

Egypt

October, 2001

It is my principle not to travel on organized trips. But in Egypt, for the first time I traveled absolutely unorganized. I did not take neither a book, nor a travel guide. I wrote on a piece of paper the things I wished to see. I remembered that the Pyramids were located just next to Cairo, and Abu Simbel temples or Luxor were also in Egypt. In order not to be tied on a route I also searched on the Internet for cheap hotel addresses in many cities. Afterwards I did not touch that information, as there could be no tourist guide of Egypt that could help much. The reason for that is the lack of any system, the continuous opening, closing, and moving of the hotels, stops, bus stations, and changing the railway timetables, if any at all. The only way to deal with that is to ask, if possible, mainly people not working for the tourism.

On the airport I decided not to use limousine or taxi to reach the centre. I denied even to share the van trip with an European. I went to the city bus stop. The local people told me that there were many bus lines from the airport to Midan Tahrir¹. The more people I asked the number of bus lines turned bigger. I used to write down the bus numbers and about half an hour later finding a bus out of my list turned into a nightmare. The logic activity in an Arab country is a sign, that you are mistaken and not well informed. I crumpled the list, No 356 passed, I shouted "Tahrir", the driver nodded, and I took the bus. Every trip, from its first to its last stop, is very simple (the stops are where different number of people block a lane and wave to the buses). More difficult tasks are to elbow your way in the middle of the distance or to jump on a moving bus carrying your backpack. The digits were also an obstacle to some extent. Almost the entire world writes the Arabic numerals, so called just because the Arabs do not use them. Not any longer. The old numerals have been modified long ago and writing them the European way – left to right – is the only exception of the rule. That does not confuse people who do not read Arabic.

In the first hour in Cairo I have earned my first pund² by decent work. Sherif stuck to me at the Midan Tahrir Square. Tall, slim, cheerful, and well-mannered youngster–junkie with a few front teeth missing. He showed me 4 hotels in a tall building and as there were no other tourists I arranged a pretty nice and cheap room. Sherif did not leave me for a moment as soon as he found I had just landed. Every foreigner is allowed of 3 litres alcohol and 3 cartons of cigarettes on a cheap price during his first day in Egypt. The tragic story of Sherif's father followed – his alcoholic liver was crying for western whiskey. I did not believe him and cut him short. But the news has spread. After a while, a well dressed Arab entered in my room, a blocky man, who has been organizing his relative's wedding ceremony and who has forgotten to arrange the drinks and the smokes.

- You sell them, don't you?
- I should be honest with my friends. I will buy them, paying you a night in the hotel.

The junkies are always duped. A taxi took me to the nearby foreign goods store where three mustached men were already waiting for us with the money and stuff ready in plastic bags. I only had to show my passport and to put my signature on a document written in Arabic. I got 25 pounds from Ishram, the negotiator. In the evening Ishram and Sherif had a long and noisy argument.

Maybe nobody knows the exact number of the population of Cairo. According to the Ministry of Transportation, only the taxis and vans are about a million and a half. There are no taxi stands, thus all that armada is in a state of constant movement, hunting for piastres and passengers. Taxi drivers from other cities are also troubled by the traffic. They park their cars in the city outskirts and use the city bus system or local taxis. The native city drivers surpass the stunt men of any auto show. They are also making some extra money elsewhere. The ant-hill inhabitants witness an unusual atmospheric phenomenon like a-month-long eclipse or rather a sky darkening, at the end of October, called "The Black Cloud". According to the Ministry of Transportation, straw-burning peasants along the Nile Valley cause the phenomenon. But I think peasants from along Mekong

1 A major public square in central Cairo – translator's note.

2 Also pound, or gineih – the currency of Egypt – translator's note.

and Yangtze rivers should also be blamed. Recently, a collaboration between large taxi and telecommunication companies has been started, with the noble intention to promote mobile phone taxi calls and the use of taxi stands. However, despite of these efforts the Telecom and the taxis cause lots of problems. The road system of Cairo is built by a powerful intellectual in an enormous scale. It is pretty normal while leaving a one-lane street at an unmarked fork to enter a three-lane tunnel or a three-lane bridge. Along the road barracks, shacks, modern shops, prisons, skyscrapers, prefabricated concrete blocks and flashing billboards stand, all they ISO9001 certified. The blocks' waste containers are lined up exactly in front of the entrance, but in the leftmost boulevard lane according to the standard. Only the subway is not in harmony with all that Arabian entanglements and wonders. Its first two cars, where I only once happened to get onto, are reserved for the hanums and the kids - neatly, in order and perfection. This discrimination should get broader attention in our western press, as the latter has missed to mention so far that cruel crush of their basic right to elbow with the others.

The pyramids are at half an hour from Cairo. Many buses go there too. This time, the bus stop was where about 10 people were standing in front of the Egyptian Museum. The travel was fast and without any problems. Nomads gather at the pyramids' entrance. They sell fake entrance tickets and apart from this business they organize camel, mule, or horse trips in the desert, full of mystery. However, their desert finishes a kilometre away. If you have not agreed on the price in advance, you do this sitting on the camel's back while the camel stubbornly refuses to kneel and your wife sitting over a jade has just gone to an unknown place to party with the rest of the Arab's band. It is not easy to be convincing at such a moment. As an American complained, \$100 or more is an ordinary amount. The next 2 weeks could be summarized by the phrase "sink or swim". Just behind the fence around the pyramids there is a bounty market where one can buy "Egyptian women"³. "Misr" in Arabian and "misir" in Turkish means Egypt⁴. After Giza and the turkeys, I reached somehow the pyramid complex at Saqqara and Dahshur near the ancient capital Memphis. I had underestimated the distances, so I visited on foot only the Pyramid of Djoser - the oldest step pyramid. After 3-4 pm, the traffic to Cairo becomes dangerously rare and I had the luck to take a completely empty van. A minute later a group of youngsters carrying red banners got on and the schedule for tonight became clear on the road to the national stadium. Al-Ahly, an elite Cairo club in crisis, played vs. Petro Atletico, an Angolan team in a match of the CAF⁵ Champion League. I brought luck to the host team, which managed to score two wonderful goals near the end of the match, with a final result 2:4. This was the second loss ever for Al-Ahly as a host for the Cup and their worst defeat in all times. The previous match in Angola had the score 3:1 and there was a chance for the two teams to meet again on the final. Allah is great and generous, but most of all just.

Alexander the Great had also been great, but Death owns the last word and his corpse had been kept into a barrel of honey, had passed through half of Asia until its tracks got lost somewhere in Egypt. In Alexandria and in the Siwa Oasis, enormous efforts have been made to solve this ancient archeological mystery. The main agent here is the tourist industry, financing the archaeologists in the metropolis as well as the oasis' bureaucracy and guards. The new Bibliotheca Alexandrina is next to the wide boulevard "Al Iskender Al-Akbar"⁶ and excels in size and structure the modern planetarium building. The Citadel of Qaitbay built upon the ruins of the mentioned by Strabo Lighthouse of Alexandria is located nearby. Nearby there are also: a beautiful mosque - pictured on the Egyptian banknotes (I figuratively called them greasies), an ancient amphitheater, catacombs, the Montaza Palace – the residence of King Farouk I of Egypt, and so on. Another tourist attraction is a pharmacy called "Osama", which is next to "Hattab Tours", just beside a branch of Palestine Liberation Organization, by whose door a stall of books is placed, where copies of the Qur'an, Arabian and western newspapers are displayed along with "Mein Kampf", the Kissinger's memoir books, the collected works of Bin Laden and other activists of The Green Comintern. The Egyptian Tourism Agency (ETA) is the last and the weakest in this subversive chain, which stirs up nostalgia only in the minds of the tourists coming from Spain. The Alexander's passage continues westward

3 The quotation marks – by the translator.

4 A pun – 'turkey' in a Bulgarian variant translates to 'misir'. The word in Bulgarian is in feminine gender, hence 'Egyptian women' – translator's note.

5 Confederation of African Football – translator's note.

6 Alexander the Great – translator's note.

and 300 km along the Mediterranean and other 300 km southward in the Libyan desert later, it finishes at Siwa Oasis. A heavy rain postpones Alexander's death for several years and the local oracle commands divine origin and great future. Alexander comes back with the ordinance to be buried in the oasis, and ETA is founded 2300 years later. Nowadays, the asphalt road reaching Siwa passes by the graveyard of El Alamein. In between vast fenced areas, crosses stick up as souvenirs from the Third Reich. Small red signs with worn away letters denote the fence. Less often large red signs could be seen bearing a skull over bones above the short "Danger, Mines!". Sometimes, camels ruminate beyond the signs, not even one having a missing leg. Four days later I shortcut 300 m of the road, going over a hill in Aswan. There was no fence but soldiers wearing Kalashnikovs with two cartridges binded by adhesive tape, staying in sentry boxes hidden between sand and rocks, in no time started shouting. The senior military swore at me using the word "bomb" and drew in the air a semicircle denoting the hill over I was descending. I did not believe him immediately, but quickly got used to urinate on the road. Siwa is a fantastic place, too. Imagine a monumental massive cliff transforming into a small stone mushroom under the constant attacks of time and erosion. Add to this the whole plethora of metamorphosis in the middle of the flat desert, around the oasis and the falling over fossilized shells sand and along the coast of a salty lake where, the sun sets, for instance. And you are laying in a hammock, enjoying even the mosquitoes and flies while sipping hot tea and smoking a cigarette. Eh, keif, would say Bay Ganyo⁷ and would jump as a seaman in the Cleopatra's Bath. The ancient historian and biographer of Alexander, describes that the crystal clear spring water is warm in the morning, lukewarm at noon, and boiling at midnight. It is hard to believe, but now instead of the charming Cleopatra, only bony German women take a bath there. So, I went back to the hotel. In the evening, Ibrahim Mohamed, a philology student and the boss of the local Internet club and of a bicycle repair shop translated for me the Egyptian news from Afghanistan. We lost ourselves in chatting about politics and only when three bearded men, almost at midnight, entered and took their seats in front of the computer, Ibrahim did a clear gesture. We finished the talk and went on our ways, of a barber man and a Bulgarian, born in the same time, but in separated worlds and leading us to the same point of view. In the desert under the stars, the Internet provided the data in need, which comes from the nearby market where olive oil, dates, or machine guns had been selling. I stayed in Siwa for a few more days. If there is another chance to come here, insha'Allah, it would be for months.

I went back to Cairo passing via Alexandria. After having arranged the tickets for the night train to Aswan (seats No 38 and No 40) I had the whole afternoon free. I spent it on a Nile's island called Jazeera, which translates from the Arabic as 'an island'. I stopped at the Ethiopian-Somalian church, where Sudanese were sending three of their fellow-citizens. In fact this was a Sudanese party – the place was the church as there was no other building. There were guitars, drums, an electronic keyboard, girls' chorus and little furious children played tag between the church's rows. At the same time the Sudanese minister was trying to translate from one vernacular to another and in the worst case he spoke English. The women were not very pretty, but many of the present men were like 2 metre ebony statues of Apollo. What explains to some extent why the profit coming trading of humans has a large share in the budget of Sudan. The Egyptians, as all other nations suffering from the lack of slaves, beat the rookies according to a scenario, which happened in front of the tourist train for Aswan. A crowd of 30 young boys suddenly appeared out of the tunnel between the platforms. Each boy was carrying a worn-out blanket. The rookies ran in formation through the staffs of their seniors (an enraged barber in Siwa, was producing a similar echoing sound while beating his stubborn donkey) and again suddenly squatted over their blankets and froze in that pose for half an hour without talking or smoking. Listening to the concert of a rookie and the staff beating him, tourists bite their tongues, do not take any pictures and the train slowly leaves the station. Seat No 39 got taken, according to the common law, by the car's guard – a young boy wearing a pistol. He put on his earphones, turned on his Walkman, and fell asleep before the suburbs of Cairo. Instead of filling up many pages with description of security measures taken for the tourists in Egypt, I am going mainly to mention the convoy between Aswan and Abu Simbel, the latter located 300 km to the South, on the border with Sudan. The dam and the reservoir lake, on the left side of the road, are thoroughly guarded. Nevertheless additional efforts are made to protect the tourists. There is a flight connection, but the more frightened and poorer tourists could reach the Temple of Ramses II by the city bus. In fact, the bus drivers are rarely in a

7 A fictional character created by the Bulgarian author Aleko Konstantinov (1863 – 1897) – translator's note.

good mood and do not take in tourists. An easier and surprisingly the cheapest way to go there is by the convoy. Wake up at 3:30, departure at about 4 (+/- 10 minutes Egyptian time). Around 4:15, in front of the Nubian Museum, the whole sleepy crowd packed in say 20 scheduled buses and 20 vans more, is catalogued in a greasy journal. The drivers nervously ram the gas and the tires leave smoke as if on the start of Formula 1. The bus column departs simultaneously without a traffic light. The large buses disappear ahead and the vans drag behind, stretching the column through the desert along tens of kilometres. There are no guards of course. A bearded guerrilla man, positioned in a convenient place and armed with a bazooka and 40 rockets, could leave Abu Simbel in half an hour without any visitors for the day and for the next several weeks. Nevertheless, usually at about 7:30, all the monkeys pour out over the lined up souvenir stalls and shops, forming a long queue at the ticket counter. Two hours of waiting and gaping and the convoy gathers again for the formal check of the tourists' number, that is walkie-talkie relayed. The buses arrive back in Aswan at a time when every ordinary Arabian or Nubian barely wakes up. And what is all that circus organized for? There are many explanations. It is convenient that all buses travel together and are available later for other purposes. Job positions are also created, only on paper, and bank accounts are partially financed by anti-terrorism programs. There are similar projects in Sinai too, where bare rocky forests are declared protected areas and to walk the road leading to a stinky toilet requires a police permit (bulis bermit) as well as a local guide that costs who knows how many pounds and how much wasted time. But the simplest explanation is that the circus is where the circus manager, artists and paying audience are. And when clowns star in Aswan, London, Sinai, New York and talk about convoys, guards, trust and security, the only sure thing to happen to you is the next clown gig. The Philae Temple near Aswan is a picturesque place located on a pretty small island. Similarly to Abu Simbel, Philae is cut out into pieces and relocated from its original place at the future reservoir's bottom to a higher ground. A wide asphalt road, going through hills, leads to the wharf where tourists come by buses and get on boats. Patrol boats go around in the lake; guards patrol through the temple; on the nearby hills observant soldiers hidden in their posts between sand and rocks watch around. The space between the bunkers is mined for better security. A fence bearing red signs is missing in order not to scare off those down who pay. Those measures tear off legs; if you are a terrorist, or coming on foot instead in a group, or because of the heat you just decide to shorten 300 m and take the shortcut, or you are not lucky enough. What to do – most probably the terror will continue until there are reasons for it. The Christians have their reasons, the Muslims, the Copts, the Sunni, the Shi'as and the sects in this branch of Islam, all they have their reasons. The Europeans, the Arabians, the Berbers, the Nubians, the Sudanese, as well as the different political, economic or spontaneous fractions in all the aforementioned groups of people or thousands not mentioned at all – they have reasons too. The future will show how the terror survivors will live through the security measures, too. After all that they will become brothers, unified around another Kalashnikov and another bag full of money.

Our ideas for everything around are nonexistent, borrowed or self-acquired, but most often a mixture of all three. The lack of personal impressions, together with curiosity and trust, feeds up the gigantic media conveyor. It spills out predominantly stereotypes shaped by this or that point of view. Ordinary documentary shootings meagerly advertise Egypt by the Luxor massacre in 1997. States as Libya, Syria, Lebanon and Sudan on the other hand are discussed only in the context of bombs, suicide terrorists and green banners. The rare news about anything apart from the military activity focus mainly onto starving to death kids covered by swarms of flies. Before departure I was frequently asked "Isn't it dangerous there at the moment?" I had hidden in a place in my luggage, not so difficult to find, a piece of paper written in Arabic, addressing all my "Dear friends", saying that I was a "descent person" who respected his father and the Arabian moral and faith. Nobody managed to convince me that the Egyptians were definitely friendly to foreigners until I saw it with my own eyes. Now, I ask myself, how many visitors to Germany know the number of foreigners killed by skinheads within the last 10 years, or for example, the fact that the German Court opened the case on the neo-Nazi riot in Rostock from 1992, only nine years later. If the overuse of such information only increases the insecurity of an imaginary state, so does ignorance.

As practical people, the Egyptians have developed the stereotype of the tourist as a dollars-machéd person. An industry builds upon this stereotype, rather a reality than a media presence. Tourism, along with the Suez Canal revenue, are main items of the state budget. Only 3% out of an area of more than 1 million km² is arable. You can feed with desert sand a person or two, but you

can not do that with 60 millions. Instead of “Good morning!” the greeting to a foreigner often is “Tip, please.”, asked in exchange for the favour “greeting with a tip”. Smart – some even make it short by “Giv mi one baund!” If you give them a penny as a souvenir, they are cross and ask for the bank exchange rate. When I was having a casual lunch over a boulder at Mount Sinai the local cat approached my table. First I threw a piece of cheese to her. The cat greedily ate it. Then I threw her a piece of bread, and she ate half of it. Finally she only nibbled the onion. But when I started to pack my luggage the cat ate the rest of the bread and the onion and hared off in no time. Who said that the pets resemble their owners? Few hours later I had the following short talk with a 10-year old boy sitting on a bicycle: - Giv mi a pund! - Why should I? - I am hungry. - You have such a nice bicycle but you are hungry. - It belongs to a friend of mine. - Here is some bread. - A-ah, I don't want bread. - You said you are hungry, don't you? - O.K. then, give me the bread. It is always worth of trying. People try first to offer five- or ten-fold prices. Some fool will pay at least and then you'll have a nap in the mosque. You decrease the price only when the client turns his back to you. The financial relations are simple in the Arabian world, but first let me explain about sleeping in the mosques. The sleep is inseparable part of the Arabian culture, practiced equally day and night. The number of sleeping people is apparently constant. The number of the awaken is also constant – working, chatting, tea drinking, smoking people, or simply making noise out of boredom and envy. Due to mass sleep deprivation people lay down wherever happens and nobody bothers if the guard in the military museum dreams blissfully in the shadow of a captured Israeli tank from the 1973 war. Years ago, an Iraqi student in Bulgaria begins his dissertation thesis by - “In the shadow of the n-th congress of the Ba'ath Party ...”. His advisors correct him that in Bulgarian it should be “In the light of the n-th congress ...”, but agreement has not been achieved. The shadow in the tropical countries is equal to the light in the cool ones. And as the mosques are shadowy, cooled, in every 100 m and accessible to everyone, the Qur'an suras and prayers are followed by a melodic snoring.

A milestone of Islam is that rich people should donate to and share with the poor ones. The believers do these arrangements in the local mosque. For the infidels, illiterate in the Qur'an, the entrance tickets are ten times more expensive. All other services are priced according to your ability to bargain. One of the very few local newspapers in English, “The Egyptian Gazette”, prints out under its masthead the price of 50 piastres. Often, there is a white sticker over it where in pen handwriting is scribbled “2 pounds”, or the free trader requires a 300% tip for the service “a newspaper with a sticker”. In such a case you pay 50 piastres and take the original – after all the sticker and the efforts cost money. Even including the cheats, Egypt is not an expensive country. The transportation, like almost everywhere in the world, is a bit more than \$1 per 100 km, the hotel rooms cost \$3-4, and the falafel and the pickles are almost for free. In fact, for 100 km by the train, 3rd class, I paid approximately €35 and stayed in a Suez hotel for \$2, where workers from construction sites around the city centre, packed by five in a room, along with the cockroaches living from workers' morsels and trash, were having a rest. I am definitely not squeamish, but only with some efforts I was able to expectorate in the sink and it is better not to comment the toilet at all; the blankets and the pillows were bearing blue seals “Military Healthcare Facility Property” and “US Army Hospital – Nuernberg” and looked unwashed since the coming back of the last brave G.I. in a sheet iron overcoat at state expenses. You can find a clean room (in another city) for only \$1 more and you can find far worse room for another dollar more (here in Suez). There are not any rules in this city. The very few exceptions are valid only for the numerous seamen, Gastarbeiters, smugglers, and other traders, who do their small business along the bigger Canal business.

The Egyptian tourism declared Luxor as its capital city. It can brag with the Pharaohs Valley, the Pharaohs' Wives Valley, the graves of the noblemen, the Ramesseum, the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut, to mention only a few tourist sites along the West bank of Nile, as well as the Karnak Temple Complex, the Luxor Temple, the museum, the mummies, and myriad hotels, tourist agencies and restaurants along the East bank. If well organized, the trip should last 2-3 days, at least. It is really amazing, that after so many artifacts have been drawn out, toward London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, or Cairo, the depository is still overfilled. “Face the miracle of the ancient” or “Let history embrace you” – such posters, made by a poetic soul, hang up on the road trees and imperceptibly move the tourist to the centre of “Upper Egypt” - Thebes (Upper Egypt is the name of the southern kingdom, while the Lower Egypt stands for the northern one; upper and lower comes

from the Nile River's course). If you have the chance to visit Luxor when Mr. "king" Mubarak is on a visit, you are going to see a state official escort of limousines, motorbikes, and military vehicles, and also police cordon and rows of unconstrainedly exultant children crowd, freed from school. The more curious people would ask themselves whether the date is September the 9th 8, or November the 7th 9, or a millennial of the enthronement of Thutmose III. It is out of importance, but in order not to twist the facts, I would also mention, that Egyptians, who are usually ambivalent in their appraisal of Nasser or Sadat, while sounding convincing and honest, stay unified behind Mubarak. After all, Egypt follows only Israel by means of U.S. financial support. And not to twist this fact either, let me say, that Egypt is also the Iraq's second trade partner, only after Russia. Make the dollar's flow cycle clear for yourself if you can. In Luxor, this cycle has been standing still since the November's Monday, which cut off 30% of the tourists and the profit. The traders aggressively attacked the remaining ones and after bargaining often admitted that their profit was just enough to eat each other up. For almost an hour, I stayed in the company of only the soldiers and guards of the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut, where in a calm day of 1997 only 62 tourists were killed out of a small crowd. You should be aware that the temples' guards know the best the right people in Egypt. They usually approach any tourist by "ps-ps-ps", "Which country", "Good photo here", "Aah, Bulgaria, nice people", or "Aah, Bimbinistan, nice people". When they earn the tourist's trust they get a small tip. Multiply 1 pund by 1/10 of the tourists number times the number of tourist sights and you will have an idea about the money involved here. Naturally, the guards are having licenses and a share of the tips goes to tip other guards, who are also licensed.

Along with Taklamakan, Western Sahara Desert, and Atakama, Sinai is the vividest example for a piece of a desert which is permanently attacked by the foe, whatsoever. It is strange that after all the blood spilled, the sands of Sinai are not scarlet tinted yet and the cliffs and peaks are still bare and uninhabited as in the biblical times. The local population is composed of Bedouins, who are proud of their origin Arabs. The fact that only the youngest among them do not speak perfect Ivrit is due to the consecutive merry-go-round of rulers. The modern history of Sinai briefly is: 1956 - Nasser nationalizes the Suez Canal – British, French, and Israeli military forces station in Sinai for shorter than a month – USSR threatens London with a big bomb – the U.S.A. keeps neutrality – the troops pull out – Nasser wins. 1967 – Israel occupies Sinai – the Suez Canal is closed for years, on October the 6th, 1973, during Yom Kippur and Ramadan, Egypt advances across the Canal along a 200-km-length front, recapturing tons of Sinai sand back, in 1978 happens Camp David, 1979 – Begin exchanges with Sadat "land for peace", on the military parade of October the 6th, 1981, Nasser is assassinated by Islambouli (a name needing no comment) and Israel completely withdraws from the peninsula only in 1982. The Bedouins who did the hard labor for the Israelis lose it and Egypt begins generously giving land and tax relieves to all the nomads ready to step down of their camels' backs and to start make a living by other means. A year or two later, they eventually get indulgences for their sins and the large investors willing to support tourism in the region, eased by the simple but effective measures, help the appearance of numerous resorts, as if mushrooms growing after rain. They bear names such as Sharm el-Sheikh, Dahab, Taba, or Nuweiba. The Bedouins, from being camel herders before 1967, drivers or longshoremen till 1982, take responsibilities of large land owners, traders, or politicians, but only those whose efforts were in accordance with the investors' ones. As the Bedouin mafia is strong, there are always job positions for all their men having no lucrative jobs, as guards or tourist guides of the Saint Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai (Moses with the tablets of the Ten Commandments), The Black Desert (a desert), The Blue Hole (a coral reef), the Colored Canyon (a canyon), Ras Muhammad (the diver's paradise), etc. For the time being, Sinai is an attractive destination for many settlers coming from the Nile Valley. It is a well-greased, working mechanism, that gulps tourists and spits money. And the things would have been perfect, if the next owner, greedy for sand and stones had not knocked at the door (O.K., there is oil too, but not much).

In fact, I notice, that despite all my efforts, the memories and impressions constantly come before the letters, so my task to catch up and write them down on paper is definitely beyond my power.

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- 8 Bulgarian coup d'état of September 9th, 1944, later celebrated as the National Liberation Day (from the Monarcho-Fascism in Bulgaria – a made up by the Communists period) during the second half of the 20th c. - translator's note.
- 9 The date of the October Revolution in Russia, October 25th, 1917, is according the Julian calendar; later the Soviet officials moved to the Gregorian calendar and then the October Revolution happened to be on November 7th; officially celebrated as the most important day during the Soviet era – translator's note.

Simply said, Egypt is a country, where instead of pines and firs there are mainly date palms and olive bushes, where in yards along with donkeys and horses, camels ruminates, and where on special occasions children have to be given apples and pears instead of oranges and bananas. If I have to summarize in conclusion, I would say, that such a kaleidoscope is rarely seen, one that blends a Communist approach to the labor, a deeply rooted religiousness, and capitalistic monetary relations, all that within the structure of something between a jamahiriya and a monarchy. The road toward the Egyptian bright future, or if you insist, to the shady one is tough, but that is the Allah's will.