

Chapter No. 9:

MY FIRST HOME LEAVE IN SUMMER 1963

I have been too pleased with the choice to start my first home leave at Lebanon. I had almost a week on disposal to learn about this interesting country. Once I have settled in the hotel it was time to start a sightseeing tour on foot through the City of Beirut. I have marveled about the rich display in many shops and inwardly looked at prices converting them in Yu-Dinars. Ljiljana certainly could not resist visiting shops to view the goods and probably to bargain about prices as well. Actually I was looking for the Barclays Bank to get the local currency to cash my first Travelers' cheque ever. The Swissair Office was by coincidence in the same building so I went to see if Gaston's brother Marcel is in office. He was out for the lunch break so I left a notice that I would return later or he could call me at the hotel late afternoon.

After took a snack I continued my town's walking tour. Soon I got to the town's old centre where an oriental life buzzed in narrow streets with small shops set in the order of various trades and crafts. The traffic converged towards the not to big harbor as there was not much to be seen I returned to the hotel. Retracing to the Swissair Office found Marcel there so we planned my first visit to Lebanon. We considered my itinerary to suit the time available until my departure on coming Thursday May 30, 1963. Marcel suggested that it would be best for me to make several sightseeing tours that he booked for me accordingly. Marcel proposed to visit Baalbek at leisure on his day off on Saturday. After I returned to the hotel I felt rather tired of first day's impressions and most probably of the climate change. I took a small snack in the hotel's coffee bar before dropped into cool bedding sleeping like a hog for long hours.



The stairway to the Bacchus Temple at Baalbek

On Friday morning a taxi picked me from the hotel as there nobody else booked for tour to explore Beirut's northern coastal region. The driver cum guide was a Maronit that is a follower of St. Maron's Christian Church specific to Lebanon and Syria. He spoke good English and was rather talkative explaining in many details the Maronit's history and other places we visited that splendid sunny day. At first we followed the coastal road to turn in the cool and woody valley of river Ibrahim. We set on a verandah next to the river at a rather pleasant resting place. I in particular enjoyed the cool breeze that swept through the valley. Later we continued more northwards to view the ancient place of Byblos and turned at Amahit back to stop at Juniah. The Church of St. Mary is built on top of a ridge and the

St. Mary's statue of Harissa could be seen from far driving along the coast. This place of worship and religious fairs was important for Maronites and Moslems as well. At that time Lebanon was a peaceful country and the place of religious co-insistence also. My guide told me a lot about the way of life in City of Beirut whose inhabitants were certainly a mix of different nationalities and believers of various religions too.

At the hotel waited a message from Marcel saying that he would fetch from the hotel at 10 o'clock to start an interesting journey in his car tomorrow. I was so exhausted with all the impressions of my first sightseeing day of Lebanon that I could need a good rest before to be ready for another interesting journey. Yet Marcel drove us out of the City on a road next to the airport where passed by a large settlement of many container looking like barracks. This was one of the Palestine refugee's camps that looked orderly with a relatively good looking hygienic standard. There was the water supply cum sewage installation including tended small gardens around at each the abode. In front of some barracks parked large American type vehicles and TV-aerials were mounted on top of the cabins. I could not comprehend such a technical "comfort" to be compatible say with a normal refugees' camp. Marcel explained that the UNO subsidies Palestinians as the political refugees and that they would lose this financial support if moving into a permanent settlement. Thus it was a mere political pressure on the UNO that Palestinians continued to live in their cabins. Though these had a reasonable standard and the refugees earned some money in addition by moonlighting works.



View from the inside of the dome remnants of Bacchus Temple

We drove on the main road to Syria and stopped at Zahlah to have a typical Lebanese "mezza" (snack) there. Zahlah is situated in a verdant valley below Leban Mountain and there is an important railway crossing station. We sat in a shadowy garden and the innkeeper started with a procession of dishes containing different specialties one testing better than the other. He brought a bottle of deep chilled "araq" (a strong alcoholic drink tasting of anis) pouring little of in our glasses to top it up with cold spring water. The liquid turned whitish but tasted just fine in combination with so many different food morsels we ate at leisure for quite some time. Well after the noon Marcel took onto the road at Riyaq junction and turned northwards to the ruins of Baalbek. I was amazed with the whole surrounding and walked around taking many pictures of remnants of Heliopolis mighty temple with its tall columns topped up with grand decorated roof beams at few places. Again I was getting tired of so many impressions and probably of the huge snack so we were back to Beirut at late afternoon. Marcel had to leave soon after. I had just a light meal in hotel's bar and before going to bed considered the plans for remaining days.



The roof ledge of the Bacchus Temple at Baalbek

On Sunday I walked leisurely down passing the Protestant College compound and came down to the bay with Pigeon Rocks. Following the coastal road “La Corniche” I came back by the majestic Hotel St. George to the City’s Centre where I attended the Holy mess. Out later I booked the trip “Beirut by night” for that evening and two full day trips first one to the Cedar Trees at Faraiya on Leban Mountain and a second one to Damascus a day after. Early evening a bus picked up the tourists from their hotels and on the way to the Casino one could see Beirut by night. We arrived at Casino de Leban at 8 PM where we were shown to our places at tables placed in an amphitheatric form in front of a wide stage.

First a dinner was served (in price included) but alcoholic drinks had to be paid as extras. Guests talked and kept themselves busy rather aloud particularly because the serving of meals was slow due to the big number of visitors that evening. The hall was full so the great expectation rose to the moment when the show was due to begin. The performance brilliance and precision kept the guests in attention throughout the all two hours of. I was really surprised that it was the midnight when the show was over so I stopped at Casino’s halls for short just to write a postcard to Ljiljana. Then I found a minibus that took guests who did not want to stay in the Casino back to their hotels in Beirut.



The bridge over Dog River aka Nahr-el-Kelb on the road north from Beirut

On Monday a taxi picked me from the hotel around 9:30 and two more passengers joined in later for the tour of Cedars and Northern Lebanon. At Ghadir we left the Coast road and started on a winding way to Faraiya with many views onto nice landscapes. As the road continued ascending it came to the dead-end lastly. Outside was rather chilly but viewing the mighty cedar trees was a really magnificent sight. Still one could see around snowy

patches on this plateau at 2063m ASL. I certainly did not expect such a cold up here and happily turned into a warm skiers' cabin. The cabin smelled of cedar as it was constructed of cedar tree trunks that walls and benches were covered with bear's and sheep skins. It was very cozy inside and warm tea cum rum warmed me up for the next leg of our trip.



An elderly native couple met on the road northwards towards City of Tripoli

We drove back the same way when the driver turned at Ghosta onto another winding road that followed ridges enabling beautiful views on fertile valleys far below. Our driver drove carefully so nobody got sick after many more upwards and downwards steep curves. The drive went on and on until we reached Besharri passing on route with several lookouts and noticed another large group of Cedars of Lebanon. At a short rest in another cabin we got served a “mezze” and warm teas after that our driver took a descending side road leading to the City of Tripoli. Here we stopped for short just to visit the Citadel of Raymond de St. Gilles and the Lions' Tower. On the return way to Beirut I must have fallen asleep as I do not remember much of that drive along the northern Coast of Lebanon.



The Jebail Fortress eastern buttressing at the City of Byblos

This trip did really exhaust me and I had slept deeply until the alarm clock woke me up at 8 AM on Tuesday. I got a quick breakfast as I was supposed to start my last day-trip to Syria at 9:30. To my surprise a taxi turned up again and soon after another guest joined me so we were the only passengers during the whole trip. My fellow-traveler turned out to be a high ranking officer of H. M. Home Office after I got a view at his double-sized thick black passport. My thin and red Yugoslav passport was not too impressive to him so I explicated my rather poor English and that I got a contract as lecturer in the Sudan. After the formal introductions were over we continued our journey in a most amicable way. Also I received a perfect lecture of English language and spelling enjoying it thoroughly. Before crossing into Syria our driver took us for a quick sightseeing of Baalbek that we both have seen

before. After this brief stop we crossed the border to Syria at Riyaq and after some short formalities continued straight to Damascus.



The interior of Umayyad Mosque at the City of Damascus

Our driver brought straight to the front of Damascus Citadel and from here on two of us strolled on alone as my companion knew too well the City. A later meeting point has been agreed upon with our taxi so we ambled at leisure through the Citadel, the long and roofed Al Hamidiyah Souk (market) and getting out at the West Propylea next to the remains of Temple of Jupiter. Just opposite of it stood the imposing Umayyad Mosque to that my “guide” lead with an instinct of a perfect connoisseur. It was the first time that I viewed such a mighty religious and cultural edifice that had deeply impressed me. After this tour de force it was time to relax in a shadowed café where we enjoyed “hommos” (mixed cheese with herbs) followed by “kabab” (meat on a spit) and drank araq. So refreshed we walked on passing narrow lanes of Al Qaimariyeh district until we came out at small square of Bab Touma with the Thomas’ Gate (St. Paul’s’ escape).



The tomb of St. John in the Umayyad Mosque at Damascus

Our taxi was waiting there already and shortly we were on the way back driving along the Barada River up to the main road leading to Beirut. My companion complimented well my English with continuous a barrage of words’ spelling and pronunciation baffling me even more. He confused me thoroughly with the word GHOTI that should be read as “fish”. I did not get the sense of this riddle being too tired of many impressions of that day. There was just nothing that I could take more of on that day. Nevertheless my companion’s continuing “lecture” was so entertaining and humorous that it kept me awake despite my thorough

tiredness. We parted in an amicable way as my fellow-passenger wished me all the best for my home leave and professional life in future.

I needed a good respite after several days of sightseeing tours so decided to take on easy on my last day in Beirut. Marcel accepted my invitation for a typical local lunch so we met at the fine restaurant located on a mount above the bay with Pigeon Rocks. Here Marcel suggested we take an all inclusive menu that was the best choice from cost point of view and also considering the variety and amount of food to be served later. The lunch lasted for almost 3 hours when we had to leave each to go his way. I thanked greatly Marcel for all his help and guidance during my stay in Beirut and Lebanon. Back to the hotel I started packing and went to bed early that night. On Thursday May 30 morning a taxi took me to the harbor where I boarded m/s “Esperia” of ADRIATICA Line due for Alexandria by mid morning. I booked a double bunk cabin for the few days of sailing and was lucky staying alone until the arrival in Naples two days later.



The St. Paul's Window at the east side of City of Damascus' perimeter

The ship passage was uneventful and I preferred to stay on the ship during its night stopover in Alexandria (Egypt). The next day we sailed on gentle Mediterranean seas and arrived to Siracusa on Sicily the following morning. As the ship stay had to last several hours I disembarked to saunter around for a while through old city's center and visited the Cathedral. I took a perfect pizza for lunch cum wine and as there was enough time I went to see the here famous catacombs. The ship sailed out in late afternoon passing through the Strait of Messina in full darkness so there was no point to stay awake all night. It was Sunday June 2, 1963 when “Esperia” cast anchor in Naples on early afternoon. Thus I had good time to find the hotel where I should meet my colleagues from Zagreb. The members of the Croatian Society of Civil Engineers & Technicians organized a bus tour through Italy following an invitation of the counterpart Italian Society. They had to make a survey of the highway construction “Autostrada del Sol”. Their arrival was scheduled for an overnight stay in the same hotel on evening of June 4, 1963.

The hotel was located at “Margelina” quite close to the harbor. After I lodged in my room I went for a stroll walking along the quayside passed “Castel dell'Ovo” and soon came to the Royal Palace. Both were closed for the public being taken in by some governmental offices possibly custom and police so far I could remember. Near were several churches I visited a few of but turned back to the hotel as I did not feel safe walking alone Naples at darkness. The next morning I took concierge's advice taking a bus up to the Archeological Museum from one have a splendid view on the Golf of Naples. The nearby catacombs

were not as attractive as the one in Siracusa so returned via “Porta Capuana” to be back on time to catch on a boat trip to Capri Island.

I spent the afternoon in sightseeing that island as well as went up by the funicular as far possible. I descended ambling up to the harbor to return to Naples still by daylight. On Tuesday I booked a trip to Pompei where I had plenty of time to look into every corner of this famous archeological site. I was back to the hotel shortly before the bus with my colleagues arrived and was rather pleased to see that Mrs. Kappler with the group. She was Society’s secretary and helped me a lot in organizing several professionally specialized courses from 1955 until my departure in 1961. She had informed me that Ljiljana cannot come to Koper but she would be waiting for me in Zagreb. I suspected that there might be some troubles with extending visa in our passports again.



The cathedral of Syracuse on Island of Sicily

There is nothing significant to be mentioned about the trip from Naples back to Zagreb. It was just almost a nonstop driving except for a few short stop at service stations along the Autostrada. This monotonous traveling was discontinued in Trieste for a longer rest as well as for some shopping there. Late evening we continued the tour to arrive to Zagreb on next morning. Ljiljana was waiting in the Society’s office and were especially glad seeing each other again. Saying goodbyes to colleagues and friends we walked over to Ljiljana’s sister apartment that was close to the office. As I have already anticipated some serious problems cropped up with our visa extensions. Again Ljiljana has notified her UDBA liaison officer asking for his assistance as he helped them with visas’ extensions just a year ago. With some anxiety we had agreed to meet the office at the passport office in Petrinjska Street on Friday. I loathed that office dreadfully as well as the red-haired officer on duty there because of my appalling experiences in October 1961.

We had met in the waiting room where we had to queue until I could go in first. The red-haired clerk looked up at me suspiciously and opening my passport (...did he recognize me?) said:” I have to take in your passport. You were abroad illegally and you made a serious offence.” I froze and my first thought was to get out and leave this country for good instantaneously. After a few seconds of consternation I regained my guts and requested angrily to talk to his chief. This surprised him a lot as at that moment Ljiljana and her companion entered the office. The red-haired officer got up saying appeasing that he would see if his chief could see us instantly.

The chief came in and invited three of us to his office where the problem with our visas had been discussed in reasonable attitude. He could not accept the document of the Sudanese Ministry of Education as the proof of my vacation of my current 3-year contract as it was not embossed but just had the Minister's signature. A short discourse between the two high ranking UDBA officers resulted with a reasonable proposal. I should get an affirmative letter from the Commiserate for Cultural and Technical Affairs with Foreign Countries in Belgrade that had originally approved my contract in October 1961. Thus I had to travel to Belgrade and find the particular Commission's Officer who should have to write such a letter again.

There was not anything else to do for me but to journey to Belgrade and find that ominous office there. We thanked UDBA's liaison officer for his attendance and returned to the flat contemplating about whether it is worth trying the Belgrade connection and to spend our home leave in Yugoslavia first or just get on straight to the British Consulate to get out of this country fast. With our passports taken away the best option was to try obtaining that letter if possible after that we may get our passports with visas back. Frustrated I talked to my parents in Osijek and it was agreed that I should come to see them and my sister who might find somebody traveling to Belgrade next week. This was fine with me as it was the chance to see my parents again that could turn out to be for the last time if things turned wrong way after my visit to Belgrade.

My sister Cvijeta, an internist doctor, was the Head of Department for Nuclear Medicine in the General Hospital Osijek. One of her clerks had to travel on official matters to Belgrade by car soonest. This was to be a good chance for me joining him. So on Tuesday next we set off via Vukovar to the highway for Belgrade arriving there at mid morning. He brought me straight to the new offices of Federal Executive Council (SIV) in New Belgrade. Once there it was easy to find the Commission's office that was looking for.

There were several elevators and few wide staircases in this huge building. The front desk clerk gave me the detailed instruction so I found the number of office fast. There an official listened to my problem tentatively and offered me a seat as he went up to search for my file. He was soon back and with some surprise said that he does not see any problem why my passport should not be extended after all. Also the visa should be granted pending my contract to expire in 1964. He wrote an official letter as I was waiting to be sent official way to the Passport Office in Zagreb the same very day. I got a copy of this letter just in case and he gave me his phone number if there would be some more problems in Zagreb. The whole affair did not last more than 20 minutes so prompted by his friendliness I had to ask who was in charge of this office two years ago. His answer astounded me as I knew that person by name from childhood's times. He directed me to the office of comrade Zdenka Kaiser that was in another part of the same building.

Then I ventured to Zdenka's office as I had some time left to return to that car waiting for me. I knocked on the assigned door and I entered into a large room. There Zdenka was sitting behind a bulky desk looked up at me with some astonishment. We have recognized us although our features changed after 23 years when saw each other last time. Zdenka was the younger daughter of Dr. Julius Kaiser, a lawyer in Osijek, who was abducted to a concentration camp because he was of Jewish faith. My father had to take over his office to clear up all the pending cases according to the order by the court. Before the war our families were well acquainted in private too. After I explained my reasons of coming to the Commiserate of the Communist Party I had to ask her about the reasons for the many difficulties I have had getting my passport and the visas for my assignment in the Sudan.

She considered my query for a moment probably thinking about what to say. Then she confirmed knowing about my presence in the camp in Stockerau that was an offense to be dealt with for all the time. This took me really by surprise as I never denied that I was in Stockerau that was a training camp for the officers of Croatian Home Guards. Getting to my wits I had to ask her implicitly: "Zdenka, do you know what kind of a camp was that one in Stockerau?" She did not know anything about the purpose of this camp that included its purpose as military training barracks. I had to explain Zdenka why and how I came to Stockerau first and then said conclusively: "Zdenka, your wrong bias caused me many problems and worries through all these years. Also I ruined quite many years of my professional life too." Obviously she had assumed erroneously that the camp in Stockerau was used to detain Nazi's adversaries that included Jews as well. Without regards or saying anything else I left her office rushing down the stairwell to meet the driver who drove me back to Osijek.

I stayed at my parents for another day to celebrate my 38th birthday yet I did not want to tell anybody about the ambiguities plaguing us since my return to Yugoslavia for holidays. I left Osijek with saying goodbyes to my parents and sister's family whom we expected to arrive on Hvar Island within few weeks. Parents would stay in the house belonging to the Harbor master in Starigrad. My sister's family would stay at a friend's house in the City of Hvar about the same time as the parents. In secret I said my farewells to my home town for the second time. I did not expect to come back as long Tito's communistic regime was in power in Yugoslavia – I was sure about.

Back in Zagreb foremost of all I wanted to go to the Passport office to meet that red-haired clerk. There he was waiting for me and with in a sour grin gave out our passports with the visas lasting until the end of my contract in 1964. That was it! In the best mood of Ljiljana had already packed what we would need for our 8-week sojourn in Starigrad. After the holidays we would return to Zagreb to start the return journey to the Sudan August 1963. We traveled by a night train to Split and took a ferryboat to Starigrad next morning. There Ljiljana's mother bought an old depilated house in Starigrad in 1961 that she turned in a cozy dwelling for our families since. We spent our holidays here in 1961 already that is before leaving abroad. Would this second stay to be the last one for a long time? Now we should enjoy this place to relax after two years spent in the Sudan. The climate here was on the whole more enjoyable for us than the dry and hot ambiance that we would have in Khartoum the year to come.

The house was built in the local style using rough cut stones and my mother-in-law worked hard to close meticulously with cement mortar all the many cavities. In old days one used ship masts to support floors thus the later sagged considerably that in places one had to place implants below floor planks. There was no plane in a level and one had a feeling as of walking on an uneven ship's deck. A local mason constructed under my guide a balcony over the cellar-vault giving a nice appearance to the old house as well. Later I found in the local Parish church's museum an engraving showing that this house was a tavern named "Vrba" (= willow) some 200 years ago as it stands next to the road leading into Starigrad. The Old Town (= Starigrad) is situated at the end of a deep bay some long 8km at north side of Hvar Island. The traffic has increased significantly since and a park was created where the original bay ended in a shallow and marshy zone during low tides before.

Our arrival was anxiously awaited for some time now. Ljiljana's mother Mara had full hands to keep Vesna under full control and that she gets the Primary school in Starigrad regularly. The idea was that Vesna attends the 2nd & 3rd class (classes were combined in this school) and to pass the exams for both if possible. Subsequently Vesna had achieved

this task and all of us could enjoy in full our long holidays after all. At this period on the supply of household general goods was not functioning well. Grandma got up early each morning to get fresh white bread and milk for our breakfast. She did all the cooking so that we could spend more time in swimming and sunbathing. We had to walk quite a distance from Vrba to the place near the harbor beacon known as “Feral”. There we had the choice either of an adjacent little graveled bay or went on some dozen of meters to a suitable flat rock nearby. We left Vrba house after the breakfast around 10 AM and stayed out until mid afternoon. Then deep shadows spread all over and it became too chilly to swim. By that time grandma Mara has prepared a lavish dinner that we eagerly gulped down.

The days passed in leisure but there was quite a lot to work on improving the house’s interior and the balcony’s construction did take its time-toll also. Ljiljana helped in tending the small garden with flowers that were Mara’s great pride. A year ago Čedo, our brother-in-law, bought a polyester fiber glass reinforced hull form looking like of a speed-boat. Also he found a second-hand Johnson motor of 35HP supposedly to speed up that boat. For some bad luck the hull still needed some internal additions like benches etc. I disliked the idea of such a boat type from the very beginning particularly as the petrol consumption would be severe. It turned out that the petrol supply was too irregular so one had to queue or wait patiently until the next tanker would bring a few gallons to Starigrad station.

Early in July arrived three “Buhas” that is Čedo, Bojana and their son Milovan who was almost of the same age as his cousin Vesna. Vrba now was full up to its brim and the two 9-year old ones got their sleeping berth at the attic. There grandma “baka” had prepared for them rather comfortable cots with lot of her improvisation spirit. She did overlooked one important fact that she placed her sleeping bedstead next to the kids’ ones dividing it with a frame of soft plywood only. The youngsters chatted and chattered excitedly for hours until the sleep took over the tiredness. Only we the parents had two separate bedrooms on first floor. The toilette facilities were at ground floor adjacent to a “dinning” space next to an open kitchen. It was a simple arrangement but it worked fine with the conciliatory and sociable folks who were used to live under restricted conditions experienced in the war aftermath. Čedo got on with the difficult task to put in use the “speed boat” that working on attracted a lot of attention by local kids.



We really enjoyed the ride with Čedo’s “speed” boat in the bay of Starigrad on Hvar Island

The main problem was to get the engine running for while of that I hated most the manifold pulling at the starter rope. Once the engine was running the six of us scrambled into the boat one by one. This would be allowed only after Čedo or I crammed all boxes containing food, fruits and beverage, several beach mattresses, towels and other paraphernalia the

under deck. At the end the remaining one had to be placed between the many legs. At the end “Captain” Čedo had just enough place at the aft to hold the steering rod and a canister placed by his legs. Then “baka” would free ropes and the boat moved away from the quay at slow pace first. Some moment’s later Čedo opened to full throttle when the speed-boat obviously went faster at last. This “speed” made watching kids to cheer laughingly: “Look, there goes the speed boat! Ahoy!” Still and despite several deficiencies we did spend many pleasant days basking on flat rocks along the outer section of the main bay or in one of the coves that had a small sandy beach. The main handicap to our “speed” boating pleasure remained throughout including the engine’s fuel consumption considering the erratic fuel supply to Starigrad pump station.

Few weeks later my parents arrived to Starigrad as well. It was obvious that I should have to accompany father in his daily hiking long walks. I did it gladly for the sake of security of my septuagenarian father also knowing his lack of orientation sense. We have walked for many hours visiting nearby places like Vrbovska and Jelsa from where we returned by a local bus. We climbed up northern slopes of Hvar mountain ridge and often trespassed through vineyards or hiked on unused or overgrown footpaths. We would return to Vrba where mother was nervously waiting for us. Both of us were exhausted and dehydrated, with few scratches or minor injuries my father was prone to. We would not meet anybody along our ways although on a few occasions we were invited to a house for a glass of wine or so.

Rumors had spread on island about a strange couple walking on unknown paths almost everyday so my father became the most prominent hiker of Starigrad too. Opposite of the Vrba was a modern winery and the director invited us to taste the wines at any time. That turned out not to be an easy doing as the local red wines are heavy and full of flavors too. One was supposed to drink say “Plavac” (= Blue) with water say as 1:2 blends. Because we had visited the winery dehydrated and on empty stomach consequences of drinking that heavy wine was the weariness and sleepiness as well. The thought that plagued me most during these many strolls was that it could be probably for me the last time that I accompany my father. Unfortunately this happened to be the last occasion though!



The house VRBA in Starigrad few days before our departure for good in August 1963

Time passed rather fast as there was a lot of coming to and going from our temporary quarters. No wonder as “Vrba” held to its tradition of a meeting place known as “Inn at the Willow” at the access to Town of Starigrad some long time ago. Our two kids had made many friendships with local and children of about the same age that were on holiday too.

Vesna acquainted a few local children during her relatively short schooling days in Primary school where she passed all exams for 2nd and 3rd class with success. My sister Cvijeta came with Boris and son Nino (4-year younger of Vesna) as they resided at City of Hvar to visit the parents. Nino went with our two plus few others children to swim at the "Feral". So we invited Cvijeta and Boris to play Mah-Jongg with us two "experts". Ljiljana and I used some foul tricks by mumbling numbers and figures (as invited words) in Arabic that won us some great games. But luck does come who tries and by some miracle we made twice the most expensive "Royal Flash" suits. That was too much (not for real payment though) for our counterparts who had decided not play with us Mah-Jongg anymore. They kept to their decision and we never would get another chance to try our luck though.

Inexorably the days of our departure were approaching at too fast. With them came saying goodbyes to friends and families most probably for good ever. Nobody knew about our thoughts and plans for the future though. However there is more to read about in the next chapter referring to our return voyage to the Sudan.

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