

## 1981 Kilimanjaro journal excerpts #2 (May-September)

*With the countdown to departure underway, the tone of my journal notes often veered into the cynical... Fortunately, there is no indication that the capacity for curiosity and wonder were impaired.*

### May 2

All staff were compelled to attend a “hearing” of WEDECO (the student council) called by the Head Mistress this afternoon.

The purpose was to investigate a trio of class leaders’ attempt to incriminate a classmate. The allegedly intimidated student had attended a chaperoned dance at the Lyamungo Secondary School without having drawn a lot—as required by the limited seats on the school bus. Yet it was revealed that a few other girls were guilty of the same offence.

I did not fully grasp the details (all proceedings were in *Kiswahili*) as to why the student leaders chose one student for scapegoating, but petty animosity seemed to be involved. There was a hint of jealousy over a boy attending the dance...

It took more than 3 ½ hours of “parliamentary” procedure to reach a resolution. The leaders were themselves convicted of a miscarriage of justice—just as the accused girl had complained. The gang of 3 were sentenced to 2 weeks of after class flower planting along the school fence...

All the proceedings were directed, as customary, by the Head Mistress Herself. Having recently announced that she is working on a doctorate from an American university, she might well use today’s hearing as an example of her Weru-Weru model of “student self-governance” in action.

While the teachers and even the student leaders sat through most of the hearing with heads down, they did show of hands or provide quips of consent as required. I wondered whether mine was the only head throbbing from the dominant grating voice...

From the perspective or the lone *mzungu* in attendance, the proceedings seemed less a demonstration of self-governance than autocratic string-pulling... Still, the father of the nation, *Mwalimu Nyerere*, would have no doubt that that his personal friend was demonstrating her utter devotion to the principles of *Ujamaa*...



## May 5

Amid the routines of the work week, I have come to look forward to lunch hour. That is when I have the opportunity to practice *Kiswahili* across the table from Ester. Although her daily concoction of rice and split peas is dull, every day our *mazumgumzo* grows more interesting.

Today she told me that she's *ugofya sana*, very fearful of gas and electricity. That was in the context of mentioning that if I had a hotplate like the Pozhavovs next door, we would not have to worry so much about finding kerosene for the cooker (I was intentionally practicing 'if' clauses)...

She also told me of her nervousness with James, the watchman who mans the school gate. Ester claimed that his tribe from southern Tanzania, well known for their *Makonde* carvings, also secretly eat human flesh.

She went on to say that she hates snails and pork, items which apparently are on the menu of the natives of Kibosho, higher up the mountain. She warned me to stay clear of the *russa* (Russia?) neighbourhood of Kibosho, where the particularly bad-blooded [*damu mbaya*] denizens were notoriously hostile to outsiders. Even *Wachagga* like herself from neighbouring communities avoided the area due to fear of *ubakaji* [rape] or *mauaji* [murder].

Before clearing the table, she announced that her baby had just started creeping... In this case, she had to make the motions before I understood *kutambaa* [to creep]. A few months from now, I will certainly miss our homey little routine...



## May 6

I would like to bottle this image from earlier in the evening:

*Walimu Kimenye*, Chobya, Mwanga and Mwandenje, and I are hunched on stools around a rough wooden table in the local *mbege* bar at *Mila Sita*. We are sipping from the same plastic tubs passed leftwards around the table. In the dimness of dusk, I am ghostly pale amid the dark laughing silhouettes....

Outside the open doorway, the shop's proprietor jokes with a few local mamas in the fast-receding equatorial sun. For a few moments, the deep green maize fields out the open door are tinged reddish in the sunset glow....

When the kerosene lamp is lit, the faces of Mmandenje, Mwanga, Chobya across the table are illuminated. They have been joined by 2 local girls they've coaxed inside. One girl demurely touches her lip and the other rolls a coconut in her lap.



In the warmth of *mbege*, I compared that ambience to a rosy glow remembered from drinking at the American Hotel on Vancouver's Main Street with friends one Friday night, 2 years ago.

There was no question about which setting was more pleasurable. So it is with growing sadness that I still prepare to leave in September....

## May 10

While waiting for the milk ration by the school kitchen door this afternoon, I had a chat with *Mwalimu* Paul Mwanendenje, the newly appointed Acting Head of the English Department. Although majoring in French and English at the University of Dar es Salaam, where he recently graduated, he admits that he has limited experience in speaking informal *Kiingeresa*...

When I first heard him speak English outside the staffroom a few weeks ago, his *Kiingeresa* was so strange that I wrote down afterwards the words I could make out. In what I took to be a comment on the difficulty of walking through the mud pathway following the heavy overnight rains, he had said:

*"...barring the abstractions, we must seriously bear this condition by which we are stepping on the mud soils."*

Still, fully aware that I (presumably judgemental) was making him nervous, for the last few weeks I have tried to avoid wincing in his presence. More importantly I have tried to give him the impression that the command (or lack thereof) of *Kizungu* by the acting head of the English department makes no difference to me. As a temporary teacher, my concern is solely with my own classes.

Standing together in the lineup this evening, Mwanendenje seemed for the first time at ease. He said that at University of Dar Es Salaam he was a roommate of *Monsieur Kimenyi*. He started out as a seminary student but disillusioned with the church, switched into a BA program.

He also told me a little about his background. His father was a purged politician of Zambia who first fled with his family to Zaire. In the mid-1960s, his father moved his family to Tanzania where he worked as a regional economic advisor. His pedigree quite probably factored into his placement in a school where many of the students come from the families of the Tanzanian elite.

Still, I was surprised by his voicing of complaints about the school administration... Although there were no other teachers in the lineup, there was always a danger of grumblings getting back to Vice Principal, Sister Mosha, or woe betide— back to the headmistress Herself...

But Mwanendenje seemed to be in a carefree mood. He said that he found “great hypocrisy” in the recent WEDECO ‘hearing’, which might have been more accurately described as a ‘show trial.’

“Just wait sir,” he grinned, as we reached the front of the queue, “You will be seeing me challenge the conservatism here in a way that you will be giving me credit!”

Brave but reckless words?

## May 25

*Going away party for the Pozharovs:*

Assembled *Walimu* sat at the long counters lining the 3 sides of the sewing room. At the table in the open front, sat the Head Mistress flanked on the right by Master Sergeant Moshia and on the left by Corporal Matoe. With arms folded, the troika looked down over the table laid with dishes, cutlery, and tureens of food. At a right angle to Her Highness sat the honoured personages—Pozharov in cardigan, along with wife and kids, 9-year-old Katya and 6-year-old Dima.

After the assemblage had picked away at their chicken and rice (forks and knives not generally used at home) and the student servers began taking away the empty plates, Pozharov motioned towards the middle table. Thereupon was his contribution to his farewell dinner: 2 chilled bottles of vodka.

Wary of this fiery drink, especially in the presence of the Head Mistress, most of the teachers politely declined—leaving *Walimu* Manga, Chobya and I to indulge along with comrade Pozharov himself.

In the starting up of the blaring cassette player, the atmosphere loosened up somewhat. Even under the gaze of the troika at the head table, a few teachers began to dance. After about 15 minutes, Mama Kuhn signalled for the tape to be shut off so the formal phase of the ceremony could be executed.

In her jarring English cadences (influenced by her husband’s native German), the Head Mistress paid tribute to “our dear Russian friends”. They stand by Tanzania, she intoned, when so-called “friendly” nations, are evermore lukewarm in support. She then offered her personal appreciation to Pozharov, for obtaining good results in his classes in the Form Four leavers’ national physics exams. In concluding, she stressed the importance of promoting science education for girls. She stressed how well-educated and self-confident young women are key to the fulfillment of the goals of *Ujamaa*.

It was then Pozharov’s turn to speak. He was nervous—and already little drunk. But after a stumbling beginning, he spoke sincerely about the friendliness of Tanzanians and how delighted he was that his children learned *Kiswahili*: making for their “lifelong solidarity with Africa.” In closing, he presented the school with a handsome clothbound collected works of Marx and Engels. As he awkwardly placed one of the volumes into the open hands of the Head Mistress, the assemblage gave a rousing cheer.

With the departure immediately thereafter of Mrs. Kuhn and her deputies, the cassette tape began to blare again. In the official 20-minute windup, the few of us remaining were obliged to finish the second bottle of vodka.

Chatting with Comrade Pozharov, I hazarded to ask him for the first time, how he thought the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was working out.

“I suppose you see the parallels with the USA in Vietnam?” He chuckled, vodka having pushed the mask slightly ajar.

How might he feel, I persisted, if his own son, Dima, was one day drafted to serve there?

“I’m a socialist,” the mask back firmly in place, “and I believe in fighting to protect socialism.”

It was just then that we were interrupted by a silence. The cassette tape had been abruptly shut off. It was precisely 8:30 PM, when the function was officially designated to end.

The bare room, lit by harsh fluorescent, suddenly seemed cold. I had drunk too quickly—and much too much.



## May 26

Aldous Huxley was 100% correct when he noted that alcohol was a perfect intoxicant for the Calvinist mind—the momentary escape into frenzied joy followed by the “necessary” wallop of punishment.

I could hardly roll my poisoned body out of bed this morning. I was barely able to even hold up my head to splash a little water into the bleary eyes. While the stomach heaved, the brain was wrapped in a numbing fog. Allah only knows (if Calvin doesn’t) how I managed to get through the end of term exam invigilation this morning. I told Ester that I had no appetite for lunch.

At the end of the hellishly long day at 4:30 PM, I could hardly wait to collapse behind my closed door. Before going to bed without supper, I took a long bath. While the bath water ran, I looked in the mirror. In the puffy face, I saw myself at 40.

## May 29

During lunch today, Ester, told me the legend of the original settlement of Chaggaland.

In *Kiswahili*, augmented by dramatic hand gestures, she explained how the spirit of Kibo summit threatened the first humans who ventured within its sight by belching smoke and fire. Over several years, the Chagga *wachawi* [elders] made repeated sacrifices of ‘*zeruzeru*’ [albino] creatures—white cocks, white goats and white cows. Finally, the mountain spirit was appeased. It ceased spitting fire allowing people to live safely on its slopes to this day...

This myth may have some origin in fact—as Kilimanjaro once was an active volcano—however long before the *Wachagga* settled here... Yet while hearing Ester's tale, I was saddened by the reminder that I will soon be cut off from *Kiswahili*—perhaps forever...



## June 5

I met *Baba* Msole on the way back from Moshi today. We stood together on the side of the Arusha road for nearly 2 sweaty hours waiting for a lift. As more cars passed us by, he paced and grew more agitated. At one point he launched into a harangue, which was interesting enough to record, almost verbatim:

"O, some of these businessmen you see—the ones with their private Peugeots beside their many buses—they have thousands—untold *thousands* of shillings—perhaps *millions*. They keep their money buried underground—hidden in caves—wherever..."

".. But no, no—they won't bring it out. They don't dare to keep it in banks. They're afraid the money might be declared the property of the people. Of course, the government has said no such thing but these private people you know, they're scared to bring all their wealth into the open..."

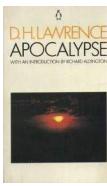
"...When the government changed the 100 shilling note a few years ago—before the old one became worthless—people could bring the old ones to the banks for exchange. The aim was to find out exactly how much we had in circulation and out of circulation. Ha! It backfired—the whole thing. The bank clerks made a fortune, *privately* exchanging the notes of these bastards who were still scared to bring their piles—their carloads—of money to the banks..."

"...Even at a *magendo* [black market] rate of exchange—3 to 1 or 4 to 1 of these old notes for the new ones—they still drove away with carloads of the new stuff. They took it back up into the mountain, back into their underground caves or wherever. O my dear, it was *terrible*."

Finally, Msole pulled out his handkerchief and wiped his brow, seemingly embarrassed in having displayed such ire before a '*mzungu*'.

Listening, I was reminded of the recently read '*Apocalypse*' by DH Lawrence. In his interpretation of the biblical Book of Revelations, Lawrence makes a case that the text, apparently authored by one John of Parmos (not the apostle, John), is not—as commonly believed—a mystical prophesy of the end of the world. The vision of the Book of Revelations, according to Lawrence, is rather one borne by a bitter envy of the wealth and power of the Roman state...

So it seems that Msole's intense hatred of the businessmen—and more broadly of the capitalist west—may be borne by a similar burning envy...



*Ad. Note:*

After listening to the horrific BBC radio program on the growing possibilities of nuclear war tonight, I thought about how many Tanzanians view the America-USSR rivalry as just another *Wazungu* “tribal conflict”— just as Baba Msole once described World War II.

Some Tanzanians like Msole, believe that a World War III in which both east and west are mutually destroyed, might in the long run, be the best hope for Africa. Yet given the near certainty of extinction of all humans in the wake of nuclear holocaust (as starkly described in tonight’s program) —that is a vain and foolish hope...

## June 11

I had expected to be visiting Simanjero Mission tonight, but the medical supplies needed for the Simanjero clinic were not ready to load. *Padre Pepe* said I was welcome to stay the night in the Arusha diocese Central House, but I said that I’d prefer going back to Weru-Weru and meeting again at the Central House in Arusha tomorrow morning. I might have considered staying overnight were I even a lapsed Catholic rather than an agnostic of Protestant origin...

Before I got back to Weru Weru at dusk, I accompanied *Padre Pepe* and *Padre Miguel* on a visit to the family of a Salvadorian planter on a coffee estate near Mount Meru. It was a strange glimpse into a world never imagined in socialist Tanzania: a South American-style rural estate filled with Italian antiques, antique copper Zanzibar pots, Arabian perfume decanters and African art.

The patriarch of the *finca* was Senor Funes, a bald and worried faced Salvadoran with a chatty Mexican wife. With their 3 dark-eyed teen daughters, it seemed a Gabriel Garcia Marquez scene transplanted to the East African highlands.

We sat at a table on the patio where sandwiches and lemonade were placed before us by a white-coated servant. The conversation was largely in English—a presumed courtesy which Senor Funes was no doubt accustomed to extending to any ‘American’—even though others in a gathering are left out. In this case, it was awkward knowing that both *padres* spoke little English. Still, I knew that Miguel was eager to learn some—which was a principal reason why I have been invited for my 2<sup>nd</sup> visit to the Simanjero mission tomorrow.

Fortunately, Señor Funes did break into Spanish when he perceived that *los padres* were straining to comprehend... Behind us, not bothering to listen (even though they spoke English), the girls and their mom fawned over their puppy, named Rocky.

Meanwhile, the man they addressed as “Daddy” vented his frustration in trying to grow coffee for the Tanzanian *Kahawa* [coffee] parastatal without foreign exchange to buy spare parts for antiquated machinery. He railed against Tanzania’s “blackmail” of the west and opined that President Nyerere “better stop pretending to be nonaligned.”

“How can you run a successful business when profit is a dirty word?” he said, echoing the rhetoric of the Reagan revolution.

He went on to opine that the Chilean and Argentinian juntas were unfortunate but necessary to save those nations from communism; that communists are ready to take over south Africa should the apartheid regime be overthrown; and that Reagan is the right president for the best interests of Latin America...

Beholden to his hospitality, I listened politely. He no doubt whiffed leftist sympathies—but assumed mine typical of *Norteamericano* naiveté...

I was reminded of conversations in Argentina just weeks before the *junta* in 1976. I bore in mind that where the stakes are between swollen fleshpots or grinding poverty; fat cat sinecures or torture dungeons—politics is no parlour game. While clerics like *Padre Pepe* (who only half listened) may subscribe to some version of ‘60s liberation theology, the Roman Catholic establishment fears godless socialism far more than fascism. At the same time, a loyal Catholic businessman is far more useful to the church than a thousand devout peasants. Back home in El Salvador, Señor Funes has very likely dined with bishops or even with cardinals...

As for this afternoon’s tea, it was noteworthy that while Señor Funes railed against socialism, the Tanzanian servant, standing in the background was plainly listening. No others at the table seemed to notice his winces and grimaces. The Funes family seemed unaware that unlike house servants of El Salvador, those few in Tanzania are not quite so disposed to blend into the décor.



Back in my armchair at Weru-Weru at 7:00 PM, I thought of the contrast between the visit with the Funes family with that of another wealthy Catholic expat visited last year. At that time in the company of my Chilean colleague Adriana B. (who introduced me to the Simanjero missionaries), we visited another posh home near Arusha—one occupied by a Dutch executive of a flower seed company...

The ambiance of that pool side dinner seemed more Californian than European... Our craggy-faced and tennis-tanned host talked of the corruption of the Tanzanian bureaucracy and the near police state surveillance of foreigners. Still, he dismissed it all with a shrug:

“What the hell? We are still making money out of them!”

Meanwhile, his sun-bronzed little boys played with model battleships and airplanes. Later, the blonde wife wrapped in tie-dye served post-prandial cognac-laced coffee and Dutch cigars...

The more earnest supporters of *ujamaa*—such as Baba Msole—would be horrified to know that this parallel world of neo-colonial decadence exists right under their noses...

**June 18** (*From Moshi to Dar es Salaam*)



Along with Pozharov, in late afternoon, I waited at *Mila Sita* for a lift to the Moshi bus terminal. In my heavy *mzito* [knapsack] ‘goalie bag’ were 2 boxes of souvenirs and notebooks to be mailed from Dar es Salaam to Vancouver. Pozharov was heading into Moshi tech for a final visit with his Russian comrade, Mikalov.

With dark approaching and still no sign of the lift—I grew fidgety. I had to make the overnight bus departing for Dar at 8:00 PM. Still, I was grateful for the final chat with my neighbour of the last 18 months—who in just 2 days would be returning with his family to Moscow.

We finally got a lift in the back of a battered truck and made it to Moshi in time to have a coffee at the KUC Café.

In our final sharing of the spirit of détente: Pozharov conceded some of the achievements of free enterprise—Canadian Skidoos garnering praise. I countered by granting that Russia has a far richer culture—Chekov given special merit. He confessed that like Khrushchev before him—he would love to take his kids to Disneyland...

In our final parting we shook hands in genuine sadness.

**June 19** (*Dar es Salaam*)



I bounced all night on the Majira bus on a collapsed cushion right on top of the hot whining engine. It was the worst seat on the bus. With the fumes and noise almost unbearable, I stuffed my ears with wads of toilet tissue. Sometime in the middle of the night I realized that I had pushed the wads in too far. In attempting to dig them out with a pen tip, I pushed them in even deeper. As we jiggled into the sticky air of Dar es Salaam in the gray light of dawn, both ears were buzzing...

Before heading to the CUSO apartment in Oyster Bay, I waited for the first pharmacy to open. I bought a bottle of rubbing alcohol and a pair of tweezers (40 shillings). Later in the bathroom of the CUSO apartment, I tried again to remove the wads. Realizing the danger of perforating an eardrum, I decided to go to the clinic—however embarrassing the self-inflicted malady...

First, though—as planned in the sleeplessness of last night—I phoned Dora K., the typist in the Ministry of Labour. Our meeting a year ago near the bus station in Dar (I was asking directions) led to a one-night dalliance. I received a couple of letters from her in *Kiswahili*, the last of which I neglected replying to.

She was surprised to hear from me but receptive to meeting. We arranged to meet during her lunch break at 12:30 PM in front of the Mawenzi hotel.

I got there early, sweating heavily in the unfamiliar humidity and the midday sun (more mad dog than Englishman?) A few minutes late, she walked up from the bus shelter. A little nervous amid the turning heads of passersby, she extended her hand in greeting. While shaking it, I noticed a gray hair at the top of her head—something missed 6 months ago. In the cleft of her blouse were the remembered black wisps.

“*Habari zakazi?*” [How’s work?] I asked as we made our way to the Impala restaurant across from the Clocktower. Over greasy chips and eggs, we engaged in some nervous chatter but agreed to meet again after she got off work at 5:00 PM.

For the rest of afternoon, I got down to business. I got a drive to the central post office with Gerard M. who is also staying at the CUSO crash pad as he processes his departure papers. I mailed my boxes to the CUSO office in Vancouver, where hopefully I can pick them up in the fall. From there, I walked to the local CUSO office. While waiting to meet the replacement FSO for Len L., I borrowed Mailer’s ‘*The Executioner’s Song*’, from the bookshelf.

The new FSO, Ned M., greeted me with a crunching handshake. He is a bear of a man with a red Viking beard. By way of introduction, he said he has brought along his wife and 2 small children directly from Inuvik, Northwest territories, where he had been a social worker. He said that both he and his wife, Joan, would share the FSO position.

He grinned. “Two for the price of one!”

When I ask how he’s handling the culture shock, he chuckled.

“The climate and the culture? Those are just superficial differences. The deep issues around development here are *very* familiar. I’m right at home!”

Much to my relief, *ndugu* Ned was supportive of my request for departure on the first week of September. I explained that I wanted to stay until I had covered the Form One syllabus and my

replacement will only be left with review. He made an appointment 2 days hence for the signing of the forms.

I then rushed back to the Railway bus stop, thinking I might be late for the rendezvous with Dora. She was nowhere in sight. For the next 10 minutes on the busy corner, I served as a curious distraction for the queuing hordes. I was just about to leave, thinking that Dora had already come and gone, when she walked up from behind. We walked together 2 blocks to the Clocktower Inn. Under the leer of the Asian desk clerk and a few gawkers in the lobby, the *mzungu* teacher from Moshe and the plump African secretary signed in for a double.

My ears were buzzing and the room filthy and dark. I could barely get the cork of the bottle of the Dodoma wine, which was foul tasting. When we did lay back on the mattress, she was nervous that squeaks would be heard through the partition. Nonetheless, we proceeded...

Later, as we lay on the unopened covers, she told me of recently having to nurse her mother through stomach cancer. She said her mother died in her arms. She still had nightmares of her mother crying out to her for an orange and a sip of water.

I listened in silence. As the dusk grew through the dingy curtain, she put on her dress and prepared to leave.

In the awkward moment of her anticipation of a *zawaidi* [gift], I brought out the pair of lace panties I bought for her from Moshi. I also slipped 100 shilling into her hand for taxi fare and dinner. Knowing that I was soon to leave Tanzania, she was disappointed that I couldn't give her my wristwatch. She had assumed that a *mzungu* would be more generous than a *muhindi*, such as Mr. Peterson, the Indian "friend", she had told me about in our first tryst. He had brought her a silver necklace back from a business trip to Kenya. Still, she assented to coming back at 7:00 AM in the morning before her work.

Ears throbbing and buzzing, I tried to sleep. As expected, she didn't show up in the morning. Under the circumstances, I was relieved.



### **June 20 (Dar es Salaam)**

Even with the earache worsening, I joined Gerard, Fortunata and their baby on a drive out to Kunkuchi Beach. I could not resist a refreshing dip, but in diving under—the pressure on my ears was excruciating. On the drive back into the city, I asked Gerard to drop me off at the Aga Khan Hospital. It was late afternoon before I joined the snaking queue into the clogged corridors. After a head pounding 2-hour wait, I finally saw a young Asian doctor. He poised his stethoscope over my ear for a few seconds then told me he saw a little redness and swelling—but nothing blocking my ears.

"Are you sure?"

"I'm positive. I'll just give you an antibiotic to get the swelling down."

He scribbled a prescription for tetracycline, and abruptly turned to the next person in line. Disappointed, I nonetheless got it filled in the adjoining pharmacy. As a white sleeve shoved me the envelope of *dawa* [pills], I hung onto the pharmacy counter in dizziness. Until it passed, I feared I could be the second CUSO-Tanzania casualty of cerebral malaria...

**June 21 (Dar es Salaam)**

After dutifully taking the red and yellow chemical peanuts, I woke up partially deaf with the throbbing in ears worsening.

I walked back to the Aga Khan Hospital. When the doors opened at 8:00 AM, I was the first in line. Luckily, I was only the second patient to see a different young Asian doctor than the one on duty yesterday. He alertly pressed the stethoscope to my ear while I held my breath. After half a minute he said:

"Yes, there's something in there. I can see it clearly. It looks like tissue paper."

I froze in the directed tilted head position to allow the good doctor to pluck out the wads. He dropped them into a metal dish, held by a nursing sister. I thanked him profusely. Still, relief was mixed with embarrassment (how many people over the age of 5 jam paper in their ears?)

Halfway out the room I was struck by a wave of nausea, I barely made it to the men's cubicle. After retching into the filthy bowl, I wiped my stinging eyes. Hallelujah, I can hear again!



**June 23 (Dar es Salaam)**

*Among compatriots:*



This evening, I briefly visited the house of Ned and Joan M., also in Oyster Bay, not far from the CUSO crash pad. I accompanied *Ndugu* Richard, who was also staying over for a few days in the CUSO apartment. He is a former cooperant who finished a 2-year teaching stint and then enrolled at the university of Dar to polish his *Kiswahili*.

Joan (who will be processing my papers tomorrow) was bathing the kids while her partner was talking politics. Our conversation reached a disagreement about the extent to which *Mwalimu Nyerere* was succumbing to a personality cult typical of nearly every African leader of a one-party state. I mentioned how curious it was that a fascist like Mubutu Sese Seko in Zaire and an avowed socialist like Nyerere could cultivate similar Stalinist trappings... *Ndugu* Richard sipped his Safari lager thoughtfully, but Ned gave a scornful laugh.

"I don't know why the name of Stalin continues to strike terror into the heart of liberals!" Ned scoffed.

Just then his 2 babes, both under 6, came running in naked from the bath.

"Hi, ho— let's get dried off now."

Coming into the doorway smiling, his wife, tossed him a towel. Vigorously towelling the 2 blonde boys, *Ndugu* Ned resumed:

"You have to remember when Stalin was leader of his nation—the Soviet Union was at war—attacked from all sides—fighting for its very survival."

His gentler tone, suggested something of the community organizer in Inuvik, enlightening the locals...

"Stalin was the supreme leader of the party. It was his office that was being honoured, not the man himself. Maybe it's about time more people had the guts to stand up and give a fairer appraisal of his contributions.... Now let's get into pajamas!"

With that, Ned the Red, bear-hugged each of his sweeties, gave them each a playful slap before trundling them off to bed...

#### **June 24 (Dar es Salaam)**

Still processing the papers to prepare my departure, I saved on the hotel bill and spent one more night in the CUSO apartment in Oyster Bay. I took the bunk above *Ndugu* Richard while Gerard and his family remained in the other bedroom. As expected, there was a steady stream of visitors. Tonight, Katy H., former Mozambique FSO, just flown from an NGO job interview in Arusha, dropped by.

"Oh Richard," she cooed, accepting a light for her Rothmans, "Once I get through these wrinkles with *Jozo Leo* [her prospective new employer] I think there'll be very interesting possibilities!"

The exaggerated RP in the final words emphasized that her British accent—combined with blonde hair—has mighty allure in postcolonial Africa.

As she spoke, I was reminded of the cynical take on development crusaders in Shiva Naipaul's '*North of South*'. Katy obviously has a romantic attraction for things African and is much at ease in the expat lifestyle. She loves to name-drop local artists and exiled revolutionaries along with journalists and embassy staff with whom she does tennis-doubles. Still, it may be just a little too cynical to suggest (as Shiva Naipaul probably would) that Katy is of the ilk drawn here primarily for access to powerful African men...



In the afternoon, I shared a beer in the Seaview Hotel with another CUSO compatriot—Ben, the nerdy chartered accountant, working with the Ministry of Finance office in Dar. He was with his girlfriend Karen, a lawyer visiting from his native Toronto.

"Ben," said Karen with a chipmunk grin, "I know you've got a future in municipal finance. Now if only you'd stop being so wishy-washy about your future." She winked and hoisted her beer, seemingly signalling her dominance in their relationship.

For his part, Ben lowered his eyes and twisted a match between his fingers. I took the scene as further affirmation of why I have always been averse to Toronto...

**June 26 (back at Weru-Weru)**

*Les Miserables, encore:*



3 herd boys were straggling behind the herd of goats along the bank of the Weru-Weru River. Struggling along beside them was a short-haired mongrel—jerking back upon itself, licking a horrible gash along its side. Glistening flesh and quivering intestines were visible within.

Stopping up on the path in horror, I asked the boys what happened. They stared, less alarmed by the dog with his guts ripped open than by a *mzungu* standing just a few feet away.

"Are you going to help that dog"? I asked in *Kiswahili*.

The boys gaped.

What happened? I repeated. One boy stumbled and jumped backwards as if recoiling from an attack.

After a frightened whisper, one shaven-headed urchin piped up: "Nyani". He pointed back along the tangled bank.

So, a monkey had flayed torn open this poor creature's guts—and there was nothing they could do to help it.

Shaking, I hurried away down the road as the dusty-faced boys stared after the first *mzungu* to ever speak directly to them. Maybe that's something they'll remember for the rest of their lives.

## July 11

*Les Miserables, encore #2:*



The old boar was prodded out of his pen by a stick wielded by one of the school labourers tasked with his butchery. Out in the blinding glare, the heavy waddler tried to twist away from his human tormentors, but his trotters kept slipping in the mud. Pushing him forward, 2 labourers in front jabbed their sticks into his back while the one behind poked at his crotch.

Shrieking and voiding, the old pig was driven forward along the narrow path leading to the back of the waiting pickup truck. Once therein, he would be driven a few kilometers away, where a tub of water was already being boiled to receive his blood-drained corpse.

Still, the old pig held back—his feet firmly in the mud. One human hand tried to tickle his lordly balls to coax him into submission. When that failed, the hand cruelly clenched his bulging scrotum while other hands pulled his ears and tail. Before the makeshift ramp, he kicked and more desperately shrieked. Watching in horror, I wondered at which point comes the awareness that resistance is futile?

I also reminded myself that tomorrow, my helper, Ester, would likely be joining the lineup of *wasichana* [girls] from every household on the compound to buy a half-kilo of his pale flesh...

## July 16

Mwanahawa, one of my Form One students, was in class for only the first week of term before disappearing. I asked *Mwalimu* Eliseli, who also taught her, if she knew of the girl's whereabouts. Eliseli informed that Mwanahawa was likely not coming back—at least not this term. She said the girl was in KCMC Hospital awaiting an operation to remove a tumour from her breast.

I was shocked that breast cancer could strike a girl so young...

"Not so uncommon," said Mr. Pramming. "Actually, cancer which strikes a young person is likely to be far more deadly. A tumour grows much more rapidly in the young body."

Mwanahawa was not one of the vocal students. I could barely remember her face among the blue-sweatered *wanafunzi* at the back of the class. Yet nothing seems crueler than facing

mortality in adolescence. It would have been far less cruel for the random selection to have fallen upon my head...

The least I could do was buy a gift on behalf of the class and deliver it to the hospital. That would be just a gesture, I realized—but better than no acknowledgement at all...

### July 22

*Classroom faux pas:*



In a sketchily organized role-play of ‘requests’ in Form One this morning, sweet Selena, who so often carries my books to the staffroom, volunteered to model a person asking a stranger on the street for directions. I took the role of the *mgeni* [stranger].

Standing in profile in front of the class, we began.

“Excuse me, I said, “can you tell how to get to the KCMC hospital?”

“Hello, my darling,” she said following the English greeting customarily used by Vice Principal, Sister Mosha.

I immediately broke character, ““I’m a stranger, Selena! You can’t address a stranger as ‘darling.’”

Several students snickered. When we finished there was no polite applause, as was usual for front of the class performances.

In the silence, Selena sat down. The other pairs then came forward to perform their short dialogues—each pair receiving hardy applause. As we moved on to the reading segment, Selena’s head went into her arms and her back heaved.

When the others began silent reading, I leaned over her desk and nudged her hand.

“*Shida gani?*” [What’s the problem] I asked softly.

*Hamna shida,*” [there’s no problem] she choked out.

“*Usijali. Unendelea vizuri,*” [Don’t worry. You’re doing well]. I whispered. At that moment, the bell rang. Along with the others, Selena gathered her books and scurried out to the next class.

For a few moments, I stared through the open door of the empty classroom. Did I unwittingly intimidate her? Whatever harm was inadvertently done, at least the *mwalimu* learned his lesson...

### July 23



*Monsieur* Kimenyi is back from Tabora with his beautiful bride, Veneranda, a tall slim *mtutsi* like himself, slightly lighter skinned. He is immensely proud of her and his eyes shine when he speaks of his newfound peace of mind.

"Everyone— really everyone is better off married," he said after introducing her.

As she poised, softly smiling, Kimenyi described their wedding. It was a mixture of the modern and traditional Catholic mass followed by a "Tutsi cow Parade" in which Tutsi elders drive garlanded cows in precise formation past a reviewing stand.

"This is the first time I've seen the ceremony myself," said Kimenyi. "You know before we were driven from Rwanda in 1960, they slaughtered all our cattle. They knew that cattle are the life of the Tutsi people. It's only now that we are exiles here in Tanzania that we are building our lives back. It's only now that we have cows again."

I was pleased to hear Kimenyi and his bride will be moving into the other side of my duplex in Pozharov's old place. It wonderful to have them as neighbours—if only for the 6 remaining weeks.

## July 29

*Chama Cha Mapunduzi* pep-talk:



While much of the world tuned in to the pomp and circumstance of Prince Charles' wedding in London this morning—here at Weru-Weru, attention was focused upon the visit of the state governor.

An ebullient man in a tan suit, he came to deliver his CCM party pep talk to students, teaching staff and labourers. He spoke under the eaves of the walkway at the side of the school from a makeshift podium, bedecked with flowers.

A performer he certainly was—holding his audience spellbound though a 2-hour speech—punctuated by hoots of approval and ending with the rhythmic chanting party of slogans ('CCM, *juu, juu, milele!*' [forward, forward forever])

With comic grimaces and gesticulations, the governor made the case that all the nation's woes were reducible to one hard fact: the lack of foreign exchange. He trotted off his examples: the crime, the shortages, the corruption. Every point was received with a wave of applause during which he fingered his ivory baton and grinned broadly.

After the speech, questions were allowed (Standing beside me, *Monsieur Kimenyi* whispered a few translations). The audience was surprisingly blunt, asking:

“Why don't we have sugar these days?”

“Why did the price of rice go up?”

“Can the government really force people to grow millet when no one likes to eat it?”

“What is the government doing about *wajanbuzi*?” [armed robbers]

The governor was unshakable. He laid his baton on the formica table, lit up a Rex cigarette, huffed deeply. He then spun more conspiracies of vicious circles made more vicious by “green mamba” saboteurs, naysayers and sceptics of the wisdom of *Ujamaa*.

Finally, with grievances momentarily salved, the governor stepped away from the podium. Still clutching his baton, he was bade to the catered lunch on waves of rhythmic clapping and raised fists of solidarity.

Yet even as the teachers walked back towards the staff room, there were hints of sourness in some faces. All that fine talk—but still no sugar or cooking oil!

## August 5



Looking in vain for toothpaste though several shops in Moshi today, I asked the dapper Asian behind the desk at the wholesale shop on Marangu St., whether toothpaste was no longer being manufactured in Tanzania. He gave a gold tooth smile and explained:

“No, my friend, the factory in Arusha isn't broken down. It's these parastatals. They make their shipments only to the shops who pay extra. It's a kind of corruption, you see.”

I saw. Indeed, after nearly 20 months here, I would easily create a flow chart illustrating the vicious cycle:

1 Manufacture of any product by the government-controlled companies is slow and quality poor even at the best of times. Underpaid workers with guaranteed jobs have little incentive to meet quotas and old equipment tends to break down. There is no foreign exchange to import replacement parts.

2 Whatever goods are manufactured are under-reported by parastatal bosses. Unreported product is sold on the *magendo* [black market] for the bosses' pure gain. Meanwhile, workers smuggle out a small share of goods for themselves.

3 The scarce goods that do officially exist are supposed to be fairly distributed and sold at controlled prices. However, *hongo* [bribes] are expected for favoured distribution.

4 Whatever paucity of goods that reaches shelves at official prices, quickly disappears. Consumers who line for hours on the rumour of a shipment of a scarce item, often leave empty-handed.

5 Whatever product the stores can hide will find its way to the hoarders who will wait for the moment of most dire scarcity to sell on the *magendo* at inflated prices well beyond the affordability of most Tanzanians...

So it was, squeezing my near empty toothpaste tube this morning for the last dollops, I recalled how impressed I was in first hearing that *Mwalimu* Nyerere had translated *Julius Caesar* into *Kiswahili*. I still have no doubt of his refinement as a man of letters... Yet I now I wonder whether there might be toothpaste today, had *Mwalimu* taken a few more courses in free market economics!



## August 14



Standing behind the chair after the lunch of chapatis and lentils, Ester, seemingly out-the-blue asked: "How long do children breast-feed in Canada?" As always, she augmented her *Kiswahili* with gestures. "At what age do they usually wean them?"

"*Nategemea*," [it depends] I said, still eating.

"Me, I'm going to breast-feed my baby until he's 3 years old!"

I smiled, not sure how to respond... I was aware that breast-feeding is often traditionally relied upon for contraception. Also, in Tanzania, it is very difficult to obtain birth control pills. Was she dropping a conversational gambit to lead into that topic?

"*Hiyo ni nzuri kwa mtoto wako,*" [that's good for your baby] I said.

Sliding out from the table and sinking into my armchair, I realized that she has probably come to appreciate our lunchtime *mazungumzo* [conversation] as much as I do. As my fluency has grown (to low intermediate?) with her 'tutoring' help, so has her trust in bringing up whatever happens to be on her mind.

A few weeks from now—it is hard to know which one of us will miss our lunchtime more.

### August 17

A new teacher, whispered to be a "madwoman," made her first appearance today in the staffroom. With black-framed glasses and a chubby face, she looked no different than any other mid-30ish Tanzanian teacher. The most noticeable feature was her self-effacing smile.

While her transfer was officially approved by the Ministry of Education, Sister Mosha apparently had reports of her odd behaviour at her previous school. As acting principal and fully supported by the teachers, the Vice Principal is doing her upmost to make the woman unwelcome.

Yet the alleged "madwoman" has been stubborn: When told that there was no housing available in the school compound, the poor lady apparently camped out in an unused classroom with 4 small children. In the last few days, she has moved into a storage room attached to the school sewing room.

When she entered the school staffroom today—she was met by total silence. Utterly ignored, she made her way to an empty desk where she sat for an hour shuffling papers. In a *mzungu* estimation, there was no hint of 'madness' in her drawn face—but there certainly was anxiety...

I was reminded of an incident in northern Nigeria 2 years ago. A Canadian teacher, also rumoured to be insane, was posted to my rural school. The silence when he first entered the staffroom was eerily similar to that of today... It took 2 days of leper-like shunning to push him over the barking edge whereupon he had to be trundled restrained from his room back to Kano and on a plane out of the country...

Yet unlike in survival of the fittest Nigeria, one might have thought that under the guidance of the lofty principles of *Ujamaa*, more allowance might be made for a person struggling to regain a foothold...



### August 22

My new next-door neighbours, the Kimenyis, had me over for dinner tonight. After the tasty *ndizi*, [plantains] boiled peas and salad, Madame Kimenyi folded her arms demurely and Monsieur Kimenyi creaked back in his chair. At first a little nervous, Monsieur Kimenyi gradually warmed as we sipped the 2 bottles of beer I'd brought along. Aware of a shared interest, he zestfully seized upon a topic in linguistics:

"Swahili has no tribal basis," he said, "It's just a pidgin, borrowing from the Bantu languages along with Arabic, English and German. It's just a language for inter-regional communication. Like English—it's impersonal. It hasn't anything like the elegance of tribal languages!"

He then spoke of the richness of his own native language, *Kinyarwanda*: "...so rich in proverbs—so exact, deep and intimate for sharing culture."

Listening in admiration, I was struck that by being a native speaker of English, I am among the minority of the world's people lacking a tribal mother tongue. Perhaps native English speakers are especially impoverished in the experience of sharing deep and intimate culture...

## August 24

Sensing that it could be inappropriate for a non-relative, especially a *mzungu*, to make an unscheduled visit to the convalescent ward, I left the basket of fruit for Mwanahawa, the Form One student with cancer, at the nurse's station. Afterwards, I followed an attendant back out through the grounds of the KCMC hospital compound.

In the narrow passage between two buildings, I was assailed by a blast of sewage stench. In stepping gingerly cross a board propped across an open sewer, I was greeted by hooting from the concrete block on my right. Then from the same direction came a plea, half in English:

"Sir, *bwana*, *naomba cigarra*, please, friendee!"

From a barred window, hands were waving. Crouching at the base of the concrete block at the side of the sewage ditch, a wrinkled man was scratching his head. From the upper story window more arms in prison grey were thrust out, waving. At the same moment, the stench sharpened.

Waiting me for me to hop off the plank, the attendant, grinned and circled a finger around his temple. No need for alarm, his gesture was meant to reassure — the loonies in the Kilimanjaro psych ward were harmless....



30 minutes later, I entered a shabby room where the entire back wall was stacked with reams of curling yellowish paper. But for the smell of paper, it could have been taken as curing tobacco leaf.

At a long table, 6 or 7 young men or women sat absently flipping through sheaves of paper pulled from the wall behind. In their middle, a soldier in fatigues slouched with an *Africa Now* magazine.

When I came through the doorway, identified myself and stated my request, all the workers looked up with growing curiosity.

For the next half hour while I waited for my request to be processed, I responded to questions such as the following:

*'Are you married'? 'Are you interested in this girl, here'? (The girl smiled shyly) 'Is there much corruption in Canada?' 'Will you sell me your watch'?*

So went the visit to Kilimanjaro District Tax Office—where I did manage to get the tax clearance certificate needed to exit the land border to Kenya next month.

### August 30



Attempting to blow off steam this afternoon, I jogged through the *mashamba* [fields] 5 kms. down to *Daraja Mbili* before circling round at the Weru-Weru river bridge. From down on the bank, a ragged man ran up waving his arms.

"*Naomba cigarra!*" He yelled, fingers to his lips.

"*Sivuti*" [I don't smoke], I yelled back.

Jogging back up the hill, I looked down to see the man still running after me.

"*Naomba saidia!*" [please help me] He yelled, and then in English: "Gimme shillings!"

I quickened my pace, more annoyed than alarmed. There was no relief around the bend in passing a man with hands in pockets who stared at me, bug-eyed.

Back near Chege's tuck shop a kilometer from the school gate, I passed a trio of young men hunching in the shade of a tree. They stared as I strode quickly past. Then they shouted from behind:

"CIA! CIA!"

I was almost perversely delighted. Being openly called a spy neatly removes any remaining qualms about disappearing from their midst forever. Just 6 more days!

## August 31

As expected, getting through classes today was an ordeal. The students were grim-faced and nervous as I'd never known them before. Having last week's exam to correct at least allowed for more formality—no need for jokes or language games...

My official excuse, offered to teachers at the end of June, is that I have to return to Canada for continuing studies. Still, some of the students wonder why I am 'abandoning' them 2 months before the end of the school year. Others might have heard vicious rumours from the likes of Baba Msolle, with whom I have talked a little too loosely about *siasa* [politics] the very subject he teaches the girls. It was Msolle, after all, who instructed the girls last Saturday afternoon not to let me take their group photograph—as if I had some nefarious purpose in capturing their images...

So in this sudden distrust—verging on paranoia—it will be tough to get to the end of the week... For the first time, I am grateful for the dreary Brick text to fall back on.



This evening I browsed through 2 University of Dar Literature coursework classics borrowed from Kimenyi's bookshelf: Carlos Fuentes' '*Death of Artemio Cruz*' and Tolstoy's '*Death of Ivan Illiyich*'. Both are powerful works, highly relevant to the sense of urgency of late... Before too long, I must read both...

In the meantime, the feeling grows stronger that I have wasted the last 2 years.

I rue the decision in spring '79, to do ESL training rather than tackling the graduate school option. No time was ever riper for creative work or disciplined study—but it was pissed away. The lost time could have been much more effectively used in a prison cell than in this cloister—however exotic the backdrop... In leaving here, nearly at the age of 30, maybe I can set the clock back 2 ½ years, and start again...

## September 2

*Weru-Weru lifeboat ethics?*

Down to our last 2 lunch time chats, Esther told me that Mama Kuhn's latest tirade has been against the local villagers who bring their children to the school infirmary for checkups.

The Head Mistress apparently suspects that some of the locals may be bringing their *kipindi-pindi* [dysentery] or even tuberculosis though the gates. Ester claimed the Head Mistress has flatly told the villagers that the Weru-Weru clinic is set up for students—not as a public facility. So much for sharing in the spirit of *Ujamaa*!

By now, Ester surely knows that any gossip likely to intensify my feelings about the school administration makes for good conversation.



Down to the wire, the stream of visitors grows. Teachers who have only once or twice visited, came today: Mwandari, Elisali, Mamuya and Kiwia. All bade a sincere farewell, but then looked around the not yet bare room and asked:

"What do you have to sell me, Mr. F.?"

To which I had to respond. "Sorry, I've already promised everything. It's all being picked up tomorrow."

"What about your *vikombe*?" [cups] Your curtains, your buckets? Your broom – your coat hangers?"

"Sorry, there's nothing left?"

"Nothing?"

"Nothing!"

*The final entry from Weru-Weru concludes on a more positive note:*

**September 4**

Announcement of my departure was sandwiched between an official welcome to Kimenyi's wife and a question-and-answer session with a visiting official from the Ministry of Education.

"I, um, I'm usually not comfortable with formality," I said, "If I haven't already, I will say my goodbyes to everyone in person."

Unprepared, I was reduced to mumbling a few more stilted lines, which judging by the patronizing smile of the Head Mistress and glances between her deputies Sister Mosha and Mrs. Matoe, were several seconds longer than necessary.

Of course, I could not fail to contrast the perfunctory nod afforded me with the farewell party for the Pozharov's or the "disco" for the Swedish lady I replaced 21 months ago. Still, the proffered lunch that followed offered some acknowledgement of my passing though.

Noticeably absent among the staff meekly pecking their food was the "madwoman" teacher who was occupying the sewing room. No surprise that she has been successfully driven off.

So who will be moving into my vacated flat next week?

The Head Mistress will certainly use her connections in the Ministry to ensure that the next international teacher will be a 'package deal' with connections to other sources of aid... Ideally it will another family, like the Pozharovs, which the Russian embassy may be counted on to provide.

If another English teacher is needed, the Swedes or the Danes will be happy continue supporting the "Weru-Weru experiment". There will certainly not be another Canuck—even if CUSO were inclined to offer one...

The subtle tension during lunch was wiped away by the warm spirit prevailing during dinner with my neighbours, the Sisters of the Assumption. As honoured guest sitting between Sister Chui and Sister Immaculata, I partook of the special meal of grilled beef and Coca-Cola. Before leaving, I promised to visit their sister Assumption house north of Nairobi next week.

I am sincerely touched to have earned their gratitude for my brief passage here. I will fondly remember them.



\*\*\*\*\*

*Continued in 'Back from Tanzania 1981' (Part #1)*