

“Peter Rand’s stylish memoir plunges us into the boozy bonhomie among the journalists, hoteliers, and other Caucasian hangers-out and hangers-on in an African nation. MY ZANZIBAR REVOLUTION brings to mind Graham Greene in its empathic understanding of innocence – its crazy grandeur as well as its destructiveness. This beautifully written, exciting, and insightful memoir is a must-read for anyone interested in Africa-in-transition, or the follies of youth.”

—Scott Spencer, author of *Endless Love* and *A Ship Made of Paper*

## INTRODUCTION

At the age of twenty, Peter Rand flunked out of college, left his comfortable home in California, crossed the ocean, and roamed the world to pursue his destiny as a writer. In Africa, this young drifter, an inexperienced stringer for the *New York Herald Tribune*, stumbled into revolution. He was living on Zanzibar, an island off the coast of Kenya in the Indian Ocean. Fabled as an Arab trading center, Zanzibar was also a legendary slave port where racial anger still simmered under the surface. Revolution broke out immediately following independence from British rule. It was a violent uprising. When it was over, revolution had altered the landscape of Zanzibar. It had also transformed the life of the college dropout.

In his memoir, *My Zanzibar Revolution*, Peter Rand recounts in vivid, powerful detail the land and people of the island of Zanzibar and tells how he rose to the occasion and seized the opportunity to join forces with other American journalists, rubbing shoulders with death. It was a defining moment of profound bravery, kindness, and friendship in a dire, life-threatening situation. Drawing on the raw emotional material of this extraordinary episode, Rand fashioned his first published novel, *Firestorm*. Critics called him “a young Hemingway.”

This rare, firsthand, eye-witness account of the revolution on Zanzibar also reveals British and American geopolitical intrigue in the twilight hours of colonialism, when imperial power began to fade at the onset of African independence. Thus, this book is not only a personal memoir. It’s an important contribution to a part of world history we cannot afford to ignore.

**ALSO BY PETER RAND**

## Non-Fiction:

*Conspiracy of One—Tyler Kent's Secret Plot against FDR, Churchill, and the Allied War Effort*

*Zhou Enlai—The Last Perfect Revolutionary*

*China Hands —The Adventures and Ordeals of the American Journalists Who Joined Forces with the Great Chinese Revolution*

## Fiction:

*Gold from Heaven*

*The Private Rich*

*The Time of the Emergency*

*Firestorm*

To the Memory  
*of*  
William E. Smith

## Acknowledgements

This memoir is drawn from my recollections of an event in which I participated fifty years ago. To write the story as accurately as possible, I submitted the recollections, which I first put to paper fourteen years ago on a visit to Cuba, to notes that I made at the time of the Zanzibar revolution, to an article, never published, that I wrote immediately after the events I have described, and to various published sources. These include: John Peer Nugent's *Call Africa 999*; William E. Smith's *We Must Run While They Walk: A Portrait of Africa's Julius Nyerere*; *The Shadow of the Sun* by Ryszard Kapuscinski; and *Revolution in Zanzibar: An American's Cold War Tale* by Don Petterson. The authors of the aforementioned books experienced the Zanzibar Revolution and have written valuable first-hand accounts of what happened at the time. In addition, I have consulted *The Zanzibar Revolution and Its Aftermath* by Anthony Clayton and *A Guide to Zanzibar*, a guidebook with a foreword by Sir George Mooring, K.C.M.G., the British Resident in Zanzibar in the early 1960s.

I would like to thank Professor John Curtis Perry and Stephen Jeffrey Mason for reading the memoir and providing critical suggestions. They are staunch friends and good readers, and their comments were invaluable.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Professor James Brennan of the University of Illinois, a specialist in the history of East Africa in the twentieth century. Professor Brennan, who is familiar with the story of the Zanzibar revolution, provided me with copies of telegrams from the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library in Austin, Texas, concerning my participation in the events of that time. He also read the manuscript in advance and vouched for the accuracy of the material to the best of his ability. I alone take full responsibility for any errors in the memoir.

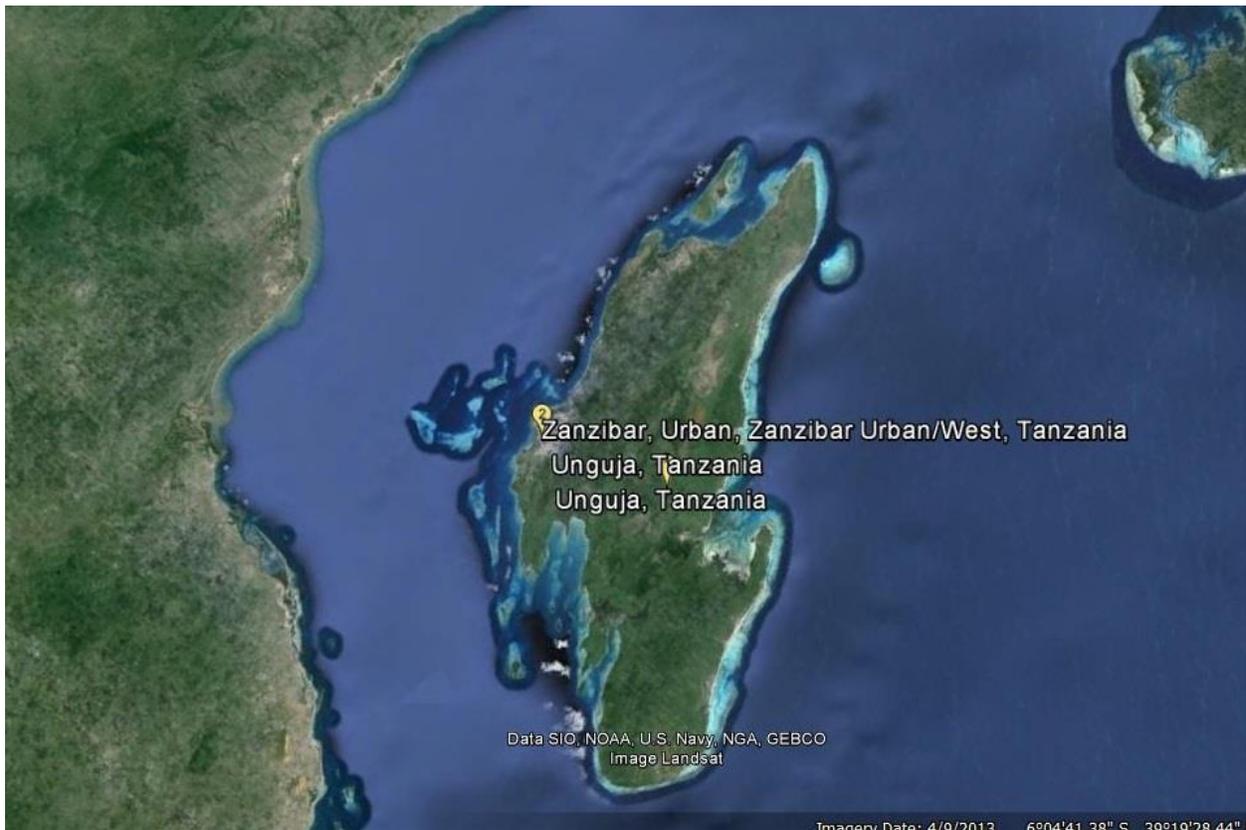
I must express thanks to Genevieve Smith, a friend of long-standing, who gave me access to the photo in the memoir.

This memoir is now in print, online, only through the encouragement and rigorous editing of my publisher, Joanne Wang, of Four Seasons Press, whose questions and brilliant insights were invaluable to the writing process.



# My Zanzibar Revolution

A Memoir



Island of Zanzibar (Mainland Tanzania on the left)



The Hamiltons told me to go to Zanzibar. I can't remember why. They were English friends I had made in Johannesburg. They lived in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, as it was then called. Ian Hamilton was a radio personality in Salisbury, and he and his wife had recently vacationed in Zanzibar, the island set in the Indian Ocean, off the coast of Tanganyika. While there, they had come to know Fritz Picard, the United States Charge d'Affaires. They sent a telegram to Picard and told him I was coming his way.

I was traveling back to Greece from South Africa, but without any specific plans. I had hitch-hiked to Salisbury, from Pretoria, and then I went on to Mozambique, after the Hamiltons had set my course for Zanzibar. In the port of Beira, I booked passage on the *Europa*, a Lloyd Triestino passenger liner, for the two day voyage up the East African coast to Zanzibar. At that time, I was twenty-one. It was April, 1963. I was on the first leg of what turned out to be a three-year sojourn in Europe in Africa, picking up odd jobs and working as a free-lance writer, which is what I told people who were curious about what I was doing, especially in places where, in those days, lone travelers at my stage of life were not that common. I was a really a college drop-out from Southern California who wanted to write, loose in the world.

I had a natural inclination to spend any available money I possessed on temporary excursions into extremely expensive, comfortable forms of pleasant relief, which I could never afford, and which I have never regretted, if only because they often yield experiences valuable in their own way. On the *Europa*, I enjoyed a brief romantic encounter with one Rosalie Potts. I also made friends with Andreas Potgieter, a Cape Dutchman headed for the South African Consulate in Nairobi. And then there was our arrival at dawn in Dar es Salaam. The port was invisible along a coast lined with silver sand and low grass and palm trees under the great dark sky streaked with orange, until, as we entered the narrow straits, it appeared in a small bay as a vision of buildings white and silver.

Night had fallen by the time I disembarked in the company of Fritz Picard after many parting rounds of drinks with my friends on board the *Europa*. Fritz had come to greet me on board the *Europa*. He drove me to the Hotel Pigalle, where I had elected to stay. On the way, Fritz took me past an open space lit by a

huge bonfire where a crowd of Zanzibaris were cheering a man who seemed to be ranting at them from a podium. The bearded speaker was dressed in a loose tunic and baggy pants. Cast in the red glow of the fire, he looked demonic. “That,” Fritz told me, and he jerked his head as he did so to indicate the orator, “is Mohammed Babu, the leader of the African Nationalist Party.” After fifteen months in prison, Babu – Abdulrahman Mohammed Babu - had been released that very day and, Fritz explained, his supporters were staging a celebration. He told me that Babu, who had studied Marxist philosophy at the University of London, was an instigator of revolutionary fervor against outsiders who tried to influence the internal affairs of Zanzibar, be they colonial, imperialist, or mainland Africans. He wanted to turn the island into an independent socialist state. In his role as a radical African political activist he already had paid several visits to Red China. Babu’s immediate objective, as a route to political power, according to Fritz Picard, was to rid Zanzibar of Project Mercury, an American satellite tracking station the U.S. had built on the island. Babu, and other Zanzibaris, some radical, others not necessarily so, believed that Project Mercury was a CIA operation. Babu was an obsession of Fritz Picard’s. He had alerted the State Department about the menace to regional stability that Babu posed, but to no avail.

What I stumbled into on Zanzibar was a situation ready-made for Graham Greene: a torpid, lush island sultanate that still functioned under the protection of the British, drifting absently toward independence in a hidden undercurrent of political antagonism. The British had already transferred home rule to their East African colonies, and planned to lower the Union Jack in Kenya and Zanzibar at the end of the year, in December, 1963. The day of Jomo Kenyatta, Milton Obote, Julius Nyerere, and, perhaps, Babu, was about to dawn. Jomo Kenyatta was destined to rule Kenya after independence in 1963. Obote led Uganda to independence in 1962. Nyerere became the first Prime Minister of Tanganyika upon independence in 1961. Great changes were underway in the region. Still, in Zanzibar, in April, 1963, despite the bonfire, and Babu’s rally, change, to a casual visitor in that languorous place, at that moment, seemed rather hard to imagine. It was too humid, for one thing.

The monsoon rain poured straight down out of the sky every day. For hours it slammed on the corrugated rooftops of Zanzibar buildings and hammered the cars, the trees and the streets.

The Hotel Pigalle was the considerably less expensive alternative to the Zanzibar Hotel, a private house in the center of town that had been converted into a somewhat posh hotel with a comfortable bar where you could extrude through your pores the Pimm’s Cups you consumed under fans suspended from the ceiling high above that circulated the air with their lethargically revolving blades. I carefully rationed my expeditions to the Zanzibar Hotel in an effort to conserve my money,

which was running low, after the expensive voyage I had taken on the *Europa*. The Hotel Pigalle could also take pride in its well-stocked bar, but it was situated in the dining room, which resounded with mealtime clatter much of the time, even though the occupancy was never very impressive.

Marita Dyer Melville, who owned the Pigalle, was ever present. She was a woman of more than a certain age. She could not quite conceal this fact despite her coif of orange curls. She had a face of soft flesh webbed with fine lines. She was quite large and hampered in her movements by arthritis. She wore lipstick of bright red and a touch of rouge to brighten her appearance. She was a character worthy of Joseph Conrad, not because she was Polish, as happened to be the case, but because in her predicament and her situation she was a person of many aspects and a being profound enough to invite the considered reflection that Conrad bestows on the characters he develops in his story telling. This was a woman who had married at fourteen a nobleman in the Russian cavalry who took her to live in Omsk, where she lived during World War One and learned to speak Russian. This husband was killed in the war; at the time of the Russian Revolution, she fled to Paris and married a man who became the French Consul in Zanzibar, where she had lived since the 1920s. In Zanzibar, they had lived grandly in the Arab house that later became the British Club; after the death of the consul, she had married Dyer-Melville, the British Public Works Commissioner of Zanzibar. Widowed, endowed with a government pension, she had opened the Hotel Pigalle, which she may have been equipped to run, and in any case did so, from her desk in the dining room, where she used her cane to bang on the floor when she called for Suleiman, her head boy. She was forever trying to balance the books, negotiating with officials about building violations, and screaming and squealing in a high-pitched voice. I never knew whether she was laughing or crying, and sometimes she was doing both at the same time. She had once been a *grande dame* on Zanzibar, but she had never actually learned to speak English very well, so the commands she continually shouted out at her servants were almost impossible to understand.

Her bartender, Bakari, introduced me to Ali Jaffer. It might not be too much of an exaggeration to say that Ali Jaffer was the press attaché for Babu and his party, which had joined forces with the African Independence Party of Zanzibar and Pemba, Zanzibar's sister island in the clove growing business.

Once on Zanzibar, I quickly formed a feeling of familiarity with the place and the people. The town was a warren of narrow streets that ran between high walls of houses with dark, heavy wood doors ornamented with fixtures of gleaming brass, or cool doorways that opened onto cool interiors, and open spaces of bright tropical trees and lush green foliage. The atmosphere was swollen with heat, and sensual, and busy with wild birds of exotic blues and reds and yellows, dipping and

flying high, crying as they went, noisy with the sounds of shouting brown barefoot boys, bicycle bells, honking horns. The air was thick with the smell of curry, herbs, fish, sweet food, garlic. Sometimes you heard wailing music. It was humid and languorous, but also electric: There was a promise to all the color and noise and bustle, anticipation among the restless humid bodies that seemed to go unrealized. You got up every day with a sense of expectancy, and every night you went to bed somehow unfulfilled. It was a place ripe with conspiracies that died on the vine.

Bakari took me to meet Ali Jaffer in his hut in the native section. There, in his earthen floor dwelling, Ali Jaffer turned out, on a mimeograph machine provided by the Chinese, copies of *Zanews*, Babu's newsletter, with stories filed by the New China News Service about the evils of capitalist exploitation, all reinforced with facts and figures.

One day, Babu took me on a tour of the island. He was unquestionably charismatic. He was a little wild. He was thirty nine then, and he'd seen a lot. He had a bushy afro and beard and a big loose gap-toothed smile. What made him such a popular politician, in my judgment, as I look back on him, was the sense of immediate, intimate friendliness he conveyed; he laughed easily, joked freely in English, and seemed to connect in an honest way as he discoursed intently on the evils of the American satellite tracking station and the virtues of collective farming. He was bright and energetic; in the speed of his talk and the energy of his movement he conveyed this. Nothing seemed to slow him down. Later that day, as we sat around in Ali Jaffer's house, we consumed enough *tende*, or cane spirit, to turn most people catatonic, but Babu was coherent, ever on message.

I felt very liberated in the company of Babu. I can think of several reasons why. For one thing, he had spent time in China, and I could relate to that. My father had been a journalist during the Chinese civil war, in the 1940s. That's where he earned his reputation as a world-class journalist. I had never been to China, but my father had returned from China with stories and artifacts and introduced us to friends who had lived there. My godfathers were China hands. I also had read about China under Mao. These years, when Babu was there, were perhaps the best years in Mao's China, although no one outside China knew about the terrible famine that Mao had brought about after the Great Leap Forward. I could relate to the revolutionary enthusiasm Babu conveyed from his China experience. He was a direct link to China.

Somehow, this encounter with Babu reinforced my connection to China, and, by association, with my father. Dad was a great professional success, a New Yorker correspondent. He had been absent during much of my boyhood. Still, I could identify with his adventurous life. It's why I had set out to travel the world. I never wanted to be a journalist, as he was. I wanted to write fiction. I had published stories in the school literary magazine, and in my senior year had won a

prize in a short story contest that provided a scholarship to New York University. I was discouraged from accepting this prize and went to the University of California at Berkeley instead, and while I was there I published a short story in the *Occident*, the literary magazine.

When I flunked out, I went to see the Dean of Students.

“If you want to write, why go to college?” he said. “Faulkner never went to college.”

I didn't know what I wanted at that age, but I knew that I was a writer, and I was in search of myself as I drifted in the world, writing stories and keeping a journal. I was lonely and confused, but I wanted to prove myself. It was exhilarating to cruise around in the company of an intellectual revolutionary like Babu, someone who was making a difference in the world, and who took me seriously, and made me feel that I was witness to something important.

The story, according to Babu, as I understood it, was all about the oppression of African laborers on Zanzibar at the hands of Arab landowners, for whom the British had provided a social infrastructure on this island protectorate they were about to unload. Babu showed me on our tour how the African Zanzibaris lived and worked like slaves on the clove plantations. The Africans on Zanzibar and Pemba were slow to anger, but every so often, Babu pointed out, they had risen up and, in a great orgy of slaughter, chopped their oppressors to pieces with those razor sharp machetes, called *pangas*, blades of curved metal they used to slash the encroaching vegetation. The presence of the British on Zanzibar had smothered this eruptive violence, but it was always just beneath the surface of life there. The British knew this. As a great imperialist force, they could hold sway as long as Zanzibar was their political protectorate. They could maintain a status quo in which the Arab landowners presided over their fiefdom and the Africans who worked on the plantations. But Babu pointed out that when independence came to the island at year's end, that protection would disappear.

Meanwhile, the Arab landlords went out and about in the narrow alleyways in their linen robes untroubled, it seemed, by this slumbering African rage in their midst, almost fatalist in their calm, despite the political change in the wind. The Sultan of Zanzibar lived in his palace down near the harbor, a gray stone building with a portico under which a red Armstrong-Siddeley automobile awaited his pleasure. The Sultan, the titular head of state, in his scuffed and crenellated palace, went on living his rather secluded, indifferent life of seeming permanence, an illusion reinforced on Zanzibar by the British presence.

The British residents of Zanzibar used to repair to the English Club, where Mrs. Dyer Melville had once lived in colonial splendor. This was a bastion of comfort, a high Arab house situated on the edge of the Indian Ocean facing west. A Union Jack flapped and fluttered listlessly from the second story balcony. Inside,

the rooms were cool and dark with high ceilings and tiled floors. Imperturbable calm ruled these precincts. On the second floor, in the library, one could escape into volumes of the works of Hardy, Galsworthy, Trollope and Trevelyan, among others bound in dusty leather that filled the shelves of glass-paned cabinets. The sitting room, down a wide, palm-lined, carpeted hallway, looked out on the harbor. Here, members of the club could sit in wicker chairs, at wicker tables, and read the London Illustrated News, or lounge outside on a wide terrace, drink pink gin and gaze at the dhows and sailboats gently bobbing on the placid water.

The romance of Zanzibar was all in its Arab flavor, and the vibrancy of that flavor was in the life of the port, an ancient slave and ivory trading port visited by merchants and other maritime travelers from the Persian Gulf since times medieval. Ownership of this rich, strategically placed tropical island had passed over the centuries from the early Arab settlers to the Portuguese in the year 1503, soon after Vasco de Gama visited the island. In 1498, Vasco de Gama was the first European to reach India by sea. On his return from India to Portugal in 1499 the Portuguese navigator made a port of call in Zanzibar. The Arabs of Oman, seized Zanzibar and Pemba, her sister island, soon after they took Mombasa, the Indian Ocean Kenya port, in 1698. The Sultan of Oman, founder of modern Zanzibar and her clove industry, according to my *Guide to Zanzibar*, moved his capital to Zanzibar from Muscat in 1832, and until the recent past, Zanzibar was the major center of trade along the coast of East Africa, and, commercially and politically, the dominant port of call. The Sultan of Zanzibar banned the slave trade in the 1870s, which paved the way for an agreement with Britain and Germany in 1886 that recognized the rule of the Sultan over Zanzibar, Pemba, and a ten-mile-wide strip of Kenya coast, in return for which the British East Africa Association took over the administration of Zanzibar. Ultimately, Zanzibar became a British protectorate, in 1890, even as, under the Sultan, it remained, until the Ninth of December, 1963, an Islamic state.

From Zanzibar you perceived the world through highly decorative, very old portals of an Arab trading center. Through arched doorways, you looked out upon a placid, shining sea under an enormous sky, a view softened by the air, scented by the perfume of the bright flowers, and from that vantage point your vision might be arrested by a swift, small fishing dhow in full sail, steered by a Zanzibari in a short white cotton tunic. This Arab flavor was everywhere, especially in the Old Town, down through which ran narrow stone streets shaded by the high unbroken walls of ancient houses, ornamented with balconies of dark wood, that seemed to lean out over the street at each other, parted only by a strip of blue sky, and along which flitted figures in their light cotton jellabyas. The romance was not that of a sleepy port like Lamu Old Town in Kenya, the oldest and best-preserved Swahili settlement in East Africa. Zanzibar's Old Town was intense with life, a place of

concentrated commercial energy in the morning hours, and again in the evening, when Zanzibaris flung open those great doors studded with brass behind which they retreated in the midday furnace to cool, high ceilinged rooms, for hours of repose.

It was a rich and vivid society of all kinds of people: Comorians, Seychelloises, Parsees, Arabs, Goans, Africans, Ismailis, Sikhs. You saw them in the teeming market place during the day: Africans, in torn Khaki shorts with smooth legs nicked pink, children with dirty mouths, old women with monkey faces, men in pajamas with lined foreheads, sunken eyes, shiny black curly hair, missing a few teeth, men in jellabyas, veiled women in purdah in long black skirts walking with bare cracked feet, some with brightly painted toenails on which the polish was chipped.

On the fringes of Stone Town, the urban center of Zanzibar, you could wander streets strewn with mango skins among flies and scrawny chickens pecking away at the ground in the smell of small kebab fires where, in the market place, shoppers could find tripe, or liver, or brains or intestines displayed on stone or wood slabs, or examine the containers of what looked like orange sand, or green sand, or yellow sand – dry herbs – and buckets of over-ripe mangos and pawpaw. Always the cars, too many cars, horning through the chaos and collective odor of urine, fish, meat, bodies, perfume. Not long before I got there, the people of Pemba and Zanzibar had experienced the blessings of a boom in the world market for cloves. This, some said, had brought about a glut in cars, many of which, in Pemba, now rusted away, stripped of their parts, useless to their formerly prosperous owners, once the boom passed on.

I spent some time in the company of Fritz Picard and his wife Shoana. They were good fun. Fritz was a great conversationalist. He had slightly protuberant, bloodshot eyes in a thin face, thick black eyebrows and black shadows under his eyes. He looked like a man who never slept. His eyes seemed to penetrate you. They were eyes that listened. Picard spoke in brilliant, incomplete sentences. His conversation couldn't keep pace with his brain, which raced with ideas. He was impatient, funny; he was quick to bark out a laugh. He had a straight nose, flared nostrils, red elbows. He was all nervous energy. He was the man in the old *Bulletin* ad shouting on the streetcar while all the other passengers are lost in the pages of the newspaper, in Philadelphia, where “nearly everyone reads the *Bulletin*.”

Fritz knew that something was going to happen on Zanzibar, but nobody was paying attention. That may be one reason he drank so much. Although, on Zanzibar, it was hard not to drink.

The fate of Zanzibar was not going to be rushed. The air was part of the temperament of the place. It was laden with the stench of tropical rot and Indian

food, burning in the hot, wild sun. Cigarettes took longer to burn in the Zanzibar air. Smoke hung in the air, clung to the mouth, to the nostrils. It took an enormous effort to walk, as I took to doing at midday. Streaming with sweat, I would wend my way to the Zanzibar Hotel, to slump in the comparative cool of the dark wood lounge under the fan. There I sat in the acrid smell of damp, wood furniture, to await the cool approach of the waiter, Abudi, in his long white linen robe, bearing a tall lukewarm Amstel beer. Here, or at the Pigalle, or anywhere cool enough to offer relief, you could talk for hours about who was doing what, and to whom, but as soon as you got outside, it was all you could do to get back to your room and collapse on the bed and sleep. Unless you were Babu, who would still be talking somewhere nonstop.

One afternoon a telegram arrived informing me that my stepfather had died, suddenly, of a heart attack. He was fifty one. He was a tennis pro in Montecito, and he'd dropped dead of a heart attack at the end of a day on the tennis court. Byron was a surrogate father to me. I happened to share a temperamental outlook with him. I felt his sudden loss very severely because he had been a sympathetic man in my life when I needed one, and we had grown close. He was good-natured, warm, and, in the opulent Southern California where I had grown up, a "sunny place for shady people," he was that rarity, a real person. When he married my mother, the quality of our life changed. He happened to be someone whom all kinds of people loved, and at the Biltmore Hotel tennis courts where he taught tennis you met all kinds of people who were drawn there not just because they loved to play tennis, but because he was there, and now, too, so was my mother. In this setting, from the time I was ten, my own social gifts flourished. This was what had made it possible during my later sojourn in the wilderness to adapt to the different social situations in which I found myself. Thanks to Byron, I developed social confidence. I was shocked by his death, the first one in my immediate family. I flew across the world as fast I was able to join my mourning family back in California.

But I was determined to return to Zanzibar. I wanted to write about the place. I had managed to save up enough money to go back. Over the summer, I prepared for my return by studying Swahili at U.C.L.A. I was fortunate at the time that my father, Christopher Rand, was a staff correspondent for *The New Yorker Magazine*. I turned to him for help.

My father and I had a good relationship. Yet he was a man with many problems of his own, and it was hard for him to find the sympathy or the emotional energy to understand what made me tick. Unlike my two older brothers, I did not fare well in school, although I got by until I reached college. He knew I wanted to

be a writer, but I don't think he wanted his children to follow his own difficult path, and he used to suggest alternatives. Architecture, for example. I was not cut out to be an architect. When I set out for Europe and went to South Africa to visit friends there, he had given me his blessing, but rather absently. I now went to him with my Zanzibar plan and forced him to consider what I should do.

After some deliberation, he arranged for me to visit William Shawn, the editor of *The New Yorker*, who decided that Zanzibar might well prove to be of interest, and agreed to reserve it for me as an area of research. In New York, I also went to see Sy Friedin, the Foreign Editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*, at the suggestion of a family friend who had been a reporter on the *International Herald Tribune* in Paris. Friedin was a jovial, round-faced man with glasses who welcomed the chance to give me a letter of introduction to whomever it might concern on *Herald Tribune* stationery stating that I was a Special Correspondent for the paper. It cost him nothing, and who knew? I might encounter a serious story along the way. He also gave me a collect cable card so that I could file stories collect to the *Tribune*.

In January, 1964, I was back on Zanzibar. I had traveled from Egypt up the Nile and overland to Khartoum, and then by steamer to Juba in what is now South Sudan. With fellow adventurers, I rode up to Kampala, the capital of Uganda, in the back of a truck, and continued from there on down to Nairobi.

It was the same, but it was not the same.

Zanzibar, Kenya, Tanganyika, and Uganda were now independent of British rule. On December ninth, still in Khartoum, my travel companions and I had listened, on short wave radio, to the celebration, in Kenya, as the Union Jack was lowered, and the new flag of an independent nation was raised. This was *Uhuru*. Freedom at last from British rule, after the *Mau Mau* war of terror conducted by *Mzee*, Joma Kenyatta, "The Old Man," the founding patriarch. Crouched around our transistor in the dark night, we could hear the strains of "God Save the Queen," followed by the national anthem of Kenya.

On the surface, *Uhuru*, which in Swahili means freedom, had not changed things much. In Nairobi, the intolerably cheerful voices of the local Kenya British still rang in the air at the Thorn Tree, the outdoor café of the New Stanley Hotel. In the Long Bar of the New Stanley, churlish rearguard Kenya Brits still congregated for pink gins at lunchtime, and openly mocked the new African rulers. One customer brought his dog to the Long Bar. He kept it on a long leash coiled in his hand that he released when an African messenger wandered into this all-white precinct. His angrily yapping little dog ran out on the leash, shrieking and jumping in the air, trying to fly at the African, whom it seemed the dog had been trained to attack.

Everything was just the way I remembered it. Yet already the shift in power was evincing itself. When I arrived in Kampala by truck from Juba, the talk everywhere was about the aftershocks from a mock-*Uhuru* party that some white colonials had thrown on the eve of liberation. The new government of Milton Obote had expelled a dozen Europeans from the country. The house of the host had been set on fire, and nine members of a Uganda youth movement had been accused of arson. They were also arraigned on charges of kidnapping the Business Manager of the *Argus*, a local newspaper, who had been marched through the streets of the market in the middle of the night. It was the first scandal of its kind to occur in Uganda.

I lingered in Nairobi over the Christmas and New Year holiday. While there, I dropped in on Jack Nugent, the *Newsweek* bureau chief. I had stayed with him in 1962, en route to South Africa. He was quite a cheerful, wisecracking kind of guy, an Irish Catholic from Brooklyn, blond and good looking, quite savvy. He took great pride in being a former Marine. His secretary, who despised him in a good-natured way, used to call Jack “an ambulance chaser.” Jack lived out on the Limuru Road quite grandly in a house he liked you to know he’d rented from one of the Mountbattens. Jack, and Phyllis, his dreamy, beautiful wife, whom he called “Babe,” had a horse, and an *askari*, or armed guard, and a newborn child, and a Rhodesian Ridgeback. This time, when I went to see him, Jack seemed a little worried. He’d written a *Newsweek* cover story on Kenya that had outraged Tom Mboya, and Jack thought he might be deported. Mboya, founder of the Nairobi People’s Congress Party, was a key Kenyan politician. Among other things, in his article, Jack had made the claim that Mboya owned one hundred and ten suits. This was the kind of slur that made caricatures out of African leaders. The youth wing of Mboya’s party had taken particular offense to Jack’s story.

I flew over to Zanzibar on the Fifth of January from Mombasa. The flight was an omen. The plane, a Dakota propjet, lifted off the runway and began to lumber upward. I heard the explosion. It was a short blast. No one else seemed to hear it. We were still over the airfield when the plane tilted drastically forward and the glided downward and bumped onto a grassy field. There it came to stop. I saw two fire engines racing up alongside the plane. The pilot, his face stark white, opened the cockpit door. He stood in his white uniform at the head of the cabin, his head tilted slightly to one side. He looked haggard, lank moist blond hair plastered on his forehead.

“We’ve had a bit of a crisis,” he said in a low-key voice, drained of emotion.

Zanzibar was furiously hot and stifling, but sunny, now, in contrast to how I had left it, during the monsoon season of April. The island sweltered in the

lukewarm waters of the Indian Ocean. Sweat dribbled down my face in constant little rivers. I felt already limp and used up in the mornings, and the effort of dragging myself down to the United States Embassy for my mail at midday finished me for most of the afternoon. Even the overhead fan at the guest house where I was staying, owned by a local Arab named Salim Barwani, seemed to require an immense effort to turn around.

The heat set the tone of Zanzibar, as ever. The island's waking hours were between six a.m. and two in the afternoon. At that time it was a wilderness of noise, the chatter of little children, the wailing Arab music, the ceaseless screaming of exotic blue, yellow and red birds, the honking of cars and the ringing of bicycle bells in the narrow streets and the high-pitched shouts of the street vendors. Noise, and the restless humid bodies of the Zanzibaris, seemed to defy the torpor of the morning. Then, at two, everything ceased. Doors closed, windows were shuttered, cars vanished. The Europeans generally spent the afternoons playing tennis, or golf – the British always looked immaculately cool on the golf course just outside the town in their white ducks – or swimming.

This was all much as I had left it, minus the rain. Still, it was impossible to ignore the political unrest that had surfaced on Zanzibar. The day I returned to Zanzibar, Mohammed Babu was the feature story in the *Nation*, a Nairobi tabloid. It was all about politics. Babu had formed a radical pro- communist party, the *Umma* Party, soon after I'd last seen him. The ZNP, the new ruling party, and Sheikh Mohammed Shamte, Zanzibar's new leader, had banned *Umma* right after independence. The government had raided the *Umma* office, confiscated office equipment supplied to Babu by the Chinese Communists, and banned his party. The police on Zanzibar had issued a warrant for his arrest, but Babu had slipped away in a canoe on January 8<sup>th</sup>. According to the *Nation*, Babu had been sighted in Dar es Salaam.

Babu, in fact, was a ZNP renegade. He'd been a founding member of the ZNP. He and a fellow Zanzibari named Ali Muhsin had created the Zanzibar Nationalist Party to oppose the Afro-Shirazi Party, which the British administration had helped the Africans on the island to bring into being. With one eye trained on African political leaders of mainland East Africa, the Brits had put their weight behind Abeid Karume, a boatman with no formal education, but a man nevertheless graced with a certain political shrewdness. They had decided to support the Africans on Zanzibar. By doing so, they had institutionalized ethnic rivalry between Africans and Arabs.

It may seem odd that a radical like Babu, who had allied himself with the Communist Chinese, would found a party supported by the Sultan that represented Arab landowners on the island. Yet it makes sense, given the circumstances of the 1950s. Babu hated the Arab landowners, but he also opposed what he considered

British manipulation. Ali Muhsin, his co-founder, was from a rich Arab landowning family, but in those days he was a fervent Arab nationalist. He and Babu opposed outside political interference of any kind on Zanzibar. Julius Nyerere in Tanganyika sent his own party activists from the mainland to harass Arab voters during the local elections of 1957. The ZNP, Babu's party, protested this intervention, even though it was on the side of the African workers. At the time, the ZNP seemed determined to fly against prevailing pan-African political winds. That may explain why Karume, the African boatman backed by the Brits, won that round of elections for home rule.

As Secretary General of the ZNP, Babu made numerous trips to Eastern Europe and China between 1957 and 1961. That's when he developed strong ties with Communist China that made him a force with whom everyone had to reckon. He injected Marxist ideology into the ZNP platform. He launched the publication of *Zanews*, his broadsheet, with its link to the New China News Agency. He also took his stand against Project Mercury, accusing the Americans of using the satellite tracking station as a cover for a secret missile staging installation.

In 1961, in a new round of elections in Zanzibar, the ZNP won the electoral vote. In a switch vehemently opposed by Babu, the ZNP now called for a gradual approach to independence. In view of this political opportunism, the British also switched sides. They dropped their African friends and put their muscle behind the ZNP. Some of the educated Arab leaders of the party had worked as employees of the British in the Zanzibar civil service. The British were comfortable with these people. They could talk to them. They had trouble communicating with largely uneducated African nationalists. Babu fiercely protested the new political alignment, which allowed the British to delay independence. He was now a danger to both the ZNP and the British. Together, the ZNP leaders with the consent of the British Resident arrested Babu for sedition, accusing him of instigating arson, a charge he strenuously fought. He had just been released from prison after serving fifteen months in prison when I first saw him before the roaring fire in front of a crowd of cheering followers.

In the nine months since I'd last seen him, Babu had broken his ties to both of the main political parties on Zanzibar. In December, shortly before my return, the British had turned the reins of Zanzibar governance over to the ZNP, which was now a conservative, and uneasy, party of Arab landowners. Babu, by then, was driving a book mobile around Zanzibar filled with Marxist literature. He had become a fringe politician. His *Umma*, or "Masses" Party, had a following of radicalized Zanzibar youth. The ZNP, under Babu's leadership had sent some of these radical Zanzibari boys to Cuba for military training. They'd come back,

trained to use automatic rifles, a threat to the new government, which had taken steps to outlaw the *Umma* Party.

Babu was a wily opponent. In July 1963 the British had cancelled his passport to keep him from getting off the island. They didn't want him to attend preparations they were holding in London for upcoming independence. Babu, the ever resourceful canoeist, paddled to the mainland, wheedled a passport out of the Tanganyika authorities, flew to London to crash the constitutional conference underway, and then proceeded to Peking for a visit before he reappeared in Zanzibar, soon after independence.

Babu could never be counted out. Once again, he'd made his escape. He was a volatile ingredient in the political situation that seethed under the brilliant, but torrid, surface of Zanzibar when I flew in on the Fifth of January, 1964.

The new government, under Sheikh Mohammed Shamte, had the support of Sultan Jamshid. He was the son of Sultan Seyyid Sir Abdullah Bin Khalifa, owner of the red Hawker Siddley, the melancholy looking inhabitant of that gray stone palace down by the harbor. He'd died, suddenly, in July, and Jamshid, his son, had inherited the impotent role of titular head of state. Jamshid, thirty-three, was a fancier of race cars. He liked to sail and hunt. This charming young sultan had no popular appeal at all. The government couldn't count on him. The new leaders had thrown mainland police out of the gendarmerie, armed the local Arabs, and, in addition to banning Babu's party, had plans to move on Karume, the longshoreman, an African, who led the opposition, which was increasingly restive. Babu and Karume had been working together since the summer to roil the waters. Yet within the opposition all was not harmonious. Karume hated his ASP spokesman, a veterinarian, and a literate, well-spoken member of the Arab community named Sheik Othman Sharif. Those sophisticated British who still lived on Zanzibar were waiting for an eruption, of some kind, politically, within the year. Why did the British expect something to happen? Zanzibar, in Arabic, means "the black town." It had always been a slave port. In its years as Zanzibar's protector, Great Britain had not solved the basic problem. It had not done so in the preparations that it had made for its own departure. Independence was not the real issue. Festering African resentment toward Arab overlords on Zanzibar that burned beneath the sluggish surface of daily life – that was the ongoing problem. It was due to erupt.

No such thoughts crossed my mind at the time. The presence of Chinese visitors did strike me as odd because I'd never seen them there before, but I assumed they were friends of Babu. Gossip was feverish in Zanzibar: People confided all sorts of demonic suspicions about one another all the time. This was a flavor of the place, whether in the salon of the Zanzibar Hotel, or at the Pigalle – whose respective owners were sworn enemies – or at the street vendors. The

atmosphere was slightly mad in the heat, the colors violent, birds screaming. Part of these early days I spent trying to sort out how I was ever going to realize the plan I had presented to Mr. Shawn and others to write about Zanzibar. I had to get my mind on the project at hand, which I circumvented by making my way, every day at midday, to the Zanzibar Hotel.

I was drawn there by the presence of three people: a thin, gangling man with a ginger mustache and bright blue eyes named John Cloete, who was in the business on Zanzibar of packaging lobster and shrimp he caught in traps for the wholesale market, and a man and his wife who had come to Zanzibar from Kenya for a brief vacation and had formed a friendship with the shellfish entrepreneur.

I don't know how they'd met. The couple from Kenya was staying in the hotel. The husband drank heavily and seemed amiably inebriated most of the time, though quite capable of holding up his end of a conversation. His wife was enormous. She was in a placid way also a comely woman: black, smooth hair, white, smooth complexion, lively blue eyes. She was, for a woman so very overweight, fiery, full of life and possessed of a dangerous, probably unbalanced, sense of her own power who, it occurred to me, would not hesitate to strike anyone very hard with the back of her hand who said something she didn't like. She did the talking, she directed the conversation, she set the men straight with her minatory, slightly mad, jolly bullying.

Rose had only half decided to send her husband home without her to the children and move in with John, the shellfish merchant, who had eagerly invited her to do so, and with whom she may already have started having an affair because she spoke quite openly in front of us, me, her husband and her lover, about how exciting it was to have found him, although in a detached sort of way, one that permitted John to agree fervently, as though he had introduced her to something he was very glad she had so much enjoyed, and now what they had to do was discuss, at great length, what she was going to do, in the course of much else that came up for discussion, stories she and her husband traded about their adventures, the usual racist nonsense to which postwar British working class immigrants to East Africa subscribed, and gossip concerning people neither I nor the shellfish man, her lover, knew. John, the entrepreneur, came from a rather distinguished South African family and not, like the husband Rose was about to send packing, someone who drank to excess. He was alert, attentive, and eager for a kind of long-term sexual romp.

Suddenly, after days of this indecision, Rose and her husband vanished. This did not seriously concern John. He was still the gregarious, friendly soul he had been in the company of Rose. They had finished their vacation, he told me, and returned to the mainland. I continued to meet with John for beers at the hotel. Now, I spent those hours talking with John about life in Zanzibar, and Zanzibar

politics. Once Rose had left, he drove me around the island, his version of it, which had all the charms of a tropical paradise: long silver beaches, tall palm trees leaning out over the sand, mango and mangrove plantations, and smugglers' hideouts, not to mention leopards. It was a place forever enraptured, it seemed, by the past, when Rita Hayworth came to stay on her honeymoon with Prince Aly Khan, a playboy famous for the stamina he exercised in the act of making love. The honeymoon couple stayed in a palace owned by his father, the Aga Khan, head of the Ismaili sect, who was said to be a direct descendent of the Prophet Mohammed. The palace, now empty, stood above an empty, shimmering beach at dusk, facing east across the ocean, and you could imagine only how idyllic, and how hopeless, it must have been there, for two people unaccustomed to seclusion when they were not employed in fervent sexual activity, however frequent and protracted.

Sex there was. The visitor to Zanzibar could always find prostitutes – male and female – in Zanzibar. When I was there, the heir to a great European chocolate fortune used to fly down to Zanzibar from his private island near Lamu for sexual adventures with teenaged Arab boys. The atmosphere on Zanzibar was richly suggestive of erotic possibility. It hung on the air.

One night, after Rose and her husband had left the island, John and I returned to his house on the water after inspecting his lobster traps, to find Rose firmly planted on his verandah, with her suitcase, having abandoned her husband somewhere between Tanganyika and Kenya. She seemed pleased with her decision. John went inside and returned with beer and we sat in the gathering twilight while Rose described her escape from her husband, after their car broke down somewhere on the road between Mombasa and Nairobi.

She had with her a copy of the *Nation* that she had brought with her. Babu was on the front page, in a photograph, under a headline that announced, "BABU – FIGHT IS ON." The accompanying article was datelined Dar es Salaam, where Babu was awaiting the arrival, from London, of a pair of lawyers, to fight the legal charges against him, and the banning of his party. We discussed what appeared to be Babu's increasing ill fortune. On top of everything, two days earlier an automobile had struck and killed one of Babu's young daughters on the Mnazi Moja road, the main road to the airport. The authorities had evidently decided to wait for him to return to attend her funeral and then arrest him. They had set up roadblocks on the island. The night before Rose returned, police had stopped John, and inspected his car, looking for Babu.

"Poor man," John said. "He's on the skids."

That was a Saturday night, the Eve of Ramadan, as it happened. As I made my way back to the guesthouse of Salim Barwani, the streets were throbbing with

festivity, as Zanzibaris ate and drank together to prepare for the ritual daytime fast of Ramadan that was now upon them.

I awoke in the morning to revolution. At seven o'clock, Salim Barwani came into my room, woke me, and told me to come upstairs, that revolution was underway.

I was excited. I quickly dressed, forgetting to put on socks in my haste, and dashed upstairs. The other guests – four Peace Corps volunteers on vacation from Ethiopia – were standing around the dining room table in strained silence, trying to hear the sound of gunfire. Periodically a rifle shot went off from the street down below, but otherwise the morning was absolutely still. The insurrectionists, who had come ashore on the southern end of the fifty-two mile long island, were still outside of town, and Salim Barwani was trying to find out over the phone what was happening.

It was impossible to know exactly what had happened, or who was behind the trouble, at this stage. Nevertheless, as the morning advanced, we began to piece together what had happened from odd bits of information relayed over the radio, and from Ali Muhsin, the Minister of Information, who was a friend of Barwani. Some of the rebels, it seems, had come over to the island from the mainland in the early hours of the morning and joined forces with others who had awaited their arrival. Armed with knives and *pangas*, the rebel force had stormed the main arsenal and easily overwhelmed the guards, who were groggy from feasting. The rebels helped themselves to machine guns and automatic rifles from an armory of more than three thousand weapons, and stormed up the island, ravaging farms as they went. Although by dawn they had not yet occupied the airport or the Cable and Wireless office, located in town, down near the port, they had set up roadblocks and taken over the hospital.

Gradually, we began to receive reports about some strange field marshal, who had evidently led the insurrection. Early in the morning, the rebels had captured the radio station, and after initial news, all we could get was an unbroken medley of music, until midday, when the field marshal made a speech in upcountry Swahili in a crazy, high-pitched voice.

By now, Salim Barwani knew that, for Arabs like him, it was all over. He was a calm, urbane man. He had been an early Arab district commissioner on Zanzibar, much respected by Arabs and Africans alike. He told me, in flawless English, that, sooner or later, the rebels would come to take him away. He was, he explained, to cut short my protestations, a member of a land-owning family of longstanding on Zanzibar. He was a fatalist. Babu had filled the heads of rebels with the Communist revolutions in China and Cuba. He expected to be seized and executed by African laborers who saw their chance now to overthrow the rich

oppressor. Barwani had a revolver, and he offered it to his guests, but none of us wanted to take it. Reluctantly, I agreed to keep it, although I had never used a handgun. As soon as I could, I took it downstairs and hid it under my clothes in the bottom bureau drawer in my room. He urged me not to use the gun for his protection.

By noon, it had dawned on me that I was perhaps the only foreign correspondent on the island. This was a situation not unlike that which forms the premise of *Scoop*, Evelyn Waugh's comic novel, about William Boot, a gardening columnist who is sent by mistake to cover a war in Africa by the editors of *The Beast*, a British daily. I was Boot of *The Beast*, only instead of finding myself holed up at the Itegue Hotel in Addis Ababa, here I was on Zanzibar.

The thought that I might be the sole representative of the foreign press was something that I should have found thrilling. This was the chance of a lifetime. I already knew stories about people who had jump-started fabulous careers by being in the right place at the right time. This was surely the chance that Sy Friedin had foreseen when he had given me the collect cable card, and the letter I carried around that introduced me "To Whom It May Concern" as a Special Correspondent of the *New York Herald Tribune*.

But I was not thrilled. I was paralyzed with indecision. It was terrifying to know that I was in such a responsible position, yet that I had not the faintest idea of how to proceed. As it turned out, one other journalist on the island, a lady stringer, had been filing copy all morning long, down at the Cable and Wireless office, until the rebels swept in around noon. I did call the Cable and Wireless office, many times, all morning, myself, but this was an absurd thing to do because no one had the time to answer a phone, if there was one. I should have gone down there, with my copy. That was another problem. I had never written a newspaper story. I was in no way prepared for the occasion. I did not own a typewriter. I did even know how to use one.

Even so, I did not shirk my responsibility, exactly. An enterprising person in my situation might have gone out looking for trouble beyond the neighborhood where I was staying. Although I did go out for a look around, I spent much of my time trying to construct a story on some onionskin paper I happened to have. Using a fountain pen filled with blue ink, in large block letters I wrote, "REVOLT BROKE OUT EARLY THIS MORNING STOP THE AFRO SHIRAZI OPPOSITION GROUP AND THE COMMUNIST UMMA PART HAVE TAKEN OVER THE WHOLE ISLAND STOP IN THIS TROPICAL NEVERNEVER LAND CALLED ZANZIBAR..." This was my lead. Or lede, as it is called, in journalese.

I thought it was quite good. The problem I found was that new information, much of it conflicting, all of it based on hearsay, kept streaming in, and this forced

me continuously to rewrite my story. I filled many sheets of onionskin paper with false starts written in block letters.

The government of Mohammed Shamte fell in the afternoon. By then, Jamshid, the young sultan, had fled the island with his family aboard his yacht, the *Khalifa*. The government had called on the British to act on its behalf, but the British, with a military base in Kenya, could no longer act, had they wanted to do so, which is unlikely, without the permission of Jomo Kenyatta, who withheld it. Instead, they sent a survey ship, the *HMS Owen*, for the purpose of evacuating British citizens.

Fritz Picard came over in the afternoon. He was still Charge d'Affaires on the island. He was rounding up the fifty-odd Americans on the island and shepherding them into the British Club, which he had borrowed as a safe haven, while he tried to negotiate an evacuation on board an American destroyer, the *USS Manley*, which was in the region on a good-will tour.

An African revolutionary situation was dangerous and terrifying. If you lived or traveled in Africa at that time you had to know this. The people of Kenya had not recovered yet from the *Mau Mau* terror. More recently, violence was ongoing in the former Belgian Congo, where, during the Katanga secession that had followed independence, Europeans were massacred along with Africans. I had recently traveled up the Nile into the Southern Sudan, and even there I began to encounter hints of the kind of violence that is now common to that part of the world. There was panic in Fritz Picard's urgency. I, along with others, went with Picard to the English Club, although I had at that point decided to stay on the island.

The Americans made themselves at home in the club, much to the indignation of an elderly resident, who marched around in a dressing gown surveying the disintegration of order, as the refugees wandered about with beer cans, slouched in couches and chairs, and littered the floors with old copies of the *London Illustrated News*, and evening stole over the scene with a lavender sky. Below, on the beach, where the water lapped gently on the shore, lay the body of a dead Arab, in plain sight.

I stationed myself with Picard in the club office, near the entrance, by a magnificent thick Arab door, very ancient, now secured by a huge brass chain. The destroyer was in Mombasa. Picard's only contact with the ship was via the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam, by phone, until the wires were cut. Picard, I thought then, and still do, was a brilliant man in this situation. He was a brilliant man in any case, very high strung, very funny. It was rather as though Tom Lehrer were in charge, minus his piano. And he had a warm, good-hearted wife, Shoana.

Fritz for many months, according to Donald Petterson, the Assistant Charge D'Affaires, had been having an affair with a beautiful, sensual Zanzibari woman

who worked as a secretary for the USIS public affairs officer. Her name was Fathiya. She was married to Communist, but she was also related to the sultan. As a mother of two children, she may have been in danger. We could hear rebels breaking into houses up the street from the club, one of which was where Fathiya and her family were staying at the time. To divert the rebels, Petterson writes in his memoir of the revolution, Picard went out in the night and made a terrible racket to divert the rebels so they wouldn't enter the house where Fathiya was holed up. This enraged Petterson, who, until then, had respected Picard's judgment in most matters. Now, he thought, Picard was going to draw armed rebels to the sanctuary of the English Club. This is exactly what happened. The leader of a patrol confronted Picard, who mollified him by telling him that we were having a party in the club. Later that night, Fritz managed to slip Fathiya, her mother and her two children into the club.

Picard had also provoked the ire of the British High Commissioner, Timothy Crosthwaite, when he decided to evacuate the Americans on the island. Still, Crosthwaite, rather grudgingly, kept us informed about what was happening. The field marshal, on Sunday evening, announced that Zanzibar was now a republic. He was a military man from Uganda named John Okello, who, later, claimed to have planned the revolution all by himself. Though neither Kenyan nor a member of the Kikuyu tribe, he had, he insisted, served in the *Mau Mau* movement, and had won a position as Brigadier, he said, because "I had the power of interpreting dreams." Five years before the Zanzibar revolution, he had been a housepainter on Pemba, where he had started training people for revolution on Zanzibar "because I heard that the Arabs were slaughtering the poor Africans." He had informed neither Sheikh Abeid Karume nor Babu of his plans to lead an insurrection, he said. On Sunday night, he announced that he had asked Karume to form a government. Karume's new Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defense was Babu. For a time, Babu was also Prime Minister and Vice President.

It may have been a mistake to summon a huge, menacing American destroyer to Zanzibar to evacuate the Americans. And it might not have come at all. Washington had ordered the *USS Manley* to return to Mombasa when it was en route to Zanzibar, but Fritz Picard somehow managed to countermand the order and it hove into view in mighty splendor the following afternoon. The presence of a U.S. destroyer made the Zanzibar revolution look like a reign of terror to the rest of the world. To the Arab population this is what it actually had become. A blood lusty mob of Africans had started looting stores and slaughtering Arabs. From the club terrace we watched armed Africans careen past in trucks loaded with loot. Mrs. Dyer Melville called me at the club in hysterics from the Hotel Pigalle because rebels had shot and killed Suleiman, her number one servant. Even so, no European lost a life in the revolution to the rebels. John Okello made sure of that.

The new government leaders were outraged that Picard had not informed them of his plan to evacuate U.S. citizens.

As the destroyer approached the island, a delegation of rebel officials actually appeared at the English Club and told Picard that the government was withholding permission to evacuate anyone. From the terrace, we could see a whaleboat being lowered from the *Manley*. Directly below, a British couple in bathing suits appeared on the beach, sidestepped the dead Arab and took a leisurely swim. Shortly afterward, while Picard negotiated with the government delegation downstairs, the former Prime Minister, Mohammed Shamte, very tall, dressed in a suit, and accompanied by three of his cabinet ministers, ambled up toward the English Club in plain sight and turned off into a side street.

At the end of the day, accompanied by the captain of the *Manley*, and Jim Ruchti, head of the political section in the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi who had come over on the destroyer, Picard and Petterson went to Raha Leo to obtain permission for the evacuation from Okello, Karume and Babu. The leaders opposed the decision Fritz had made to summon the *Manley* to evacuate Americans. They grudgingly gave them the OK, although it remained a sore point that turned nasty a few days later. Altogether ninety-nine people, fifty-three Americans and forty-six others, assembled in the hallway by the club entrance, prepared for departure aboard the destroyer. Some of these were Arab employees of the Embassy and other Arab friends who had managed to save their lives and those of many family members.

One person I'd heard both Fritz and Shoana talk about in agitated conversations was a Johns Hopkins graduate student named Rex Preece. He had been on Zanzibar writing his dissertation on the 1962 constitution. Preece was also the C.I.A. man on Zanzibar. When Fritz found out that, unbeknownst to him, Preece was a C.I.A. agent, he was not at all happy. He did not want someone reporting separately to Washington on Zanzibar. I never saw Rex Preece. He was somewhere in the club. The night revolution erupted, Preece had come down with a terrible headache. It proved to be the onset of cerebral malaria. Shoana knew that it was essential to get Preece off the island because he was on the verge of death. His condition was an added stress the entire time until he made it to Dar es Salaam. I don't recall how they managed to get him out onto the destroyer.

It was a sweltering afternoon. Fritz and I rushed groups of people down to the beach to the whaleboat, in full view, or so we feared, of snipers. We boarded Fathiya and her family after everyone else had been safely transported out to the destroyer. Fritz remained on the island.

I was the last American onto the *Manley*. I had planned up to the last minute to stay on the island. I had written a brief bulletin in the club, which I had planned to ask one of the evacuees to cable for me to New York. But I was stricken with a

sudden sensation of fear and loneliness, and I hastened on board on the pretext, to myself and all those whom I had told I was going to stay behind, of filing my copy from Dar es Salaam.

On board the *Manley*, Jim Ruchti sent a message to the Department of State that was forwarded to the White House. I never knew about Ruchti's cable until recently, when a historian of East Africa recently scanned me a photocopy of documents he had found on the Zanzibar revolution at the LBJ Library.

"Wish alert you that Zanzibar evacuee US citizen Peter Rand correspondent NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE will file story revolution in semi-exaggerated fashion upon debarkation January 14," Ruchti wrote. "Rand is very young and inexperienced. Has requested MANLEY transmit story but this impossible due operational work load. His story likely include opinion that three Cubans are military leaders Zanzibar revolt and new Foreign Minister Mohammed Babu is communist and friend of CHICOMS. His estimate 500 persons presumed dead or injured cannot be substantiated."

I spent that night rewriting my dispatch, and prepared to scoop all the other reporters who I knew would be on the dock, waiting for news of the revolution.

Jack Nugent was not deported after all, for writing about Tom Mboya's one hundred and ten suits. He was there, early Monday morning, on the Dar es Salaam waterfront, when the whaleboat brought us ashore. He has immortalized the occasion in *Call Africa 999*, his vivid, if factually imaginative, recollection of his salad days as a *Newsweek* correspondent in Africa.

"Sport-shirted reporters were all over the pier with cameras, pencils and tape recorders, ready to interview the evacuees, who were coming ashore in power boat convoys," writes Jack. "As I pushed and shoved with British, Asian and African colleagues, I suddenly spotted one slight, soiled and tired-looking youth climbing out of the small boat. It was Peter Rand, a West Coast student who had stayed with Phyllis and me in Nairobi a year ago. He was seeing the world on his own before finishing at the University of California at Berkeley. I had heard he was on Zanzibar doing a 'last island paradise' story for an American magazine. 'Peter, Peter, over here!' I shouted. Other reporters rushed toward him. 'Hands off, he's mine,' I snapped. I grabbed Peter and pulled him and his grubby little brown canvas away from the crowd. 'Boy, am I glad to see you!' he said. 'I lost everything.' 'Come on, I'll take you to me hotel,'" Jack wrote. "'I have an extra bed. We'll get you some food!' 'It's awful what's happening there! Gosh, I'm tired,' said Peter, penniless, clothes less, and slightly punchy. I took him back to my hotel room – amid dirty looks from my colleagues. An American newspaper reporter was said to have called me 'a son of a bitch.' Yes, it is a tough profession."

I don't think, in his book, that Jack Nugent really thought he was a son of a bitch. Maybe he did. It's a line right out of *Vengeance Is Mine*. If he did entertain the idea, that's because the role of tough guy appealed to him. That was the ex-Marine. It's true that he typed my article for me, in exchange for an exclusive interview. As Jack put it, I was working for a daily and he was a weekly reporter, so how could there be conflict?

Once Jack had typed my story, we took it down to the Cable and Wireless Office and sent it to New York.

I stuck with Jack. He wanted to get over to the island. Now that I was a professional correspondent, the *Tribune* man in East Africa, this, too, became my goal. It was the objective of every reporter in Dar es Salaam, where the East Africa press corps had gathered. Routes of access were limited. The rebels had rolled oil drums out onto the runway of the Zanzibar landing strip. Somehow, this had not presented a problem to the Fleet Street Boys, who seemed to have unlimited funds to spend. These daredevil journalists, some of whom had been British Commandos in another life, were always showing their stuff, often with a sneer at the reputable correspondents, who they thought looked down at them, although to Jack Nugent they were clearly what real journalists were all about. Jack, after all, had served in the Marines. He, too, reserved a jeer for his conscientious peers. His middle name happened to Peer, but he, like his Fleet Street peers, was uneasy among fellow correspondents like William E. Smith of *Time*, Robert Conley of *The New York Times*, and Clyde Sanger, the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent, an Englishman, all thoughtful, talented writers with whom Jack and I soon found ourselves traveling aboard a small dhow across the Indian Ocean under a boiling sun, along with a local East African photographer named Priya Ramrakha, and the *Toronto Globe and Mail* reporter, Robert Miller.

The Zanzibar airport was closed, and it was impossible to find anyone willing to fly us over. Jack and I went down to the harbor of Dar es Salaam in the afternoon. Riding at anchor out on the bay, what should I see but the *Camargo I*, an elegant white yacht formerly owned by the Vietnamese emperor Bao Dai. It belonged to Julius Fleischmann, an American millionaire and cultural philanthropist.

I was familiar with this yacht because, in the summer of 1962, in the course of a cruise along the Dalmatian Coast with friends, I had been a guest of Fleischmann for cocktails on board the *Camargo*, in Dubrovnik. I was with my friends the Richdales, who had chartered a large boat to take twenty friends on a cruise in the Adriatic. In Dubrovnik, we met people who were cruising aboard the Fleischmann yacht. They invited us back for drinks, where we joined passengers from the *Clonsilla*, a yacht owned by a member of the Guinness family, who were waiting in Dubrovnik while their captain recovered from an accident to his back,

which he broke when the speedboat he was driving hit a bad wave. Julius Fleischmann, known as Junky, was a very congenial host, and I thought he'd be happy to run us over to Zanzibar.

Jack and I hired a boatman to take us out to the *Camargo*. When we called up to a crew member, he told us that Fleischmann and his guests had all gone to see the Victoria Falls over in Rhodesia. The captain invited us to come on board. He wore a khaki uniform. I asked him to take us over to Zanzibar. He declined. He and the entire crew, he told us, were recovering from malaria.

It was dusk when we headed out to the fishing village of Bagamoyo. That's where we found Bill Smith, Conley, Priya Ramrakha, Clyde Sanger and Bobby Miller, along with the *Times of India* correspondent, who fled back to Dar es Salaam after I recounted to him all I had heard and seen on Zanzibar.

Charter dhows in Bagamoyo were in short supply. The local fishermen were reluctant to sail into a revolution. The only available dhow, finally, amounted to a small sailing vessel. The owner was willing to take us over in the morning. The correspondents fell to arguing over who had first rights to the dhow, argument enflamed by personal enmities I knew nothing about. It's true that Jack mistrusted Conley, although quite why he did I don't think I ever discovered. Back in Dar, in his room at the Twiga Hotel, after I had begun my recitation to Jack, he had suddenly jumped up and dashed out of the room to examine the transom.

"What are you doing?" I asked him.

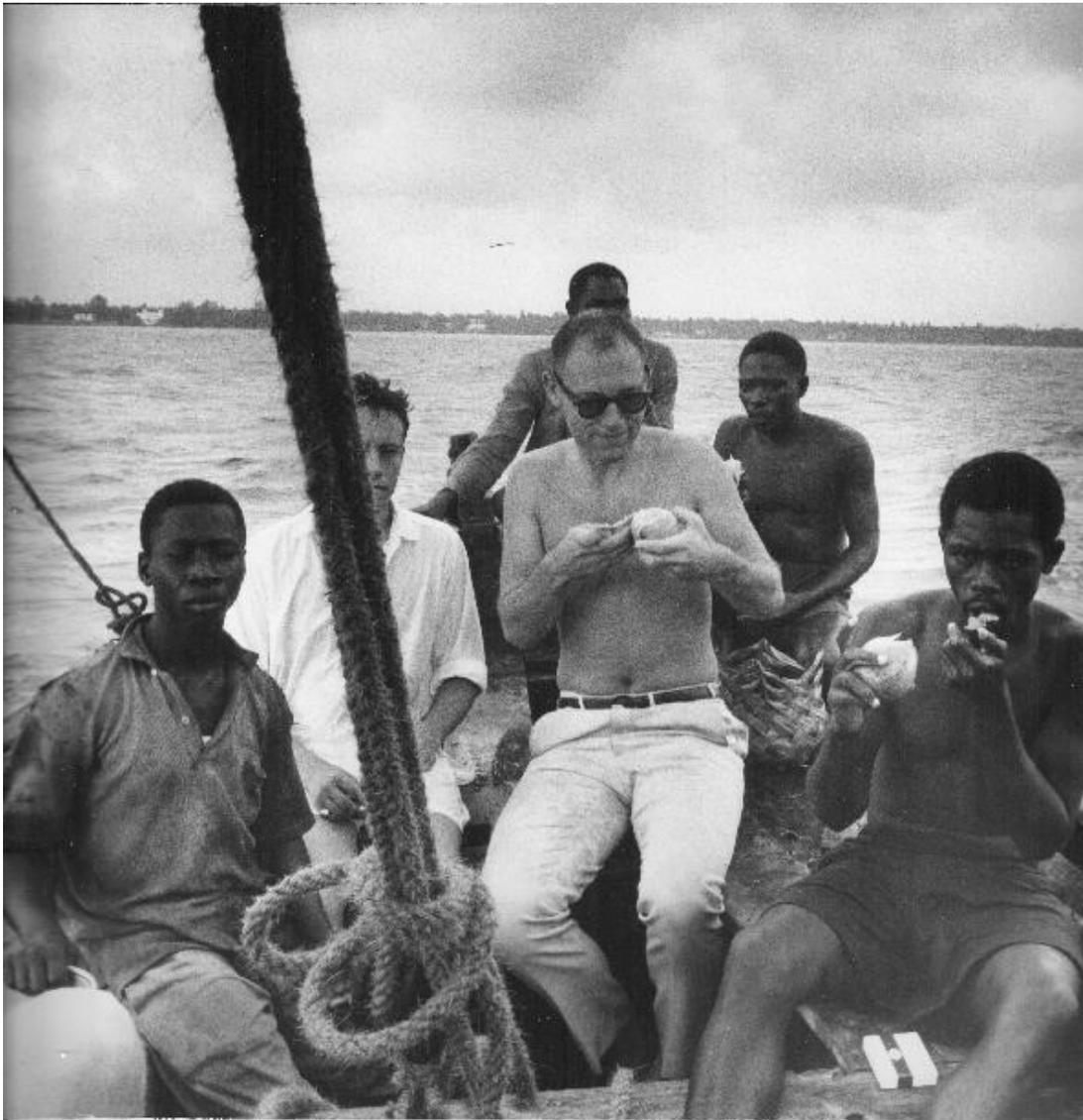
"Well, you never know," he explained. "The *New York Times* man has a room right down the hall."

Much childish bickering ensued, out there in Bagamoyo, as night fell, and various correspondents held their ground. Clyde Sanger, the one British journalist among us, came up with a solution. He was somewhat superior, in a long-suffering way. He was the most liberal, if not radical, journalist in our midst, the journalist of authority of a kind who verges on the scholarly, and someone especially resented by the Fleet Street Boys, who never let Sanger forget the story he had filed that appeared in the *Guardian's* early edition the day after Dag Hammerskjold's plane went down in the Congo. Sanger, in Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia, had started out for the airport, as I heard it, to greet Hammerskjold's arrival, but turned back when he encountered a crowd coming in the other direction, and rushed to file a report for the early edition that the U.N. Secretary General had arrived safely from Elizabethville, in Katanga, the breakaway Province. Perhaps that is why he seemed somehow fretful, chastened, even, as though, unlike other reporters, he was enduring something he found oppressive.

Sanger quietly resolved the matter of who would get the dhow when he suggested we all go together. This we finally agreed to do and went about ordering our dinner at the Anchor Bar, an Asian *duka* by the sea. As I look back on them

now, I realize that most, if not all, of these men could be forgiven much, if only because they had lived through the horrors of the Katanga secession, and the U.N. armed intervention, when, a year earlier, the peacekeeping mission had laid siege to Elizabethville. They had covered this frightening, violent episode from the Katanga capital. They called me “The Kid.”

Bagamoyo was an old trading settlement along the coast of Tanganyika, with a long silver beach and a fringe of palm trees along the water. The night was warm and soft, and after dinner we went for a moonlit swim before flopping down to a deep sleep on the sand, a sleep broken only once, before dawn, when Miller, the *Toronto Globe and Mail* reporter, cried out, in the night, “They’ve stolen the dhow and gone without us!” and began racing around looking for his companions, who were, after all, sleeping fitfully on the beach.



We set sail under a blue sky at six in the morning for the forty-mile voyage, which Ali, our skipper, assured us would take at most two hours. Midday found us idling out in the Indian Ocean, far from the sight of land, under a brutal sun, from which there was no protection. It was hard to get comfortable on the wooden cross boards in a boat that had filled up part way with salt water at the time we climbed aboard. Our dhow was no more than a large dinghy with a sail, minus an outboard motor. To reach our dhow, we had stripped off our clothes, which we carried over our heads, and waded in water chest deep out to the wooden craft and hauled ourselves over the gunwales, dipping the craft in the water as we did so.

We quickly ran through whatever drinking water we had brought with us to quench our thirst in the blistering sun. Jack Nugent provided our nourishment. He had stocked up on chocolate, which he'd read somewhere was nutritious on a voyage like this one. We had also supplied ourselves with mangos.

Hot mangos and melting chocolate did not combine well. We fought boredom by counting the flying fish that leaped out of the water around us. Every so often a small plane flew above us, headed in the direction of Zanzibar. The Fleet Street Boys. That was the opinion of my disgruntled, mildly churlish, companions. Every so often, Nugent would insist we were being pursued by a school of sharks. We kept standing up to gaze out at the horizon, trying to spot the island.

Finally, at two in the afternoon, Zanzibar did appear in the distance, a low green oasis of land, although, when we were within shouting distance, we discovered that we had reached the southernmost end of Zanzibar. Slowly, for the next three hours, we sailed up the west coast toward Zanzibar Town.

We did not try to sneak onto the island. The shoreline along the coastal town was ominously still. We decided, collectively, that the safest course would be to request permission to land, and with this plan in mind, we headed for the British survey ship, the *HMS Owen*, a vessel in Her Majesty's Navy, which rode at anchor off the harbor of Zanzibar, manned by British officers in white uniform shorts. With some reluctance, Commander Haslam, the captain of the *HMS Owen*, gave us permission to come aboard. When we did, he urged us to stay on board overnight. It was an invitation we gratefully accepted.

We were all feverish from sun poisoning. Those of us with pale skin were now a brilliant red color. We were hungry and thirsty. The officers treated us to gin and tonics on deck, followed by a full meal. When night fell, we sat out on deck, within earshot of occasional rifle shots, which echoed in the stone town, and watched the movie *Separate Tables*, starring Rita Hayworth, the mythic Zanzibar honeymoon visitor of years gone by.

It was surely a mistake, this decision to do the right thing and request permission to come ashore from the new government because they refused to let us do that. We took the matter into our own hands. We had not yet paid Ali, the skipper of our dhow. He had waited for us all night, within calling distance from the *HMS Owen*. We hailed him now, and when we had paid him in full for his services, he conveyed us to the port.

As we disembarked onto a set of stone steps slimy with algae, we were greeted by men with rifles, which they were aiming at us. Priya Ramrakah, the Indian photographer, slipped on the algae, fell forward, and gashed his shin on the cutting edge of one of those steps. It was a bad omen. Never in my experience had I found myself facing angry, jittery men who might easily decide to open fire at point blank range. A situation like this seems incomprehensible at first, like a misunderstanding that you want to rectify immediately, on the assumption that, once reassured of your good intentions, members of the greeting party will laugh and instantly lower their weapons. But that's not what happens. These men were screaming at us.

A fat and slovenly Asian immigration inspector came over, told us to wait, and went away. We waited. During this time Donald Petterson, the Assistant U.S. Charge d'Affaires, drove up. Picard had sent him over to give us some protection. The Indian immigration officer came back in an hour with an official who wore a steel helmet and a blue denim shirt. He accused us of entering the country illegally. The chorus of riflemen who had been guarding us shouted that we were CIA spies. With the official's tacit permission, they dispossessed us of all our camera equipment and notebooks.

We were then driven to *Raha Leo*, which in Swahili means "Happiness Today." This lime green concrete specimen of contemporary architecture, two stories high, was situated in a palm grove near the waterfront on the other side of town. It was the new revolutionary headquarters. Hundreds of Africans milled around outside, many of them going about in bare feet attired in fantastic clothes, Zoot suits, Homburgs and brilliantly dyed Arab robes. A girl who wore a chartreuse crinoline and plastic sandals guarded the entrance to the building with an Enfield rifle that she swung at us with ferocious abruptness when we started to move past her.

Once we got inside, it looked as though an enormous rummage sale had been in progress. The hall was piled to the ceiling with looted clothes, furniture, radios, what looked like Christmas tree ornaments, and bushels of bananas. Swarms of people milled around inside the building munching on bananas and swilling beer. It stank of urine. A loudspeaker blared South American Salsa music, interrupted by the voice of the field marshal, John Okello, screaming commands in upcountry Swahili. We were taken up a flight of stairs to an auditorium to await a

passport control officer. Up here, in another chamber, a kangaroo court was issuing death sentences to Arab captives. Every so often you could see one of them pushed down the stairs by his executioners, armed with pistols, taken outside to be shot.

Here we were put in the care of Mohammed, the guard who was appointed to watch over us from then on. He was one of the members of the youth wing of Babu's *Umma* Party who had been sent to Cuba for military training. He looked as though he might actually be Cuban. He was a lean, olive skinned man in his early twenties. He wore a beret and carried a Sten gun and wore several belts of ammunition. He seemed never to be without a bottle of vodka, from which he took an occasional swig. He wore an olive green paratrooper uniform. He had an unnerving habit of twitching the trigger of his gun with his index finger, which I had often heard described as an "itchy trigger finger," but had never seen, not even in the movies.

The passport control officer, as he was called, showed up, finally, accompanied by Fritz Picard. We were placed under semi-house arrest. This, we were told, meant that we had to go everywhere together, accompanied by Mohammed, our guard.

We were assigned to semi-house arrest in the Zanzibar Hotel. In the next twenty four hours I became familiar with the Zanzibar Hotel as I never had been when I was a paying guest there. The hotel, built by a prosperous Arab trader as a private mansion in the nineteenth century, possessed many of the characteristics of a traditional Zanzibar Arab house. The entrance was off a courtyard, and opened onto a short hallway that ran to the bar past the dining room, the reception desk and the main stairway. You mounted these stairs to the upper two stories, which looked down upon an enclosed courtyard behind the hotel. I shared a room with Nugent off the stairway on the first landing. You could, if you stood on the balcony of our room, hear conversations in the bar, such as those I had enjoyed so recently with Rose, her husband, and John Cloete. Beyond the bar and through the courtyard a flight of back stairs ran up to what had once been the servant quarters, now bedrooms, disconnected from the rest of the hotel. The rooms had been built with high, wood-beamed ceilings now equipped with overhead fans; the beds were protected with mosquito netting.

The hotel was now a meeting place for journalists who had made it over to Zanzibar. The Chinese and Soviet journalists stayed at the Pigalle. Mrs. Dyer Melville, who had fled the Russian revolution, now presided over a revolutionary clientele with whom she could communicate in Russian and Polish, which, to the communist reporters, might have been a mixed blessing. The *Pravda* man showed up for drinks at the Zanzibar Hotel, though. So did others, including John Monks, of the legendary team of Monks and Youngusband, who was there for the *London Daily Express*. He was one of the "Fleet Street Boys."

We immediately slipped our guard and went out to explore the town. It was two in the afternoon, which explained the prevailing quiet. Every store was shuttered. The great Arab doors were firmly secured on all the houses, and shutters sealed. You had the eerie sense that people had entombed themselves within. The sun burned down with a sinister brightness on the empty streets.

I gathered with the other newsmen at the house of Othman Sharif, the new Minister of Education. He was a big, somber man, the former animal doctor. He wore a fez. Sharif was on good terms with Picard, who had joined us. He was, it was rumored, on poor terms with others in the government. He deplored the violence of the revolution. As we sat there, in his living room, Africans were butchering Arabs outside of town in the countryside, and we knew this. He was really rather a conservative. He thought Babu was a scoundrel. We asked him to lift our semi-house arrest, but this he would not agree to do. We came, he said, by special transport, and we must, therefore, be treated as special guests. He could tell us nothing beyond that. He was awaiting the return, that afternoon, of Babu, Karume, and Kassim Hanga, the Vice President. They had flown over to Dar es Salaam, to discuss matters with Nyerere. Sharif apologized on behalf of the government for putting us under guard. Before we left, he made an appointment to meet Picard that evening at the Zanzibar Hotel bar.

Some of the journalists returned to the revolutionary headquarters, for a meeting with John Okello, the revolutionary commander who claimed to have appointed the cabinet, but seemed strangely dissociated from its members. That was when, according to the account Bill Smith gives in his appreciation of Julius Nyerere, *We Must Run While They Walk*, Okello declared his power to interpret dreams that made him such an asset to the *Mau Mau* insurrectionists. "The story about his participation in the *Mau Mau* was bizarre," Smith writes, "especially for a Ugandan and a man who was a member of neither the Kikuyu nor a closely related tribe. But who could say? Could an interpreter of dreams have insinuated himself into the *Mau Mau*?"

I was in the lobby of the Zanzibar Hotel when the hotel manager walked through the front door. He had just returned from Dar es Salaam. He announced that he had just seen Babu leaving the airport headed toward his house on the Mnazi Moja road. I waited not a moment. A green, afternoon spell had fallen over the hotel. I telephoned John Cloete. I had not seen Cloete since the evening that preceded the revolution. I asked him to meet me in the lobby. When he arrived, I asked him if he would drive me to Babu's house. Ever congenial, he agreed to do this. It was no longer possible to leave by the front entrance. Mohammed, with his gun and his vodka, had turned surly, in the company of other, bearded *Umma* youth. I arranged to meet Cloete at the back entrance to the hotel, next to the

kitchen. I dashed upstairs. Nugent was up there lying on his bed. I told him what I planned to do and he seemed to think it was a good idea.

Flight was easy. On the drive to Babu's house, John Cloete told me that Rose had been a real heroine during the first, violent two days of the revolution, batting guns out of people's hands, picking the bullets out of wounded Africans with tweezers, flying into the fray like a Valkyrie. Now I realized that it was Rose of whom Fritz Picard had spoken in awe when he described an enormous woman he had encountered the night before who kept throwing people to the ground. She had departed earlier in the day, John told me, for Nairobi, and it was there, upon my own return, where I beheld a headline on the *Nation* announcing "BUXOM ROSE PICKS BULLETS OUT OF VICTIMS WITH TWEEZERS."

John dropped me off in front of Babu's house, a white stucco villa facing the road. The guard at the door was none other than he of the steel helmet and blue denim shirt who had come to us at the harbor earlier in the day and escorted us to *Raha Leo*. He recognized me at once, and blocked my entry through the open door with his rifle, but Babu appeared almost immediately from the dark interior of the house, smiling, and welcomed me inside. We went upstairs and sat outside on the flat roof of his house, in the hot sun. He went inside and came back with a fifth of White Horse Scotch that he kept on hand for his guests. He was charming and witty, highly intelligent, and also someone you would find it hard to beautify. He was now running to fat. He was sloppily dressed in a loose tropical shirt and rubber flip flops. He had not shaved for several days. He had buck teeth, a thick, overgrown mustache and opaque, bloodshot eyes.

I found his hospitality unnerving. I suddenly did not know quite how to approach conversation. He was now one of the revolutionary leaders of Zanzibar. I complimented him on the revolution. He told me that he had not known anything about the revolution. I asked him about the *Nation* headline that Rose had shown me on the Eve of Ramadan. He told me that it was utter coincidence. He and the Afro-Shirazi Party had both been planning revolts for some future date. I drank some Scotch, neat, in the hot sun, and Babu poured me another glass. He told me that he, Karume and Hanga had been in Dar es Salaam that day trying to persuade Julius Nyerere, the President of Tanganyika, to provide police protection because John Okello and his band, those armed Africans dressed for a costume party over at *Raha Leo*, had been getting out of hand. The government was at its wit's ends, he said, trying to keep Okello happy while subduing the looting and the Arab massacre. I could see his point, as his guest, sipping Scotch, under the hot sun.

So Arabs *are* being killed, I said, in an effort to keep the conversation going in an agreeable way, conscious as I nevertheless was, dimly, that I was also there as a reporter. I knew this was happening. When Okello's militia took over the arsenal and handed weapons around to Zanzibari Africans, he sparked a genocidal

massacre that only died down after they'd executed anywhere up to five thousand Arabs .

Babu denied that any Arabs had been killed. He was smiling, still, when he said it. I tried to cajole him into conceding that at least some Arabs had probably been killed. Cajolery was a device more suited to Jack Nugent, for whom it was a natural form of expression. I have never liked it, in myself or in others. I do not think that Babu liked it either. It was not in the spirit of our brief acquaintance. Cajolery, however, now found its voice, under the hot sun, fueled by Scotch, in my newly discovered role as journalist. I went on wondering out loud in different ways if really it wasn't true that Arabs were not being killed, and Babu continued to politely deny anything of the sort. I then implied that I had heard from Fritz Picard that he and Othman Sharif were on bad terms. He denied this. We finished our drinks.

The sun had passed into shade. Babu told me that he had to attend a cabinet meeting. He offered to drop me off at the hotel. Babu drove. We were accompanied by the guard with the helmet. I sat in the back seat. This was the moment when I discovered that I actually had learned some Swahili in the crash course I had taken that summer at UCLA, as Babu's guard informed him, with some urgency, in Swahili, that I was one of the seven CIA agents arrested that morning down at the harbor. Babu straightened himself at the wheel of his car. I noted how his foot, in his thong sandal, pressed down on the accelerator as we sped into town to the Zanzibar Hotel. He was friendly, though, when I got out of the car. He suggested that we meet later, again, for a drink.

Journalists had started once again to congregate in the lobby. I was not altogether drunk. To be altogether drunk is to be someone other than who you are, which is to be absent from all conscious awareness of your physical circumstances, even though someone else is there performing in your absence. I was still present as I watched myself babble about my visit to Babu before these visibly distressed reporters, preoccupied now with finding some way to get off this island, from which it was not possible to file a story, uncensored. Someone observed that I'd been drinking too much.

Jack was upstairs. He told me to take a bath, which I did, while he went downstairs.

He soon returned. He told me to stay where I was, upstairs, and, once again, vanished below, while I got dressed, somewhat apprehensive now that I had sobered up, and waited for Nugent to come back, as he did, ten minutes later, to tell me what had happened.

Picard, and Othman Sharif, had come to the hotel, as they had planned, for a meeting, while I was in the tub, soaking in a hot bath. Just as the two men had started to drink their beers, Babu, Karume, Hanga, and several other ministers,

accompanied by an entourage of armed men, had stormed into the hotel, past the reception, and into the bar at the rear, past a concentration of foreign reporters and some British tourists, directly to Picard. They all shouted at once, according to Jack. Karume shouted in Swahili and Babu shouted in English translation. Picard, they shouted, was trying to disrupt the internal affairs of the government with the help of his spies, who had sailed into Zanzibar that morning in a dhow. His call for a destroyer, they went on, was an overt attempt to discredit the revolution in the eyes of the world, to make their government look unstable to those eyes.

“Why are you causing us trouble? Why are you interfering in our affairs? Why? Why? You Americans, why did you evacuate your people without telling us? Why do you not recognize us?”

Then Karume shouted, “You have called our ministers and interfered in our affairs. Get out of here in twenty-four hours – no, twelve hours.”

Picard rose to his feet in the face of this angry barrage, and started to protest that nothing of what they were saying was true. He declared that the seven journalists had nothing to do with him. He spoke, Jack said, diplomatically, calmly, but this was ineffective, because this gang of rebel ministers had gone off its collective head.

“You mean you want me to take my staff and leave?” Picard said.

“Go to your house and do not leave it,” Karume replied.

Rebel soldiers marched Picard out of the lobby at gunpoint. They let him drive to his house, where they sequestered Fritz under armed guard. The revolutionary government put all seven of us under full house arrest at the Zanzibar Hotel.

It never occurred to me that I might somehow have to bear some responsibility for the scene I have just recounted. That evening, I wondered, along with my fellow dhow passengers, what would happen to us. Picard was still on the island. Nugent later wrote that once he was inside his beachfront house, Picard tried to use his phone. “It was dead,” Nugent wrote. “He turned out all the lights, took out a cold can of Amstel Beer from his refrigerator and sat down to watch the outside action in silent darkness between refreshing sips. He laughed like hell. Under arrest there was nothing else to do.”

Meanwhile, as night fell on the Zanzibar Hotel, we assumed that the government would come to its senses by daybreak. We were all on edge by now, verging on panic, but trying to remain calm. Clyde Sanger, the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent, telephoned the British High Commissioner, Timothy Crosthwaite, whom he knew, and asked him to come over to the hotel. As a British reporter, Sanger did not feel that he ought to have been placed under arrest with a group of men, only four of whom happened to be American, whom the government now insisted were agents of the CIA. The British foreign service is even less

inclined than that of the United States to offer assistance to those citizens it represents who might need help in a foreign land. Very reluctantly, Crosthwaite drove over in a capacious Daimler.

“I suppose Fritz has been drinking again,” Crosthwaite observed, dryly, when he came into the hotel.

He told Sanger that he would see what he could do to get us off the island.

This was reassuring. We sat down to a dinner of Lobster a la Newburg.

Then we went to bed.

In the morning, nothing had changed. We were still under arrest. We had no way to find out what would happen to us. The situation struck a chord of anxiety in me as I stood on the balcony of the room overlooking the courtyard that I shared with Jack. I heard a voice in the bar down below say very clearly, “It was all the *Tribune* man’s fault.” This took me by surprise. The voice belonged to Bobby Miller of the *Toronto Globe and Mail*. I went downstairs to the bar and asked him what he meant by that remark.

“Well it’s true,” he shouted. “You’re the spy. They’re saying it on the radio. Everybody says so. Even Babu said so last night.”

Miller was at breakfast with the other captives in our group. They confirmed his verdict by turning a cold shoulder to my presence. I tried to apologize to Clyde Sanger, who was sitting with Miller. He was, I thought, a man with a soul. He regarded me coldly.

“Did it not occur to you,” said he, “that by visiting Babu you might be interfering in the internal affairs of the government?”

I realized that we were in terrible danger. Rumors abounded. A number of the journalists had covered the Katangese secession up in Elizabethville, where they had experienced terror at the hands of Katangese militia. The same sense of entrapment prevailed now. In Katanga, it made no difference if you were a journalist. You were subject to the same lawless madness as everyone else.

It dawned on me that, if anyone was going to be taken away and shot, I was the one the rebels would shoot.

Like the others, I was confined to the interior of the Zanzibar Hotel. I moved around because I thought that by doing so I might elude my captors, but this was the behavior of a trapped animal for which no possible escape exists. Throughout the hotel a pall of taut silence had fallen. Mohammed, our guard, stationed at the hotel entrance, sometimes came into the lobby. Once, in a menacing way, he jerked his head when he saw me standing with several journalists.

“You,” he said. “Come.” He was pointing his gun at me. I looked around for the other correspondents but they had disappeared.

“You wait,” I said. “Let me get my friends.”

“You!” he said, raising his voice. “You want me to tell the government you not obey orders?”

I stepped outside at his command. It was blazing hot in the small courtyard. He motioned with his head at the wall behind me. He wanted me to stand there. He took a swig from a bottle of vodka. He was the olive-skinned guard I’d first met at Raha Leo who looked as though he could be Cuban, and he was undoubtedly one of Babu’s Cuban trainees, now drunk and a little too arrogant. I stood against the wall, sweating profusely. He told me to stay where I was. He went into the dark lobby. When he emerged, he was holding a camera. All he wanted to do was to take a picture of me. It was part of his job, he said.

We waited through the morning for some resolution.

An awful, mad air hung over the place. We had become the untouchables of the press corps. Other journalists still on the island had to go everywhere under guard, except the Soviet and New China News Agency people, who were lionized. When they found themselves in the hotel, though, none of the other news people would actually speak to us.

Riszard Kapuscinsky, the Polish reporter who became the poet-chronicler of those revolutionary times in Africa came to Zanzibar. The revolution was his first big African story. He flew over and visited the Hotel Pigalle, where he had the opportunity to speak Polish with Mrs. Dyer-Melville. It’s hard to tell from his account how much he actually saw. He left the island when revolt broke out in the barracks among Tanganyikan soldiers in Dar later that week.

We heard at midday that the Zanzibar government had expelled Picard, that he had been flown off the island. The American Assistant Charge d’Affaires, Donald Petterson, was somewhere about, but no one expected him to do anything on our behalf. Crosthwaite was now our only diplomatic go-between. Increasingly, it looked as though the government was planning to punish us, and now we decided, in concert, to spread out through the hotel so that they would not be able to take us away, easily, in a group, and shoot us. I retreated to the room upstairs.

I was the real spy. I would be shot. When I lay on the bed, the walls seemed to converge on me. This was almost a hallucinatory state. It was the only time in my life when I had been able to mentally project my imagination into a world in which I no longer existed. I beheld this as a vision, the image of a garden in Zanzibar, lush and green, surrounded by high stone walls streaked with black, and this was the garden of my death, beyond which the world continued serenely on without me. The experience was one of natural fear, and guilt. In my mind, in my imagination, I kept seeing myself taken away and gunned down. I couldn’t get beyond that. I’d dash out to the landing when the claustrophobia grew unbearable.

The worst of it was being alone. Two or three times, Bill Smith came in to see how I was doing. In him I found at this time a great friend for life. He was tall, with the face you might see on a statue of Buddha as a young man, in repose a face that was calm, though serious, a broad face with high cheekbones, and blue green eyes set wide apart, an abrupt, flat nose, and thick lips that broke into a wide, white smile when he laughed, as he often did. This was the man I had first seen at the American Embassy in Dar es Salaam, at a press conference, in the company of other reporters, the day I arrived on the American destroyer, a person whose aura cast all others in a half-light.

He was already balding, of fair-colored hair, and, when possible, he was very brown from the sun. He was a California person, born and raised, who had attended Occidental College, and later graduated from the Columbia School of Journalism. He was a man who could convey such passionate enthusiasm that he could enlarge your own appetite for the bounties of life: travel, beaches, novels, movies, restaurants, clothes, art, friends. His enthusiasm was various and extreme. He invested all his obsessive energy in discoveries he made, and he had a tremendous capacity for relishing the pleasure it gave him, say, to visit Saint-Tropez, or drive a Volkswagen, or listen to Marlene Dietrich sing *Blowing in the Wind*, in German, on his portable record player, or to swim at Ballston Beach on Cape Cod. He was receptive, also, to the suffering of others.

In Zanzibar, he understood what I was experiencing, and several times he came to tell me that no one, neither I, nor anyone else, would be shot. He was not absolutely sure about this because none of us could be, but his impulse to help anyone in danger never failed Bill, and he was, at this moment, the very embodiment of goodness. Our friendship developed from this experience. This friendship had a lasting influence on my subsequent life as a writer. In Africa, afterward, we drove together to Rwanda and the Eastern Congo, travels that formed part of *Firestorm*, my first published novel. In Nairobi, he persuaded me to use my racetrack winnings to buy my first typewriter, a portable Underwood with a pigskin case.

When I had returned to Europe, and was living in Rome, Bill went back to Zanzibar for *Time Magazine*, and, while there, retrieved my luggage from Barwani's guest house and brought it to me in Rome. He was my Best Man years later, in New York, when I was married in Greenwich Village. He and Genny, his wife, gave Bliss and me a wedding reception at their house afterward. He wrote a superb book about Julius Nyerere that was published in *The New Yorker*. He was a dedicated journalist, and a superb, beloved friend, and his early death in 1992 was a devastating blow to many people.

Crosthwaite engineered our release. Later, we learned that Julius Nyerere had sent his private plane for us, but that the rebel force out at the airport had refused to let it land. The government was still sore. Some years later, when Bill Smith interviewed him for the series of *New Yorker* articles about Julius Nyerere, published in book form as *We Shall Run While They Walk*, Babu told him, “The reporters coming by dhow without proper papers – how could they do that? Suppose we did that in America? Would they have tolerated our landing in America that way? And it could have been very dangerous. The Sultan was still in those waters, and we thought there was a danger that he might go to Pemba and set up a government there, and we were trying to push him out of those waters. So, to have a load of foreigners arrive by dhow, of course it was dangerous.”

Late in the afternoon, an official from the Office of External Affairs appeared at the hotel. He had been assigned to escort our group from the hotel to the harbor. He was an Indian from Goa named Wolf Dourado. He was a short, light-skinned man with shiny black hair. He wore a brown suit, and necktie. He was quite genial. He spoke fluent English. Dourado invited us, still under armed guard, to climb into the back of a gray Peugeot lorry, where we sat, in close quarters with our armed escort, on wood seats, facing each other.

Dourado hopped into the passenger seat of a ministry automobile, and off we went, in convoy, headed, or so we were told, toward the harbor. If this was so, then why, I wondered, were we being driven in a direction away from the harbor? Clyde Sanger, who was also familiar with Zanzibar, sat directly across from me. He, too, must have wondered the same thing. He was ashen. We looked at one another, and he dropped his eyes. He had the look of a condemned man. We felt, all of us, the way condemned men surely do when taken by truck in an armed vehicle to meet their fate. None of us spoke. We traveled quite far out on the Mnazi Moja Road that runs up through the town and out toward the airport and into the farmland beyond. Suddenly, we turned left, and drove a short distance down a narrow lane between walls. Our lorry stopped in front of an open cemetery.

This was the Asian cemetery. It was an execution ground, where Arab prisoners were being brought to be shot and buried. The rich, brown earth here had been freshly dug up in places where new, open burial plots had been readied for the bodies of the newly deceased. Hundreds of Zanzibaris had died in the slaughter that took place on the far end of the island. Meanwhile, during our house arrest, rebels had gone through the streets of the Old Town, systematically forcing entry into the houses of local merchants and landlords. Many of these Arabs were taken to Raha Leo, where they were executed. Ultimately, the death toll was somewhere between one thousand and five thousand before it was all over.

Dourado sprang from his car up ahead and came to stand in his brown suit on the roadside between our truck and the graveyard. His round face was shiny and

pale in the densely humid, overcast afternoon as he looked up at us, and his voice was a bright cry out of the silence all around.

“We just wanted you to see how peaceful everything is on Zanzibar,” he said.

Thanks to the mediation of Timothy Crosthwaite the good ship *HMS Owen* was assigned to ferry us across the waters of the Indian Ocean to Mombasa, the Kenya port of call. Once again, we slept, free men, on the deck of the survey ship.

In the exhilaration that followed our release ill will evaporated. Our shared trial was a kind of bond, as we began to realize that our house arrest on Zanzibar had, briefly, made us headline news all over the world, and, especially, in the United States, where we had been a front page story for twenty-four hours, only to be eclipsed when President Lyndon Johnson ordered troops into the Dominican Republic. The Zanzibar Revolution, however, had already occupied a leading role in the media for six days, when, the following morning, we went ashore at Mombasa. There, to greet us, and to debrief us, were, among others, Frank Carlucci, who at that time was stationed in the Congo, and John Hogan, the solid USIS man in Nairobi, who wore a blue suit. We were taken from the *HMS Owen* in two groups aboard a speedboat that came out to transport us to the dock. I was in the second group. As we pulled up to the dock, I heard Hogan cheerfully call out, “I wonder if someday they’ll call people like us ‘Africa Hands,’ the way nowadays they talk about ‘China Hands.’”

From the dock, we were taken in a truck to a British army leave center outside of town. There, our passports were stamped for entry into Kenya.

From Mombasa, with Jack Nugent, I flew to Dar es Salaam down the coast in a small Cessna that Jack had chartered with a big-bellied Falstaff named Ray Robinson. He was a photojournalist. We called him “Robbie.”

I don’t know why Robbie wanted to go down to Dar. Jack had left his luggage down there, at the Twiga Hotel, and so had I, whatever, that is, I had managed to bring over with me from Zanzibar on the U.S. destroyer. Most of my clothes and my other possessions, the Florentine leather cigarette case, the gold gas cigarette lighter, my gold collar pin, were still, or so I hoped, at Barwani’s guest house, in my downstairs room. The lighter I had purchased at Dunhill, on Fifth Avenue. My initials were engraved on the flip top. It was, along with the red Florentine leather cigarette case embossed with fine thin gold lines on four sides, and a gold tie pin shaped to resemble a safety pin that I had acquired at Brooks Brothers, and the gold signet ring I still wear, an essential part of my repertoire. “*Favet Fortuna Audaci*,” is engraved in the signet ring, which, in translation, means “Fortune Favors the Bold.” It happens also to have been the chosen motto of

Boss Tweed. These articles – I owned nothing else of value and dressed almost indifferently – established, for my own security alone, that I was not some anonymous traveler, but a person of some distinction.

Jack and I rode in the back of the Cessna, strapped down to our seats in this tiny twin engine plane. Robbie Robinson sat up in front in the cockpit next to the pilot.

Jack's book, published in 1965, is a boastful boy's adventure story, in which he relates his African exploits, written with bravado and told with schoolboy exaggeration. It's exactly the sort of book you might have expected Jack to write, one full of colorful inaccuracy, in which the material provides a setting for Jack's vaudeville routine. In his account of the Zanzibar Revolution, to which he devotes two chapters, I play a modest, but key, role as "The Kid." Jack flatters me when, on the occasion of Babu's appearance with Karume downstairs at the Zanzibar Hotel, he relates that he came upstairs to advise me to stay where I was and observes that I had "given signs of wanting to come downstairs to fight." That was not the way I ever behaved when I drank. That was how Jack behaved.

Everything that happened on this adventure, including incidents involving me, Jack otherwise appropriates to himself. It's a vivid account, nevertheless, even though Jack adds an extra twenty-four hours to the ordeal of our captivity. Perhaps he decided he needed the embellishment of this fabricated day to give the publisher his money's worth.

Jack does write truthfully about our flight to Dar, with Robbie Robinson, which without any exaggeration on his part was unexpectedly hair-raising. We were flying along out over the Indian Ocean no more than a thousand feet above the water. Jack was asleep, and I was lost in thoughts of my own, when Robbie, unnoticed by either of us, instructed our pilot to fly out to Zanzibar, so that he could take some footage from an aerial perspective.

Robbie, too, had taken refuge on the *HMS Owen*. He had been filming our deportation when a Zanzibari official ordered him to turn over his film. He continued, despite this command, and, when finished, he boarded the launch that took us out to the survey ship. "My dear chap," he called out to the official from the launch, "you seem to forget whose navy this is!"

He had not, however, undergone the ordeal from which Jack and I had just escaped.

Now, we were back, flying low over the island, inclining steeply to starboard so that we looked directly down on the town of Zanzibar, the scene of a nightmare. Jack and I awoke together to this outrage simultaneously. We were seized with terror. We thought the plane was going to conk out when the pilot stalled so that Robbie could get his shots. God Bless Jack. He screamed at Robbie. He ordered

him to get the plane away from those skies instantly, and the pilot did gain altitude as we flew up over the island and back toward Dar es Salaam.

“The reader has every right to conclude that, in the end, the author finally panicked,” Jack wrote. “Wouldn’t you?”

How surprising it was, when we landed in Dar, after the crucible of guilt and fear that I had just endured on Zanzibar, to me, to find, awaiting me, telegrams of congratulations, from Mr. Shawn of the *New Yorker*, from the Foreign Editor of *The New York Herald Tribune*, from my father. “Good On You.” That was his message, those were his words.

That night, we held a two-hour debriefing session with Bill Leonhart, the American Ambassador to Tanganyika. I also met with Fritz Picard, who taped my narrative about what had happened. He was in a state of manic anxiety. Zanzibar had already all but wrecked his career, which had begun with much promise. I was sure he wanted to use my testimony to argue his case that he’d been right to evacuate Americans. He never really recovered. He died during the seventies after a failed Foreign Service career.

Despite the cable from my father, I didn’t think I had done anything of which to be proud. But I had not, I later realized, done anything to be ashamed of, either. I had not provoked the ire of Babu and Karume. When they charged into the Zanzibar Hotel, they had read what they considered defamatory statements in some of the notebooks the gunmen had confiscated from reporters. As Leonhart put it in a cable to the State Department that went to the President while we were still on Zanzibar: “According to story angry scene ensued when Karume and Babu stormed into hotel lobby looking for Picard to upbraid him for stories US pressmen had attempted to file from Zanzibar earlier in day when Karume and Babu in Tanganyika.” They were angry at Picard, too, for ordering the evacuation of Americans aboard the *Manley*.

My father’s message got it right, but I took years to understand that. Now I see that when I made a decision to go back to Zanzibar with those reporters, it was the defining experience of my life. I returned to the revolution I’d fled. I embraced the role chance offered me. I became a journalist, charged with the job of reporting for the *Herald Tribune*. I threw myself into the situation. When I did so, I opted for my destiny as a writer. I shared my first professional adventure with men far more experienced than I was, but, for me, it was a blind leap into manhood.

The anticipation of the definite possibility of my own death up there in that room in the Zanzibar Hotel was the real rite of passage. You don’t know what it is to be alone until you are forced to face your own extinction. This visionary moment is a key to *Firestorm*, the novel I wrote that drew on my Africa sojourn.

In the weeks that followed, I used to wake up in the middle of the pitch dark night, out in the Kenya countryside, drenched in sweat. I'd turn on my bedside lamp, certain that Babu had sent someone out here to find me. I was living at the Farm Hotel in the White Highlands between Nairobi and the Rift valley twenty miles out on the Limuru Road. I awoke from dreams in which I returned to Zanzibar, sometimes as a captive, sometimes by accident. Sometimes I managed to escape, sometimes I was trapped, unable to escape. These dreams were soaked in the anger of Babu.

The story that I'd sent from the Cable & Wireless Office in Dar es Salaam never reached the New York Herald Tribune. I have no idea whether it was sabotaged, or whether it was sent to the wrong cable address. However, I did file another story, without the help of Jack Nugent, which was published under my byline in the *Herald Tribune* and its wire service affiliates. I suppose that was a rite of passage too. I stayed on in Kenya. At the Farm Hotel, I wrote a piece for Mr. Shawn. It was never printed, but he paid me a kill fee, and I have used that article as a reference for this memoir.

I overcame the night sweats, eventually. I worked as a writer on a Hollywood movie being filmed outside Nairobi called *Mr. Moses*, starring Robert Mitchum. While I was living out at the Farm Hotel, I met Shirley MacLaine. She had come to Kenya to see Mitchum. We used to sit at the Farm Hotel and drink Pimm's Cups together. Soon after the Zanzibar Revolution, Bill Smith's article appeared in Time Magazine, along with a photo taken of Bill on the dhow we chartered for the trip from Bagamoyo to Zanzibar. There I was, seated next to Bill, who looks leonine. I look somewhat glum. You can see my signet ring better than my expression, though. A thick rope obscures most of my face. Still, I was so proud to be in the photograph that I rushed to show it to Shirley.

"Look at this," I exclaimed, holding the magazine open to the photo.

"You and a rope," she said.

I traveled in Africa, lived for a time in Ethiopia, and, by the time I returned to New York to live, in the summer of 1965, I was ready to settle down.

My first novel, *Firestorm*, was published in 1969. It tells the story of a young drifter who falls in love with a young couple. They travel together up the Nile with other characters into a revolution. For this work, I drew on my experiences as a footloose college dropout and all the anxiety and fear that you have at that time in your life trying to find your own way. Some of the characters in my novel resemble those I encountered in real life, including people in this memoir. I have gone on to write novels, short fiction and works of history. *Firestorm* is the summation of all I had learned and experienced in order to grow

into a writer. At the time, it earned wide recognition for its author that opened all sorts of possibilities. The adventures of my youth, including the Zanzibar Revolution, paved the way.

I never actually wrote about Zanzibar in *Firestorm*. The revolution in my novel is set in the region around Lake Kivu, in the Eastern Congo. I never planned to revisit the Zanzibar episode, although I had kept a diary and notes for articles, including the manuscript of the piece I wrote for Mr. Shawn.

It so happened, however, that I visited Cuba in 2000 with James, my son. Zanzibar, you recall, was considered the Cuba of East Africa in 1964. There is a similarity of temperament between these two tropical islands, and perhaps that is why, on my last night there, in a hotel outside Havana, my Zanzibar revolution rushed back to me as though it had only just happened. I sat down and wrote the story as I had never told it before as it came back to me now in all its color and detail in one sitting, almost forty years later. I rewrote it, corrected facts, and checked my notes when I returned home to make sure I had gotten the story right. Then I set it aside to attend to other writing projects. Now, fifty years have passed since that momentous event in my life and the life of the African continent, and it seems appropriate to release it to the world.

## About the Author

**Peter Rand** is the author of seven books. A former editor of *Washington Monthly* and a regular reviewer for the *New York Times Book Review*, he has taught at Columbia and Harvard universities and has appeared at numerous conferences and on television and radio shows, including the *Leonard Lopate Show*, Christopher Lydon's *The Connection*, WNYC, WBAI, and WBUR, among others. Rand teaches journalism at Boston University and lives with his wife in Belmont, Massachusetts.

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Photo caption: Author behind the rope with William Smith

Photo credit: Courtesy of Priya Ramrakha

Cover and page design by J. Wang

Published as electronic edition in 2014 by Four Seasons Press, LLC, New York

ISBN 978—0-9911606-3-1