

**From:** Centro de Estudios sobre Africa y Medio Oriente <ceamo@cenlal.inf.cu>  
**To:** Phyllie <phyllie@iafrica.com>  
**Date:** Thursday, September 30, 1999 12:32 AM  
**Subject:** Reply to 3 lavishing E-Mails

Dearest Phyllie:

I am at Ana's replying three E-Mail messages from you that have piled up without having been able to read them, less still answer them. The reason is not that I am on vacation -- No, I continue to work my arse off worse than ever. First, the climate: we had 10 straight days of deluge, we thought would never end. It finally has now. Then there are all the other problems that have kept me busy.

But before I forget, let me tell you that the last time I went to the hotelito to take your gifts to people there (Walter kept finding more and more packages in the disorganized remnants of his luggage) I found the first driver you had in Cuba, remember, the one who was sick and almost dropped dead, I can't remember his name. Well, he scolded me for not visiting him before we went to SA, so he could write to you. Doctors already found out what was wrong with him, he's finally cured and working again.

Well, news from home. My little grand-nephew, one year old, had a very bad cold, high fever for over a week, and twice it went up so high that he had convulsions and they had to run to the hospital with him. Fortunately now he's OK, no sequels, and things at home are back to normal -- but imagine old Mom during those days.

Sis is working harder than ever, trying to help my niece take care of the little sick baby and at the same time embarking on publishing a new tourism review, and I have to edit all her articles -- actually re-write some of them, like one crazy one she started about the effects of globalization on the tourist industry. Hell!

Abel is adamant on changing jobs: wants to go work at artworks restoration or archaeology. Has had a hard time with the university political structures. I have to give him more attention, but he is getting too elusive.

Then there was helping Walt and his wife Cristina. I took a bullet of gas to their place on my bike under the rain and almost died in the process. Then he's scraped around for money among all his friends to send his fridge to be repaired -- actually, to be redone, and it seems that sometime in the near future, after over a decade, he will again have cold water to drink at home.

We were also busy plotting new video strategies. We finally met the head of the Cuban medical team in SA, who had a foot on the plane back to Pretoria, and presented him our new project (that was Friday morning), which I drafted in several nights of insomnia. He OK'ed it in principle, he has to discuss it and do some math with his budget, and he'll get back to us. It would only be a month's filming (going in the January charter flight, returning on the February

one) with a 3-man crew in which, like I said, I will probably not go for the reasons I explained. But still, I will push the project as far forward as I can for Walt's sake (my standing with the nomenklatura is better than his).

Then Monday morning we met Walt's boss, who OKeyed everything in principle and asked us to get immediately to work in editing the rock art serial and a short piece on Cuban doctors – let's see what we can come invent for the doctors, with no sound! Immediately I had to get on to rearrange the scripts, to plan the editing: last night I was doing that until 2 a.m. It's top priority now for us, to have something finalized that we can show.

By the way, guess what: our director informed last Wednesday of his latest meeting with Serial K. You'll never guess what he told him. Are you ready for this??? Well, that after my excellent experience in SA, he thinks the whole centre should get involved in this type of video experience. Please comment, but no four-letter words. Anyway, it's good for the future.

There was something else – ah, yes. Walt's crazy sis is going to Barbados, and she wrote a book of her memoirs as a Cuban-Barbadian child that she begged me to edit for her. I thought it was going to be lousy, and I was surprised at how good it was. I got so involved that I copied her version in my computer and edited it with great care. I think she will have no problem getting it published in Barbados. But that also took up some of my time.

Then there was my other editing work in French, the book I thought I had finished with, and from which I got some dough to go to SA. No, now the editors sent the chronology back from Montreal, they want to change it. The editor will be arriving tomorrow, and we are expected to determine the date when he will take me to Haiti for a week or two to see if I can think of a script for a documentary on Cuban doctors there. Initially we thought of doing it in October, but with the other editing commitments I will have to leave that for next year.

You know why I had to come to Ana's to write you an E-Mail? Well, the water pump at CEAMO burnt up again, and it won't be fixed earlier than a week or two, so CEAMO is closed, with imagine what odours coming from toilets that haven't been flushed for several days – oh, sorry, I forgot how sensitive you were to my naturalistic descriptions of ambiance.

On Friday I have to go give my annual lecture at the National Defense College – so tonight and tomorrow I will have to prepare it. Good thing I am still on vacations, until next Monday!

Well, it's almost 5 pm, it's thundering (rain again???) and I haven't had lunch and Mom is expecting me back, so I'll cut here. If you don't receive E-Mails from me, you know it's because of these problems. But there is hope: I have just had the re-installation of my modem, coupled to CEAMO's E-Mail, at home, so that should make things

easier. Of course, that might take a few weeks to materialize. But when it is working, you send your E-Mail to CEAMO and I will be able to read it at home.

I'm glad that Mwallmu did not die, and that you too are well, even if you did not put on your gown for Madiba, and that your place is again full of people, even if that makes you work more, and that you are happy and smoking, and just being yourself and just doing whatever the hell you wish (of course, within certain limits!) after so many sufferings and longings and repressions. You certainly deserve it. And I'm very happy that the book is coming along, even if I always knew it would.

Lots of love, David.

