

## Chapter No. 3:

### **FAMILY REUNION IN KHARTOUM - JANUARY 22, 1962**

Days dragged on and I had fussed over the old fashioned syllabus making it difficult to me to explain to students the various subjects the way I was used to back in Zagreb. It was frustrating task to teach from out of date books that distributed to the students for their usage. They have expected from me that I follow these books by giving a few explanations only. I had to dictate in verbatim what was essential for them to learn by rote. Of course I could change figures of the printed examples but figures had to be in the same Imperial units (British) as stated in the book. Personally I had some hard time to get used to the Imperial units that had a great disadvantage not matching to the decimal system. Soon I have started developing formulae by using general characters instead of straight forward figures. I could insert them and/or change into figures at will at any time later. My way of lecturing was absolutely new to KTI students aged around 20. It stirred up a revolution a few months later when I had some hard time explaining this problem to KTI's directors.

For some time I tried to make certain compromises to appease my students who little by little got used to my lecturing. Certain signs of mutual sympathy developed slowly too. One morning a student of mine Mohamed drove in KTI parking lot in his new VW car engulfed in a cloud of smoke from the engine at rear. This surprised me much as Mohamed got his car almost at the same time as me. In the class I had to ask Mohamed what was wrong with his car but he replied simply that there is nothing wrong with the engine. I insisted that something seriously is wrong with the engine. On my inquiry whether he made the first checkup at the workshops of VW he just denied.

Then I asked Mohamed in front of the class what is his father doing. Proudly came his answer that father still has many camels and like his grand-father spending some times on caravanning even now. I listened attentively as Mohamed explained in details of the works to be carried out before the camels could start on a new caravan trail. There was a loud leer approval of classmates when I said: "Mohamed, your new car needs badly some kind of maintenance like the camels of your father too". I believe this event may have broken the "ice" between my students and me. Since then we were on "sava sava" terms.

In meantime I learned about the train service from Port Sudan to Khartoum that it runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays only. It requires about 30 hours getting to Khartoum plus some Insh'Allahs too. I have obtained a Governmental loan to buy furniture and other domestic utensils like a refrigerator, a stove and similar. However I decided to wait for Ljiljana to make the necessary purchases when we could move in our flat. Our relatives from Zagreb wrote about some difficulties with crates to be put on the cargo ship in Rijeka. At the end all four large crates left including my two world travelers too. Čedomil, my brother-in-law, wrote regarding my financial obligations that news was not encouraging at all. Our total debts were some 160.000 Dinars of that about 2/3 was to my parents and the rest to other relatives.

A few days later good news reached me through Mitchell Cots Co. Offices in Port Sudan that Ljiljana and Vesna had landed safely there. They would travel on the train leaving Port Sudan on Tuesday January 24, 1962. On Wednesday next Maurice tried hard to keep me calm by several phone checks trying to find out when the train would pass the Khartoum North Station. We should go out to meet them at the Khartoum Railway Station about the time when the train crosses the bridge over Blue Nile. The 30 hours had passed since the

train probably left Port Sudan but still there was no sign of its nearing to Khartoum North. The afternoon hours dragged on and it was almost the 5 o'clock tea time when Maurice got a phone call announcing that the Port Sudan train passed Khartoum North some time ago. The call came far behind schedule as the train crossed the Nile Bridge getting into the Khartoum Main Station when we got into Maurice's car far behind our plan.



***The four newly-built blocks at Hai el Matar site.  
Our flat is on the 2nd block from left on 4th floor right.***

The train was in the Station already when we arrived out of breath seeing disembarking passengers in full motion. And there was Ljiljana and Vesna standing in front of a wagon already. A Sudanese was helping them to unload their luggage onto the sandy platform. The gentleman was an official of Mitchell Cots in Port Sudan who met my girls in Port Sudan harbor and accompanied them since. Of course the meeting was more than happy and enjoyable at first. Next Ljiljana said disappointingly: "You've become rather fat, dear!"

True, I was not checking my weight since leaving Zagreb some 6 weeks ago but have put on some 10kg for sure close to 102kg. The only explanations I would to blame were meals at our favorite Greek restaurant and the leisure time due to students' strike. Also the lack of physical exercises could have some influence but to exercise in this heat!? We drove to Kuzmanović's house where the girls were supposed to stay for a few days hoping that we would move to our intended flat soon. After two nights my girls were too happy to accept Maurice's invitation to move into his Spartan bachelor's house right away. The seven crates had been brought and stapled up in his garden too. This was a perfect excuse for my girls to change the quarters out of all other reasons as well as for proper flushing toilette of Maurice's house too.

At last we all moved into Maurice's bedroom in the 1st storey and an extra sleeping mattress was placed on the balcony floor in front of our room. At this time of the year people slept mostly outside in the open air either on balconies or in gardens instead inside of rooms. Ljiljana took over the cooking and Maurice got a list of items to be bought at groceries or on the market. It did not last long Ljiljana joined Maurice on these household supplying tours that she like much learning how to bargain and where to get the best offers.

With some dismay we found out that some crates had been damaged during long transports and on one of them the lock was missing too. Ljiljana started checking items according to packaging lists and with some relief found out that nothing too valuable was

missing. The local insurance agent was called in and the long process started listing damaged and missing items followed by the value evaluation. All these documents should be consequently send to our insurance agent in Zagreb (a governmental institution) who would have to pay the damages in Dinars after some long waiting time though.

The following days were passing fast with my girls telling stories about their sea voyage lasting about 2 weeks. The cargo ship stopped in harbors like Naples, Famagusta on Cyprus, Jeddah and Port Said. They went there on daily trips visiting several interesting places. In Naples Vesna was rather interested viewing the Pompeii buried city. On Cyprus they visited Salamina and the Othello's Castle. Accompanied by the captain and his 1st Officer they drove from Port Said to Cairo for a night show of Belly Dancers. Ljiljana was much taken by elderly men gazing wide eyed at dancers' fat bellies than to the dance. Vesna aged 7+ became the best crew's animator and toured around the ship at ease accompanied by one or other member of all Croatian crew. Vesna organized some kind of shows for that she prepared tickets to be paid for whatever a visitor willingly gave to help her "artistic" performance.

The ship chandler bought supplies on the ship anchored in Famagusta harbor. Vesna got in exchanged of a pair of Croatian dolls a full box of oranges that she distributed to the crew at the dinner. In Jeddah the girls could not go down from the ship but standing at the railing looked down on chaotic shipping business going on the quay. Suddenly few grand limousines stopped in front the berthed ship. These were full of children and women clad in dark cloaks and lace covers over faces. The car windows were pulled down and the passengers stared up to the railing where my blond girls stood taken by surprise of this scene. All these events and experiences have been new to them and the right introduction to future experiences and changes in their lives coming soon. Maurice was an interested listener to Vesna's story telling but Ljiljana had to translate everything.



***Springers, Kuzmanovićs and Mrs. Diklić are waiting for Marshall Tito's arrival at the Khartoum International Airport (= Hai El Matar) January 1963***

It was high time for Vesna to continue her schooling after she passed the 1st class in the Primary School in Zagreb. She had a break of 6 weeks so our local friends recommended an English lady. The later kept a kind of "kinder garden cum school" for children of various

ages for a fee of SK£ 5 per months. Varieties of subjects were all taught in English and that was exactly what Vesna needed now. She joined instantly and enjoyed tremendously the company of youngsters particularly as well as the free days on Fridays and Sundays. Ljiljana made great efforts to organize a bachelor's household that obviously lacked the "woman's touch". Her ruling was appreciated by Beshir who was our host's servant for all the housework. Maurice did everything to please her though his finances were depleting faster than he was used too.

Of course both newcomers were welcomed by our local new friends as well as in the Yugoslav Club. There most of women did not speak English at all and a very few of their children went to Khartoum schools either. Sayed Abdel Halim Shawki was Manager at Mitchell Cots Co. and turned into our most faithful friend during our 3-year long stay in Khartoum. His help and advices became extremely valuable to us all the way through.

One night Maurice invited us to one of the two Open-air cinemas. We loaded several blankets and cushions into his car. I knew about this practice already and told Ljiljana to dress Vesna and herself warm enough and take a woolen pullover or coat with them. She thought that I am crazy to dress so warmly in that climate where daily temperatures were getting to 40°C already. Later they found out how good it was to have a cushion sitting on a steel chair, bundled in a blanket and dressed in woolen cloth too.

This was the effect of a strong perspiration at extremely low air humidity at 10% or less where the slightest breeze makes you shivering. It was like this at night although the air temperature never dropped below 25°C. Temperatures rose above 40°C by mid of February by now making the heat almost unbearable. Newcomers were looking for darkened rooms and had to protect our heads when exposed to the merciless sun rays. Friends have tried "to cheer" us up with the promise that the higher temperatures are due to come soon and would last for the next 9 months or so. What would be our perspectives then?



***Marshal Tito shakes hands with Dr. Branko at the International Airport of Khartoum. General Aboud, the President of Sudan, in uniform is left in front with Tito in white clothes***

During a regular Saturday's meeting of the Yugoslav Club we were told that Marshal Tito would be visiting Khartoum on next Saturday February 17. It was obvious that all the Yugoslavs should attend Tito's arrival on Khartoum International airport at mid morning. The children should come dressed as Young Pioneers if possible. I hated to go but did not

have any choice but Vesna looked like a proper Pioneer because she brought with her bleu cap, red scarf, white blouse and blue skirt that she acquired for an introduction ceremony in Zagreb at school begin. The mid morning turned rather misty of fine sand in the air so even the sun didn't burn fierce as one could expect.

Marshal Tito approached dressed smartly in a white uniform with a lot of decorations the assembled Yugoslavs. As first he was greeted by the Ambassador and his entourage. Then he approached the small group of children singing a song and Tito patted them and talking to few shook their hands. Then he proceeded towards a group of adults standing aside. Well, Tito obviously decided to give each his handshake so I could not miss this "opportunity" but all what I got was a feeble handshake of white gloved hand. In front of me stood a bulky man, almost closed eyes twinkled from a white made up round face without any expression. In a flash of thought I just could not believe that this should be the man who was behind all those sufferings and dreadful events I have survived. I did not like this man at all! We were also invited to the Embassy to a party that Marshal Tito would attend on the same day late afternoon. Due to the adverse weather caused by a sand storm made this meeting impossible. Of course, everybody was disappointed and sad that one could see or talk to Marshal Tito ... at least on one's face of it.

However two days later something happened completely out of normal daily routine way. Because of the Ramadan I returned from KTI earlier on that **Monday February 19, 1962**. Ljiljana produced a letter from the Ministry containing the news that **we should collect the keys for our new flat**. We could not understand why Ljiljana was to be the receiver of this official letter. The only explanation could be that she "bewitched" Sayed Farah when I had introduced Ljiljana to KTI directors. Sayed Farah was also acting the Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Education that sent this letter to Maurice's address where we stayed for a short while.



*The reunited family portrayed with first owned car a VW "Beetle" 1962 model.*

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