

09. OUR DEPARTURE FROM KENYA IN 1967

The second half of December 1966 had been probably the most frenzied of all the Christmas times we have had. The opening ceremony of Wazo Hill Works at Dar-es-Salaam was set for the February 8, 1967. This meant for me to fly few times there to get all the contractual works done that included painting and decorative tasks. The President of Tanzania Mwalimu Nyerere would personally open the plant expecting quite a number of distinguished guests from the Government to attend. Parallel to this task I hurriedly looked after to complete the still unfinished design projects for the Extension of Bamburi plant. The construction was well underway so I wondered whether Dr. Mandl or I would win the bet agreed upon. The dead-date was for the completion of concrete casting on the Heat exchange tower before Christmas.

We invited Mandls for a dinner on the day of Mzee Felix's birthday. Ljiljana's meal had been praised by all and Mzee relieved to us that we would leave by mid of February 1967 to Salzburg at last. Now it was something fixed that stirred my parents' mind that they would leave with a month time too. The scheduled arrival of m/s "Jelsa" had been envisaged for January 23 as the ship carried some heavy load for Bamburi plant. Yet Ljiljana got involved in a rather capacious and tedious work unwillingly. She had been chosen to purchase and prepare some 400 presents for children of Works employees for Christmas 1966.



Mother Šari and Ljiljana sort out delivered presents prior to the packing and naming each parcel according a long name list of the children.

The presents were supposed to be distributed on December 27 and 31 to the children respectfully. The main Christmas party would be held on 27th and one expected a large attendance in front of the Head Office in Bamburi plant. This has been the practice since long time ago and we have attended two parties in 1964 and 1965. Ljiljana had "learned" about the whole process of purchasing and marking each one of the gift with the appropriate children's name etc. She got the name lists for 1965 showing the child's age as well as which gift had been given to each of the children. Mother was stunned seeing what Ljiljana had to accomplish yet she readily went with her to the shop for the children toys and the bookshop. Ljiljana ordered the proper number of any precise toys and/or books based upon the children's age. The shops knew about this Company's custom as this was an excellent business for them. The ordered number of presents would be delivered to our house including some quantity of chosen wrapping papers.

Could anybody imagine how our house and living room looked likewise? Ljiljana bravely started this irksome task dividing delivered objects in groups first. Then she marked each one for a particular child according its present age making sure that it differs from the given last year etc. Two friendly ladies arrived to help wrapping the gifts and Mother assisted my two ladies too. Then Ljiljana sorted the presents into two groups to the date according to the list provided by the Labor Office. A pickup arrived a few days before to transport the two groups of parcels to proper places in the Head Office. The staff sorted there the gifts by names in the order of giving out. After those days our living room and house looked empty so it was time to make it ready for our Christmas celebration at last. This would be the first time in six full years that we would rejoice the Saint's day with my parents together.



**Left Ljiljana distributes parcels with presents to a family called in by Santa Claus.
At workers' camp Ljiljana was busy distributing balloon to a crowd of children.**

I have returned from the office at lunch time on Saturday Dec 24. An araucaria tree had been decorated to look like a Christmas tree already. We have done so in the previous years as well as hanging the congratulation cards on strings spanning the living room. After the lunch and drinking the Turkish coffee on the verandah we chatted for a while. Ljiljana said that everything would be ready to celebrate the Christmas Eve few hours later and proposed a beach walk. Suddenly Knocker runs out chasing monkeys that climbed up papaya trees to get to ripe fruits there. One or two monkeys succeeded to pick a ripe papaya and rushed into the adjacent thick bush next to our plot. Father had a list with Christmas chorals in Croatian so accepted Ljiljana's suggestion. We went for a walk on the beach where we could exercise singing chorals. We should remember well some from our child's age.

The barefoot walk on fine sand has been an excellent idea. Ljiljana started singing one of the choral to be followed by another one when Father suddenly stopped us. "I do not understand why you sing Christmas chorals on the Good Friday?" We were a bit taken aback but Vesna recovered first explaining that Christmas is tomorrow. Retrospectively one could understand Father at 73 as he had celebrated Christmases always when it had been cold and there was snow in winters all his life long. Now here he walked in balm weather on a warm sandy beach with a view onto wide seas. Next instant Father noticed his fake perception and joined enthusiastically our choir chorals singing aloud not bothering about anybody listening to us. However the beach had been deserted as most people were busy in their houses with their private businesses.



1966 Christmas Eve celebrated at Bamburi with Zvonko's parents.

The Christmas Eve of 1966 was a rather sensible event so some tears have flown down the cheeks when embracing. The rather intimate moments were dispersed soon as the dog had to get the dish with a special food for this occasion. Vesna wanted to see her presents so a minor chaos originated as Ljiljana started handing out the gifts wrapped in glorious papers. Mother admired these papers wanting take them to Yugoslavia yet she knew well that it would not be possible. As for Mother's present we found a giraffe artistically carved out of hardwood as. She stood there admiring this figure that would follow her on their way home in about 3 weeks or so. After some more chorals singing and when all parcels vanished from the table it became free for the dinner. This was to be our last Christmas in Africa as we all would return to Europe in January or February 1967 latest. We bought bicycles for all of our home staff members as the present for this occasion.

On Sunday we visited a few neighbors so we were back for the lunch. In the meantime Ljiljana had a 6kg turkey roasting for hours that we ate with a great gusto. Yet the roast-meat was so plentiful that we had it for another few days as cold or warmed meal. The first Christmas party started in the factory on Tuesday 27. There was a great assembly of employees in the front of Head Office. The Works' brass band marched in opening the ceremony. Then a big model "rocket" fixed on a flat lorry drove in to stop in front of the entrance. The rocket side opened and Santa Claus stepped out of waving to the cheering crowd. He greeted the Committee and Mrs. Mandl inviting her to start the distribution of presents to the good children only. This distribution process had lasted some hour or so as more than 200 children got their presents. The rest would get on Saturday Dec 31 although with less pomp.

The party continued and a large buffet opened as well as some non-alcoholic drinks had been offered. A local native choir arrived later and interpreted several Christmas chorals part in English other in Swahili. My parents left the party joining Mrs. Mandl who invited them for the 5'clock tea. We got a bit around the crowd greeting acquaintances

and keeping small talks until the sun set in. It was time to go home and enjoy a quiet evening after all this festive agitation and tumultuous days.



Mother holds her present the artistic carved giraffe in the company of Vesna and Father.

Tomorrow I had to start with my usual tasks considering that in about 6 or so weeks we would leave this place we got used to like very much. Coming home we noticed that Knocker disappeared as usual and he would stay away for some 8 days. What should we do with him when leaving? Vesna have had some problems regarding her aquarium in that she kept a few beautiful fishes. To whom should she give the aquarium and who would take the four guinea-pigs. These and some more questions became the main concern to all of us in weeks to come.

A week before Christmas I have lost my bet to Dr. Mandl. The top and last floor of the HET had been cast at the height of 72m. The contractor had to remove the scaffolding of the floor shuttering when the concrete would be 14 days old at least. Yet Mzee noticed that the work on this roof floor had stopped and came to my office asking me to give K£5 for the lost bet. Well I did not want to argue about the day when a floor is finished and paid the amount of KSh100 to my boss. I knew to well that Dr. Mandl does not like loosing games of tennis or table tennis yet he played well both. Thus I did not mind loosing any of these games but the HET floor had been completed a week after Christmas. I did loose the bet and paid it hopping for a good bonus for this success. I got it later!



Zvonko's mother Šari takes pictures with Boris' camera at visit to Mazeras botanical gardens.

Father was getting a bit uneasy considering leaving this place where he got used to long and most pleasant walks on the beach. He started looking for shells and brought them home to be cleaned and sorted out. Mother learned from Ljiljana how to clean shells in that the snail was still alive. Father missed newspapers from home that he got from the First officer Zrinko when a Croatian ship docked in Mombasa. Yet Annie Mandl brought him the Swiss newspapers and magazines regularly. Therefore he could not complain too much of not knowing what was going in the World.

Mother went to town with Ljiljana when ever she had to do some shopping. Mother looked after presents to be taken home but complained about the prize being too high. She had calculated that the Company had paid for the Christmas presents worth some 2.1 Million YU-Dinars that were horrendous costs for her. When Mother finished all her purchases for daughter Cvijeta's family and a few friends she "owned" me quite a substantial sum in hard currency – she said that at least. I have forgotten about and to look after the two crates to be ready in time for our departure. I choose the Mhoho hard wood boards that were fitted in the carpentry shop of Building Department. The fitting had been done expertly so I would use these planks to make of some furniture later.



Shaudernas attended the party at Mandl's house on the last day of 1966 aka Silvester day.

Knocker returned one morning dirty so Ljiljana just scolded them thoroughly but did not have time to wash him. The dog went to Mother who started petting him at first what was not a good idea at all. Knocker rubbed his muzzle into Mother's nice dress as she wanted to join Ljiljana going to town. What a drama! At last Vesna got hold of Knocker and took him to the beach to be wash with a detergent and washed out under shower there. Knocker hated this procedure but this had to be the price for his "love affairs".

We were to Mandls to have the dinner and to spend last few hours of 1966 with them. It was a perfect dinner and my parents obviously enjoyed Mandls' invitation and chatting. Of course I had to play a table-tennis game with Mzee that was the ritual since our first visit to Mandl's house early January 1964. On that occasion my contract had been fixed by a handshake or should say by the game I lost to Mzee. He was certainly better than I that time.



Of course Zvonko is missing on both pictures! Welcome to the New Year 1967!

The trip by car to Malindi had been the last safari that we went to with my parents. On first Sunday in January 1967 I drove the Ford car from the Garage pool northwards on the main road that had a murram yet well maintained surface. The travel distance to Malindi was about 100km so we drove over the nearby Mtwapa Creek on a military Bailey bridge. The Kilifi Creek we crossed on a ferryboat that was about on half way to Malindi. First we went straight to Turtle Bay to visit the Fish Sanctuary there. After we changed into swimming suits we boarded a glass-boat that has a long and quite wide observation window midway of the floor. The boat toured along the riff and shallow water thus one could clearly visualize the underwater timing life and variety of corals. Both parents were enchanted with this experience listening carefully to boatman explanations.



We made a trip in a boat with glass bottom visiting Fish Sanctuary at Turtle Bay.

Later the boatman hanged an outboard ladder so we could get into the water swimming along nearby riff. Visitors who did not have goggles and snorkels have received these from the guide. Father did not join us but Mother swam next to me for a while yet tired soon due to some current. She returned with my help to the boat thus ending for us this extraordinary expedition. It was time for lunch so we choose the SINBAD restaurant in Malindi town center. We knew well this restaurant from our previous visits that served a cold buffet and a superb curry on Sundays. Of course we choose the curry and Mother joined us but Father preferred to try his choice from the cold buffet. A waiter pushed a

trolley from that one could choose the various additive tidbits for the curry cum rice on the plate. Mother did not know that procedures and had been somehow astonished as the waiter offered her as the first of. The waiter honored her as the most senior in our group by bringing the trolley to her at first.



We found the wall of a mosque ruin during the visit to the Gedi National Monument near Malindi. At right is another view into the interior of Gedi ruins.

The lunch lasted a bit longer as this was always the case with curry meal. The desert of a strawberry ice-cream amazed my parents again about having this fresh fruit in middle of their winter. The fresh strawberries came from Nairobi at that time of a year though. Then the waiter came with another trolley with a variety of cheeses as the closer but both parents had to refuse this course completely. They obviously ate much saying that the eyes were larger than their stomachs. Coffee had been served at the restaurant open-air verandah providing a perfect view on the wide Indian Ocean.



The largest room cleared in the ruins at Gedi National Monument.

On the way back I turned the car on a narrow track leading through a dense. It was short distance of 6km from Malindi and I thought it would be worth showing my parents the GEDI National Monument. This would their last visit to bring to an end on their stay in Kenya. Between very old and large baobab trees and overgrown bushes stood ivy-clad ruins of a Swahili settlement from 14th century. We could walk long a few of tracks viewing a number of ruins of houses and public buildings and city murals. Yet the site would need a lot of cleaning and cutting before this antique site would show its full size and splendor. Also the access to the beach had to be cleared as it was impossible getting through that dense thicket now. Everything at Gedi looked rather abandoned and forgotten through ages.



We visited Kwale and Shimba Hills forest where an obstacle stopped us for a short while. Right all participants shown at Shimba Hills lookout point like Zvonko's parents and Ted Hoskins.

The following weeks in January 1967 were very hectic mostly by choosing items to be taken on the voyage to be followed by packing and re-packing etc. Father was rather nervous and went swimming on his own sometime just not to be in the house full of movements and changes. Ljiljana started an ikebana brief course of flower arranging despite all her heavy work load at home. A few hundreds of clean and sorted shells had been packed carefully in several boxes of different sizes too.



Zvonko's parents and Ljiljana pose with two boys who stopped us at Kwale on the way to the waterfall below Shimba Hills shown at right picture.

The two crates arrived so Ljiljana started packing in the many trophy items we have acquired during our protracted stay in Kenya and on many safaris. She went on packing the many carved figures of hard wood mostly of them made of ebony. We collected a few dozens of yet the most of them came from Mtwapa a harbor on the border to South Tanganyika. The buffalo head cum horns was certainly the largest item after a zebra skin. We received several presents from various friends and coworkers that included bows and a collection of various arrows.

Vesna went to school when the new year started on Jan 17 thus she was away for several hours daily. Vesna found a colleague to whom she handed over the four guinea-pigs. Also she gave away the aquarium to her favorite girl-friend Winnie Loo of Chinese origin. By mere coincidence we got a new owner for Knocker our dog. We could not take the dog to Europe at all so we spread rumors about giving away Knocker to a good person.



**Our dog “Knocker” waiting in his usual posture to be called for a swim.
The last time we took Knocker to Bamburi Beach prior his new owner got him away.**

One day a veterinarian phoned and asked if he could see the dog. It proved to be the golden choice as he was “the flying-veterinarian” visiting farms all over Kenya in his own plane. Knocker had been kept at the house so when the vet came to our house the meeting turned to “the love on first sight”. The vet visited us several times after and when my parents left he came a week after and took Knocker with him for good. The day Knocker went away was an ideal one for us as we had to fly to Dar-es-Salaam for the opening ceremony of the Wazo Hill Works a day after.

Mother had finished her purchasing tours accompanying Ljiljana on her almost every trip to town visiting various shops. There she had spent quite a sum of money in “hard currency” as she called the Kenya shillings. She suggested that I should give her a credit in the exchange value of Yugoslav dinars. I have accepted Mother’s proposal although I never had claimed it.

There was a lot of uncertainty regarding the arrival of the m/s “Jelsa”. The stopover harbors on the return voyage were not known yet as well as what would be the home port Rijeka or Split. First the arrival of “Jelsa” set for Jan 23 and the departure on Jan 25 for Dar-es-Salaam did not happen but the ship did not arrive until the Jan 31. So my father became very edgy and worried about what would happen if “Jelsa” does not come at all. He was fully set for the travel for too long time by now.

In the meantime the ship-chandler of “Jelsa” Mr. Čok visited us and brought several documents to be filled in. This he did for the first time so we helped writing in all the necessary data into the several documents up to dot. We fixed the same cabin on m/s “Jelsa” for the parents that they had on their way out here. It became clear to my father now that the departure gets closer by every day and that they would return home after all of that waiting for sure.



Zvonko's parents on M/S “Jelsa” leave Mombasa on their way home.

We have invited friends and acquaintances to the farewell party on Saturday January 21. Ljiljana prepared a dinner for a total of 10 persons who arrived to say goodbye to my parents whom they learned during their of some 3 months stay at Bamburi. Mandls were present too and the prepared food and desert delighted everybody. The menu consisted of Segediner goulash and Greek Moussaka and as for the desert Ljiljana produced ice-creams containing strawberries and pineapple. Later Mother commented that she had some problems eating holding the plate on her knees. We were sorry for that yet there was not place enough around the table on that Ljiljana arranger the buffet dinner. We ate the remnants of this opulent dinner for a few days after.



Vesna and Ljiljana wave to the departing M/S “Jelsa” standing at Coast Battery at Ras Serani.

Early February I invited all workers of the Building Department to my farewell party. I purchased a big sheep from Works' Garden Department that the workers slaughtered and prepared a stew in large copper cattle. There I offered a lot of soft drinks and the party became a real success. Many of the workers were sincerely worried about how it would be when I leave them and few asked me if could get some job in Europe where I am going to work. I received a red painted long spear to protect myself yet its length just fitted into one of the crates.

Early February started the final farewells first for my parents that we would follow about two weeks later. The m/s "Jelsa" berthed on Friday Feb 3, 1967 at last and we brought the parents' luggage to their cabin the next day. Father had his last walk on the beach and was somehow melancholic having to leave this habitual stretch. Mother was rather pensive as they both realized that their stay in Kenya had been a unique opportunity in their life. For us it became probable that we might see all our relatives in Europe again soon. We did not tell them about our plan to immigrate to Australia if something would go the undesired way with my new job in Europe. Thus I have prolonged my Affidavit letter for a free passage to Australia at the British Embassy in Nairobi recently.



The Baobab tree standing next to the road at Ras Mzile.

On Saturday February 4 the m/s "Jelsa" sailed and waved to my parent's as the ship left the berthing place. Then we hurried on the coastal road to the Ras Mzimle. We could see "Jelsa" there as she left the Mombasa Harbor. We have waved our last farewell to my parents hopefully standing at the railings. The ship would sail first to Mogadishu to load some 300 camels and then proceed to Jeddah to discharge the camels. At Port Sudan one would load cotton as freight prior proceeding via Suez to Venetia possibly. We could not find out to which home port would sail m/s "Jelsa" to be Rijeka either Split at the end of this voyage.

We flew to Dar-es-Salaam on Tuesday Feb 7 and stayed with Froehlich's in their house next to Wazo Hill Works. Martin Froehlich was the Works Technical Director that should be officially opened next day. The President of Tanganyika Julius Kambarage Nyerere had been expected to arrive to the new Cement Works for this event. Nyerere known as Mwalimu (= Teacher) arrived with a strong entourage and toured the factory first. At his speech Nyerere declared that the Works belong to the Peoples of Tanzania. Thus it would be nationalized according to the Arusha Declaration. Certainly this news had not

been pleasant for the Management staff and the owner's representatives. We could not stay longer with the rest of guests who had been entertained for a while. Ljiljana and I had to leave soon after to catch the plane back to Mombasa.

When we returned home the house seemed to us rather empty. My parents were gone and Klocker was also not there to greet us anymore. Our servants waited for our return standing in front of the house somehow lost and with very sad faces. They knew that our departure would come soon now. A few days later the General Manager Dick Roberts told that we have to vacate the house until the end of February latest. Thus the crates had been taken to the factory the next day to be shipped to Lagermax Company in Salzburg in due course. I have booked the flight for all three of us departing on Friday Feb 17, 1967 to Nairobi. From Nairobi we would fly to Rome for a brief stopover and then proceed to Zurich. In Zurich I should visit the Head office of the Parent Company Cementia Holding AG. The scheduled arrival to Salzburg had been envisaged for Feb 23, 1967 latest.



Ljiljana on the farewell photographic tour standing at Mackenzie Point at the edge of Prince's Park with Mombasa Old Town white buildings in background.

Early February I invited all workers of the Building Department to my farewell party. I purchased a big sheep from Works' Garden Department that the workers slaughtered and prepared a stew in large copper cattle. There I offered a lot of soft drinks and the party became a real success. Many of the workers were sincerely worried about how it would be when I leave them and few asked me if could get some job in Europe where I am going to work. I received a red painted long spear to protect myself yet its length just fitted into one of the crates.

The day of our departure came fast! There was no time to contemplate about what would happen in Salzburg to us and what to expect of our new domicile. We knew too well that we are leaving our "Golden Gate" hopping that it would not be our last visit to Kenya the land that we have liked so much. Yet the farewell had to be brief despite our pensiveness. Each of us felt deep in his heart that the time we have spent in Kenya had been worth any moment of. We should keep deep in our remembrances for ever this period of time. Hopefully we or any of us would return to Kenya for say as for holidays or even to work in future some time. Goodbye Kenya!

The Gate to Golden Age had been opened to us. Let us see where are we going?

Cui bono...?



So long and goodbye to Bamburi Beach!

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