

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

RFG - 16
Pioneer Farmer

c/o Barclays Bank
Arusha, Tanganyika
November 4, 1955

Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 36, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

In the earliest days of the settlement of Tanganyika the European population included a good proportion of Greeks, who were mostly engaged in trade. After the First World War there was a fresh influx of Greek settlers, some of whom took over farms which had been confiscated from their former German owners. Others went into business or carved new farms for themselves out of the wilderness. The concentration of Tanganyika Greeks is probably highest in the Northern Province. Arusha, the provincial headquarters, possesses a flourishing Hellenic Club, a Greek Orthodox Church, and a Greek School--the only one in Tanganyika -- where Greek children can study up to the age of twelve.



Mr. E. Marinakis

In Mbulu District, some twenty-four alienated European farms are scattered at the foot of the western escarpment of the Rift Valley over the sixty-mile stretch between Lake Manyara and Dareda. Most of these are owned by Greek settlers. Betty and I visited some of these farms earlier this year, and I mentioned them briefly in several previous letters. The man who is generally acknowledged to be the pioneer of this cluster of farms is Mr. E. Marinakis.

Last week in leaving Arusha to return to Sonjo Camp, we decided to travel through some of the places where we had camped on previous safaris, taking pot-luck if hospitality was offered. Our first stop was at Mbugwe Mission, where we were served with tea, and admired the new well which has freed the mission from its precarious dependence on surface water. After the missionaries had given us their version of the local news, we drove on to the Marinakis farm at Magara. The family, who had just returned from a Saturday shopping trip to Babati, generously invited us to spend the night with them and to stay on for a big Sunday dinner at which the district commissioners and other officials of Mbulu and Singida Districts were expected. We accepted the invitation and stayed at Magara

till Monday morning. During this visit we were shown over the farm and listened to Mr. Marinakis and other members of the family tell the history of Magara.

Magara Estate, which is the official title of the Marinakis farm, is named after the Magara River, one of five or six streams which take their origins in the Nou Forest on the Mbulu Plateau above the escarpment and flow into the southern end of Lake Manyara. The Magara River runs parallel to the escarpment for ten miles, cutting through the plateau in a deep valley, before descending in a series of cascades to the lake. It is a perennial stream whose waters are used on the farm for domestic purposes and to operate the farm machinery. The rainfall varies widely from year to year at Magara. In normal years it is sufficient for growing crops, except for chili peppers which require irrigation every year. But in dry years most of the crops are irrigated by a network of water furrows connecting with the river. The total amount of rainfall for a year is often less important than the timing of the rain. In the past year, for example, the total rainfall came to the desparately low figure of fifteen inches, but it fell at exactly the right time. With the help of a little early irrigation, the maize crop yielded sixty bushels to the acre, and the seed beans were equally abundant. Sisal also yielded well, as it is less affected by drought than other crops. The pawpaw trees, however, wilted under the hot sun and gave almost no crop at all. Mr. Marinakis and his eldest son Dimitri between them now have about 1,000 acres under cultivation. They have ambitious plans for enlarging their fields by several thousand acres in the next few years. But before describing their future plans, it will be well to review some of the problems which they have tackled in the past.

Emmanuel Marinakis was born in 1895 in a village in Crete. His father was a laborer. At the age of eighteen he immigrated to the United States and spent the next twelve years there. During the first five years, while he was learning American ways and the English language, he worked successively in a cotton factory, an iron foundry, and a Fisk rubber plant. Then he invested his savings in a general store at Ferry Point, Ohio, which was the center of a mining region. With the help of generous credit extended by wholesale companies he did fairly well for several years, but found competition keen. Then a strike swept the district and the miners had no money with which to buy goods. Most of the stores refused credit to the striking miners and their business came to a standstill. Against the advice of his own creditors, young Marinakis decided to take the risk and extend credit freely to the strikers. As a result his business increased enormously in volume. After six months the strike was ended with an agreement favorable to the miners, most of whom then paid their accounts at the store.

With a comfortable bank balance in his name for the first time, Emmanuel felt that he was in a position to get married. So he sold his store, changed most of his money into gold, obtained a six-month's leave of absence from the immigration department, and sailed for his native Crete in 1925 to look for a wife. He was determined to find the right girl, and that took him longer than six months. He lost his right to return to the United States but found exactly the girl he was looking for in Maria Galanakis. After two years of quiet domestic life in Crete, during which two sons were born--Dimitri and Manoli--he became restless again and chose East Africa for his next immigration. Leaving his family behind, he came to Tanganyika in 1927 and found work on a sisal farm near Moshi. There he learned some of the fundamentals of farming in Africa. His next venture was the purchase of a

heavily mortgaged coffee farm at Arusha. He soon lost this farm through foreclosure of mortgages, but gained further valuable experience in farming.

Marinakis first saw Magara in 1930. He had taken a job as tractor driver for an eccentric Greek named Zikakas who was trying to develop a farm in the wilderness between the Mbugwe Plain and the Rift Escarpment. During the month and a half that he worked for Zikakas he explored the neighboring Magara area, recognized the fertility of the soil beneath the forests of thorn trees and thickets of tall elephant grass, and saw the possibility of digging water furrows from the Magara River. He walked to Mbulu Boma and applied for 500 acres of Magara land. He was given a 33-year lease on this land at an annual rental of fifty cents an acre (about ten cents U.S. currency at that time).

The first serious attempt to develop Magara was made in 1933. Marinakis formed a partnership with a Greek named Tsiknos, who was supposed to furnish the capital while Marinakis managed the farm. The partnership only lasted a year, but clearing operations were well started and the first cotton crop was planted. He also built his first house at that time--a flimsy structure of poles and grass where he brought his wife and children who had come from Crete to join him. The Marinakis family were penniless then and were only able to carry on farming with the help of a loan of 300 shillings a month. This was made by an Indian-owned cotton ginnery at Sino about ten miles away.

The general scheme of production at Magara, as on other remote farms in Tanganyika, is to raise much of the food required for family consumption, a staple food crop--chiefly maize--for feeding the labor force, and crops for cash sale. The Marinakises have had no trouble in producing enough food for their own needs and for the African laborers: the only obstacle to be overcome in that has been nature. But in the case of cash crops there were two other factors more intractable than nature--transportation to market and fluctuations in market price. In the early years they concentrated on cotton as a cash crop. The soil of Magara was suitable and the crops were good, but the market price was not high enough to pay for transporting the raw cotton ten miles to the ginnery by human porters. Every year there was a loss. The only source of money was the 300 shillings a month loaned by the ginnery. From that small sum they had to pay household expenses, buy seed and equipment for the farm, and pay the field labor. After five years of this discouraging grind it was time for the two boys to go to school, but there was no money to send them with. Mr. Marinakis built a new house for the family on the site of the present house, planted his first field of sisal, and in 1938 left Magara to work on a sisal plantation near Tanga.

By then two daughters had been born--Georgia and Tassia--and soon afterwards Kaliopi was born. For the next five years Mrs. Marinakis managed Magara Estate, living there alone with her young daughters. The boys were sent to school in Moshi on Mr. Marinakis's wages. The farm continued to show a loss year after year, and the debt at the ginnery mounted steadily as the 300 shillings were advanced each month. Cotton was still the main crop, but the sisal field began producing as the plants reached maturity. In 1943 Mr. Marinakis returned to Magara, formed a partnership with Mrs. Gladys Rydon, and planted pawpaw trees for the first time. The price of papain was good, and during the three years of the partnership Magara Estate was cleared of debt and a comfortable balance was accumulated in the bank.

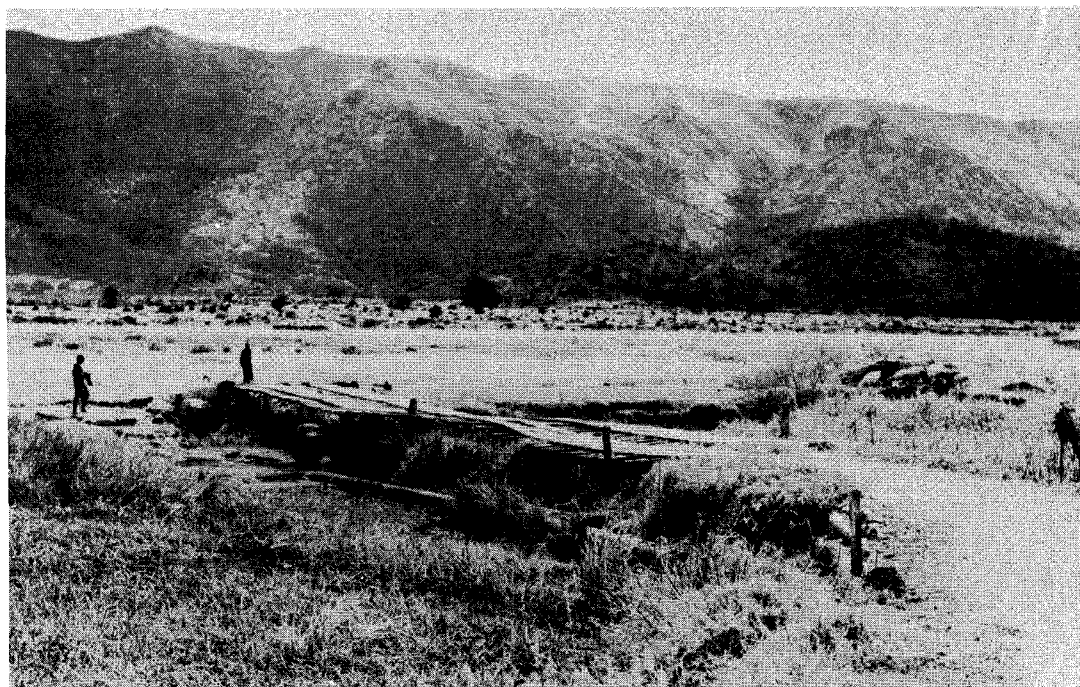
Mrs. Marinakis is now a handsome vigorous woman of middle age, her hair still black and her figure a little portly. She is cordial and sociable and loves to talk, but she knows no English. Our conversation with her was carried on in Swahili, in which she is very fluent. Her years alone at Magara were similar in many ways to the lives of American pioneer women. She had no motor transportation on the farm. The Great North Road was twelve miles away, and in those days there was no bus service. To go to Arusha or send the boys off to school, she had to walk the twelve miles and then hope to get a lift from a passing truck or car. If no vehicle came along she would camp overnight by the road or sleep in one of the dukas at Madukani (see RFG - 6). For mail she sent a weekly runner eighteen miles over the mountains to Mbulu. Besides managing the farm, she acted as doctor for her own children and for the African workers. She had dangerous encounters with wild animals, which abound at Magara, and also with snakes. On one school vacation Dimitri brought home a small puppy. The same night a leopard broke through the door of the house to seize it. The puppy hid behind a corner cupboard, and in the excitement the leopard carried off a pillow, which it tore up in rage when it discovered the mistake. Another of her favorite animal stories happened before her husband left the farm. They were told by the watchman one dark night that wild pigs were raiding the garden. Mr. Marinakis grabbed his gun and he and his wife ran out to drive away the pigs. He heard something moving and let off his gun. All around them black hulking forms started moving. They were in the midst of an elephant herd. Mrs. Marinakis thinks that she must have actually walked under an elephant.

In 1946 Mr. Marinakis had 200 acres of pawpaw trees under cultivation. The commercial product of the tree is the solidified juice of the papaya fruit. The fruit is bled on the tree by slashing it with a razor; the juice then drips into an umbrella-shaped receptacle of canvas which is placed round the tree stem. A large brick kiln was built at Magara for processing the raw papaya juice. First it is filtered by means of a mechanical press, then the gummy substance is spread in large trays and placed in the kiln oven to dry. The dried product is called papain. In 1946, when the price of papain reached 30 shillings a pound, the Magara trees yielded 15,000 pounds. This crop sold on the market for about \$90,000. The farm income was further boosted that year by crops of maize and sisal and smaller amounts of coffee, chilies, and beans.

With the price of papain holding at 30 shillings, 1947 promised to be a prosperous year. Mr. Marinakis planned to build a new house and install a decorticating plant for sisal. Then disaster struck in the form of a fire which burned the old house. About 3,000 pounds of stored papain were destroyed. Altogether the loss of uninsured goods amounted to \$30,000. His capital was wiped out, but he still had good credit rating at the bank. He carried out his plans, put in the decorticating plant, and built a spacious aluminum-roofed house of plastered brick and timber which cost \$10,000. The next year the price of papain dropped sharply, and Marinakis shifted his main interest to sisal. His original plants were almost done bearing leaves, so he planted a new field of 250 acres. He also installed a brushing machine so that he could send clean sisal fiber to market. Paw paw trees grow well at Magara, but the market is fickle. In 1950 and 1951 papain again went up to 30 shillings a pound. At present it is 10 shillings.

Sisal is a reliable crop with a comparatively steady price, but it is so bulky that transportation cost is the critical factor in its cultivation. Thus it is out of the question to ship the rough leaves to Arusha market from a place as remote as Magara. Clean dried sisal fiber has only 3% of the weight of the rough leaves, but its transportation still constitutes a problem. Because of its bulk, only about two tons can be loaded on a five-ton truck, but the haulage fee is the same as for a full weight load. To avoid this transportation loss, Mr. Marinakis has installed a baling machine, which was first put into operation on the day of our visit. When the fiber is baled it is possible to load five tons on a five-ton truck.

From the very first Mr. Marinakis realized the importance of his transportation problem. For all its other advantages, Magara is most unfavorably situated for getting crops out to a public road, and for twenty years Marinakis has been studying the problem. There seemed to be three possible routes of exit from the farm. The first possibility, which he long ago investigated and ruled out, was a road from Magara to Mto-wa-Mbu, running between the Rift Wall and the west shore of Lake Manyara. This would have involved building nineteen bridges and would have served only two or three farms. While he was surveying the Mto-wa-Mbu route, an episode happened which decided him to stop shooting game. His men were in need of meat, so he shot them a zebra. At the sound of his rifle a buffalo herd which had been grazing unnoticed in the high grass stampeded in his direction. The whole herd thundered by him as he crouched in the lee of a frail bush.*

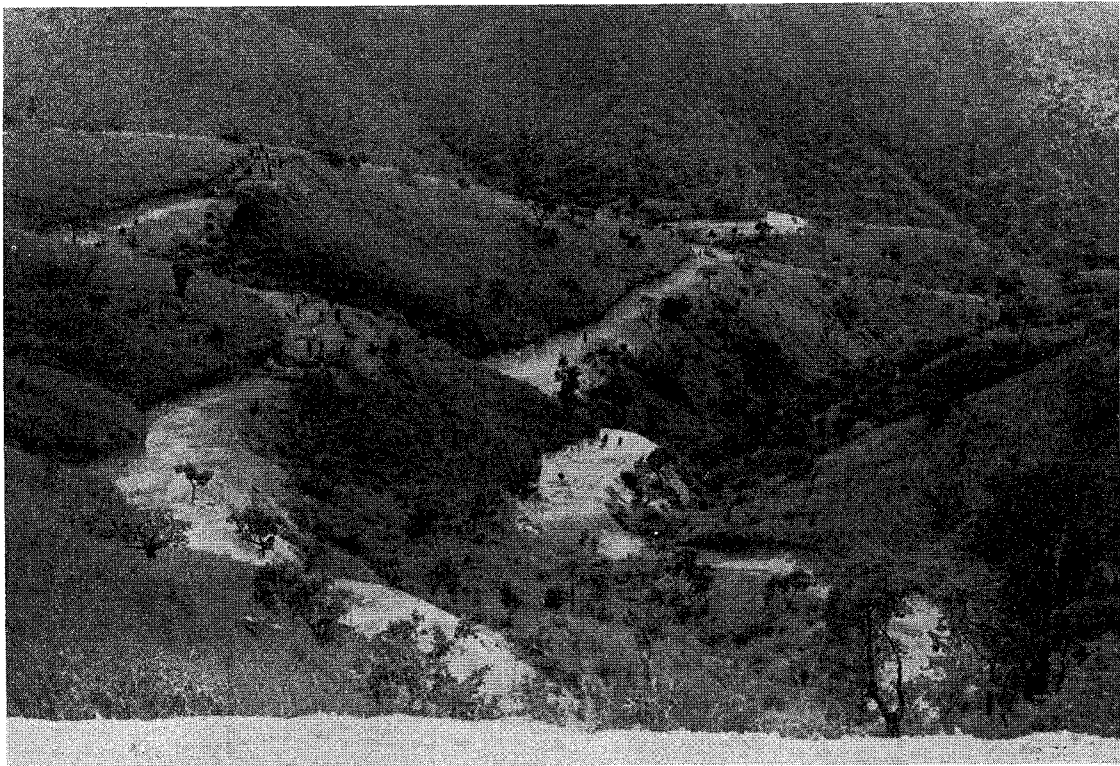


Bridge Built by Mr. Marinakis
Rift Wall in Background

*A similar episode of stampeding buffalo which happened at about the same location is recounted by the French hunter Sommers in his recent book, "Man and Beast in Africa."

The second route runs eastwards across the Mbugwe flats to the Great North Road. This road is crossed by four or five streams and as many korongas or gullies. In seasons of heavy rain the whole plain becomes a sheet of water. To get out of Magara at those times, the family would have to float over the deep water on a raft, and then wade through the shallow water or be carried on sedan chairs. Vehicles were able to ford the rivers and get to Magara for only about two months out of the year, but until recently it was the only way that Marinakis could get his crops to market. In the case of a concentrated product like papain it was feasible to use human porters: a man could easily carry a 30-pound tin of papain which might be worth almost \$200. But for heavy crops like cotton, maize, or sisal, human transportation was uneconomic. In 1950 Marinakis made an agreement with the government whereby all the streams were bridged. The government built four bridges, which brought the road in as far as the turnoff to the Sino ginnery, while Marinakis built seven bridges between there and his place. There still remained the problem of the flooded stretches of plain between streams. A year or two ago the government provided communal labor for building embankments under the direction of Mr. Marinakis, so for the first time Magara has a year-round road to the outside world. These new bridges, built of logs and planks, required a great deal of work and are not used unnecessarily. In the dry season many of them are by-passed, the road running through the dry stream beds as formerly.

The third route from Magara--up the escarpment to Mbulu--is by far the most spectacular. The first attempt at an escarpment road preceeded Marinakis's arrival in Africa. In the mid 1920's a D.O. named Harris built such a road for government use. The gradient was so steep that cars had to be pushed most of the way up. According to Mr. C.I.Meek, the present



Working on a Section of the Escarpment Road

District Commissioner, who is making a study of the early history of the region, two villages of Africans were required to help cars over the road, one at the top of the escarpment and one below. Only two or three cars ever traveled over the road. When it was finished, Mr. Phillip Mitchell (now Sir Phillip), who had just been appointed Provincial Commissioner, reprimanded the builders for excessive use of forced labor. Since that fiasco the government has viewed the idea of an escarpment road with disfavor.

For twenty years Mr. Marinakis studied the terrain with a view to building a serviceable road to Mbulu. He became thoroughly familiar with the face of the escarpment behind his farm which rises steeply to between 2,000 and 3,000 feet. Finally he staked out a roadway and convinced Mr. Meek that it was practicable. Last year the government assigned communal



Mr. and Mrs. Marinakis (1st and 3rd from right) Welcoming the Acting Governor and his Wife at Magara

labor to build the road--the Iraqw Tribe working from above and the Wambugwe from below. Mr. Meek drove down the road when it was still unfinished, using the old road for the first quarter-mile. But Dimitri Marinakis claims credit for being the first to climb the finished road, driving his 1929 Ford with no brakes. At first the road was considered safe only for Land Rovers, but this year it was widened and improved to make it passable for three-ton trucks. Betty and I first drove down the road in June while the Africans were still working on it. Some of the turns on the edge of precipices were still fearfully sharp. On July 11th the road was officially opened. Driving from our Gidas camp to Arusha on that day, I stopped at Magara by invitation to witness the ceremony. In the morning the Acting Governor of Tanganyika, Mr. Stapledon, accompanied by the Provincial Commissioner, the D.C., and other

government officials, drove down the road from Mbulu and stopped at Magara. A select group of Greek farmers were also present for a buffet luncheon that made the boards groan loudly. Mr. and Mrs. Marinakis glowed with justified pride. After leaving Magara last week, Betty and I drove up the road with ease, though I should not like to do it after dark. It is now only eighteen miles by car from Magara to Mbulu. Formerly it was 120 miles of mountainous road, either by way of Mto-wa-Mbu or Dareda. The government has taken over the new escarpment road and has promised to maintain the road across the Mbugwe flats. The problem of communications and transportation at Magara Estate has finally been solved.

Some years ago the epidemic of sleeping sickness at Magugu (cf. RFG-7) was spreading in the direction of Magara. To prevent it from entering his farm, Mr. Marinakis cleared an adjoining area of 500 acres and planted it in food crops. He continued to cultivate this land, which he held on renewed three-year leases. Clearing the surrounding forest and bush not only eliminates tsetse fly, but also reduces the crop damage done by wild animals. Elephants are the most destructive animals, and as Magara is on the migration route for elephants between the thorn bush and swamps to the south and the forests of the Giant-Craterland to the north, they are usually present near the farm. A herd of elephants can easily destroy a field of pawpaw trees or maize in a night. Mr. Marinakis maintains a force of thirty korokonis or elephant guards to protect the farm. These men spend their nights on watch-towers, which are usually high anthills, where they keep fires burning and beat on tins to drive elephants away. Elephant guarding is the only work that the neighboring Wambugwe will accept on the farm. The other 200 laborers are recruited from distant tribes. Occasionally it is necessary to shoot



Elephant Guard-Tower between Fields of Pawpaw and Maize

a troublesome elephant buffalo or rhino. This task falls to Dimitri, who has been working with his father at Magara for several years. A few weeks ago Dimitri shot a leopard with a .410 shotgun using number-7 shot. Seeing the animal on a bough five feet above, he thought it would leap on him and shot it through the neck.

Dimitri is now farming the second 500 acres and lives in his own grass house with his wife, whom he brought out from Crete, and baby. Marinakis pere and fils have both been given 99-year leases on new land which will increase their farms to over 2,000 acres each. Their contracts require that the land be cleared within five years, so they are busy making ambitious long-range plans. Much of the land that lies in the shadow of the Rift Wall is excellent farm land, and now that roads and amenities are entering the region people are applying for leases. This land comes within the tribal territory of the Wambugwe Tribe, but they have never made use of it. Before considering its alienation, the government carefully sounded tribal opinion. The Wambugwe gave their consent freely, explaining that they would profit from the elimination of tsetse fly, which had been seriously encroaching on their pastures. The danger must be born in mind, however, that future generations of Wambugwe may wish to use this land and claim that it was stolen from them.

Besides the new land at Magara Estate, four other farms, ranging in size from 1,500 to 2,600 acres, have been alienated in the area. These are all north of Magara and each one has its own stream coming down the escarpment. Mr. Marinakis has reason to believe that his high standards will be maintained on the new farms. The second farm from Magara was taken by Prince Bernard of the Netherlands, who first saw the country when he came through Magara on a hunting trip in 1953. A photograph of Prince Bernard with the Marinakises, taken when he visited them, is a proud possession of the family. According to some reports, Prince Bernard desired the property mainly as a hunting lodge, but his lease requires him to clear and cultivate the land. Mr. Marinakis hopes to learn the intentions of his royal neighbor on November 20th, when Prince Bernard is expected to come to Magara and inspect his new estate.

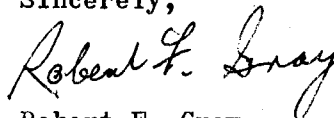
Manoli, the second Marinakis son, also married a wife who came out from Crete. He now has a small farm at Magugu not far from Magara. The eldest daughter Georgia is married and lives in Arusha. Tassia and Kaliopi are still living with their parents at Magara, learning the secret of how to run a bounteous household on an African farm. The youngest son John is in the Greek school at Arusha. On his last holiday he visited Greece on a conducted tour. The father had a severe attack of gastric malaria last year and nearly died. He is thin and looks tired, but still has a youthful gleam in his eye. His whole family, and his doctor as well, have been urging him to go to the coast for a vacation, but he says there are too many things to be done on the farm just now. Mrs. Marinakis is beginning to worry that she will not see her native Crete again, but she seems to be busy and contented on the farm. As you talk to Mr. Marinakis, it is clear that he does not think primarily in terms of money. Whether the farm shows a profit of \$50,000 in a year or a loss is less important than that it is being progressively developed. His aim is to create a modern farm in the wilderness and a civilized home for his family.

After our visit at Maraga we drove to Mbulu and from there to Ngorongoro via the Aicho Escarpment road. We checked in at the tourist camp and then went to visit the D.O. at his new house on the crater rim a few miles from the camp. The D.C. of Masai District, Mr. Frazer-Smith, was also there. They were discussing a chronic disagreement between the Administration and the Park Board which has recently become more acute. This concerns the relative rights of Masai cattle and wild animals to grazing in the Serengeti National Park. The park people would like to see all Africans and their livestock ultimately removed from the park, leaving it as the exclusive domain of wild animals. The government recognizes the rights of the Masai to their traditional grazing grounds in the Serengeti. The two opposing sides are working on a compromise whereby parts of the park will be reserved exclusively for wild animals, while in other parts the Masai herds will be allowed to share the grazing with wild animals.

Although this argumant did not concern us, we were inclined to side with the government, because we were a little peeved with the park management. Every time we pass Ngorongoro on our way to Sonjo we are taxed a fee for entering the park, though we only use public roads. Moreover, if we arrive hot and tired at the tourist camp and want a glass of refreshment, we are refused service at the bar unless we pay "club membership" for a week. To an American this smells of a racket.

The D.C. suggested a way of avoiding the terrors of crossing the eastern Serengeti by driying westwards to Serenera, the other park camp, and from there to Loliondo. This we did, but before the management would book accomodations for us at Serenera they demanded that we take a park guide with us. The D.C. saved us from this nuisance by assuming responsibility for our safe passage. The road to Serenera was comparatively good, and we arrived in time to spend part of the afternoon viewing the amazing variety and concentration of game in that region. In the evening we saw a pride of lions.

Sincerely,


Robert F. Gray

Written at Sonjo Camp.

Received New York 11/14/55.