

Chapter No. 14:

LEFT KHARTOUM IN AUGUST 1964 TO RESIDE IN MOMBASA

The home sale dragged on too slowly for us because we sold very few listed items at first. Then out of blue Halim brought one of his friends (we would never find out how many friends he really had) who moved from Cairo to Khartoum recently. After going through the lists this friend bought almost 90% of all things including the living room expensive table set and all parts of rattan furniture from the veranda. We summed up the costs using listed single amounts and after a short bargain the final amount was agreed upon. Finally the good buyer paid 25% in cash instantly and the rest on the collection of goods shortly. I was somehow surprise by that fast deal (I put up a little bit on the listed prices) so we offered few smaller items as baksheesh following the local good practise. It was agreed that all the bought items should be collected in due course except for our beds to be taken after we leave. Halim offered to lend us a table and several chairs and anything we might need before living for good. Once all the furniture things were collected we felt somehow naked in that flat we liked so much during the two years by now. Any step or sound one made reverberated strangely in the almost empty rooms during remaining few weeks.



On the last drive with our "Rat" into the desert north-east of Khartoum in background a mirage and optical phenomenon aka "Fata Morgana"

My car a VW "Beatle" (to Maurice the "Rat") was one of the last of the unsold items that worried me as time of departure drew nearer inwardly. There was a Yugoslav geometer with whom I negotiated most about price and drafted several contract forms in the course of June. At the end he turned down everything agreed upon. Through friendly channels I heard about him as hair-splitting and penniless person so breaking up with him was a good fortune for me as I overlooked few serious mistakes in our last draft too. Few days later by mere luck our good friend Halim came with a new candidate who just returned to Khartoum from Cairo. He was a doctor who just opened his practise in Khartoum. It was agreed that we would go see doctor's new ambulance before making the contract.

Doctor's practise was a tiny one but rooms were neat though rather packed with waiting patients. I had to wait there for some time until the doctor had time to talk to me. Right away he accepted to buy my 2.5-year old VW with some 21.500km for the original price of S£600 in cash. As the next I had to arrange with the Ministry that the residual small part of my unpaid loan should to be written down as a long term loan to the doctor. A day after doctor came to us and apologized that I had to wait in his practise explaining that he was

in a meeting with a publisher who edits his novels and poetry. Then he handed to me the fixed deposit expressing his hope that I would hand over the “rat” to him at my earliest convenience. However I had to make some ten visits to various offices until all the papers were approved and signed in accordance with the official contract of vehicle ownership’s changeover.

A proper marathon started only with changing the car insurance policy in my name with the Mitchell Cots Co. Halim seconded his assistant Ibrahim to assist me so we hurdle-raced through Khartoum City to and fro one building/office to the other one to repeat it again. As long as we could use my car we would make a reasonable progress with Ibrahim finding the right door or person to deal with. At last we handed a collection of signed papers at the Ministry of Trade and Industries (MTI) where I had to leave my car in custody until the new owner brings his insurance policy and only then he could to pick up the car. Out of some foresight I kept the car technical papers and one key with me fortunately. Three of us had to squeeze in Ibrahim’s abating car to start another hunt for the documents. It seemed as our “luck” had run out when Ibrahim lost his “lucky” skid so I had to take over the command enervated with the tardiness of last few official visits.



Amna Shawki, Ljljana and a friend of Shawkis wrapped in Sudanese tobs

Two days later we were back to the MTI where I noticed on a notice board that my car was offered for cash sale of S£500. That price was about 20% higher than the money due to me to receive from MTI. Furiously I went to see the official handling our case to hand him the new owner’s approved insurance policy. He took the papers smiling meekly and in handing the car key to the Sudanese doctor said that he achieved a perfect deal with that almost new car formerly mine. Then he handed over to me the MTI cheque then I would turn over to my bank after. I drove the doctor to his ambulance where Ibrahim following us in his slower car came happy that this task was over at last. The doctor agreed that I could keep his car to accomplish some more waiting errands prior to my departure. I was very grateful for his offer and looked after my former “Rat” with Argus’ eyes after. A day before our departure I took the vehicle to the understanding Sudanese doctor wishing him all the best his “almost new” VW “Beatle” and successful work for him as a neophyte writer too.

July weather became more bearable as several rains preceded a few less strong haboobs. Vesna started to be an enervating “saw-blade” so we wondered who is more difficult to be educated the parents or the child. She stretched to a height of 138cm and weighed almost 40kg – a strong girl of 10. She became the chief instructor about the Red Indians to many Sudanese children who never heard anything about them. Vesna made quickly friends in the neighbourhood lacking her school associates so she probably could start speaking in

Arabic with them soon. However the Comboni Sisters School opened on July 8 so Vesna went to the 6th class despite our departure in 4 weeks. It was high time for her because she talked tirelessly about her plans going on safaris to Ngorongoro, Serengeti and Tsavo Parks and to swim in the Indian Ocean. Vesna had a new American teacher who told us soon after she met her that she is like “a sack of fleas” strong headed and does say what she means. Lucky for the teacher we left soon after.

One day we had to tell Beshir that he cannot come with us to Kenya or Yugoslavia. After that he acted almost like a phantom. He would appear mostly at irregular intervals with a sad stare and an unpleasant gaze on his face. He behaved like that despite he received advanced disbursements and some extra presents from us too. Beshir was not to be found or seen anywhere on the day before our departure at all. In the meantime we had informed everybody not to mail anything to Khartoum after July 15 and gave a temporary address at Mombasa P.O. Box 1846 only. In fact this would be our permanent address at the Cement Works there but that was not disclosed at all.

As from July 1st the Sudanese Government introduced new custom duties on all imported goods and in particular technical appliances, tools and machines. Within a short time we sold all our domestic devices like a washing machine, vacuum cleaner and a floor polish machine, our radio and tape recorder that we used so often, Ljiljana’s good “Bagat” sewing machine and as last the faithful refrigerator that produced ice cubes to the last moment. Our neighbours offered help so Ljiljana could store just so much food we needed for a few days. Halim found a bit battered refrigerator that we used to cool drinks but Ljiljana’s ice cream production stopped for good.

The construction works progressed better on Halim’s new house in July at last. I did the best out of it by drawing and writing down all of my final instructions for Halim as there was hardly any chance that I would return to Khartoum in near future. Consequently we had avoided contacts with the Yugoslav newcomers and stopped going to the Club for good. I played tennis with my new favourite partner Mrs. Mayer up to the last moment and even winning few games at last. Obviously my physical conditions were improving after the worse part of season was over with temperatures below 40°C during day. Nights were cool so we had to sleep inside and put on all covers we could find because as the emptiness in rooms increased that chilly feeling.



Vesna meets her friends prior to our departure from Khartoum in August 1964

By mid of July Halim sent a group of company’s packers and they finished the job placing everything we stored for them in one room in just a day. They used a lot of craft paper and wood-straw for wrapping every item including the small boxes Ljiljana prepared already.

We were lucky as there was no haboob on that not too hot day due to recent rains. I had painted the destination address on each of 6 crates that read "ZAGREB – YUGOSLAVIA - via PORT SUDAN". This bogus destination was meant for to all suspicious about next moves. Actually our agent in Port Sudan was Halim's employer at Mitchell Cott Company. It was agreed to readdress the crates' destination to the stores of LAGERMAX Company in Vienna Austria. Of course nobody knew anything about this arrangement except Halim who would care to proceed accordingly. All transport and insurance costs paid the Sudan Government anyway.

The last few days tore on our nerves lumbering around our almost empty flat where every step echoed unpleasantly. As for one of the last fare well party we visited Abdel Halim's home where several family members were waiting to say goodbyes to us. A while after Ljiljana came out of the lady's quarter dressed in a beautiful Sudanese female wrap. All the gentlemen applauded generously as I hardly did recognize her at first moment.

The day of our departure was fixed for August 4, 1964 on a British Airways early morning flight to Nairobi. The set departure time at 4AM was not adhered to exactly although the new VC10 4-jet aircrafts could be more accurate. Halim came to pick us from our flat at 2AM and I handed him keys of our flat so he can extract the furniture and other items he had lent us. The last evening the car owner picked up his VW Beatle now. In principle very few persons knew the exact time of our departure -- definitely nobody of the Yugoslav community. We were worried about somebody from the Yugoslav Embassy might obstruct us leaving for Kenya instead straight to Yugoslavia. Thus Halim arranged with a friendly airport police officer to take care about us the moment we arrive there.



The farewell visit to Abdel Halim Shawki and Amna at their house in Khartoum South

After all everything had proceeded smoothly. We left Khartoum on time after saying most cordial goodbyes as to the last person our dearest Sudanese friend Abdel Halim Shawki. We left the Sudan for good as we would never return to Khartoum or the Sudan later.

After we landed safely at Nairobi International Airport early morning of August 4, 1964 we did not have to wait long for the flight connection to Mombasa. Late morning the same day we arrived at the Mombasa airport where Mrs. Mandl was waiting for us already. She took us in her company's car to the Oceanic Hotel where we stayed before in January. After short welcome chat with Mrs. Annie Mandl, Managing Director's wife, she left us to get a good rest that we badly needed after the last rather exciting 24 hours since our departure from Khartoum.

Three days later we moved to our new residence that was a house the company bought recently. The almost furnished house had to be refurbished first as the original owner moved out a few days before. The house built on a coral head outcrop had a wide veranda overlooking the Bamburi Beach some 100m far only. Beyond the reef stretched towards the east the open Indian Ocean in all its wideness and splendour. The company provided for my personal usage a second-hand VW “Beetle” almost the same as the one I had in Khartoum - except for its colour that was beige now.

The not too old dwelling has been erected on a plot of about two acres of almost pristine land. There were few large trees and several papayas growing along the northern plot’s boundary. Beyond the later one was the virgin bush in that probably lived some number of wild animals including a variety of “dudus” (= insects or anything that creeps). Also we got a dog from the former owner who could not take it with him to South Africa. Now, our new household was complete with the dog named “Knocker” that would stay with us until we leave to another still undisclosed place in future.

Soon our life in Kenya got into the routine way and new social contacts were established in due course. Vesna went to the Loreto Convent School in Mombasa with the company’s school bus that took children to and fro from the Works compound. I brought Vesna there before I got into my bureau in the Company’s Head office also within the Works. Ljiljana did not need long to organize our household and to be accustomed to the local market in Mombasa including the many shops and stalls.

Thus our life got into a new phase that would become “**The Golden Age**” for all of us.



*A road sign standing at perimeters of the City of Mombasa
JANUA LUCIS that is GATE OF LIGHTS*

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