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Dear Phyllis,

Your letter of 14 April arrived a couple days ago, - looks like mail is not too regularly to this sandblown place. (There are appr. 190 days with sandstorm per year) As a result, planes cannot land and occasionally telex lines etc get cut.

In the mean-time I made a big tour to the "Interior" - as it is called here, and I must admit, the sahara has given me a lot of respect for its vastness, heat and loneliness. This country is an incredible place, in all respects and should actually be inhabited only by nomads. The whole set-up is slightly nomadic and swanky, - c'est à dire, everything is loosely decided, promises not kept and people move at irregular speeds and directions. Did you know that only last July slavery was officially abolished by decret? Hands are still cut off as punishment for petty thieves, only some months ago the Medical Association protested against this law of the sharia, and this public festival of barbaric enjoyment has been stalled. The political angle: The last two cases were youngsters from the South (Blacks), and the feelings on racial lines against the Maures is rising anyway.

The attempted coup d'état of 16 March has been interpreted in various ways: the most plausible explanation is certainly the Marrocan connection: to wipe out the support of the military Government for Polisario. About one month later Gadaffi made a (non-announced) state visit here with 140 officials and three big planes (the apron on the airport is not big enough to hold 3 Boeings), demanding a federation of the Maghreb States (Mauritania, Algeria, Libya and Polisario). The opinion of the public and apparently also the military government seems divided on this question: the Prime Minister was fired afterwards and the whereabouts of the President are unknown. However, all this seems not to matter, since the air is blurred anyway by the sandstorms, one has to be careful to keep the few roads free of dunes to allow for some traffic.

The curfew is still on from 11 p.m. and apparently rather strict: if one is caught by the police, they drive you 40 km into the desert and you can walk back....

Recently, a number of journals have been banned here (Jeune Afrique and also Afrique & Asie) so one has fairly little insight of what is happening in the world apart from the lousy news on all short-wave channels. I still have no car, but more recently I struck a good proletarian relationship with the chief mechanic of Mercedes, who then loaned me the big comfortable, airconditioned car of his wife, who is presently on leave in Germany (I hope she stays a while...).

I will go to Nairobi around the 11th June and hope to meet up with A. Gobezie (did she meet you over Eastern?). Then I will have news of the fate of my car and possibly drive the thing up here. In which case I will pay a visit to Lesotho... Insh'allah....

No news from Munah, except a postcard, telling me, she takes Nabeel often to the beaches in CT. I have the suspicion, that mail is getting lost from this end, at the moment I am happy, not to be bothered with News from there.

Jane Turner was in Las Palmas and England, she wrote me from there and will be back in Stellenbosh (her Adress: J. Turner, Poste restante, "Welcarxmas" Stellenbosch) end

of May.

On first May I went to Senegal to St. Louis, the old capital of both Senegal and Mauritania. Situated on an island in the Senegal river, the place is full of decadent and rotting memories of the French colonial empire. The fishermen on the Atlantic take the place over slowly but surely. All in all I think Frantz Fanon had a rather good intuitive vision concerning the coming peasant revolution of Africa....

It is pretty hard to lay hands on good reading material. Reading, however, is not easy, there are frequent powercuts at night. I spend this time in a little courtyard next to my house, trying to keep cool, since the fan also not works. As a result one feels lousy next morning, and not inclined to do hard labour in the office. Workwise I had my first shoot-out, which I hope will clear the air. According to statistics about 39% of all children in the 5ième arrondissement (slumtown) are malnourished. When visiting last week the pediatric ward of the National hospital, I was told that one does not have a feeding regime for these kids, as a result they come back after a couple of weeks with severe dehydration, meningitis etc.... I tried successfully to find some food from one of the many welfare org. and charities here, and proposed to the head of the department to establish a feeding regime there. As result he complained to the Minister that I interfere in his affairs and the Minister has called me for a meeting tomorrow... What a place.. However, time seems to pass, however slowly. Have applied for a job in Rome let's see what will happen to this application.

I hope you are in good shape

much love