order of all children at school age and those ones younger of – disregarding the staff level in the factory. Vesna got a present too that we had to purchase. Accordingly a gift of a senior staff member’s child would be added to the large assortment of other presents that acquired the Company. For the first time Ljiljana joined Mrs. Mandl in going to the town to choose and to order the necessary number of toys or similar gifts at few shops in Mombasa. Later these items would be delivered to the HQ wrapped and sorted out by names in accordance with the list. A separate Christmas party has been arranged for children of expatriate staff members as most of them had not stayed in Mombasa and just came on the holiday to the Coast only. So Ljiljana had learned this procedure by helping Mrs. Mandl that she would have to do same in the coming two years.



BAOBAB SPACE ROCKET was Santa Claus’ mobile transport that landed in front of the Head Office. Here pose Mrs. Annie Mandl at centre with 3 Springers and Siegfried von Bonin cum son.

Hertula, Werner Smolniker's wife, had arrived from Europe with their two kids about the end of November. Smolnikers have adopted twins – Michael a boy and Inge a girl - both about 4-year of age now. On the late afternoon of Christmas Eve Werner rung up calling with a most frightened voice to come down to their house instantly. We wondered about what happened as we have agreed to arrive there after sunset to attend the customary distribution of presents. All three of us and Knocker run down to Smolnikers' house where we were met by a most excited Werner warning us not to go inside the house. Hertula hold both scared children close to her trying to appease them as far as possible. Slowly we got the news about what had happened and that René Haller is due in shortly to catch a big snake that Inge saw in children's room. Hertula sent the girl to her room to fetch the wrapping papers but she returned frightened as she saw a very bad "dudu" in her bed. {In Swahili "dudu" could mean even a snake.} Ljiljana took Knocker on the leach and all of us sat on the veranda waiting for Haller's arrival.

Not long after Haller turned up carrying a long stick with a rope fixed to a leather loop at one end – a perfect tool to catch a snake. It was the first time seeing René as fully clad carrying special goggles to protect his eyes. He opened the door bit by bit and entered the room closing it behind him. After a while René came out with the victorious mien holding a serpent of some 1,5m dangling on his stick. Werner got a wide sack into that the snake was lowered into with outmost care. Then René loosened the loop rope and in a relaxing way pulled out the rod making sure that the snake had coiled in the sack bottom. Only now he told us excitedly about the caught grown up snake is the rather poisonous "spitting cobra". He was triumphant about his catch that would go into the new terrarium being under construction in one of the corners of the abandoned coral quarry.



Our first Christmas at Bamburi (Kenya) we celebrated almost in the same way as we have done it in past 3 years in Khartoum (Sudan). The Christmas tree is a branch of araucaria tree.

In our new abode we have made arrangements to celebrate the Christmas in the similar way we have had done it in Khartoum. Yet the living room here had a by far better view from this wide balcony over to the Indian Ocean openness. A long cantilever structure of this balcony supported on a large coral boulder extended out pointing towards the Bamburi beach some 100m away. We have used to drink the Turkish coffee after the

lunch sitting in the shade of outspread balcony awning. The plot size was of four acres and a few large trees grow near the house. There were several papaya trees bearing nice sized fruits that attracted Sykes or vervet monkeys. Knocker used to chase them of for a while until would become too much for the poor dog. After some time monkeys would climb on a papaya tree and choose a ripe papaya to get on with it. A monkey might hesitate for a moment if we were sitting on the balcony but then get to the fruit and by turning it around rush away with it into bush for safety. Beyond the plot north boundary was the virgin bush from where several kinds of animals had a free access to Ljiljana's garden. So we have had to get used to their visits before long.

Next to the kitchen was the dining room equipped with a large table and 8 comfortable chairs. The living room was 2 steps higher of it and was separated by a wide cupboard accessible from both sides. Sitting at the table one could easily see over that cupboard out through the balcony door on the Ocean horizon. We bought a "telescopic" tree that by pressing on a knob opened looking alike a Christmas pine tree about 1,5m tall. My two ladies decorated the "tree" with multi colour glass spheres but we did not dare to put wax candles on because of fire risk. Ljiljana got some rather tiny candle like electric bulbs powered from a battery as a replacement for. The "tree" placed on the cupboard gave a perfect atmosphere for the Christmas celebration. We purchased a new Philips "magnetophon" (aka a tape recorder) for large reels of Ø8" that played on 4 tracks so. Thus we could play the reels we brought from Khartoum.

Ljiljana purchased some goods like aprons and shirts for our servants and has packed some food into parcels for our servants. We would hand over these gifts including some little money to Mgandi, Mwachiro and Ngoa after breakfast the morning on Christmas Day. After the brief "spitting cobra" intermezzo at Smolnikers' house we returned to our house and were ready to enjoy the Christmas Eve by our self. It was the time for our private celebration so I lit on the "candles" and put on the audio-tape with recorded Croatian Christmas corals.

First I rang the bell and Ljiljana cum Vesna appeared followed by Knocker a little bit confused by an unusual notion. However dog perfect nose is led it straight to his bowl filled up with goodies that he devoured with great gusto although it was not the time for feeding. Knocker did not care for our loud singing "Sveta noć" (Holly Night) and few more Croatian corals. After that we turned onto opening of our presents that Ljiljana had wrapped with great care. Of course Vesna started fast busying herself by simply tearing of paper from her many parcels. In the meantime we two elders took our time to open our mutual gifts that were mostly practical ones. After a while we sat to the table where Ljiljana had nicely arranged a cold meal with a lot of assorted goodies of our best likeness.

Some time later Vesna went to her room for the night taking with her a few of books that she would probably start to read until she would fall asleep. We went out on the balcony listening to Bing Crosby's singing of most popular Christmas corals. Sitting comfortably in the armchairs to sounds of songs like "I'll be home for Christmas" or "White Christmas" – resulted in the best time for talking. From the dark sky shone myriads of stars with the dominant South Cross in place. In absolute nature's silence one could hear the crushing sound of the not too far of riff. We started the conversation with contemplations about our present life and the auspices of our future too. Before long we have concluded that Kenya would become "The Gate to our Golden Age".



A few months later in 1965 Vesna had her Confirmation witnessed by Werner Smolniker at right. This picture was taken in front of the Roman Catholic Church in Mombasa in participation of the whole of Smolniker's family with wife Hertula and their two children and Ljiljana at left.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~