

## Chapter No. 12:

# OUR FIRST SAFARI IN KENYA AND VISIT TO MOMBASA AT THE BEGIN OF JANUARY 1964

Early morning on Tuesday December 31, 1963 Gaston came to our flat to take us to the airport of Khartoum. Gaston would join us on the first part of our trip to Kenya and we took off for Nairobi at 05:25. The flying time on the BOAC "Comet" DC-4 took about two and half hours. We were rather excited and enjoyed a perfect breakfast with gusto. We almost forgot the worries that tormented us in Khartoum prior our departure as regards to the Yugoslav compatriots. We would take care about all malicious gossips after our return from Mombasa on January 9, 1964. I expected that the most important meeting should take place there that shall determine our future for sure. Nobody knew anything about our detour short trip to Mombasa at all that was rather hard to keep secret even from Vesna. She was too excited to care about things happening behind the "safari screen" she never heard about before.

About half an hour before landing in Nairobi captain informed the passengers crossing the equator for first time that they might feel a slight "bump" soon. Of course nothing happened but Vesna's expectation was just as great for that she got a certificate of her crossing the Equator in due course. The landing was a little bit bumpy as of a thick layer of clouds over Nairobi. It was almost 11 AM when we booked in the Brunner's Hotel of old British style. It had wide verandas towards the inner courtyard and large rooms had high ceilings fans turning at a slowly path. Soon after we settled in our room we rushed out to find an agent where we could book a safari to visit the Amboseli Game Reserve. After paying the fee we had enough time to tour Nairobi's centre with wide avenues offering a lot of window-shops that amazed both girls. Ljiljana concentrated on the variety of goods and mentally on their prices converting and comparing them with those back in Khartoum. Vesna was looking for shops where toys and children books were displayed making plans what she should buy from her pocket money.

Nairobi had impressed us with its wide streets with multi colour bushes of bougainvilleas and other flowers' arrangements between the lanes. There were a few parks with tall trees not far from the main access road that we came in from the airport. The ultra-violet sun rays seemed rather strong in Nairobi as it was clear air and not polluted with suspended fine dust like in Khartoum. Nairobi is situated on a plateau at about 1.700m ASL with an average temperature of 25°C and a moist climate of around 70% humidity. Certainly it was a considerable change of climates for us that we went through within past 6 hours. We met number of Europeans and Indians in streets whereas there were less Kenyans or Africans mingling in crowds on boardwalks. Most of the shops were owned or run by Indians who obviously employed elder family members to deal with customers only. Ljiljana found out soon that she had to change her bargaining tactics as to be more clever and deceitful in taking extra time for hard bargaining that had to include some cunning if needed to be.

We had a perfect lunch in a snack-bar known as the "Thorn Tree" next to the New Stanley Hotel. This place was the meeting point in town where one could find a few tourists too. It started to drizzle again so we returned to our hotel not too far away and had a protracted nap in the afternoon. Later we accompanied Gaston who had purchased some goods to take back to Khartoum. Ljiljana made mental notes what she should buy when we come back from the safari. Vesna was appeased by purchasing few figurines of "Old Surehand and his companions" and she could choose the food for dinner that she would eat alone in

our hotel room. Gaston suggested celebrating the New Year's arrival at the Mayfair Hotel so we left Vesna in good hands of the landlady and left the hotel at 20:30.

Mayfair Hotel was at city's outskirts and we arrived there by taxi quickly. The dinner was not too bad but the service extremely slow due to many guests. There were several of social or familiar groups all sitting along separated long tables. One could count up that about 2/3 of them were of Indian origin and the rest Europeans. The musicians played fine tunes and the crowd danced quite a lot. We enjoyed looking at young Indian couples prancing in nice traditional sari dresses. We danced at slower rhythms too but stood back watching several modern dances we did not know like Twist or Bossa Nova or Madison etc. Shortly after the midnight we left the party but had to wait for a taxi for a while until a downpour stopped.

Next morning after breakfast a car MERCEDES 190D with a driver arrived to take us to the Amboseli Park. The driver was a Kikuyu and spoke good English so Ljiljana and Vesna took this good opportunity to barrage him with a flood of questions. The first part of some 40 miles was on a tarmac road up to Athi River where we turned south onto an earthen so called "murrum" road. It was not too bad driving on that hard and dry earth surface where a car whirled up clouds of dust behind. When this surface gets wet by rains driving becomes too slippery and the road turns into a quagmire very fast. The nature around the first travel section was green with mostly cultivated fields or orchards or pasture lands. Kajiado region is mostly inhabited by the Masai tribe who graze their large cattle herds on Olobolidi Plain at the approach of Amboseli. The country side became hilly with more shrubs and forests as we passed through Kajiado and got closer to the Ingitto Hills. At Namanga settlement, that is on the border to Tanzania, we turned left to reach Amboseli Game Reserve soon after.



***A "peaceful" Masai warrior who allowed a picture to be taken at cost of KSh5***

At the access road to Amboseli we saw the first animals like antelopes and wildebeests. We passed several Morans that are young Masai warriors whose skin was painted ochre. They covered their naked bodies with a red cloak only and brandished a long spear holding a club and long knife in other hand. I intended to photograph them but they asked quite a lot of money at first. Our Kikuyu driver warned me not to do it. As he drove on I wanted to take a picture through the rear car window but two Morans started running fast behind us so the driver had to speed up to avoid a damage to his car. Kikuyu spoke derisively about Masai way of life keeping large cattle herds not eating their meat at all. Masai milk their cows only to mix it with blood, ash and urine storing that mixture in gourds for use later. The blood is drawn from cattle's main neck vein that is cut open using bow and arrow at closest distance. By adding ash and urine to the mixture of blood and milk it prevents the coagulation thus preserving of fermentation too.

After about half an hour drive on a narrow curvy and sloping road we descended on a plain of dried out salt - Lake Amboseli. Soon after we arrived at the Ol Tukai Lodge and were told that we would to sleep in tents erected close to an acacia tree grove. A slight shiver passed down my spine thinking about sleeping behind a thin canvas only. We were in the middle of wilderness with elephants and other large animals (including lions) roaming free around. The Kilimanjaro was in clouds but one could anticipate its large mass not being too far away though. One led us to our tent that was large enough to accommodate 3 beds and a table cum comfortable chair whereas the floor was covered straw-mats meticulously clean. In the rear through an open flap one entered into a service compartment containing a wash basin with several water filled buckets nearby. A chemical toilette and a shower booth ended at the free rear side of the tent. The whole arrangement was simple but rather practicable for night stay in this wilderness.



***The Ol Tukai Lodge tent-camp at Amboseli National Park – the only one in 1964***

After a brief tent inspection we rushed back to the central section where lunch was served in a pergola like tent with a canvas cover only. There was a long table with benches for some dozen of visitors and when we arrived a few were sited already. The courses were distributed by skilled Kenyan attendants. Hungry as we were the food was tasteful and plenty of including cold soft drinks. The whole guests gathering seemed to be rather excited looking forward for the first going out in afternoon. After a short rest we got to our Mercedes and drove off to circumnavigate the dry surface of salt lake looking for lions and other animal staying there. Our driver rode at relatively high speed across the dry and thin skin surface moving with short left-right swings to pass over grassy or ferny spots. Loosing impetus would result to be stopped up by the muddy and soft layer below that thin and dry stratum. At last we came to a large bush in that a huge lion rested panting of heat and stuffing himself from an open bellied wildebeest carcass next to him. Flies there had their pleasure but the smell was appalling too. Pictures were taken in a hurry and amazingly the lion did not move at all although the car came close to a few meters of him.

On the way to the drier Lengurumani plain and closer to the foot of Kibo Peak our driver missed the right path out of the Amboseli Lake. After a few hundred meters the car came to an abrupt stop settling axle deep in the plastic mud. There was no chance that the car could be moved out of this mire on its own power. The ranger accompanying us walked of to warn another oncoming car that stopped at safe distance then. A rope was stretched out to our car and a Jeep started pulling our Mercedes at rather low power. However soon it had stricken in the soft layer and was stuck firmly like we. Another heavier car got closer but sunk into that sludge the moment it stopped though some hundred meters away from us. At last a powerful Land Rover closed in and stopped on a slight rise and turned putting its winch into the right position to pull out the 3 stranded vehicles. In this gathering were present about two dozens of visitors and four rangers who controlled the operation “cars’ pull out”. The winch worked perfectly and everybody cheered each time when a car was

on safe turf again. Men got out of cars but women and children stayed inside. They were shouting and laughing at us helping to push a car out of this slush so we were splashed with mud as well.



***Helpers push hard to get our MERCEDES car out of muck and more cars stuck in Amboseli notorious grey cotton soil at right***

Soon we turned the attention to new scenes so I forgot the greyish mud that dried fast. We came upon a group of 3 rhinoceros known as “The musketeers” as two of them had very long and spiky front horns. Slowly we came as close as 20m so one could take pictures from various position before the ranger suggested moving away not to disturb them longer. Our driver stopped about hundred meters from them explaining that a front tyre is flat. Well all men got out helping the driver in changing the wheels and Vesna had to watch the rhinos. Ljiljana was taking photos as for the proof of a new dramatic position we got into. The job was done when the “musketeers” showed some interested of us by approaching cautiously. We had just enough time to get off fast in time. On the way back to the camp we saw herds of Grants and Thomson’s gazelles, impalas, hartebeests and zebras all moving towards drinking spots on Simek River that feeds the Amboseli Salt Lake with Kilimanjaro run off waters. We saw several groups of giraffes nibbling on acacia trees and baboons running around and out of woods.



***The three Musketeers watching from a distance of say 30m as the tyre repair on our car***

We were back to the camp at dusk and had enough time to wash and clean ourselves before going out for dinner. Ljiljana took a shower of lukewarm water spouting out from a canvas bag hung on top of on a hook – only stars watched her from the above. It cooled down and stars glistened in a dark sky over the natural scenery that got strangely quiet. This was to be the African stillness that we have experienced for the first time. As we got out for dinner one could barely visualize in full darkness shadows of Kilimanjaro mighty mass whose peak Kibo was approx. 25 miles away only. Dinner was served under the same canopy as at lunchtime but canvas walls were closed on 3 sides. It became rather

chilly and the fresh air streamed from the mountain so we felt fine in our warm cloths we had put on.

The entrée of boiled maize cobs made the dinner for us. If one smeared on butter a cob tasted even better. The main courses were typical for an English formal meal and visitors enjoyed the perfectly prepared food. The visitors' spirit was excellent so the conversation started vividly by exchanging experiences of the afternoon. Subjects were numerous like pulling out vehicles, various animals that had been seen and how many of. Only Vesna kept an account and proudly presented the list of animals and numbers she had marked meticulously. It was interesting how the conversation swelled up between visitors from England, France, Italy, Germany, Lebanon and us from Yugoslavia. Several gas lamps provided the only light in camp attracting zillions of dudus (= insects) most of them getting scorched smelling badly of burned fleshy tissue. When the dinner was over Ljiljana and Vesna went to our tent had to use a torch to find their way in night darkness. Vesna just washed her teeth, took of the top garment and shoes, crept into her canvas bed under two woollen blankets closing mosquito net all over her and fell asleep instantly.

In the meantime the Chief, a retired colonel of the British Army, invited the visitors to join him for the coffee course around a big bonfire. The comfortable canvas arm-chairs with blankets were arranged around the bough fire. One sat there enjoying fire's warmth sipping coffee in the sight of a giant looming shadow in background. The conversation became somehow muted by nature's all encompassing quietness broken merely by some animals' shriek. Chief brought an elder gramophone (almost like that of "His master's voice") to play Christmas' chorals and some classical pieces. Some joined in singing or hummed in the familiar tunes or just listened in that rather unusual environment in the night of January 1, 1964. At 22 hours the party dispersed everyone looking for the own tent followed by a swarm of dudus in the torch's beam. Soon the camp life quietened and one could hear the voices of African night from unknown distances only. I wondered how this thin canvas could prevent any predatory animal to get in the tent closed barely with zippers meticulously on both sides. Soon I was deep asleep so worries or senses did not matter at all.



***The family still dazed by an early morning wakeup watch the sunrise on Kilimanjaro in background***

Suddenly a voice brought me back to my senses calling politely "Your tea, Sir". Still drowsy I got up and slowly unzipped front wings trying to concentrate where we are now. In front of the tent stood a steward holding a large tray and said: "Good morning to you, Sir. Dawn will be soon. Kilimanjaro is cloud free! May I put the tray on the small table?" I was a little

bit stunned by a tall dark man dressed in white whose eyes and teeth gleamed against dull grey background turning to progressing morning twilight. With some protests girls got up and dressed quickly to observe the spectacle of the day. Ljiljana poured tea in large cups adding some sugar and nibbling dry cakes came out of the tent at last.

Also other visitors got out of their tents and cameras were put in position to record a most beautiful morning. Now one could view the mighty Kilimanjaro still in a misty haze and in front its higher peak Kibo. On green meadows below the mountain paraded long-necked giraffes, antelopes grazed or dashed to and fro joined by some zebras too. Suddenly Kibo blazed up in brilliant yellow as first rays of sun lit up the horizon. Steadily the mountain bulk got to full daylight that dispersed the haze offering the magnificent sight of the whole Kilimanjaro. Amazed by this event I recalled a small picture of it in our school book. It was not just a dream but the reality being in Africa on our first safari. I would never forget this day that may turn to be crucial for our future too.

Later everybody rushed to the tents to pack belongings and get ready for early morning cruise at 06:30. Cars dispersed in various directions looking for animals avoiding the lake this time. We were looking for elephants and saw several groups of females with offspring. Vesna diligently recorded what animals we came upon like bush bucks and water bucks, gazelles and impalas, some warthogs and few jackals, and several groups of baboons scurrying around groves or near woods. At last we came upon a group of 4 male elephants and the game-warden directed us to get closer to the mightiest of them. The car slowly moved around the group so we could take pictures at our heart's delight. When the bull started waggling mighty ears and lifted the trunk in our direction the ranger advised that it is time to get away fast.



***We say goodbye to the ranger who accompanied us to return to Nairobi***

Unluckily the weather worsened and we felt hunger in our empty part caused by the excitement and certainly lack of food. At 9 AM we were back going straight to the shed where visitors sat expectantly for a nourishing breakfast already. After 10 AM the visitors' departure got on its way at leisure. The sun was gone and the clouds gathered on the peaks of Kilimanjaro when we left the Ol Tukai Lodge around 11 AM.

The way back to Nairobi was uneventful and we were back to the hotel dog tired at 14:30. It was raining so we decided to rest and sneaked into beds after good shower. We were rather tired out by the one-day long safari so fell asleep fast. We woke up after 18 hours and it was still raining cooling the evening in Nairobi notably. In the hotel there was a good

restaurant so well rested it was right to have a proper meal again. There we met a group of Germans from Ol Tukai Lodge with whom we enjoyed a fine meal and drinks – wine and beer was served here. Everyone enjoyed the company so new acquaintances were made hopefully for better future. Gaston left for Khartoum on Friday so we had one free day in Nairobi before we would to proceed to Mombasa for the most important meeting for me.

We went out after breakfast and both girls decided to go window-shopping in the vicinity of New Stanley Hotel. I went to the concierge for arranged contact and was told that Bamburi Office has called for me already. They were somehow astonished that I did not book in the New Stanley yet and asked me to call back. A reservation had been made in my name for January 3rd so I had to explain to the clerk that we arrived 3 days ago and that we were on a safari. I asked him to cancel the reservation as I am booked in another hotel and there is no point to move in here for one night only. I asked the clerk to place a call to Mombasa for me as it might take quite some time until it gets through. We agreed that I would return in the afternoon to pick up any instruction he should kindly note for me. Thus I could join my “shop-cruising” ladies and we spent rest of the morning in sight seeing Nairobi. We noticed few houses in backside streets that had nice gardens so I took several pictures of beautiful flowers in particular big bougainvilleas.

After we lunched at “Thorn Tree” buffet that is attached to New Stanley Hotel the weather worsened. Thus we decided to spend the early afternoon in a nearby cinema. This cinema had a wide screen that was perfect for a monumental movie like “Cleopatra”. This film in Cinerama format lasted almost 4 hours and when we got out the rain stopped luckily. On the way to our hotel I turned in New Stanley Hotel just in time when the message came in. It stated clearly: “You will be expected at Mombasa airport tomorrow. Pick up your tickets at Nairobi airport. Welcome to Mombasa!”



***Ljiljana and Vesna watch the directions' post at the Nairobi International Airport***

Happy about our prospects we returned to our hotel for an early dinner and packed the suitcases packed going to beds soon after. We rose up early next morning, had a quick breakfast and rushed in a taxi to the airport just on time to reach the morning plane to Mombasa departing at 8 AM. The plane flew at 5.500m passing the mighty Kilimanjaro at the right side as well Mt. Kenya to our left few moments later. The turboprop aircraft landed in Mombasa at 09:20 and Mrs. Mandl, the Managing director's wife, was waiting for us already. She took us in her large FORD limousine to the best and leading hotel in Mombasa at that time. We felt fine the moment we landed on the Coast as it was warmer although much more humid than in Khartoum.

We never stayed in a hotel like the Oceanic before and we almost “fainted” seeing the apartment booked for us. It was on the third floor and the room had a full-width window and a balcony that looked out over the Indian Ocean – open seas blue and still like a mirror. I did not have time to enjoy the view as the driver would take me straight to the factory and to come back for my girls after. I had on my full blue dress as Ljiljana insisted that I have to be properly dressed for my first visit. In the air-conditioned car it was fine but when I was shown to Managing Director’s office I had perspired profoundly in my long sleeved shirt that became wet instantly.

Doctor Felix Mandl greeted me laughingly: “Zvonko, do you want to go around the factory in this attire?” I was about to freeze in his cool room when he said how I was perspiring during our first meeting at Khartoum airport. With this comment the “ice” was broken instantly and we could get over to the important matters of my visit to Mombasa. Later he introduced me to a few senior staff members all of them being Europeans. After that I went around the plant site taking of my coat and necktie to be a little bit more at leisure. The six shaft kilns spewed out white fume containing quite a lot of fine dust. Soon my black shoes were grey and my shirt felt dry and probably dirty as well.



***The Cement Works at Bamburi some 12km north from Mombasa Island***

The works stopped at the Head Office at noon and Doctor invited me for a lunch to his house. At end of the factory access road lined with blooming bougainvillea bushes on both sides MD’s chauffeur turned the car on the main road leading further north. After about 2km the car entered a bush track on right and soon we came to MD’s mansion built some 20m from the coast line. Ljiljana and Vesna were there already entertaining the hostess with our home stories. This first contact would result in a good friendship few months later. In front of the wide veranda was a lawn that reached up to the shore retaining wall below that spread the white sandy Bamburi beach reaching into the lagoon. There were several tall palm trees in the garden in front as well as at both sides of the lawn. We never have seen something beautiful like this before. Obviously Ljiljana went around before now and was enchanted with what she has seen. Vesna rushed just about the same until the elderly lady got a little bit tired so she started chattering unwearyingly almost until we arrived. We lunched in a dining room overlooking the veranda where we took the coffee on it later. It was just pleasant sitting there in the shadow with a cool breeze coming from the sea.

Sometime later the driver took us back to the hotel in Mombasa passing over a pontoon bridge that connected the North Coast with the Island of Mombasa. The hotel had a large swimming pool thus we could not withstand the temptation of swimming in it. Sunset set in at about 6 PM so we dressed for dinner in hotel restaurant in the proper English custom that was still being adhered here. We had some problem with the French menu but for me

everything was fine that comes from the sea. The dinner was formidable although we had to withdraw soon after as Vesna fell asleep the same moment she got into her bed. It was too early for us to go sleep so we sat in pleasant armchairs on the balcony for a while to listen to the boom of incoming tide waves crushing over the reef some 500m out.

It was the right time for contemplation about a long day full excitements and of important talks. I summoned up what has been discussed during the morning in Dr. Mandl's office that might result in some important changes in our future. He confirmed my employment with the Swiss Parent Company that should start when my contract expires in the Sudan. It was envisaged that I would work in the Cement works at Bamburi as Chief Structural Engineer for say 3 to 6 months or as it may be required. After that assignment we would move and settle in a city possibly Salzburg or Munich or Lugano that was not fixed yet. I should start and lead there a design office for the Cement Industry that was Company's outstanding idea for some time. Therefore we should send our belongings to Austria as for an intermediary storage until we move to the city chosen by the Swiss parent company.

Oddly enough we have not discussed my employment details like say salary etc. However I have had the confidence that the conditions would be certainly by far better than the one in Khartoum at present. Thus we believed that my decision has been the right one that should give us the personal freedom to achieve more safety and improve our standard of living as well. We would keep the immigration option to Australia open until our prospective plans materialize that should give us enough security for the rest of our lives. The most important problem remained to keep our prospects absolutely secret from our relatives in Yugoslavia and of course from the Yugoslavs in Khartoum. How to tell Vesna not to talk about our visit to Mombasa to her school friends? She would be so much absorbed with all the events she has participated so far that she would have enough to talk about – with a bit of luck we thought. Insh'Allah!

On Sunday we were guests of Company's General Manager Dick Roberts who organized a picnic for us at the Mnarani Club on Kilifi Creek some 40 miles north of Mombasa. On the way there we passed across the narrow Mtwapa Creek spanned over by an army suspended bridge stopping my heartbeat for a moment. From here onwards we drove on a road of stabilized earth with cement a method construction that was new to me. This road surfacing method worked fine as long a proper drainage existed. During dry periods there was no problem but during a rainy season there would appear washouts and grooves on road gradients in particular. We were enthralled with the countryside greenery as it differed so much of anything we have seen up to now. We passed a few smaller villages passing by large sisal plantations near Kilifi Creek. Later tall palm trees lined the road that mingled with thick bushes and creepers at forested sections as getting closer to Kilifi Creek. The road had several sharp curves ascending few hilly sections prior to its descend to the wide and deep Kilifi Creek. To continue onward one had to use a ferry that transferred vehicles and people on their way further north to city Malindi.

The Mnarani Club was a pleasant resort place with several rooms, a large swimming pool and an excellent restaurant. The club was located on a coral ridge some 10m above the sea level and it had a mooring for several deep-sea fishing boats. At times tournaments were arranged in deep-sea fishing and there were many trophies' photos hang in the vestibule and restaurant too. At the lunch there were some 30 persons who were engaged in conversation or discussion in a muted voice. After lunch small groups formed to drink coffee or après and to smoke - males separated from females and children gone to run around, swim etc. We spent an enjoyable picnic with likely friends and I have wondered

about whether we may attain this kind of leisurely life in near future too. However the end comes to any charm so we had to return to Mombasa late afternoon.



***The British army Bailey bridge over the Mtwapa Creek on the road northwards to Kilifi Creek***

Monday was a rather busy day for me at least. First in the morning Mrs. Mandl arrived to take Ljiljana and me on a town sightseeing tour. We walked up the ramp of Fort Jesus fortress built by the Portuguese and then for a brief view on the busy Kilindini Harbour. From our hotel balcony we could observe coming and going of the many large sea-ships some of them waiting anchored outside the reef for the tide to arrive. Two ladies stayed in town to do shopping until the driver would return from the factory where I had to carry on inspecting the works' buildings more thoroughly in the meantime. I almost forgot the time disregarding the surrounding in that dust mixed with sweat to an itching crust. At last I was relieved when the driver came to take me to the hotel at 13 hours. After a long shower and change of clothing the life seemed to be in order again. After lunch we all took a little nap including Vesna who spent most of morning at the swimming pool getting well suntanned too. Mid afternoon a conference was held at the works HQ to consider my brief report about buildings' safety and certain places where severe deterioration became evident. I was supposed to send a full report cum photos from Khartoum later.

The MD invited for dinner to his house a few of Works' top staff couples including three of us. After the opulent meals and several drinks (I learned how good it tests Gin & Tonic) it was almost 22 hours when Dr. Mandl asked who would like to participate in a table tennis tournament so I had to volunteer too. I thought that the 60-year old Bwana Mzee (means the Elder in Swahili) was joking at first but as the tournament went on he thrashed all of us. There was a lot of applause and cheering from the onlookers and particularly when the tournament ended in doubles' playing in that our hostess participated too. It was almost midnight when the party was over with exhausted players' in soaked shirts longing for a good shower. It was well after midnight when got to our room to get some sleep before starting our last day in Mombasa.

Tuesday was overcast so Ljiljana and Vesna preferred staying at the swimming pool whereas I had to see Company's Chief Accountant. I had to collect a check that should cover gratuitously all my expenses including Vesna's travel that would solve perfectly my financial problems at Khartoum. On my invitation both MD and GM joined us for lunch in hotel's fine restaurant. Later they had to leave to do some reasonable work despite last night's tough feat. We had another good swim after that we packed our luggage for the departure to airport at 19h. At 20:20 boarded the aircraft and flying in dark through some turbulence landed at Nairobi at 22h. Company booked a room for us in New Stanley Hotel and soon we were in the horizontal by 23h.

So ended like a daydream our short conspired trip to Mombasa. We would remember it for rest of time that we had to live in Khartoum. Vesna would recall long hours she spent alone on the swimming pool where she made new acquaintances as well as blue seas and long and white sandy beach. I wondered whether the accord attained with the Company in Mombasa would get into reality by end of my contract in Sudan. Do we have to expect troubles and hard luck from the Yugoslav officials back in Khartoum? These questions were nagging me on the return voyage.



***Ljiljana and Vesna show up our first bought African mask at Nairobi's central round-about***

For the last day in Kenya we had foreseen a full day program that started with shopping foods like cheeses, butter etc. that one could not get in Khartoum. In a street stand Ljiljana bought a wooden black mask some 60cm long that became the collection corner stone of souvenirs from Africa later. Next stop was the Nairobi Coryndon Museum where Vesna insisted that we first had a look at the snakes. I could never expect to see such a variety of crawling animals and in quantities that made ponder about living in a country with the most dangerous reptiles. We had the chance to view milking of few poisonous snakes – all kept behind glass panes like spiting cobra or green mamba. A huge python slept in separate pit whereas else a large number of lizards, chameleons and other creeping animals moved around searching for insects or other food. The natural treasure kept in this museum was vast: huge variety of insects, butterflies, gnats & midgets, huge number of various birds, pictures of flowers, minerals and rock samples. We got really tired just walking around several illuminated panoramic displays of life in rivers, lakes and sea – some of which were in overhauls like certain museum's rooms too.

Walking around we met an American couple with two kids and after some small talks they got interested to visit our country. After all they suggested taking us to Nairobi City Park in their Morris Minor Station vehicle. Somehow four adults and three kids got into the car to enjoy the incredible flora nurtured in the park and the attached Arboretum as well as in a nursery. Our cameras got "hot" taking many photos of flowers and bushes – one just could not withstand the temptation. We found a nice snack-bar where we had a fine lunch and more talks when the American family departed their way. We hailed a taxi that took us to the gate of Nairobi National Park adjacent to Mombasa Road short of Airport junction. We went to the orphanage and a nursery where small sized pets were kept for people who went on home leaves. There were few young abandoned animals like cheetahs, lion cubs, few elephants and even rhinos nursed in this orphanage.

Around 16h our taxi driver took us around the park where at leisure grazed few of herds of antelopes and gazelles, wildebeests and zebras. One could get rather close to them even to giraffes nibbling on acacias with baboons approached from all over instantly. One had to

close windows as these monkeys would steal anything easy to get from the car. Ljiljana handed a cake to a male baboon that sat on our car for a while not allowing any other of to get on. When it had enough of a ride jumped of and we continued observing animals from our “cage” looking for places where other cars had gathered. After we passed a group of ostriches we saw six cars that surrounded two lionesses not caring for onlookers even if a driver hooted.

On the way to the hippo pools at far park’s end Vesna noted a mane behind a bush. It turned out to belong to a huge lion so we got rather close say 4-5m to take good photos before the horde in their movable “cages” closed in. Just as we started of the lion got up and walked of passing in front of our car so close that I took shots shaking seeing this mighty beast almost at hands’ reach. The sunset was setting in fast so little time was left at hippo pools where we saw a crocodile and a few hippos heads slightly jutting out of calm water surface.

We were back to the city at dark with enough time prior to our departure. We had a light dinner and went to a nearby cinema in time for the next performance. Before the movie started everybody got up when the anthem was played to be followed by a newsreel and Disney’s movie “Bon voyage”. We had to leave before the end of film to collect luggage from the hotel. After 23h we left the hotel for to airport to get on BOAC flight for Khartoum soon after midnight. During the flight we dozed of being too tired by the long passed day and landed two hours later landed at Khartoum airport. We were expected there already to enter our flat at 3 AM and went straight to our bedrooms. Ljiljana just had to put the food staff in the refrigerator after that we were all asleep within minutes.

Thus ended our 8-day journey to Kenya where we had found the beautiful flora and the fauna teaming with animals, splendid coast with pleasant seas as well as good hotels and restaurants where ever we went. Even the rains and higher humidity did not matter to us. The possibility that we might be living here even for several months became the leading deliberation for Ljiljana and me. It seems that we both were contaminated by the African Bacillus.



***The Baobab trees next to the Kilindini Creek that is the access to Mombasa Deep Sea Harbour***

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