

# Anilao

## THE HAPPY TRIBE



LEO is a geologist who has worked around the world for many oil companies. He studied the Bible and the Koran in the original language and has become a kind of Prophet, who instead of predicting the future, predicts the past. In the course of his travels he has had the opportunity to study the structure of many exotic ethnic tribes and make experiences which form the basis for an original social-political prophecy that is developed and discussed in this book. That's what Leo wrote to his friend and Master Jacob:

Here is the originality of the revelation: it was necessary to create the tribes ...

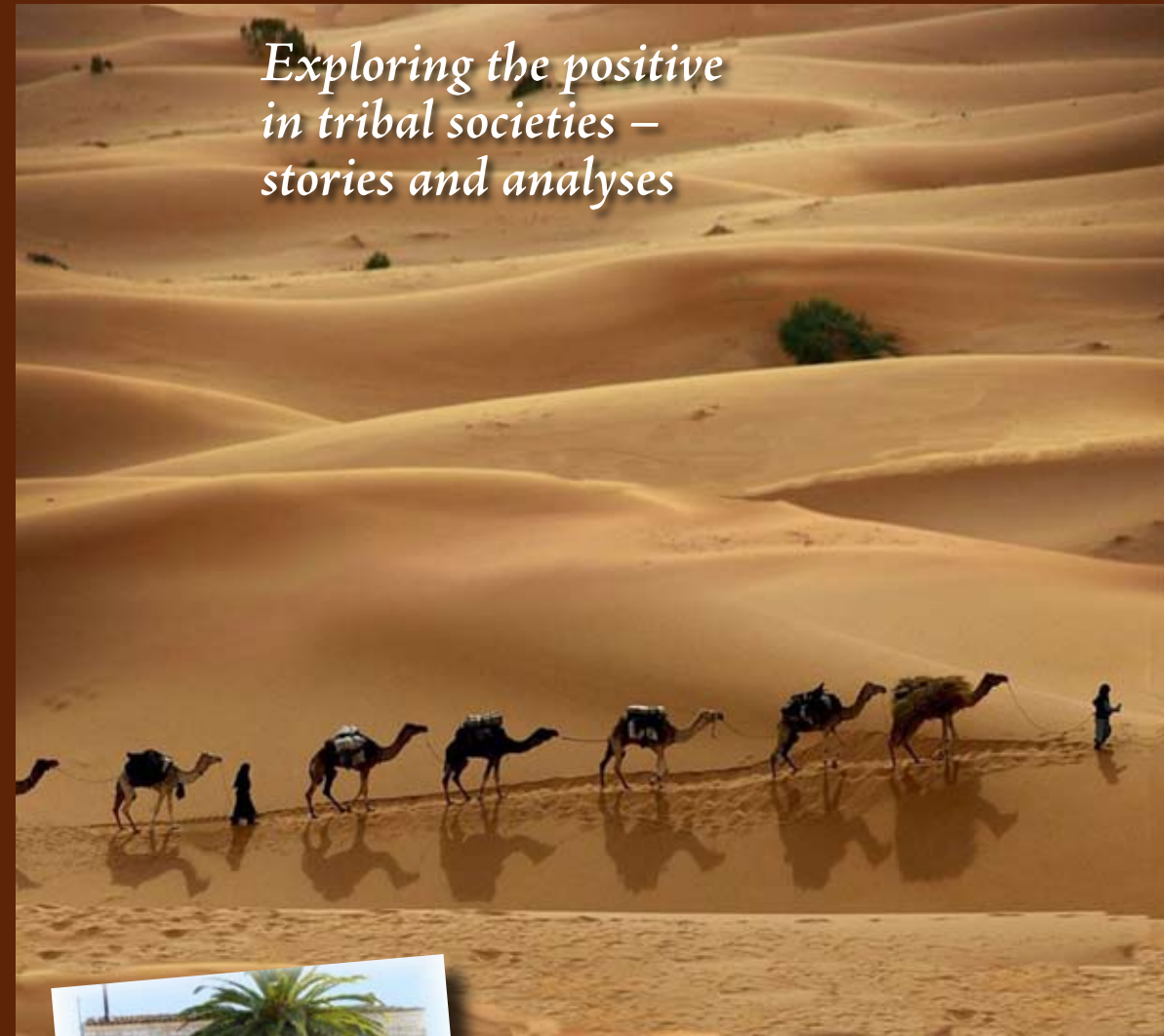
Everyone, rich or poor, intelligent or stupid, educated or ignorant, chief or follower, had to belong to a tribe and to a tribal territory. “

TO confirm his tribal concept Leo makes the experiments of communal living in his farm of Scicli, Sicily, and putting himself in the hands of chance, he founds the Italian Tribal Party, which aims to solve all the socio-economic problems of Italy. If the quantum probability can never be zero, over time also his project could succeed.

THE conclusion of Leo is:

The probability, when it occurs, becomes history ... Will the probability of the advent of the tribal society ever become history?

Massimo Melli ANILAO



*Exploring the positive  
in tribal societies –  
stories and analyses*



Massimo Melli

**Massimo Melli**

**Anilao**

**(the experiment of the Tribe)**



**Dedication:**

**While you sleep with your eyes closed the man that you oppress sleeps with one eye open. (Bedouin proverb)**

**This book is dedicated to all those who sleep with one eye open**

## Part I

### Unbelievable luck

**To win in life, my son, you have to find yourself in the right place at the right time, in other words, you must occupy the right space-time position." (The Voice)**

This is what "the Voice" had always told him since he was young. Real estate agents would say that what is important are three things: the location, the view and the right time. His cousin Zorz, who sold luxury boats for a living, instead was saying that it takes three things: eye, experience, and good luck, but if you have good luck the other two are useless. And this is what Leo, the Prophet, had finally realized the day that miraculously at the age of fifty, had found a good job. When out of your Curriculum Vitae transpires that your greater experience is Prophecy, as you had studied the Quran and the Bible in the original language, and that among your most important qualifications is the mystical explanation of the theory of probability, it is not easy to find work as a geologist in an oil company. Which company needs a Prophet? But Leo had made it! But let's start the story from the beginning, that is, from when Leo was only twenty.

When you are winning, victory is printed on your face. Your face, as the poet says, illuminates of immensity, your eyes are shining. You walk looking up and away, regardless of where moving on the sidewalk, without fear of stepping on a piece of shit. Yet, more important of all, the girls notice you and send you the "old glance" that in Sicilian is called "taliata", a word of probable Arabic origin that means: intense and seductive stare. Leo was twenty years old, the day was sunny and bright in Ragusa, as it was typical for the early summer, and he was dressed in white, except for the shoes that were red- brown. His old "zapatos Americanos" bought in the souk of Tangier the previous year when he had visited his father in

Morocco, were American military shoes, his only shoes, and whether he wore a dark suit or a white suit, the shoes had to be the same red-brown color.

Leo was on vacation, so to speak, from the University of Bologna, but the word vacation had a different meaning to Leo: it meant free food and lodging at his Aunt Maria's house in Ragusa, where he was pampered and cared for and where he could save his meager economic resources and then return to Bologna to face the September exams financially regenerated. He had just passed the exams of zoology and physics 1 for Geologists. In the fall he would try to give two more exams: physics 2 and mathematics for Geologists, which was lighter than that for Engineers but still quite hard. The first lines of the book of Mathematics began with these cryptic words: let's take an  $n$ -dimensional space... and it was clear that to understand that stuff you had to enter in a new dimension of mind. He was slaving for this exam, but he was not a workhorse. He found that these subjects were really nice, they were a breath of fresh air after the heaviness of *consecutio temporis* of Latin and of the *aoarist* of the Greek he had to study in high school. In October, he would be enrolled in the second year of university and he would devote himself to study Chemistry to take the exam in the February session. Compared to the average he was a year behind schedule, because he had repeated the fourth gymnasium, precisely because of the literary "fossils" such as Latin and Greek, that he could not manage to digest. Instead of going to school he was playing football with his mates. So he had failed the exams. But now that he was studying at the University what was easy to understand, that is the sciences, he was going along just fine.

Obviously his lack of money obliged him to spend his vacations in Sicily, otherwise if he had enough money he would go to Cervia, on the Adriatic Riviera, to live a life worth living in their old family house in Viale Pola that Aunt Maria had inherited from Aunt Giovanna. Both he and Aunt Maria were in fact "Cervesi" and when Leo was in fifth gymnasium they had moved to Sicily: why? This is a long story that has to do with the theory of probability, which was "revealed" to Leo, the Prophet, only in old age. In short it was because of a chain of "random events" linked together which formed the "cone of certainty" in the life of Leo. God had nothing to do with it. This will be explained later, but for now let's go on with the

story of the young Leo.

Leo of course would have preferred to go to the beach in Cervia where for the first thing he would try to find some “pasture” to settle down for the Summer holiday. “Pasture” in the Bologna University jargon meant exactly what you would suspect: green pastures, that is girls. Leo was certainly not up to the other professional stallions of Cervia, nor was he a daddy's boy with a spider TR3 or an Alfa Romeo Giulietta to pick up girls. He had his Aunt’s old bicycle for small displacements from Cervia to Milano Marittima, to expand his range of action. For longer trips he would ride on the scooter of his childhood friend Serz, who was always willing to accompany him. But despite the technical and economic difficulties, there was always some girl to sweep, if one was not too fussy as he and Serz: peasant waitresses from around that area, who came to work in hotels for the summer, easy prey to be confused with difficult words, some innocent German girl who did not speak Italian, but wanted to learn it, a Bolognese pizzeria waitress tired of her boyfriend and ready for a change. They were birds of passage, migratory and non-permanent and perhaps second-class stuff but that could always bear fruit. From the girls of Cervia it was better to stay away, because everyone knew each other in Cervia and they knew of whom you were the son and knew your grandmother and your aunt. At the end of the summer there was then a showdown at the Bar Rome, where the local stallions were sorting out their achievements and firing bull shit on their exploits with the tourists, in great detail, while playing billiard or games of cards. Ruthlessly, if you were seen trailing around Cervia with a girl *not so beautiful*, they would tease you: "This summer, Leo, was lean for you. I've seen you around with a "crab" to be afraid of! "It was necessary to be careful not to fall into the clutches of those assholes, and getting around by unfrequented streets and areas of dim light. Never to be seen at the beach with a girl if you were not sure that the conquest would have been considered a real "chick" by the lifeguards.

But Leo was now "broke" and had to study to figure out what the hell meant the book with a space of "n" dimensions, hence no “pasture” and Sicilian holiday instead. Sicily in the old days was a tough place for activities involving pasture: if

caught playing around with a girl, her family would oblige you to get engaged, or worse to get married with her and you would have ruined your life at a young age. One had to be careful, escaping the watchful eye of the grandmothers and mothers with their strict supervision and their grim and not very tolerant glances. To reject the official engagement could be fatal: you could perhaps end up "shot." Now fortunately times have changed, but for the generation of Leo's it is too late. Those of his age, if they are still alive, are sitting on benches along the beach front promenade to watch the passers-by, and shaking their heads disapprovingly of what they see, their mouths twisted with indignation and regret! But back to Leo, when the Prophet was still young.

It was early in the morning for his friend Frank Spadaro to be already awake from his lazy slumber, but Leo whistled the "wave" as he passed below his window at nine o'clock. The "wave" was a little melody and its meaning originated from an old joke between him and Frank: people with the shit up to their mouth in Hell would sing: "don't make the wave" to newcomers entering into the lake full of shit in which they were serving their sentence.

Miracles happen sometimes, but rarely, but that day Frank Spadaro miraculously opened the window of his balcony and waved to Leo to come over. In those days Leo and his former high-school classmates had names that sounded American: Frank Spadaro, because he was a fan of Frank Sinatra, the famous Sicilian-American singer and actor. Leo was called Leo, with American pronunciation dragging the e, like this : Leeee-o, instead of Leonardo by his friends and cousins in Bologna, because it was short and sounded better if you were a *cool dude* , that is a *dragon* like he believed himself to be, because young people have a tendency to see themselves with a positive and indulgent eye, maximizing their strengths and downplaying their faults, otherwise it would have been better to shoot oneself at a young age.

(The stallions of Cervia, the real *dragons* that picked up girls right and left, would



have called Leo and his fellows of Ragusa: a bunch of losers, and they had a point.)

Then there was Frank Parrino, the best friend of Leo and also an admirer of Old Blue Eyes. Frank was another member of the group of close friends and also the owner of the house that served to his friends as an “office” and a place where they could sit around undisturbed and listen to “rock and roll” music, while telling lies and drinking coffee. Sometimes they were playing long games of cards, if it was raining outside. While all the friends were quite poor in those postwar years, Frank Parrino was rich, being the son of the Director of INPS. He lived in a large apartment and also owned a Fiat 1100. The other friends did not own a car or even a bicycle because the streets of Ragusa were either uphill or downhill and you had to be like the Italian champion Fausto Coppi to ride at a profit. The other friends were just simple pedestrians, a category that is now in danger of extinction given the rampant use of cars and motorbikes who kill pedestrians at breakneck speed.

The apartment was so great that a large wing was used solely for the consumption of Frank, as his battlefield. The apartment was located on the top floor of the Palace of INPS, the seventh floor, and then it had a huge terrace, which covered half of the building, where Frank and his friends often played football. Frank used to scream peremptory orders to his smiling mother and order coffee for all: “Mammaaaa, make four cups of espresso at once. I have guests.” And the mother obeyed smiling: she was born to be the slave of her men, two boys and a husband. The second boy was seven years younger than Frank and tried always to infiltrate the private quarters of his brother to steal the secrets of the “big boys”. He infiltrated like a guerrilla sneaking behind the seats until Frank would notice him and drove him out: “Nzulo, get the hell out of here, disappear, disintegrate! We will call you if we decide to play football! We will use you as a goal keeper if you promise to go down to catch the ball when it finishes off the balcony! O.K.?” If Mom came in the department of Frank to spy on the pretext of asking, “Where is Nzulo?” Frank replied quoting the Bible and the story of Cain



and Abel:" Am I my brother's keeper? "

Then there was Globo, whose name had been stuck by Leo, coined for him, and perfectly reflected his personality and his physical size, because he was short and round. His real name was Giovanni Terranova, that means in Italian Giovanni New-Earth, hence his name new – Globe. Globo was the fourth regular friend of the group of high school friends regularly hanging around in Frank Parrino apartment. When they were alone, Globo and Leo, Globo used to call Frank Parrino: *the Creature* and Leo understood very well why. Parrino was born premature and therefore had a strange triangular face, because his cheekbones were not fully developed and his big ears were flapping independent of the skull more than what happens in normal faces. Globo was also calling Leo: *Belva*, which meant wild animal rather than fierce beast. “ *Belva*, let’s go to *the Creature* to drink coffee and listen to some jazz! “ Used to scream Globo, calling Leo from under his balcony, in the early afternoons after lunch. In high school Leo and Globo shared the same bench so they could easily agree on the plans for the afternoon activity. During their discussions in the “office”, while drinking coffee, Globo was always in opposition, always contrary to common sense. For example if they were discussing the fact that a jeweler had shot a thief, everyone agreed that it was unfair to condemn the jeweler, but Globo. “ The thief is a worker, you know, his profession is stealing, you know. It’s not his fault if he has to steal. The jeweler has shot an honest worker and in our social democracy this is a crime, you know.” This were the arguments of Globo. Everybody was strongly against him, except Frank Spadaro that by nature did not give a damn and used to say:” You never know!” to avoid giving definitive answers. According to Parrino, the head of Globo was made of solid bone into which a brain had crept as an ingrown nail. His brain was ingrown in his skull, that’s why he thought as he thought.

All of them were now at the University: Frank Spadaro and Globo studied Industrial Chemistry both in Turin, Leo and Frank Parrino Geology, but Frank had chosen the University of Pisa instead of Bologna. It was the University of the *élite* and the entry fee was more expensive than the more modest Bologna, where of course had enrolled Leo, being his origins from around that part of the Country.

The four friends had different personalities. Leo was a passionate Naturalist, excited from everything that was "paradoxical" in the World and was always looking for something new to discover, Globo, however, was a cynic philosopher, an iconoclast and a stubborn mule, always ready to embrace the opposite view to that of the other, to try to demolish his opponents. Frank Parrino was a scientific fatalist, since he blamed his small problems to his congenital misfortune using logical assumptions and valid axioms: "It was written, I tell you that it was written!" said Frank Parrino the day when his car crashed against a wall, imitating the Arabic tradition of blaming Allah if something went wrong. ( as Antony Quinn in the film "Lawrence of Arabia" ). But Parrino was a "great guy" for the soundness of his thinking. Together with Leo he had discussed the fundamental concepts of religion, drawing water to their mill to forgive their sins, ever since the time of high school. Parrino said: "Where does it come the notion that one must be "good"? When have we ever signed a contract with God, who provides for our goodness? It is He who created us like this! "And by joining the thumb to the index of the right hand to form a circle, he used to put the circle in the center of the forehead looking away out of the window, as if looking for inspiration from space. Together Leo and Parrino had written and typed their personal Gospel, that replaced the Holy Cross with the sign of multiplication and the concept of God with that of Probability, whose laws were written by the Divine Logos as an act of creation. Sin was thus removed, because it was the fault of the probability if one fell into temptation. To prepare to write the Gospel, Leo had spent all summer reading the Bible, taking notes on what was to be changed.

Frank Spadaro was the most difficult to describe: he was basically a lazy poet, but this was not enough to describe his personality. Probably Frank Spadaro was an Epicurean Hedonist in the best Greek tradition, he was the last of the Epicurean Hedonists. He would read the poetry of D'Annunzio and recite it in a recorder imitating the great Giorgio Albertazzi : "*I had not drunk opium in my wine, yet why so great sleep fell into my forgetful heart?*" When you asked him to tell you his opinion on any topic he replied: "You never know!"

They normally met in the “office” of Parrino after lunch to discuss the movies and decide where to spend the afternoon. Leo and Parrino had the free passes for all the Theaters of Ragusa: Leo, because his uncle had an important, but poorly paid position in the UTE tax office, while Parrino because his father was Director of INPS, and therefore was a real authority in a city where many lived of pension on the shoulders of the state. Leo and Parrino could each bring a friend for free, so Frank Spadaro and Globo were accompanying them every afternoon.

Leo usually took along with him Globo, because Globo arrived sharply on time to his house immediately after lunch , suggesting to go to the Creature first, drink coffee and then to the movies later.

“ Belva, come on, I help you fish, we need some money to go to the Bar Mediterraneo later this evening!” Globo was a very competent thief: with the help of his pocket knife he would help Leo steal quickly a 500 lire silver coin from the narrow slit of his uncle ceramic pig, to have sufficient funds for the evening. Of course the uncle knew about the *thefts* because every so often with an indulgent smile he would say to Leo: “ I wonder why my pig takes so long time to fill up!”

Parrino was usually accompanied by Spadaro. “ Hurry Frank otherwise the mask at the door of the cinema begins to worry that there is something wrong!” Parrino joked as they walked. If they did not play football or were not interested in listening to jazz, they would be walking, the four of them, the 300 meters to the Theater La Licata in order to arrive there before 2.30 pm when the movies started. If they had something better to do or an interesting debate that dragged on, they could postpone the trip to the cinema to 4.30 pm, or to a later show at 6.30 pm, but not later because by then it was important to go over and sit around at the Bar Mediterranean in the evening. The four friends of course studied very little, especially at the high school, however they had developed a nearly encyclopedic movie culture that lasted them all their life: they saw all the movies, good or bad that were projected in Ragusa between 1955 and 1964, the year when Leo left to go to Morocco.( Leo saw four times “ Lawrence of Arabia”, between 1962 and early 1964 when he left).

Back to Leo and Frank Spadaro that morning at nine o'clock. Leo told Frank to come down because he had to go to the Hotel Mediterranean and play roulette there in order to fill up his pockets with money for the day's activities. "Don't worry, I will pay for you, today I am full of money! Move your ass, you "King of Canazza" and come down!" said Leo from under the balcony. ("Canazza" was a typical Ragusa expression describing the behavior of the dog, *cane* in Italian, when lying in the shade of a tree, panting with his tongue hanging out and waiting for better times to decide to move.) Frank Spadaro was also known by the nickname "King of Canazza", an expression that described his personality very well.

Leo and Frank bought two small cigars from the Tobacconist and lit them heading briskly towards the Hotel. In the basement of the Hotel somebody had opened a little "casino", with the emphasis on the *ò*, with many gaming tables managed by beautiful Italian girls from the North. The owner of the "casino" was obviously very weak in the theory of probability and had not calculated well the risks of his business. For example, by studying well the roulette table which consisted of three rows of ten holes each, it was very easy to win. A ball rolling down an inclined trough would end up in one of the rows. You would drive the ball and fate would decide where the ball would end up. You could bet on a numbered hole and win 30 times the money invested if the ball went into that hole, because the holes were thirty. Or you could bet on one of the three rows of ten holes and win three times your bet. Leo, fresh from the study of physics 1, found out that imposing the ball a little clockwise rotation as you were throwing it down the inclined trough, it would end up in the right row. Hence the day before, he had made quite a killing playing that special roulette. Another table where Leo made some good gains was the table of 7-11, because he had figured out that his chances of making 7 or 11 keeping the "bench" were greater than those of the girl who run the game. With two dice the number 7 has the greatest probability to come out and 11 had a reasonable probability. If you made 7 or 11 with the first cast, you won. If instead you made for example 3 you would have to redo 3 before 7 would come out. Anyone with a little notion of mathematics would realize that the odds of the gambler winning were better than those of the girl who ran the

game especially as one was a born winner as Leo and Leo was preparing the exam of mathematics for the autumn session. Needless to say, the casino filed for bankruptcy and closed shop after only a week as they were losing more money than those that won. It was a shame to witness all those good looking girls, leave Ragusa with a sad expression on their beautiful faces. But that was life, there were winners and losers and Leo was a winner. That morning accompanied by Spadaro Leo had pocketed a few thousand lire in half an hour, while his friend was trying to engage in an intelligent conversation with one of the girls and watched in disbelief as Leo was cashing in an enormous amount of money.

“Come on, let`s go to the “casìno” with the accent on the ì now, to give your old “canary” a breath of fresh air and a relief from his usual routine. At this point it must look like the handle of a sword, with the imprint of your fingers all around the handle! Today I pay the ticket!” Frank replied with one of his usual:”You never know!” but with some enthusiasm in the tone of his voice. The “casìno” was the name for the local whore house. That was an Italian institution that began during the Roman Empire and continued until 1961 when an old Socialist Senator, Miss Merlin, declared the institution contrary to the Constitution and a shame for Italy, thus depriving the Italian men of their favorite pastime. The Romans of course did not agree that for a “*Civis Romanus*” should suffer withdrawals due to lack of sex when there were plenty of women all over willing to do that job. Globo had decreed that what Miss Merlin had done with her Law was against the spirit of Roman civilization and that in any case many good women considered being a prostitute a mission, like that of a nun... For the first time all his friends agreed with him, as they all shared similar values on that topic.

But that day, in the summer of 1960, the casìno was fortunately still open and after only 20 minutes Leo and Frank came out of that place relaxed and ready to tackle the next project of the day: go to Parrino and hang around there waiting for the Movie Theaters to open.

## The law of probability

In Bologna study was easy, so, having enough time, besides the study Leo devoted himself with a certain commitment to play poker and seven-eleven to clean up the pockets of his roommates Serz and Piero Biancoli. The model was the Frank Sinatra of the film: The Man with the Golden Arm and the music from the soundtrack of that movie was always buzzing in his head. But Leo knew that the seat next to Frank Sinatra, in the Olympus of greatness, was not for him: it was reserved rightfully to one that was really great and to whom Leo was not worthy to tie his shoelaces: Paolo Baldini, who often in the evening deigned to join them for a game of poker. However, while playing, Leo saw himself as if watching the movie of his life, a magic life. The good luck of Leo in the games could be defined only in one way: it was outrageous. To put it as his cousin Zorz, Leo had unbelievable luck. Being fresh from the study of physics and mathematics the problem of understanding his luck and the law of probability tormented him and became one of his main scientific efforts: understanding the formulas describing the probability. Was there a law of probability? How do you define with laws what is based solely on chance? Yet there were some simple rules that could be derived from the experience of every day. For example, the closer we are to a car, the easier it is to be run over, especially on the zebra crossing: then the probability of death is directly proportional to the inverse of the distance, actually to the inverse square of the distance because the probability increases exponentially with the proximity of the car. At a distance of one meter you are sure to get killed. This law strangely resembled the law of gravity of Newton. It had something to do with space and also with time because if you were on the zebra crossing (the space) at the wrong time (the time), perhaps a car (the probability) would certainly kill you (the certainty).

Was there really a link between probability and gravity? The gravity had something to do with time or was it independent from time? For Newton it was independent, because it depended on the distance in space. Leo, however, began to read a book written by Einstein where in a few words the great scientist explained that, contrary to what Newton thought, gravity was closely linked not only with space but also with time. This made it essentially equal to the

probability except for the fact that gravity was always certain and the probability was always uncertain.

But what was probability? Was it also a force, or a field of forces?

From his University days Leo had realized that God was not involved with the games of dice or cards that he played with his schoolmates. It was useless to blow on the dice looking in the sky for the grace of God. The probability of the outcome of the games was not the affairs of the Divinity and was independent of His divine will. First of all surely God was very busy watching the movies of his favorite scientists, to see how they fared with their attempt to find out His Holy Laws.

Members of his chosen people, Einstein and Minkowski, were approaching asymptotically the absolute truth, but luckily there was still much to discover, as the truth belonged only to God and no one could match his infinite wisdom. Ignorance of the truth was the most important gift of God, that He had given to mankind so men should enjoy themselves discovering the real truth, and keep the Eternal Father busy to see how it would end up. With his studies in physics Leo understood that God, if He was infinite, occupied the mainly dark and cold (273 degrees below zero) infinite space that, while it included the Universe, it was also the region without limits that existed beyond the Universe. In addition to living in the cold and the dark for most of the time, if He knew everything, how did He not get bored? So the concept that God knew everything had to be wrong.

Surely God, being immortal, was living in an eternal present, because for Him the time never passed, and of course knew the past, but certainly not the future, because it had not happened yet. But all the evils are not coming to harm, even to God. Instead of being limited by lack of knowledge of the future, God was saved from boredom by that ignorance, because he had the ability to imagine and have fun watching the films of His favorites scientists to see how they were going to end. Einstein was wrong when he said that God did not play dice. God played 7-11 with the Universe to avoid boredom and to have something to do. The probability was needed to play dice, without knowing the outcome in advance.

This was the Law of the God of Probability, this was the intuition that explained the reason for the creation of the Universe. The Universe was created by God to



give himself something to do to avoid getting bored. The Eternal Father certainly had also created the laws of probability that not even He could have foreseen to keep from cheating at the game. So in his second year of university Leo knew that he could not win forever. The rules of the game were such that sometimes you have to loose and change direction, to find the right direction that took you to win again in the future. But it was impossible to know the future, you could just play and hope to win.

A key thing was clear: the probability was "not good", the probability was "fair" and equal for all. If you win three times in a row at the game of 7-11, the probability of winning a fourth time is always the same, because the dice have no memory of the past, but there is no guarantee that you will always win. The human sense of justice requires that one should just stop winning to give some hope even to his opponents, but God had created the laws of probability to ensure that they were immutable, stable and were not influenced by the past. The future was independent of the past and therefore the Divine Justice was "impartial" because God controls the present but not the past nor the future. What was, has been and what will be, will be.

## **The Atlas Mountains**

Time passed, but once you are a winner you continue to win therefore the winning hand of Leo continued during all four years of University and he quickly gained a degree in Geology with grades good enough, but not great because it would have been a waste of time and a futile effort. If chance ruled the lives of the players and the results of the game, why try to warm up the dice or exaggerate in reshuffling the cards? The same day he graduated he went to bed with a headache because he had become suddenly unemployed and had to work hard to find a job as soon as possible: not an easy task for a young geologist. That day he began to lose! But the family came to the aid immediately inviting him to come to Morocco, where there was something to do for a geologist.

Leo started losing really good and solid two weeks after he arrived in Morocco where he took a job in a mine in the Mountains of the Atlas with the help of his father and the financial support of his Swiss godmother Marianne Meier. From

the rich pastures of Bologna rich in “pasture” he had ended up in the semi-arid steppes of North Africa completely devoid of girls. On the other hand he had some interesting adventures to tell the girls to make a good impression when he returned to civilization. So, instead of resting on his forehead the ring between his thumb and forefinger with the other three fingers open, wondering how the hell he had ended up over there, he rubbed his hands enjoying the adventure to come. The cone of certainty of his future, which had started in Bologna, opened up now into a broader African perspective.

After equipping him with geological gear and plenty of food at their expenses, his parents shipped him straight away to the Atlas Mountains to work in the mine owned by Herbert Belknap, a former Austrian SS officer, who had been recycled as a miner in Morocco when he was released from prison, where he had served three years for war crimes against the Jews. The idea was to help Herbert produce a geological report to evaluate the quantity of lead ore (called galena) that existed in his mine, to get funding from banks for future expansion of the mining activity. Marianne was hoping to get into that business and become partner with Herbert with the help of her godson Leo. Leo got organized with books of geology, geological maps and also bought a hand stereoscope and a geological compass in Rabat, capital of Morocco. At the Geological Survey, the BRPM, he also bought an assortment of aerial photographs covering the area of the mine and its surroundings, to be studied with the stereoscope to identify the rocky outcrops and the major faults of the area. So with a few clothes in a backpack, a pair of hiking boots on his feet and carrying all that geological Leo happily boarded the train dragging even a cardboard box closed with a string containing lots of canned food. He seemed the Brave Anselmo on his way to the Crusades!

Morocco was after all a civilized country and a famous tourist destination even in those days therefore Leo left behind Mohammedia and the civilized coastal belt where his parents lived, directed with great enthusiasm into the unknown towards Meknes.

Here he was taken over by Sidi Bousmaha, an Algerian Arab who was the Director of the mine, and left with Bousmaha by Landrover towards Tameslemt where the mine was located in the Middle Atlas mountains near Talsint. The trip

took the whole day and it was a wonderful experience for the adventurous young Leo that had just turned 24 years old. The music of the film: *Lawrence of Arabia* was constantly resounded in his ears. Sometimes a voice would interfere with his thoughts but Leo drove it out to listen to the music in peace. It was like watching the movie of his life from above while “the Voice” commented on what happened to him. He didn’t need that nonsense, he needed only to listen to the music, so he was successful in keeping her quiet and the Voice was silent for a while .

Passing through Ifrane, in the midst of the High Atlas, Bousmaha stopped in the souk to buy some food for the mine. While they were wandering through the exotic market of that beautiful mountain town, Leo saw a scene that he would remember for the rest of his life: a barefoot little boy who was holding the hand and driving a blind old man dressed in a djellaba. The child represented the eyes of the blind man and despite his young age (he was probably only six years old) carried on his mission and his destiny with great concentration and sense of duty. Leo realized suddenly to be back in the ancient world of two thousand years ago, at the time of Jesus, and that Morocco was not only a tourist attraction, but a window into the past of humanity. This is what the Voice had suggested before he managed to keep it quiet.

The scenery was beautiful and the view was gorgeous. They first crossed the High Atlas to Missouri, and then a section of a semi-desert plateau to the foot of the Middle Atlas where was located the mine, on the north side of the mountains that stretched unbroken east-west from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia following the famous " pre-Atlas accident", which was a long crack in the earth north of the Sahara. They arrived at the mine at sunset.

The building where the mine’s “office” was located was a low and basic construction elongated parallel to the slope of the mountain and ran along the dirt road that led to Tameslemt, a Berber village situated about 10 km from the mine. The construction, in a typical “no frills” Arabian style, had several rooms and many doors but had no windows. Why have windows when you try to protect yourself from the burning sun? If you need light, open the door! The construction also lacked a roof and instead had a flat terrace that extended throughout its length. Again the logic was: why have a roof if it doesn’t rain? One of the rooms

had a large open fireplace and was used both as dining room and as office for Sidi Boushmaha. It had two doors, one facing the outside of the house and the other that opened in the bedroom of Sidi Boushmaha. In one corner of the room, on the floor, there were some flattened pyramids of cards and papers, neatly arranged in a line along the wall, obviously the archive of the "office" of Sidi Boushmaha. There were no chairs. On the floor around the fireplace there were some primitive colorful cushions arranged in a semicircle around a large copper plate decorated with arabesques that served as a table. The cushions were the seats. In the evening, the young wife of Boushmaha was preparing dinner for everyone, cooking on a rudimentary stove outside the house. She must have been less than 20, while her husband was probably over 50. The dinner, for men only, was served at the center of the copper plate in a single large ceramic plate that served for all. Boushmaha used his right hand and a piece of bread to pick up the food, while Leo was given a providential spoon that the Arabs did not need. A few days after his arrival Boushmaha had told Leo that the Arabs used the right hand to eat because the left was used to clean up after they had gone to the toilet, that in their particular case was behind a bush in the desert.

The polite custom was to leave some food in the plate for the wife of Boushmaha that in her room would be eating whatever was left for last. For breakfast Leo would prepare the coffee alone in his own room with a small kerosene stove called "Primus" and ate biscuits and orange marmalade he had brought from Mohammedia. At lunch he would bring with him in his backpack sack a loaf of Berber bread and cheese or a box of sardines, to be eaten in the shade of some Argana Tree, if he found one, or sitting on a ridge of limestone of the Jurassic, which never failed to materialize. Argana trees were a kind of wild olive trees, typical of the Moroccan Atlas, and their fruits which looked like large olives were eaten by goats and camels, but not by humans. You could extract oil from the kernels of the fruit that the goats had not digested, if you were interested to find them and pick them up from goat droppings. It was a long and tedious process as it took one hundred kilos of stones to make a kilo of oil. It was a very thick brownish oil and it was said that it was very good. Too bad that it smelled like goat poop.

Leo's room was very simple. It had a chair, an empty box of dynamite which served as a table, an iron bed under which were three boxes of dynamite sticks. Basically Leo's room was also the dynamite storage of the mine. Sidi Boushmaha had reassured Leo: "Don't worry about the dynamite, if Allah wills everything will be fine. Dynamite does not explode unless you hit it very hard. It explodes only with a detonator." And if Allah does not want to? Leo was therefore very careful not to make sudden movements when he was in bed.

After the first night Leo discovered that there was another occupant in the room, a very small mouse that was running around when the petrol lamp was turned off. Leo wasn't bothered by the little mouse, actually he thought that he was kind of cute. After breakfast Leo had the habit of leaving some small bread crumbs on the dynamite box for the mouse to have his breakfast too. "I hope that being hungry he will not start chewing on the dynamite causing an explosion" Leo thought and then also added a few pieces of cheese to feed his little friend. The room of course did not have a toilet. Who needs a toilet when there are thousands of bushes and uninhabited and barren mountains all around you? On the right side of the house were the living quarters of Herr Belknap, always kept regularly closed. Leo thought that certainly Belknap had his own private toilet, and in fact his hypothesis was confirmed to be right by Sidi Boushmaha when Leo dared to ask him three days after his arrival. The lack of a toilet with a proper bidet was the worst sacrifice that Leo had to endure. To compensate for the inconvenience he got from Boushmaha a large aluminum tea pot with spout, to be filled with water to clean himself behind the bushes. That was the Arab custom.

When Leo arrived at the mine Belknap was absent, he had gone to Meknes for some business and was supposed to come back in a week or so, if Allah wanted.

## **The Berbers**

Leo was so young that all those problems seemed romantic and exciting. It was adventure in the Atlas mountains as God intended! The mine employed a dozen Berber workers, all young more or less age as Leo, but some even younger, 18, 19 years old. One of them, Ahmed, was assigned to Leo as his guide and helper to accompany him when he went around the mountains for his geological work. He

probably was only twenty years and was already married. The Berbers began life early in the Atlas mountains.

Leo immediately began his geological survey of the mining district. During the day, accompanied by Ahmed, he climbed the slope to the top of the mountains to collect samples of rock. He quickly discovered that the lead ore, called Galena, was restricted to a fault line that stretched from east to west along the northern slope of the mountain. Leo and Ahmed soon became good friends. Ahmed spoke reasonably good French so they could communicate well. They would sit together chatting while they ate their meager meals in the shade of the Argana trees during the breaks of the survey. Ahmed gave Leo some good advice: when he went behind a bush to the toilet he had to be very careful to make noise with a stick to scare away the vipers and make them flee. Once a Frenchman was bit right in his ass by a viper and died in a few hours. In fact during their expeditions they had seen many vipers. Those with two horns on their head were the most poisonous kind. Ahmed said that Leo should also be afraid of khallouff, a local name of the wild boars. Once a Frenchman had been attacked and killed by a very fierce khallouff when he entered a narrow valley, leaving no escape route to the animal. But with the help of Ahmed, if Allah wanted, he would be safe because he knew the places where the khallouff were hiding. On steep mountain paths Ahmed suggested to carry Leo on his back to avoid falling down, since there was impossible that Ahmed lost his balance, even when carrying a heavy load. He began to tell him the story of a Frenchman that did not have a local Berber guide and that therefore fell into a ravine to his death. Leo began to think that Ahmed was making up all those stories to gain his trust and his respect. "I have to stop him before he kills half of all the Frenchmen that have visited the Atlas Mountains!" thought Leo smiling.

Ahmed was actually really like an agile mountain goat, a real goat, and knew all the paths and all the shortcuts. He was good to find a few sources of water that gushed from the rock. Before drinking he would kneel down to clean the pool from twigs and dust and say : B'ism'Allah, in the name of God, and let Leo drink first.

Leo was making a map of the area with the help of aerial photographs and topographic maps, and Ahmed was good in identifying on the map and on the photos the location of the samples that they had taken. It seemed that he knew all the rocks outcrops of the mountain to perfection. He was particularly good in handling the pocket stereoscope to identify the relief of the outcrops in the aerial photos. At the end of the day Ahmed was carrying on his back up to 30-40 kilo of rocks samples, with no apparent effort. After accompanying Leo to the Office, he and the rest of the Berbers in the evening would gather together to be counted by Boushmaha and then return home to Tameslemt walking and very often running. The Berbers were good at running. No wonder some Moroccan Berber had won the marathon and the 10 km run in the Olympic Games. When he had to go to Talsint to buy something in the souk Ahmed used to run down there, covering the 40 km distance in a couple of hours, a real Olympic record. "Running is beautiful, it keeps me in shape" he would tell Leo, who was fascinated by such exploits.

The Galena was a lead sulfide,  $PbS$  is the chemical formula, a shining mineral of a beautiful grey metallic color that formed large, regular, cubic crystals, easily flaked and mixed with a whitish gangue of Barium sulfide, whose chemical formula is  $BaSO_4$ , called Barite. The mineralized vein was not large: in places it exceeded 50 cm, but most of the time it was no more than 10 cm. The vein besides Galena and Barite contained a high concentration of Silver, and the district had been discovered and exploited by the Romans almost two thousand years ago, to produce especially the Silver. Leo was surprised to discover how intelligent and evolved had been his ancestors. After the Romans, the Berbers had dug several shafts and some galleries to continue the extraction of the galena. Most of the extraction of the mineral was made by primitive methods, using picks and shovels to collect the mineral after blasting up the rock with dynamite. The mineralized zone was concentrated in light green marls, a stage of the Jurassic in which a fine grained mudstone was deposited in a quite sea environment saturated with limestone to form a rock type called marl. The mineralization was found along a fault where liquid containing the mineral coming from the depth of the lithosphere had reacted with the marls as it cooled down. That must have happened during the mountain building process that had caused the formation of the Atlas



mountains along the Northern margin of the African continent. The mineralization was of epithermal type, that is due to the cooling at shallow depths of mineralized waters. Leo learned all that from the books of Geology that described that well known mining district, known since the time of the Roman conquest of Morocco. His role was to follow the mineralization along the fault and measure its thickness to then estimate the volume, and the economic worth of the mineral. It was also important to know the thickness of the marl layer because the mineral was found only in association with the marl. The fault was not evident everywhere, but only where the rocks formed some outcrops. From the aerial photos one could follow easily the fault trace, but on the ground the fault was sometimes hidden below some debris of some ancient river or glacial deposits. Leo and Ahmed would therefore mark the hidden portions of the faults with red wooden pegs to show where future digging should be done to get to the mineral. Once understood the trick, the rest of the work would be simple, therefore after a few days, Leo could be more relaxed and could concentrate about the task of finding additional faults in the district."The Atlas mountains are all chopped up, there must be other faults that have been mineralized with Galena", thought Leo. The details of measuring the thickness of the mineral and the marls could be done later. Partly because of that idea, partly because he liked to explore, Leo started roaming about the mountains in every direction.

One day he and Ahmed arrived in the vicinity of the village of Tameslemt, so Ahmed invited Leo to his house, one of several brick-red and mud-plastered homes that formed the village. There Ahmed's pretty young wife with rosy cheeks welcomed them: Ahmed explained something to her in Berber and she looked at Leo with concern in her expression, then she said: miskeen! Leo understood that that meant: poor boy, since the word "miskeen" resembled the Sicilian "miskinu". Why was she pitying him? What had Ahmed told her to make her react that way? In any case the girl smiling asked them to sit comfortably on soft cushions in their small living room covered with Berber carpets and she brought strong Arab mint tea with a lot of sugar, that would cause a diabetic coma to an old man, but that gave a them an energy kick to keep them going for the rest of the day .

The Berbers were a strange race. They spoke their own language totally different from Arabic, and generally they had a fair complexion, almost white, actually really almost yellow. Generally they were tall and slender, had very thin beards and moustaches, and some of them had slanted eyes, like Mongols or Chinese. How did the ancestors of the Berbers get there from Mongolia, was a big puzzle, still unsolved. It was also rumored that they were the descendents of a Germanic tribe, the Vandals, that arrived in Morocco from southern Spain, where they had settled in Andalusia ( which got its name from the Vandals: V-Andalusia ). Leo could check the truth of this claim by observing Ahmed's wife: she had a very fair complexion and blue eyes, something very unusual for North Africa. In their language they called themselves Amazigh, which meant "free people" and indeed they were free to move around the Mountains, the deserts. They were free to be poor but happy, and when you are happy much wealth has no meaning! Their women were independent from male domination, in other words they were "liberated". The most important difference from the Arabs was that the Berbers had only one wife.

## **The tribal system of the Berbers**

Nowadays, in 2013, if one needs information, one should just search on Google. Here's what you find in the Internet about the Berbers: "Population native of North Africa, once common from the Atlantic to today's Libya, fragmented in areas more or less vast from the Moroccan Rif to the Atlas Mountains, and extending all the way to southern Tunisia and northern Libya.

The Berbers speak their own language and are commonly thought to descend from the Mediterranean peoples who inhabited North Africa in early historic times and perhaps prehistoric times : they were always fiercely opposed to the conquerors (Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs, French, etc..) and this has allowed them to retain many of the original traditions, especially in the groups located in the Atlas. The traditional economy is based on agriculture, livestock is generally complementary, with the exception of the Berbers of the Rif

and some other area, who are living a nomadic or semi-nomadic life herding sheep and, to a lesser extent, cattle, camels, horses, goats. Originally, the Berbers were organized into matrilineal clans, but after centuries of Arab influence, that introduced Islam, their social system was transformed into a patriarchal society at large, although traces of the original structure still remain, for example in collectivism; the large family lives alone in a neighborhood quarter and more quarters make up the village ruled by the Council of householders or by a tribal assembly. "

This description explains several things that Leo had to discover for himself at the time of his visit. First of all, the independence of women due to the fact that originally the Berbers were organized into matrilineal clans. Then their system based on collectivism explained their spirit of brotherhood and solidarity and the strong cohesion of families, who formed a tribe. Finally, the structure of the combined tribal village was due to the institution of a Council of heads of families or tribal assembly.

Ahmed had told Leo that the Berbers, when they came home in the evening, instead of standing with folded hands, were all working together their small plots of land that extended for several acres next to their village in an oasis surrounded by palm trees. Despite the hard life, according to Ahmed, the Berbers were all happy and peaceful. Almost all the young people of the small tribe, which consisted of about twenty household quarters, worked at the mine, while the women and the elderly tilled the soil or tended the livestock.

Each family had a few sheep, a few horses and many chickens.

Leo immediately took a liking to the Berbers, also at the suggestion of the Voice that commented the screening of his film.

In the souk of Talsint, where one day he had accompanied Sidi Boushmaha, Leo bought dates, for his breakfast, but also a Berber skullcap that he started wearing all the time as some kind of solidarity with the Berbers that he admired. The problem was that Leo, after a few days in the strong sun of the Atlas mountains, started looking like an Arab, not like a Berber, because his complexion became quite dark and sun tanned. In fact Boushmaha, a real Arab, was almost black. That day in the souk they met a young man, tall and slender, all dressed in white, white

shirt and white djellaba and with a white turban. On his belt he carried an Arabic sword. Sidi Bousmaha introduced the young man to Leo in French.” He is the Prince of the Desert, a Sheriff, descendent from the Prophet himself. His family owns 5000 camels.” The young Prince looked impressive in his immaculate white dress, he was smiling, he was quite dark and had black eyes, therefore Leo realized that he must be an Arab.

Arabs and Berbers seemed to get along in harmony for centuries , so that between them remained only linguistic rather than racial difference. The real masters however, since the ancient times, were the noble Arabs, the descendents of the conquerors. Sidi Bousmaha exchanged a brief conversation with the Prince in Arabic and then moved on to another corner of the souk followed a short distance away by Leo who did not dare to lose sight of him.

Talsint was a real interesting market town where people from all corners of the Atlas and the desert gathered to buy and sell especially sheep and camels. Leo was fascinated by what he saw there. The Voice, interrupting the music of Lawrence of Arabia, had made Leo aware that this place was left intact as it was still in the days of the Bible.

## **Herr Belknap**

All the activity and the mountain climbing caused Leo to become sun tanned, thinner, as he lost about five kilos, and to look more mature. He no longer looked like a boy and started looking like a man. He wore his Berber skullcap all the time and took it off only when he went to bed. In the evening the young wife of Sidi Bousmaha, as she was serving dinner in the copper plate for Bousmaha and Leo, would caress Leo’s head and whisper: miskeen. Leo thought that more than once she had given him also the “ old glance”, unseen from her husband.

But that was probably wishful thinking of Leo, that overestimated his skills as a seducer. In any case next time Sidi Bousmaha went home to Meknes he took his young wife back and brought with him an older and fat wife, that wasn’t so good looking but an excellent cook.

The weeks were passing and Herr Belknap was not coming back to the mine. Eventually he came back two months after the arrival of Leo, when the young geologist was perfectly well integrated in the local life style and had begun to speak a few words of Arabic.

Herbert Belknap was a good looking and tall man of about 45. He must have been quite young during the war: how could he commit the crimes for which he was convicted? He was an individual of typical Germanic race, with blond straight hair and white skin slightly tanned. His eyes were light blue and cold like ice. Leo noticed that he never smiled. The first impression he made on Leo was very negative, but that was probably what Belknap wanted. His objective wasn't to be liked, his objective was to be obeyed.

He wasn't friendly but at least Belknap was polite:" I talked with your Lady Mother and I understand her objectives, but what I need from you is only a geological report with a detailed calculation of the reserves potential of this mine. " Started saying Belknap that evening in perfect French when they were having dinner together sitting around the copper plate."What I really need now is a Mining Engineer to help me produce as much galena as possible, because the price of the mineral is high." Leo understood that his days at the mine were numbered. As soon as his geological work was finished, he would be asked to go. Thinking about it, apart from the fascination of the adventure, life in the Atlas mountains was not appealing to a young man like him. Adventure without "pasture". Would Frank Sinatra have accepted that kind of life?

"Just as well, the game is beautiful when it is short." thought Leo smiling under the mustache that he didn't have.

Usually dinner consisted of couscous and lamb stew, but that evening the cook had added some vegetables to the classic menu. During the day each one was doing his independent work. Leo and Belknap exchanged a few words only during dinner, then they both retired to their respective rooms. Leo did most of his work in the evening, plotting on the map the results of his day work on the topographic map to create a detailed geological map of the area, with the light of a petrol lamp.

Two events caused Leo to start hating the Austrian. The first happened early one morning when Belknap entered into Leo's room to ask him to come and help to drive the pick-up up the hill, towing the new compressor all the way to the mine. The Berbers would be pushing it all the way up the slope that was very steep. The Berbers, including Ahmed were all gathered outside Leo's door waiting for instructions. The little mouse was eating his breakfast on the floor close to the feet of Leo. When Belknap saw the little mouse he screamed like a woman and started shouting: "A mouse, a mouse!"

Leo, with a rapid gesture of his right hand managed to pick up the mouse and kept it in his hand showing it to Belknap: "It's only a little mouse, not a lion!" said Leo waving his closed fist containing the mouse under the nose of Belknap. With an expression of disgust in his face the ex-SS said: "You are just like one of them!" pointing his finger in the direction of the Berbers. Leo came out of his room, quite cross and threw with force the little mouse in front of the feet of Belknap, killing it instantly. Leo, realizing what he had done, was sick for that action that he came to regret for the rest of his life as a terrible thing to do to his little friend, and without a word started walking toward the pick-up followed by the laughing Berbers that had enjoyed the scene.

There was no way for the pick-up to climb the steep hill on the dirt road leading to the mine especially towing a heavy compressor. The wheels were spinning, skidding on the muddy road. Leo thought that the solution was only one: build a wooden winch to crank up the compressor with the help of a rope, while the Berbers were pushing. He started giving orders to the Berbers to build one very simple and primitive winch drawing a picture of what he intended to build on the sand with a sharp wooden stick. The Berbers understood immediately and work started in earnest. Towards noon time Herr Belknap walked up to the mine to inspect the work and discovered that he had not been obeyed and saw the winch already completed beginning to pull the compressor up the hill, driven by a half-dozen Berbers. He started shouting that the compressor had to come up to the mine with the help of the pick-up, as he had told Leo. So he sat at the wheel and started climbing up the hill with the Berbers pushing. After many attempts the pick-up would not move uphill, actually it came dangerously close to slide

sideways and fall off the steep slope of the mountain. Leo tried to explain to him that his method would work and would be safe for the Berbers, but Belknap answered angrily: "I don't care how many Berbers will die, but the compressor has to go to the top like I said with the help of the pick-up." Eventually he succeeded, but after many attempts and risking the life of many people. Belknap had made his point, but that was the final proof that there could be no understanding between him and Leo. Now he understood why the wife of Ahmed as well as the wife of Boushmaha showed to be worried for him, saying miskeen! Because, knowing Belknap, they knew that it would be difficult for him to live with the Austrians.

One week later Leo left by bus to return to Meknes where he would be finishing his geological report and then return to Mohammedia. Before leaving the mine Leo showed to Herbert the various red pegs that he had left on the ground to indicate where to dig into the soft debris to get to the fault. If in doubt he should ask Ahmed because he knew where the fault was. In any case his report would provide him with a geological map and topographic maps showing the exact location of the fault. Herbert explained coldly that in Meknes he would stay in his house, guest of his wife Inger, until the report was written. She would then pay his fees and he would then be free to go.

### **The trip to Missouri and Meknes**

Early in the morning Leo left his box of food, whatever was left of it, to Ahmed and said farewell to his friend hugging him. He then shook hands coldly with Herr Belknap, and finally, after preparing his bags and collecting his papers, towards noon Sidi Boushmaha drove him to the Talsint road to wait for the old bus driven by a Jew called Amar. When the bus arrived lifting a terrible dust there was a short conversation in Arabic between Sidi Boushmaha and Amar, and at the end they shook hands smiling. Sidi Boushmaha told Leo that Amar agreed to take him all the way to Missouri that day, and the following day to Fez and Meknes. Amar knew where Belknap lived and would show him the way to his house in Meknès. Leo noticed that Boushmaha and the Jew did not exchanged money, of course there was some business between Boushmaha and the Jew that Leo did not know: it was another mystery of life in the desert.



Boushmaha told Leo that that night Leo could sleep in the house of Amar, as his guest. He should not have to pay anything because everything was taken care for.

During the bus stop that lasted a long time because the people of the desert were never in a hurry, Bushmaha told him that Amar owned that old American bus and his routine was to go one day from Missouri to Talsint then back to Missouri where he lived. The following day he would drive the bus in the opposite direction from Missouri to Fez and Meknes and back to Missouri. Three days to Talsint and return to Missouri alternating with three days to Meknes and return to Missouri. That way he always spent the night at home with his family and on Saturday he rested. "The Jews love an easy life and on Saturday they rest." he whispered in the ear of Leo as he helped him to load his luggage on the bus and then gave him a pat on the back saying, "Have a good trip!"

Leo sat next to Amar and they left with the bus wobbling and jumping up and down on the desert road after waving good-by to Sidi Boushmaha.

Leo enjoyed the return trip better than the first trip. He felt relieved and suddenly free. The Jew spoke very good French and was willing to answer all the questions that Leo was eagerly asking him. Amar explained that the passengers were local Bedouins, some Arab women carrying big baskets to the market of Missouri and a few Berbers going to town for some kind of errands. The roof of the old bus was packed with the belongings of the passengers, in unstable equilibrium. There were all sort of things, including some chickens and a couple of goats. Leo observed Amar to study signs of Jewish-like characters in his face but found nothing that would distinguish him from a typical European.

Amar had pale freckled skin, blue eyes, was reddish blond, had curly frizzy hair and strong and muscular forearms, covered with reddish hairs. He was stocky and massive, and he was dressed in European clothes, with white short sleeves shirt and beige cotton trousers. On his bare feet he wore large sturdy black leather sandals. While he could immediately identify an Arab or a Berber, Leo could not identify a Jew with certainty from a French, a Greek or an Italian. The only thing was the curly and wavy hair and reddish color, which however, were common features in Romagna among his cousins.

When they reached a shallow stream Amar stopped the bus in a dry patch of gravel in the middle of the stream to allow the passengers to go out and drink or fill their bottles with fresh mountain water.

Amar knew the mining district of Talsint like his pockets and told Leo that there were no chances of finding a concession that was not already taken by somebody else. People had been mining in that area for centuries and now suddenly the price of lead and silver was quite high. Also the barite was valuable, as it was used in the drilling for oil as an additive to increase the weight of the drilling mud. Leo explained that his objective was to get the hell out of there as soon as possible as he didn't like to work for Belknap. The Jew smiled and said that he understood Leo very well.

That evening as they were eating dinner in Amar's house, Leo was able to notice another peculiarity of the Jews: they were eating using knives and forks and dishes like Europeans, sitting on chairs around tables and Amar's wife was sitting with them. She had a darker and sallow complexion than her husband and sharp features and aquiline nose. She could have been a Southern Italian from Sicily or Calabria. The couple opened a bottle of Meknes wine for their guest and Amar spoke a few words of blessing in Hebrew making a toast in honor of Leo. Then they conversed pleasantly with him for a couple of hours during and after dinner. Leo learned that the Jews were among the first inhabitants of the Maghreb, and that they got there several centuries before the Romans after the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in the fifth century BC.

The Berbers were living already there being the first inhabitants of North Africa: they lived in peace with the Jews and some of their tribes had converted and adopted Judaism as their religion. After the Jews, arrived the Romans and then the Christians of the Roman empire and then the Vandals, from Spain and North Africa. The Arab conquest was actually the last of all, in the seventh and eighth century. Finally Amar said laughing: "If you want to know how an old Moroccan looked like, look at us. The Jews are the old Moroccans!"

The following day at six o'clock Amar and Leo were ready to start their trip to Fez and Meknes via Ifrane after a cup of strong green tea with mint. After dinner Leo

had slept like a log on a carpet on a corner of the dining room and now was eager to move. The bus was loaded with people and their belongings, picked up in the souk of Missour or along the road because there wasn't any proper bus stop where to gather. They made a long stop in the souk of Boulemane, where some of the passengers left and a few new ones climbed on board, then the old bus began to climb the mountains puffing its way through the High Atlas mountains until Ifrane, the highest point and also a renowned ski resort of Morocco. Here, too, a few people went up and got off the bus. After Ifrane after they finally took the road down to Fez.

Leo was sitting next to Amar who was very willing to act as a tourist guide. Around 1 pm they reached Fez, where they stopped for lunch. Amar took Leo to a small restaurant-shop near the Mellah, the Jewish ghetto of the old Arab city, and they ate legs and feet of mutton with a yellow peas soup and Arabic bread. Leo and Amar had become good friends to the point that Leo revealed to him the legend of the Jewish origin of his family, the Lopes family. In Ferrara, where as a child he lived for many years with Aunt Mary, the Lopes were all still Jews, except him. Uncle Ernesto, his father's brother, knew the history of the family and had told him that one of their great-grandfather had married a Christian, and although he never converted to Christianity, he was not convinced enough to worry about religion, so that branch of the Lopes had become Christian. Amar smiled in amusement and said: " So we are cousins! I felt that there was a relationship between us! Since the time of Moses, Judaism is inherited from the ancestors with the soul. You cannot delete your soul just changing religion. Once a Jew, you stay forever Jew, *le olam va ed.* "

Amar was in good mood and continued to discuss the same topic. Maybe some Lopes could live in the Moroccan Mellah, but he had never heard that there was someone with that name and if there was, maybe it was a Jew from Spain or Italy. But only God knows what had happened in the past! Leo said that thousands of Lopes had been killed in concentration camps by the Nazis, and that was definitely a Jewish surname. That's why he, as a child had felt a kind of affinity towards Jews and he disliked very much Belknap.

Amar, still smiling, explained that in the old days Fez and its Mellah had been a famous center for Jewish studies, where even the famous Rabbi Moshe Maimonides lived and taught for a few years. Then Amar frowned and whispered to Leo, because no one in the shop should hear him: "If you are a Jew in your soul, a voice from above is talking to you and it shows you the way!" Leo laughed and said, "I know, not only it tells you the way but it continuously bothers you because it never shuts up!" Amar laughing slapped on the back Leo and said, "Yes, it is true, it is true!"

Before 3 pm they reached Meknes and Amar dropped off Leo and his belonging in front of Bab Mansour, the monumental arch leading to the Old City. After greeting him and wishing him good luck Amar showed him the road to the house of Inger Belknap, in the French quarter of town that was a few hundred meters from there. He could not go wrong. Then he greeted Leo and wished him good luck and Leo followed with his eyes the bus that was disappearing in the distance with a feeling of regret, like if he had lost a good friend, or better like if he had lost a member of his family forever.

### **Thalassa, thalassa**

When Xenophon and the ten thousand Greek mercenary soldiers eventually reached the Aegean Sea they knew that their troubles were over and they had reached Greece and were finally home. In the book "The Anabasis" Xenophon described very well the scene: the soldiers started running toward the sea screaming: thalassa, thalassa, which meant sea, sea in Greek. This is exactly what Leo felt when the train taking him back to Ragusa from Bologna stopped at the strait of Messina to wait for the ferry to cross over to Sicily. From the train window Leo could see the dark blue sea and smell the scent of the Mediterranean. On the ferry he went out to move around and stretch his legs. In the bar of the ferry he bought a nice espresso coffee and a brioche to have a decent breakfast. The time was 8 am and it would take almost all day to continue the trip all the way to Ragusa, where he would arrive at 2pm. But Leo thought that he was already home. It was the beginning of September and Leo, once back from Morocco was finally going home to Ragusa after spending a couple of months between Bologna

and Cervia. As usual he was almost broke, as he had spent all the money earned in the Atlas mountains. In Ragusa he would wait to be called to do his military service and would live gratis. It was a cheap solution due to his lack of money and of course he was happy to see Aunt Maria and his old friends Parrino, Spadaro and Globo to whom he would tell his adventures in Morocco. Looking toward Messina in the distance and enjoying his cup of coffee, Leo was recollecting the events of the last few months. A lot of things had happened.

### **The return from the Atlas**

After spending 10 days at the house of Inger Belknap in Meknes, writing his report, Leo eventually could return to Mohammedia with the agreed fee for his work in his pocket: 100.000 French Francs, not a great amount of money , but in those days enough to pay for his airplane ticket and return to Bologna. His plan was to spend a couple of months between Bologna and Cervia with his friends and his cousins. Maybe he would find a summer job in the Hotel Flora that belonged to his second cousin Gino. But most important of all he would have to get in touch with his ex-University colleagues to ask their advice about finding another job quickly, this time in the oil business, because mining was not for him. Being young Leo was not too worried about the future. He considered the future like a cone of opportunities opening up in front of him in every direction of space. With his good luck he would find a solution.

In Meknes Inger treated Leo very well, feeding him some substantial breakfast and dinner, because she discovered that he was broke and starving and too shy to ask for an advance. He had generously left his box of food to Ahmed and spent the last money that he had going around in the souk of Meknes: now he was penniless and hungry. Inger after all was a good friend of Leo's godmother and took care of him like a son.

Inger would go out almost every evening with a friend, a Spanish guy called Francisco and would ask Leo to act as a baby sitter for her two children aged 12 and 8, while Leo was working at his maps on the great table of the kitchen. It did not take long for Leo to discover that Herbert was a cuckold because when Inger returned accompanied by Francisco, for a good

half an hour he could hear some suspicious meowing coming from the garage below the house. Herbert certainly deserved it more than anyone else: to be a cuckold couldn't happen to a better person, thought Leo! Inger after all was still a young lady, a nice tall blond and quite attractive and obviously had better things to do than wait for her SS husband to come home from jail or from the Atlas mine. The night before he left Inger and Francisco invited him to a nice Meknes restaurant as some kind of farewell party. While with Inger he used to speak French that evening at the restaurant they spoke Spanish, a language that was easy to understand for Leo and that he spoke as a "French cow" therefore they teased him, joked and laughed a lot. Francisco was a really nice guy. He owned a Garage and car work shop in Meknes where he was born, the son of a Spanish family that had emigrated to Morocco during the Spanish colonial period. He was a classic "pied noir" as the Europeans born in North Africa were called, and consequently he spoke fluently Spanish, French and Arabic. Francisco told Leo that he was divorced and that with Inger they were planning to get married after she obtained the divorce from Herbert.

When was his turn to talk Leo confessed to them that life as a mining geologist in the desert was not made for him, because he would not like to live in the Atlas all time. There were a few pretty girls and many camels around: it was not the right setting for those who, like him, had grown accustomed to life on the beaches of the Adriatic. On top of all that he explained that he did not get along well with Herbert and had the impression that he treated him the same way in which he treated the Berbers, with contempt. Inger smilingly explained to Leo that Herbert probably considered him a Jew, since he suspected that Marianne was Jewish, because of her name Meir, and of course he knew that Lopes was a typical Jewish name. "That creep has a special talent for discovering the Jews everywhere, not only in Austria!" concluded Inger.

Leo said that really there was a legend in his family that confirmed some possible Jewish origin for the Lopes family, but Marianne was a complete and confirmed atheist, and never mentioned any Jewish connections or any religious affiliations whatsoever. But Inger said that for the Nazis it didn't matter if a person was religious or not, it was enough that one had only a few deciliters of Jewish blood

in his veins to be considered a Jew. “They are fanatics, they are sick people!” Inger then changed the subject and asked Leo if he had a girlfriend in Italy, and Leo had to admit that he had some girlfriends in Bologna or here and there, but nothing serious. Inger and Francisco then started teasing him accusing him of being a typical Italian play boy, always in search of tourist girls on the beaches of the Adriatic and when Leo replied that he was innocent, that it was all the fault of the “probability”, they all burst into laughter.

The next day Inger took Leo to the train station and Leo returned to Mohammedia to face his godmother Marianne, who naturally was not too pleased to see him back so soon. They discussed in the evening the problems about Herbert Belknap and the fact that clearly he did not need any partners for his mining operation. He needed only a mining engineer to help him increase production. There was enough mineral there to be produced, but the next project was to increase productivity and get some funds to enlarge the mine. Worse of all Leo had decided that life in the Atlas was something that did not interest him, he had other plans. So after a long evening discussing his future plans, Leo managed to convince his parents that he should return to Bologna and start looking for another job. Leo had spent almost three months in Morocco and not only his visa had to be renewed if he wanted to spend a little vacation in Mohammedia, but also his Italian passport had to be renewed. So the next day he went by bus to Casablanca to the Italian consulate to get his passport renewed and to apply for an extension of his visa with the Moroccan police. To his great surprise the Italian Consul told him that his passport could not be renewed because Leo was supposed to go back to Italy and do his military service.

Leo fell from the sky: that new situation was completely unforeseen and he thought that once you started losing you continued losing. It always rains on wet ground and disasters always happen three at the time. Negative work experience in the Atlas, and now military service: what next? Firing squad for high treason? There was no escape: now he had to return to Italy and do his duty like everybody else, so he went to a travel agent in Mohammedia and bought a return ticket Casablanca-Rome that his father generously proposed to pay for him. So Leo saved his 100.000 FF to go and have a few months of vacation in Italy before the

military service. He told his father that he needed to go to Bologna first and find a new job opportunity in the oil business before joining the army. In reality the idea of “pasture” filled all the neurons of his brain!

## **South Africa**

Fifteen months in the army passed quickly and were not a complete waste of time after all. Better under the army than under a truck, thought Leo. From the first day the captain of the company had discovered that Leo was not a s "serious" soldier because looking straight into his eyes he noticed a light of indifference and arrogance that he did not like. So he would shout to him: “ Be punished!”

Leo was soon to realize that if he wanted to stop to clean the toilets of the battalion, and go out sometimes on leave, he had to try to look at the captain with a different look.

After several failed attempts and after six months of continuous punishment, at the end it became natural for him to take the humble look of the "underdog" because he was really feeling like a beaten dog. So finally he was allowed to leave the battalion on a free-exit permit on Sundays, to visit an old sweetheart who lived in the vicinity of Udine, in the hope that she had not fully forgotten him. So he learned a little discipline in the army, but inside himself he could not avoid thinking that he was not made for a disciplined life. Maybe he could have been a good guerilla fighter or a mercenary as long as he had nobody giving him stupid orders. And already at a young age he realized that most of the orders were stupid. When he finally was discharged, he ran out of the barracks of Udine without looking back once, and went straight to the station, where he climbed with a sigh of relief on the first train to Bologna.

“Finally, this is it! "He thought, but he knew that there was another project to be completed: leaving for South Africa as soon as possible and start a career as a petroleum geologist. In fact, returning from Morocco, before leaving for the military service, he immediately started looking for work and had been in contact with two of his best friends and colleagues from Rimini, Piero Biancoli and Paolo Baldini, who had studied Geology in Bologna and had lived with him in that city.



From the two friends he came to know that the University had published two opportunities of work for graduate geologists: one as a mining geologist in the heart of Australia and one for a career as a petroleum geologist in South Africa. With his negative experience in the Atlas, Leo quickly eliminated Australia and got organized to apply for a job in South Africa through the South African consulate in Rome. His two friends, who did not have to do the military service had already applied for the job and having been both accepted, they were ready to leave. Apparently the Republic of South Africa needed to bring in as many geologists as possible due to an aggressive program of oil exploration in the country. So Leo had learned that when you're young, if you are looking for work, it is best to follow the herd, without losing time preparing useless applications for work that never received an answer. Then he followed the advice of his friends, and even before finishing his military service, he applied for that job and sure enough, he was hired.

Piero and Paolo had left for South Africa before Leo left for the military service, so when Leo arrived in Johannesburg in spring of 1966, his friends had preceded him by almost a year and half and were already acclimated. Leo had already filled twenty-six years when he arrived in Johannesburg.

Their supervisor, Dr Joubert, sent Piero to the airport to pick up Leo and take him to Pretoria, the capital of the Republic of South Africa and the head quarters of the Geological Survey where they were working.

Piero Biancoli had shared an apartment with Leo and Serz during the University years spent in Bologna. Serz, as the childhood friend of Leo from Cervia, having lived next door to Leo's grandmother and grandaunt, knew all the story of Leo and his family. It was natural for Serz and Leo to share an apartment together in Bologna, they had grown up together as children and when they went to the University they continued living together. Serz was studying Agricultural Economics in University while Leo was studying Geology. In their Bologna apartment, which had three bedrooms, one toilet and a large kitchen, Leo and Serz had also accepted Piero Biancoli to come and live with them because he studied geology, was from Rimini, 20 km South of Cervia, and therefore he spoke

with the same accent and had the same mentality as Leo and Serz. Accent and mentality were very important to be accepted as friends and young boys lived in closely knitted groups with their peers. It was a transition from family life to independent adult life, and friends were very important at that stage.

Paolo Baldini was the scion of a wealthy family therefore he had his own apartment in Bologna, all by himself, but in the evening, if he had nothing better to do he used to visit his friends from Romagna to play poker or seven-eleven with them. He was also studying Geology, but with little enthusiasm. He was born for much greater things than to become only a simple geologist. His mind was always full of projects about how to succeed easily in life. He was conceiving a future made of adventures, beautiful women, tropical paradises and poker games like in the movie: *the man with the golden arm*. And according to Leo the life style of Paolo Baldini was modeled as close as possible to the hero of that film: Frank Sinatra, at least in his head. Leo often observed Paolo playing poker and noted that he looked exactly like Frank Sinatra and did exactly the same elegant gestures and had exactly the same deep expression of the face of Frank Sinatra. For this reason he greatly admired Paolo and Leo knew that he could never reach his "greatness" although often, by sheer luck, he beat him at poker. Paul was born "great."

On the road to Pretoria from Johannesburg Piero informed Leo of the situation. First of all he got married to Maddalena, one of his four girl friends that he managed to keep contemporaneously while in University, and she now lived with him in South Africa.

"Congratulations, said Leo, how did you manage to choose just Maddalena among all your girl friends?"

"Actually it was easy, I once organized a party where I invited my four girl friends and introduced them to each other without saying a word. The situation at the party deteriorated and risked to get out of control like a nuclear reaction: I had to run away while they were discussing and arguing with each other. At the end only Maddalena survived and forgave me, so I decided that she would be the woman that I would marry."

Second, he related the story of Paolo Baldini. Paolo, being from a rich family, the son of a famous Doctor from Rimini, was used to be quite successful with the girls working at the Standa Supermarket or in the various shops of Rimini. The girls knew who he was and they were fighting fiercely among themselves for him, for this reason he had a sort of harem of fresh "pasture" always available in which to choose.

Before living for South Africa his mother had prepared for him a brand new collection of light gabardine suits and silk shirts, as her son told her that he would go to the conquest of Africa. "Paolo thought that he would come back rich and famous. Needless to say he had a bitter surprise. South Africa nearly destroyed his ego in only a few months." Explained Piero to Leo, who was eager to find out what happened. "What happened was that in Pretoria there were no night clubs like the famous "Paradiso" of Rimini!" Piero explained that everybody in South Africa led a very simple life close to nature. The boys were playing rugby or tennis on week-ends and wore desert type kaki shirts and shorts, with long socks, fit for the African bush and the girls, who were all taller than Paolo, were working during the day and went to bed early in the evenings. During the weekends they were staying home or relaxed around the many swimming pools that existed everywhere. There was no night club life. There was no need for gabardine suits, you would look ridiculous wearing one at the swimming pool.

"On top of that Paolo has been sent to a remote place in the Karoo desert to supervise a well near Sutherland, a place with only 500 inhabitants, far from all possible action!" concluded Piero.

In Pretoria Piero dropped Leo in front of a little guest-house hotel where most of the employees of the Geological Survey were staying before finding a permanent residence or an assignment to a field location. Since he didn't speak a word of English he helped him to check in and invited him to have dinner with him and his wife Maddalena in their apartment that evening. He would be picked him up at seven in the evening, leaving him a few hours of time to organize and to take a shower. That evening Piero had invited to dinner also a South African girl, Amanda to introduce her to Leo. Leo liked Amanda because she

had a body that was promising “great things” and eyes that were studying him secretly and that threw some inviting "old looks".

Unfortunately Leo did not speak one single word of English, so during dinner he was forced to speak to her in Italian, while Piero and Maddalena tried to translate. Life was easier for dogs and horses, in the sense that for them, their intentions were immediately evident and animals did not have to make so many philosophical discourses to win the females. But for humans a minimum of communication was necessary: the times of Homo habilis were long gone, so when Amanda with her car led him back to the boarding house, he gave her a chaste kiss on the cheek wishing good night and went to bed alone, just as a poor loser.

The day after Piero asked him:” how did it go with Amanda last night? So far all the Italian geologists have gone to bed with her, including me. She is a nymphomaniac and we call her Screw-anda. She has been very useful to teach us English!” Leo was shocked: “ Why didn’t you tell me yesterday, you idiot? If I had known that, I would have gone to the attack and I would not have behaved like a perfect stupid! "Piero laughed heartily and said," This will teach you a great lesson, jackass that you are. You have to learn English as quickly as possible if you might get lucky with the South African girls. "

Arriving in South Africa Leo was happy, because he had the certainty that his life there would be a thousand times better there than in the Atlas mountains. Certainly a lot of adventures were waiting for him in that exotic and beautiful country. To start with he was no longer broke because he had received a 300 Rand moving expense bonus with which he immediately opened a bank account. Then for the first time in his life he had a check book and a fixed salary that was good enough to allow him to enjoy a modest, but respectable life standard.

The first priority was now to learn English. The interview at the South African Embassy in Rome was held in Italian, because the Consul spoke perfectly Italian and probably thought that Leo spoke a minimum of English, at least enough to make himself understood. The truth was that the South

Africans were hiring dogs and pigs, so to speak, if only people just breathed and were "white" they would qualify.

The problem was that Leo actually knew a few words of English but did not understand when people spoke to him in that barbaric language. At school he had learned well French, in addition to Latin and Greek and in Morocco, visiting his father in Tangier, where he spent a whole summer when he was still in high school, he had learned well enough Spanish, an easy language for an Italian. Preparing for his departure for South Africa, he had bought a grammar of English and had begun to learn to memorize a string of words and he always carried with him a small Italian-English pocket dictionary. Having familiarity with foreign languages he had immediately realized that almost all the English words representing abstract concepts derived from the Latin and apart from the pronunciation, resembled Italian. Then 60% of the work was already done, but during the evening he was reading books with the help of the vocabulary to quickly learn the words of Anglo-Saxon origin. The English had a bad habit of mangling up the pronunciation of the written words so as not to be understood. The pronunciation, however, could be refined with time and experience. His immediate objective was to turn up as soon as possible with Amanda, to invite her to dinner and try to recover the lost time.

His supervisor, Dr Joubert, a kind and patient man of Boer origin, understood what needed to be done and after only one week in Pretoria he drove Leo all the way to Zululand, to be trained by Giovanni, an experienced Italian geologist that had been working for the Geological Survey already for two years. In Zululand, a part of the country inhabited mostly by British settlers, Leo would have quickly learned English and be trained by Giovanni in the job of geological supervisor of a drilling rig. Dr Joubert drove Leo with his Landrover through the Transvaal plateau and through endless sugar cane plantations. During the trip a new melody started ringing in his brain: what Leo thought was the soundtrack of the film "King Solomon's Mines" and "The Voice" had begun, after all this time, to comment on his adventures in Zululand. They stopped only once to eat a frugal sandwich and

drink some tea in a Tea Room to then head on the way to Mtubatuba where the rig was located. They arrived to the camp in the evening before dusk.

## **Mtubatuba**

The rig was not a proper large rotary drilling rig like the ones used in the exploration for oil, but a small diamond drilling rig used in the mining industry to recover samples of rocks by continuous coring of the subsurface rocks. To make a comparison with real life, if the rotary rig was a large Harley Davidson motorcycle, the diamond rig would be a scooter. It was drilling with the help of empty hollow tubes called core-barrels supporting at the end a diamond crown. By rotating fast the crown would cut the rock formation recovering cores, i.e. cylinders of rocks long between 30 and 60 feet. The drilling progress was naturally slow as the rig recovered a continuous length of cores, so sometimes it would take up to two years to drill a ten thousand foot well to recover ten thousand feet of cores. The idea was to recover continuous samples of the lithological column of the subsurface to find out if there were minerals or the potential for oil deposits in the area. The diamond rig was manned by a crew of three drillers, working shifts of 8 hrs each throughout the day and the night, without stop. The drillers lived in camping wagons with their families, with their wives and children and were all ethnic Boers, speaking Afrikaans. On most week-ends they stopped the operations for two days to celebrate the holiday and have some rest. They were the descendants of the ancient Protestant settlers, Dutch, Belgians and French who had fled to South Africa in 1600 to escape the persecution of the Catholic church against religious minorities in Europe. Because of the lengthy interruptions drilling proceeded so slowly that sometimes the children of the drillers were going to the same schools in neighboring towns for years before the drilling activity moved to a new district.

The cores had to be analyzed and studied by the resident geologist, they were marked every foot and described in a core-log to be sent weekly by courier to Pretoria. The geologist was also required to plot the rate of penetration of the coring operation, an important parameter that varied according to the hardness of

the rock being cored. The instrument recording the rate of penetration automatically was called geograph. On top of those duties the geologist was also responsible to prepare the drilling mud to be used as a lubricant to facilitate the coring of the rock. The drilling mud consisted of water, mixed with bentonite, starch and tannin in the right proportions to give it consistence, lubricating power and the right viscosity to be pumped down to the bottom of the hole and back to the surface. The mud had also the function to keep the hole clean and free from debris.

Giovanni welcomed Leo with great enthusiasm. After two years finally he had somebody to talk to in his native language Italian and a friend to exchange some ideas in his own language, Italian. He would rarely get visitors from the main office or from another diamond rig drilling about 200 miles away in a place called Dannhauser, where the geologists were also Italians. Dr Joubert, that evening, after taking Leo to the field and a short chat with Giovanni, went immediately to town to Mtubatuba, to sleep in the hotel and return the next day in Pretoria. Giovanni, after preparing a nice espresso coffee for Leo sat down with him in his camp kitchen to become acquainted with him and to ask all sorts of questions about his background.

The first impression of the camp was positive for Leo. It was well kept, functional, clean and it looked like a small village, except that the houses were caravans, with annexes made of wood and corrugated iron to act as kitchens and living quarters. Each housing unit had his own toilet and shower shack made of wood and corrugated iron which gave the impression of meticulous order and looked reasonably clean. Leo was supposed to sleep in an iron bed inside a large military tent next to Giovanni's caravan. First Leo inquired with Giovanni if there were snakes in the area and Giovanni replied laughing that in fact he had found a black mamba just in the corner of his tent when he was preparing it for Leo, but the snake was now gone and Leo could sleep tight and have sweet dreams. Leo looked very worried but Giovanni laughing told him that he was just joking, snakes don't like the noise of the camp and keep away from it." We are very close to the Umfolozi game reserve on the other side of the Umfolozi river and there are many dangerous animals there, including lions, but don't worry, they don't come to the

rig.” Rather than being scared, Leo was beginning to enjoy the new adventure in Zululand and enjoyed the company of Giovanni. He began to see himself from above as a youthful version of Stewart Granger in the film: King Solomon’s mines.

Giovanni, a skinny Neapolitan boy with fair hair and kind blue eyes, was well organized for the job. He had two Zulu core boys to help him carry the core boxes to a core house where the cores were stored. He had a couple of Zulu mud boys to help him mix mud in a mud pit large like a swimming pool and a cook to prepare his food and clean his caravan. In a separate shack adapted as his office, he had a desk, a microscope, a fluoroscope to check the core for traces of hydrocarbons, and several bottles of chemicals to do the necessary analyses to the rock. The camp had his power generator driven by diesel that provided 24 hrs electricity to the houses and to the drilling rig. The mud had a nice red brick color due to the addition of tannin and in the mornings Giovanni used to inspect it with proud and admiration to check if it was OK. He used to take samples of it, to measure its viscosity, pH and water loss, and to see if the mud started fermenting due to the tropical heat. Giovanni, like a chef of a restaurant, would quickly fix the problems of his “soup” by asking the mud boys to mix two or three sacks of bentonite, a sack of tannin and some caustic soda that would fix the fermentation of the starch. In spite of that routine, due to the slow progress of drilling ( sometime it took three days to drill and recover a 30 foot core ) and his good organization Giovanni had plenty of free time to go to Mtubatuba to the Bank to get the money to pay the Zulu boys weekly, to the post office to mail his weekly report to Pretoria , to buy food or to visit his girl friend Sheela in the Volkswagen retail shop. Besides, during the week-ends he could go to the beach or do some traveling in the area.

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With the help of Giovanni Leo was learning English fast and also the drillers helped him to learn. The conversation was slow and the sentences were short and interspersed by several: *I beg your pardon, could you repeat.* But Leo was a quick learner or as he would say in his limited dictionary, he was *speedy*. He had his way



to say things and people were having fun listening to him. To say above or below he would say *upstairs* or *downstairs*. Above the table would become *upstairs on the table*. To say thin he would say *not fat*, and to say very thin he would say *not fat at all*. Tomorrow would become *after today* accompanied with a forward rotation of his right hand. Yesterday would become *the day before today*, accompanied by a backward rotation of his hand behind his head. We will go to the beach to catch fish in the sea would become: *we go to the marine area to capture fish in the marine water*, since he had trouble remembering that *sea* in English meant *mare* in Italian. To describe a girl with big breasts he would say: *she has big balconies upstairs*, accompanying his description with an unmistakable gesture of both hands.

One day Giovanni took Leo to town to Mtubatuba where he had to do some shopping for the week's supply of food. Passing by the Volkswagen shop he stopped the Landrover to greet Sheela and introduce his friend Leo. Leo noticed that she was a pretty girl and she had *big balconies upstairs*, therefore he tried to start a conversation with her. "How much a Volkswagen Beetle cost? Only 1300 Rand? Is it possible to buy in bits and peace of money?" With his left hand on the desk Leo was imitating a large kitchen knife with his right hand, cutting slices of his left hand, to convey the point. Smiling amused she replied : "You mean by installments? Yea, of course, you could get one now and pay it in 36 installments, that is in three years." "Is it possible to get it quite speedy?" asked Leo with increasing enthusiasm in his voice. "For example that one you can get it today, really *speedy Gonzales*." replied Sheela pointing to a white VW parked inside the exhibition room and smiling really amused by the funny English expressions of Leo. "You can go into the office of Mr Johnson and he will calculate the rate of the installments and the methods of payment." Leo had the impression that Sheela had given him the "old glance" therefore he said. " I go back here after today. Will you be here?" " Yes I'll be here waiting for you *speedy Gonzales!*" said Sheela with a broad smile that Leo interpreted as an invitation to unbelievable action. Even the voice from above told him: "She likes you!" temporarily interrupting the music of King Solomon's Mines.

On the way back to the camp Leo asked Giovanni: "You said that Sheela is your girl friend: do you make love to her?" " Not yet, answered Giovanni shyly , I haven't told her yet!"

## **Life in Zululand**

Leo spent the next thirty days in Zululand and that was the most intense period of his life so far, in terms of number and quality of adventures. Next day he returned to the Volkswagen shop and with Sheela he entered into Mr Johnson's office to sign the contract for the white VW beetle of the exhibition room. He gave a check for 170 Rand to Mr Johnson, corresponding to a 10% down payment and the first installment of 40 Rand and filled in several forms authorizing Mr Johnson to withdraw each month from his account the sum of 40 rand for 35 months. On a salary of 170 Rand a month plus 30 Rand of field allowance, that was a sum that Leo could easily afford without any problem. Mr Johnson drove carefully the VW out of the exhibition room and gave two sets of keys to Leo: " Drive carefully and enjoy your beetle. You need to fill it up with petrol from the petrol station next door and then you can go!" Sheela said farewell to Leo and told him to pick her up at 5pm that evening from the shop to take her for a tour of the drilling location. " We need to celebrate your new car." She said. Leo thought: " Now I start winning again, and when you are winning the girls run after you! That's the rule!" and after filling the car with petrol he stopped in front of the store to buy two bottles of red wine and some filet steaks to grill in the evening.

That evening Leo and Giovanni prepared a nice party for Sheela. Giovanni was a good cook and got busy to prepare a nice Neapolitan pasta with a delicious tomato sauce. Thomas, Giovanni's Zulu cook, grilled the meat on a charcoal fire outside the kitchen and everybody enjoyed the meal. There was a lot of laughter as they were drinking enough wine and Giovanni and Leo in turn were telling jokes to make Sheela laugh. It was a very rare occasion that a girl wanted to come and visit their camp, so they had to take advantage of that event to have fun. While Giovanni was telling some really funny jokes, Leo knew only three jokes, all kind of silly and with his limited English they became even more stupid, anyway

Sheela was laughing even more. Then Sheela asked Giovanni if he had any music and Giovanni proposed to go inside his caravan where he had a record player with some good records. Sheela then danced first with Giovanni, then with Leo and while Giovanni behaved like a gentleman keeping a reasonable distance with Sheela, Leo behaved immediately like an octopus clinging to a rock with his tentacles exploring everywhere on the reef. That obviously was the right strategy because Sheela started kissing Leo and they shamelessly fell on Giovanni's bed oblivious of Giovanni. Giovanni discretely left and closed the door of the caravan a bit surprised by the sudden betrayal of his "girl friend" and Leo. On the way back to Mtubatuba Leo parked his car on the side of the road next to a sugar cane plantation and there was some more love making with Sheela before he took her home.

Back at the camp Leo tried to go to bed in his tent straight away, to avoid talking with Giovanni, who had locked himself inside his caravan, but he could not avoid being questioned by two of the drillers: Tiaan, the younger driller and Dirk, the chief driller: "Mussolini, what did you do with that girl?" asked Dirk. Leo acted like if he had been destroyed by Sheela, looked up toward the sky with his tongue sticking out and his arms raised in despair but he said: "Don't ask a gentleman what he did with a Lady." The drillers laughed and said: "Where is the Gentleman, we don't see him? But you told us everything without talking!"

That little episode had the effect of increasing the status of Leo in the eyes of the drillers. The Boers, inevitably, were racists. Having been persecuted by the Catholic Church for centuries, they considered the Europeans of the countries of the South with a certain suspicion and called them with the pejorative term of Degos. In addition to that they had been the victims of the colonial expansion of England who had invaded South Africa and had submitted them to all kind of atrocities after long bloody wars, called the Boer wars. But Leo, despite being a Degos had been successful, with a British girl, the first night he took her out and that was no minor achievement in their Boer's mentality. So they started asking Leo to accompany them, with his new VW beetle, to go fishing during the night or to go hunting during the day.

While Dirk was working on the rig on the night shift, one night after dinner Tiaan and Jan, respectively the trainee driller and the second driller, came to the kitchen of the geological compound equipped with fishing gear, electric torches, rubber boots and squid and maggot bait to go fishing with Leo to the Saint Lucia estuary, at the mouth of the Umfolozi river.

Leo felt very much honored for that request, because that meant that he had been accepted as a valid member of the fishing party and of the drilling community: he was a person to be trusted and respected. They lent him a nice new fishing rod, new rubber boots and a battery-operated electric torch. So they left full of hope to catch a lot of fish.

The Saint Lucia estuary was actually more like a large lagoon than a real estuary because during low tide a vast body of water was separated from the open sea by a long sand bar. A sea connection was established only during high tide. The drillers explained that being on the warm waters of the Mozambique channel, the lagoon was not only rich of all kind of fish, but it was also full of all kind of marine life or fresh water fauna. Most of all it was full of sharks that used to enter the lagoon through the canals that opened during high tide and would get trapped for days until they figured out how to escape. But the sharks did not have to worry about food because the lagoon was full of all sort of fish, fresh water and salt water. Apart from the sharks the lagoon was the kingdom of very large crocodiles that were lurking among the thick reeds around the lagoon's shores or in the depths of its murky waters. Leo was excited, it was Africa at the top of adventure: he was living some real stories that one day he would tell to impress the girls back in Italy.

The drillers owned a flat aluminum boat that they kept moored at the entrance of the lagoon in order to take them to the sand bar across the lagoon where they could fish in open sea. They told Leo to sit on the bow seat and got their fishing gear organized on board, then they started the little 4 horse power outboard engine. The boat was surprisingly small considering the danger of falling into the into the dangerous waters of the lagoon if it suddenly capsized. But Leo managed to hide his fears and kept his mouth shut. In the middle of the lagoon suddenly

something unexpected happened: the water became alive with hundred of fish that were jumping out of the water in a frenzy.” They are mullets running away from sharks. Be careful, some of them could hit you in the head!” As soon as Jan finished talking some mullets jumped inside the boat and lay on the floor still flipping their tails. Up to five big mullets had jumped on board as Tiaan and Jan where shouting with joy. “Here is our meal for tonight, this is delicious fish to grill when we go back.” said Jan excited.

After collecting that unexpected bonanza that fell from the sky they moored the boat on the narrow sand bar and started fishing silver bream that lives in brackish waters next to the mouths of rivers. They were using small bits of squid and maggots as bait and used their torches to attract the fish next to the shore. The bream was biting eagerly and was fun fishing them because they put up a little fight before being brought ashore. Leo quickly became an accomplished fisherman, because it was easy to catch fish, and each time he caught a fish he was screaming of excitement and joy.

Returning to the camp with 30 bream and 5 mullets they were happy and looking forward to a nice dinner based on fish, but something unexpected was added to the menu, as they were crossing the forest between Saint Lucia and Mtubatuba. A few goats suddenly crossed the narrow road jumping out of the bush. Leo was not quick enough to stop the car to avoid a collision and killed a goat damaging his right mudguard and breaking the right lamp. Tiaan and Jan jumped out and put the dead goat in the boot in front of the car. Jan was cheerful and said: “Sorry for your new car, but tonight we are going to have a varied menu, that will include delicious goat meat, bream and mullet. Don’t worry, tomorrow we will take your car to Mtubatuba and fix your mudguard.”

That night Leo sitting around the open fire where the Zulus cooks were grilling all that bonanza, was very proud of belonging to that camp and to share that adventure with the drillers and their families. It was late at night but wives, children and cooks participated in the party, and there was food also for the Zulu drillers and helpers. Out of the blue appeared several bottles of South African white wine of the Cape of Good Hope, to be divided only among the whites, as the

Zulu were not allowed to drink with the whites. They had their own beer anyway. The Zulu sat some 100 feet away under a large thorny acacia tree and when they finished eating they started singing a beautiful Zulu song with unbelievable sense of rhythm. Giovanni pretended to be fast asleep and did not participate in the party.

With the camp Landrover ext day Jan accompanied Leo to Mtubatuba where they left the car to the Volkswagen garage to be repaired. Sheela started laughing, surprised to see that after only a few days Leo had managed to wreck a brand new car." You are really a speedy Gonzales." She said. Jan explained what happened to Mr Johnson and they both laughed:" Poor Leo, he has been attacked by a bloody goat on the Saint Lucia road." It took fifty rand and one week without car before Leo could go back and invite Sheela to go out with him again with a brand new car. This time he took the girl to a little restaurant run by Greek immigrants where they ate steaks and French fries and they had fun remembering the goat accident and the fishing expedition to the lagoon. On the way they home they found another providential sugar cane plantation that never failed to materialize, and there was some more love making inside the car. Before going home Sheela told Leo that her official boy friend to whom she was engaged, would come to Mtubatuba from Durban next weekend to spend a couple of weeks with her. That was equivalent to tell Leo to get lost, but Leo did not interpret it in a negative way.

Being dumped by a girl meant regaining his independence from sentimental constraints that would have entangled him for a period of time. He was again free. He had been the lover of a girl that was engaged, therefore the official boyfriend was the cuckold, not him and now he was free to go without any strings attached. Most important of all his pride was not hurt.

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A few days later Tiaan asked Leo to accompany him to go hunting near the Umfolozi game reserves. He had with him his .22 rifle and his objective was to kill a few wild ducks that were feeding in the swamps next to the Umfolozi river. Leo drove the VW beetle and parked close to the shore of the swamp where there was a Zulu standing next to a wooden canoe. The Zulu said to Tiaan:" Goeie dag baas!"

in the traditional Afrikaans greeting and tried to kiss his hand, but Tiaan quickly hid his left hand behind his back. The right hand was holding the gun on his shoulder. "Is this your canoe?" asked Tiaan. "No boss." Answered the Zulu. Tiaan walked around for a while and Leo couldn't help noticing the contrast between the tall, slender blond Boer youth and the shiny muscular black skin of the Zulu, wearing only a pair of old shorts and primitive leather sandals. "Are they both children of the same God?" Obviously yes, although each had his different probability to exist in this world, thought Leo. Finally Tiaan spotted in the distance some ducks that were swimming in the swamp. He aimed at them and started shooting from a distance with extremely good skill, killing three of them: the ducks died with a fluttering of wings and feathers and floated on the still water of the swamp.

"Quickly, said Tiaan to the Zulu, take the canoe and go and get them before they disappear under water." "No boss" said the Zulu. "Why not, I'll give you 2 Rand!" "The swamp is full of crocodiles, Boss." replied the Zulu. "Never mind this bloody Zulu: Leo let's get inside the canoe and we start paddling to get the ducks. We will show him that the whites are not scared of crocodiles." Leo obeyed, thinking that his honor was at stake but inside himself he was far from happy. Many times they risked to capsize but eventually they managed to retrieve the three ducks in spite of the unstable canoe. Leo for a second thought that their adventure the canoe resembled that of the film King Solomon's Mines, that he had seen a half dozen times in Ragusa and Bologna. The news of their adventure spread to the camp and now Leo was finally baptized as an official member of the Boer's tribe.

The situation was much worse with Giovanni, because he kept a cool and distant attitude towards his trainee for a few days. Leo tried to explain to Giovanni that there was no point in treating women like if you were a Gentleman, and that it wasn't his fault if Sheela had attacked him: he was innocent. She did everything out of her own initiative. In any case his adventure with Sheela was now over, since her official boy friend had come to visit from Durban and she had politely asked Leo to disappear.

## Thomas and the tribal system of the Zulus

A few days after the arrival of Leo to the rig, Thomas, the Zulu cook of Giovanni, had asked with a contrite face a few days of holiday to attend the funeral of his father in the village of Somkele, located a few hundred meters from the camp. So for a few days they were left without a cook. But when two weeks later he returned to ask another leave because another father had died, that request had started to smell as a lie. The question that Leo was asking himself was: how many fathers does he have? Instead there was an explanation. Dirk, the chief driller, who knew a lot about the Zulus, said that the story seemed normal, because the Zulus lived in a matriarchal society, where they had of course only one mother, but several fathers. Women, who did all the housework and worked in the fields, had to rely on a number of men, usually unreliable drifters and drunks, to help them with the heavy work. Men did not care about sharing a wife with another man, because they did not feel tied to a single woman and were always around to catch whatever women they could get, without any restraint. The result was that no one knew who the father was, but only who was the child's mother. To avoid mistakes women kept track of those who were potential fathers of their child and the child grew, considering all of them his fathers. The men were used to do the hard work of the tribe, like carrying on their shoulders together in a line large tree trunks, or carrying together a dead cow just butchered while singing in chorus: mula-la-sha-sha-sha, to help their efforts with the cadenced rhythm of the music. Most of the day they passed the time in the shade of an acacia tree, to dispose of the hangover of Skokiaan, their preferred beer. In other words they behaved exactly like the male lions that left all the work to the females and intervened only rarely when it was necessary to use force. Sometimes two or three brothers lions divided fraternally the females of the herd never fighting between them. But they were always the first to show up when there was something to eat.

Skokiaan referred to an illegal home-made drink and was typically consisting of the juice of a palm tree fermented within one day. It was a kind of beer that could contain dangerous ingredients, such as methyl alcohol. The drillers said that the Zulus added to skokiaan, to make it stronger, all kinds of shit, including liquid of used batteries.



The fact is that Leo had ascertained that their tribal system worked very well and that the Zulus of Somkele seemed to be cheerful and happy, and above all they were singing very well in the choir. They were definitely happier than the white!

## **The last adventures in Zululand**

After a few days the situation with Giovanni improved because they got the unexpected happening of the visit of their two “neighbors” from Dannhouser, Gianni Camuffo and Paolo Ventotto, that had driven without effort their Mini Morris 200 miles to visit Giovanni and spend a vacation in Mtubatuba.

Camuffo and Ventotto arrived in the afternoon to the camp raising a lot of dust and making a lot of noise. They had brought along their camping beds and backpacks and decided to settle down and get organized for the night inside the large military tent of Leo. They had met Giovanni on previous occasions and exchanged with him some friendly remarks: “Good to see that you are still alive in spite of the lions and the crocodiles.” said Gianni Camuffo giving a strong hand shake to Giovanni. “ Giovanni doesn’t taste good even to lions and crocodiles. Only black mambas like him!” said Paolo Ventotto: “ Last time we came we had to chase a black mamba, obviously his friend, out of the guest tent. Do you remember Giovanni?” Even Paolo Ventotto confirmed the story, then after introducing himself said: “ And this must be the famous Leo, that everybody wants in South Africa. Hi Leo, we came all the way to Mtubatuba to take you back to Pretoria. Dr Joubert gave us some days of rest to come and pick you up and take you back to Pretoria with us. Apparently Paolo Baldini is swamped with work and has requested that you give him a hand in his busy schedule in Sutherland!” Leo shook hands with both of them and said: “ Finally I know the truth about the story of the black mamba in my tent. Giovanni pretended that it was a joke!” “ Never trust a Neapolitan, in their DNA they are programmed to try to screw you” Said Gianni Camuffo, then added a further explanation for the reason of their visit. “ We are going back to Pretoria because our well is completed. It was a beautiful dry-hole without any hope for oil or gas!”

Leo explained to them that the white VW beetle parked in front of the kitchen was his car and therefore if he had to go to Pretoria he would follow them with his own wheels, if they were not driving too fast their Mini Morris.

“You guys stop talking and let’s see what you have to drink in your refrigerator.” Said Ventotto and started walking toward the kitchen. After a brief inspection he came out with a resigned expression on his face: “Only lemonade and coke, let’s go to town to get organized.”

The next three days remained in the mind of Leo as the most memorable ones in terms of adventures in Zululand. The first evening Ventotto asked them to drink half a glass of olive oil each, as a precaution against getting drunk and they drove the little mini first to the store to buy wine and steaks and then to the Pub of Mtubatuba, where they drank first beer, then whiskey and made detailed plans for the activities of the following days.

Alcohol, according to Ventotto, facilitated the understanding of complex systems such as the plans for the future, plus it helped to make them laugh. Leo had asked them if they had known Amanda in Pretoria and that became a juicy topic of discussion for the rest of the evening at the Pub. The main argument was the behavior of Screw-anda, that both Ventotto and Camuffo had admitted to have screwed, in turn, one after the other. There followed some detailed descriptions of their adventures, that greatly shocked Leo and Giovanni. Why did she do what she did: for personal enjoyment or for love of her neighbors? The version of Ventotto was: "If you look straight in her face you see that her eyes say: more, more. She is a nymphomaniac, that's why. "Camuffo, however, was of the opinion that Screw-anda, even though she had an enormous enthusiasm for sex, more than a nymphomaniac was a Italofile. Ventotto however said that there was no evidence that she went only with Italians and argued that they did not know what she was doing with the Boers, with the English and so on and so forth, when they were not there. Leo told them his sad story that ended with the result that nothing had happened with her because he behaved like a gentleman due to his ignorance of English. At the end the general opinion was that it didn't pay to be a gentleman with Screw-anda and, for that matter, with women in

general. Giovanni was relieved, because even Leo had failed once because he behaved like a gentleman ... like him with Sheela, but kept his mouth shut on that matter fearing to be teased.

After the pub in the evening they returned to the camp to continue the party and to grill some huge steaks and drink the wine: surprisingly the system invented by Ventotto worked, and they all became merry but nobody became sick.

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The next day they took with them two bottles of white wine in a bucket full of ice and some lemons and they went to the beach South of Mtubatuba. That was a marvelous experience for Leo: miles and miles of immaculate white coral beaches stretched from Saint Lucia to Durban in the South, without one single human being in sight. Leo started fishing from the shore with the fishing rod borrowed from the Boers. Camuffo had warned him not to venture in water deeper than his knee as one could see sharks patrolling the coast and lurking inside the breakers close to shore. He said that not too long ago two black girls that were swimming close to shore had been attacked by sharks and killed, probably because with their black skin they were mistaken for seals. While Leo was fishing his friends were searching the rocks for oysters. In fact they found millions of them on the rocks close to shore and called Leo to join them in the feast. They proceeded eating them right there "on the rocks" opening the upper shells with knives and sprinkling them with lemon. The oysters were retreating horrified at the arrival of the splash of lemon, only to succumb to the knife that was digging them out of the shell. Nobody in the world had ever eaten oysters so fresh accompanied with gulps of cold white wine.

In less than an hour Leo had caught a few silver breams using oysters as bait, then at the end he caught a small ray shark, of the family of ray fish, a sort of harmless small shark with spots like a leopard and a very flat body. Camuffo was an expert fisherman and he immediately decided that the ray shark could be eaten, because he was feeding with small crustaceans and small fish and their meat, cut in tranches and grilled on the charcoal could be delicious. After spending the whole day at the beach, that evening they had their second party at the camp, this time

eating oyster and grilled fish. The young geologists discussed among them sitting around the camp fire that the pristine beaches of Zululand must have looked the same when the Earth was finally colonized by oysters and fish in the Jurassic. Maybe it was true because Nature did not like too abrupt changes and in those days there was still nobody, like men to threaten her.

The following day, full of energy and enthusiasm Camuffo, Ventotto and Leo left the camp early in the morning to tour the Umfolozi game reserve. Giovanni remained in the camp with the excuse that he had to finish his weekly report and still he had not finished describing the last cores. At the game reserve they drove around with their little mini, that looked even smaller when they met an occasional wild animal. Fortunately they did not meet any elephants on the road. There was absolutely no supervision and no control of the very few cars visiting the reserve once passed the gate of the reserve. The safety of the visitors was left to themselves and to their good judgment. Leo discovered immediately that Paolo Ventotto had very little good judgment. He recklessly used to go out of the car to look around among the bushes, looking for traces of lions, followed by Gianni Camuffo that was taking pictures all the time behind him. Leo remained prudently close to the car, ready to jump inside if some dangerous animal showed up at the horizon. On an open meadow a herd of white rhinoceros was grazing peacefully and Ventotto decided to go behind them, downwind from them, as close as possible, to make sure that Camuffo would immortalize his stunt for future generations of little Ventotto. Leo remained inside the mini terrified and suddenly realized why Giovanni had decided to remain at the camp. He knew how crazy they were. The nature however was beautiful and they saw herds of gazelles, a few giraffes, and fortunately no lions, otherwise God knows what the crazy Ventotto would have done.

They stopped by the Umfolozi river to look at the many crocodiles that were basking in the sun on the shore of the river. More photos were taken of Ventotto walking as close as he could to the crocodiles without being eaten alive. Seeing the size of the crocs Leo shivered thinking that he could have been killed in the Saint Lucia lagoon or on the swamp on the other side of the river, if he had been unlucky. "Our survival is really a matter of luck!" he said to himself. Their luck

continued throughout that day and eventually they could return safely to the camp to tell that adventure.

## **The Karoo desert**

After saying farewell to Giovanni and the Boer drillers, the following day after breakfast they left the camp, directed towards Pretoria: the mini first with Camuffo and Ventotto and Leo following with his beetle. The trip went very smoothly and in the evening they arrived at their small guest-house hotel of Pretoria where Dr Joubert had booked some rooms for them. That evening all three of them dined at the hotel and after drinking half a glass of the inevitable olive oil they moved to a nearby pub where they celebrated for a few hours Leo's departure for a new adventure. Ventotto and Camuffo swore to come and see him in the Karoo. Leo a bit worried thinking back to their visit to Mtubatuba, inquired about the wildlife of the Karoo and when he knew that there were only harmless sheep and baboons, some scorpions and cobras he relaxed and that night had no nightmares.

The following day at the Geological Survey office Dr Joubert briefed Leo about his assignment in the Karoo. First of all he praised Leo for his English, that in about a month time had improved a thousand times. Then he gave him a map of South Africa explaining the road that he was supposed to take to get to Sutherland. It was a good paved road, the most important artery of South Africa, which led from Pretoria to Cape Town. Past Beaufort West and a few kilometers after Prince Albert Road he would have to turn right to take the dirt road that led to Sutherland.

About ten miles before arriving at Sutherland he would see the camp and the drilling tower on the left side of the road: it was impossible to miss it. His assignment there was simple: he had to give a hand to Baldini in describing the

cores and in preparing the weekly reports. Baldini had been complaining that the work was too much for only one geologist and he needed help.

So Leo, after preparing his suitcase at the hotel, was starting his new adventure in the Karoo and driving his beetle towards Beaufort West and Sutherland.

It took two days to drive all the way to Sutherland from Pretoria because Leo had to stop for the night in a small motel after driving 700 km. It was a very interesting trip through the vast plateau of the Transvaal and then across the open vastness of the Karoo, but there was the danger of falling asleep while driving. In fact, South Africa was a huge country in comparison to Italy, and the scenery was very much the same and did not seem to change ever, so it was easy to doze off for lack of new visual stimuli.

However, the evening of the second day Leo was finally able to shake hands and embrace his old friend from Romagna Baldini. " I am pleased to see you. Once I heard that you too were in South Africa I made sure that you were transferred here for your training period. There is little to be learned for a strong one in geology like you, so we will have plenty of time to talk and to solve the problem." Leo warmly greeted his old friend and noticed that he had not changed at all. He was cleanly shaved and was wearing a nice white silk shirt, shorts and long stockings like those worn by the Boers. " I am always happy to sit down with you and solve problems, Paolo, but this time I don't see the problem. We are living a wonderful African adventure like the one of Stewart Granger in the film King Solomon's Mines and on top of that we are being paid. What more do we want?" Leo looked around in the evening twilight and saw a completely different landscape from Zululand. Here nature was a desert landscape, with very little

vegetation consisting of small bushes and some sparsely distributed thorny grass. The hills surrounding the camp were low and had a flat top. By the local Boers they were called koppies and consisted of the eroded remnants of the Table Mountain formation, an old weather-resistant quartz sandstone of the Ordovician, deposited in an old delta environment about 450 million years ago. In the sunset they formed a desolate Lunar landscape, not devoid of charm.

“By now I am sure you realize what really goes on in this country. Our mothers back in Rimini sit in the afternoon on a nice Café on the Promenade drinking tea with their friends and discuss the problems of the poor Negroes of Africa. What about our problem, the problem of their sons surrounded by Blacks from all directions and obliged to live together with these uncivilized Boers? I bought a gun in Johannesburg and I keep it all the time under my pillow!” said Baldini and Leo caught the glimpse of a strange fanatic light in his eyes.

“You can get organized in the guest caravan. Come I’ll show you.” Said Paolo and helped him carry his stuff to the caravan next door to his.

That evening they sat in Paolo’s caravan having a very tasty dinner of Cape lamb chops and South African red wine from the Cape province. Paolo was a good cook and was raised in a family where good wine was appreciated. While having dinner Paolo started analyzing his problems very methodically, with analytical precision: “A person is born in a civilized place like Rimini and does not realize what goes on around the wide world surrounding him, until he is forced to face the truth. A person establishes a “modus Vivendi” that suits his personality and that is adapted to the environment in which he grows up, and then all of the sudden he is forced to face the truth. Now I know how lucky I was, now I have both my feet stuck on the ground. I sent my brother Gian-Maria, to enroll me to the University: I was too busy playing Poker those days and I didn’t want to be distracted from my activity. To me it didn’t matter in which Faculty he enrolled me, because I was convinced that to study was a waste of time. Gian-Maria enrolled me in Geology, because he said that the queue was shortest in front of the Geology window. So here I am,

now, a Geologist sitting in this dusty desert, while Gian-Maria and my friends are on the beach of Rimini, chasing Swedish girls and inviting them to dance in the Night Club Paradiso tonight. You don't need to be a genius to tell me who is right and who is wrong!" Paolo stopped talking and poured some more wine in the glass of Leo. "So now that you have understood the truth what are you planning to do?" asked Leo.

"Slowly, slowly, we still have not analyzed the full problem, which has many facets. If I go back what shall I do? There is a young girl that claims that her newborn baby is mine. Shall I marry her and go back to Rimini, to lead the life of a *"normal person"*, and drop all my dreams forever?" Paolo stressed *"normal person"* twisting his mouth with an expression of disgust on his face, to make sure that Leo understood that it wasn't the right solution." Or shall I marry the daughter of this rich chicken farmers from Stellenbosch that is in love with me and be fixed up for the rest of my life in South Africa? One of this days we will drive there and I will introduce you to this girl, her name is Laura." Leo was surprised by that double dilemma of Paolo, because he did not know the details of Paolo's life and what happened to him after they graduated from University two years before. But he said, "If anything, it's nice that you have some options. A loser is a person who has no way out and you are certainly a winner that has not yet played the last card! "

That evening for several hours they continued analyzing and discussing Paolo's problems. Leo explained to Paolo that for him there were no problems, because he had no plans for his own future. He took life as it came and he let the laws of probability take care of the Future. "You make good plans and all of the sudden something happens to change your plans. Better be a fatalist and let probability decide." Explained Leo:" You should never be too ambitious and you will not be frustrated! You understand Paolo?"

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Next day they inspected the rig site: outside of the core storage there were literally hundreds of core boxes laying in the sun. The cores were marked with a black marker every foot indicating their depth, but Paolo said that they were not



described and not properly analyzed yet. The fault was due to one of the two core boys that had died a couple of weeks early. He was killed by the truck driver of the rig.

“What happened is very simple, if you understand the mentality of the blacks. The truck driver was having an affair with the wife of the core boy. When the core boy found out he said to the truck driver:” Why hide your relation with my wife? If you want her, you could buy my wife, no problems.” So they agreed on the amount and the truck driver took the wife with him. About a month ago the truck driver came back with the wife of the core boy and he said:”Here is your wife, keep her and give me my money back!” But the core boy said that if he wanted to return his wife, that was fine, but he could not claim the money back. They have been quarreling for about two weeks until one day the truck driver killed the core boy.”

Paolo explained that the South African police that came to investigate the homicide were very relaxed about the whole story:” If one kaffir kills another kaffir, where is the problem? It’s one kaffir less!” they told to Baldini and they took away the body of the core boy. The wife of the core boy was repatriated back to her “homeland” and the truck driver disappeared never to be found again and everything returned to normal. Except that Baldini had now one core boy less to do the job: “You understand why I am behind with my job? In any case in a couple of days with your help we can describe all the cores and store them in the core house. I pretended to have a big problem with the office in Pretoria to ask them to send you here to give me a hand. So you are now here and together we will have time to discuss our problems and find a reasonable solution. The description of the core’s lithology is not a problem: it is either Table Mountain quartzite or dolerite, a sort of volcanic rock intruded in the formation in the depth of the earth.”

In the next two days working hard they managed to get organized and therefore the third day they went to Sutherland, a small village surrounded by flat mountains in the middle of the Karoo desert, to mail the weekly reports to Pretoria with the core descriptions up to date. They had borrowed a new core boy from the Boers drillers and they had checked the drilling mud to find out if it was

OK. The drillers said that the mud was OK and it was performing well as it was. Once fixed all the problems they could have a lot of time to drive around and discuss their situation without having to worry about the routine of the rig. The Table Mountain Sandstone was so tight that there were no chances of finding any oil in it: it also had been intruded by hot lava under pressure, therefore any traces of hydrocarbons would have been eliminated long time before or the carbon would have been transformed into diamonds, of which South Africa was rich. Coring through that hard stone took a long time, therefore the drilling operation proceeded slowly and was a smooth operation that in oil field jargon would certainly result in a beautiful “dry hole”.

So Baldini proposed: “Tomorrow we will go with my Landrover to Stellenbosch and we will spend the day at the chicken farm! In the evening we can stay in a nice little hotel, the Clifton Hotel, next to the beautiful Clifton beach of Cape Town. We can spend the weekend in Cape Town, nobody will be missing us at the rig!”

Next day they left early to drive South to Stellenbosch in order to get there before lunch time. “They are from Romagna like us and they prepare wonderful tortellini and of course wonderful chicken, then in the evening we will go to Cape Town.” Paolo was driving, so Leo could enjoy the sight of the Karoo, a pristine desert landscape untouched by human settlements except for the dirt road leading to the main tar road to Cape Town. Paolo at one point stopped the Landrover to point out a donkey standing motionless in the sun under one of the koppies. “There is my little friend, I called him Einstein.” Said Baldini smiling: “What do you think he’s doing?”

“I don’t know: waiting for better times?” answered Leo. “No Leo, he is *thinking*. When we come back he will be still there *thinking*. It takes a long time to figure out the Universe!”

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The farm house was an impressive old Dutch Style construction, typical of the Cape province, sitting in a large well kept meadow and surrounded by old oaks. It had a swimming pool and a breathtaking view of the Cape of Good Hope in the

distance. The chickens were literally millions and were housed in low, elongated prefabricated constructions nearly one kilometer away from the house. If one had a good nose he could smell a slight hint of chicken poop hovering around the house. Otherwise everything was fine. In turn the chicken quarters were surrounded by corrugated iron shacks where the black laborers were lodged. There instead there were no doubts about the smell of chicken poop because it was so thick that you could cut it into slices.

Baldini explained to Leo that the black laborers, all four hundred of them, were in fact prisoners lent to the farmer as cheap labor. They were kept there, in semi-freedom, instead of staying in jail: it was a good solution for the farmer and for them, because they were almost free to move around, also they received a little salary that they could keep for themselves. The Government approved that activity, so they alleviated the problem of their overcrowded prisons and they made good use of the prisoners.

If occasionally one of the prisoners escaped, there was no problem, it would be enough to inform the police and he would be replaced with a new one. The police then, calmly, tracked down the fugitive, because without an identity card, which was mandatory for all blacks, he could not go very far before being caught again in some of the slums around the province and put back in jail.

The owner of the farm was the uncle of his girl friend, that as an Italian prisoner of the second world war, was sent to South Africa to work in that very farm in the Cape Province. When the war finished he ended up marrying the daughter of the farmer that owned the farm where he was working. Later on with his hard work he had transformed the farm into one of the largest poultry farm business in South Africa, and since he had no children he had asked his brother to come with his family from Romagna to give him a hand and one day, as far as possible in the future, the children, that is his nephew and his niece, would inherit the farm and the business." Her brother studies Agriculture at the University of Stellenbosch and Laura, my girl friend, stays home to help her parents. Guess what the father and mother of my girl friend do for a living?" asked Paolo." They run a little shop inside the camp where the prisoners come to buy everything they need and where the

prisoners spend all the money that they earn. Wonderful isn't it? Money goes out from a pocket of the family and comes back into another pocket of the same family!"

That day they had a memorial lunch. Tortellini with liver of chicken ragout followed by roast chicken and piadina. The best Cape wine was opened to honor them and they were treated like kings. It was obvious that the family accepted Baldini as the fiancé of their daughter and as a possible future son in Law. The family had enough money, so they did not care if Baldini was a geologist or a land surveyor or something else. There was work for everybody at the farm, they said, including work for Leo if he wanted to stay there and give them a hand. Leo thought that the family had exported to South Africa the typical spirit of the agricultural cooperatives that had so much success in Emilia Romagna.

After lunch the young, Laura, Paul and Leo sat on deckchairs around the swimming pool to relax and to digest the food. Leo was slightly intoxicated and started telling his adventures in Zululand, taking the cue from the fact that they were behaving like crocodiles on the shores of the Umfolozi river. He recounted his exploits with vivid details emphasizing the dangers that had challenged him. Then, last but not least, he didn't lose the opportunity to boast of his adventures with the girls, exaggerating about the quantity and the quality of his love affairs and also adding an adventure with Amanda, that even though it had never materialized, it had a high probability of occurrence. "I don't know why, he said, but as soon as I meet a new girl, she insists on breast feeding me!" Everybody laughed and Leo was immediately accepted as part of the chicken business family.

The sun was strong, but it was almost Winter in the Southern hemisphere and the water was too cold to swim but it was very nice to sit around the pool. When Laura left them alone to go inside the house to fetch some espresso coffee, Paolo whispering in Leo's ear said: " Everything is nice here, there is only one big problem: I don't love the girl! I don't need to prostitute my life just for the sake of money." Leo protested that he could at least do a little sacrifice for him, since they had offered him a nice job, and they both started laughing.

The next couple of days were spent at the Clifton Hotel in Cape Town. At the beach Leo noticed that the sand was unbelievably white and each grain of sand looked like a little diamond, except that it was perfectly rounded. It consisted of the erosion of the Table Mountain sandstone that in turn consisted of pure quartz sand. The sea water was crystal clear and cold and did not invite potential swimmers, first of all because there were white sharks patrolling the shore.

Laura showed up in the evening with an Italian girl friend and the four of them went to dinner together and later on they went out to dance in a night club.

Although her

balconies on the second floor were not great, the new girl was friendly and cheerful, so now both Paolo and Leo were fixed up with girls in the area of Cape Town. In fact, for the next two months, while the drilling lasted they showed up every so often with the girls and they invited them to go out together, but without overdoing it. They were good marriageable Italian girls and not combat quality English pasture, so it was better to be careful.

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One day, as they were walking around the old city of Cape Town, Leo noticed a little shop with a strange name: Nahum's Books. "Let's get inside to see if we can find some books worth reading." Said Leo to Paolo and they entered the shop. In reality it was a used book shop run by an old man with a white beard. Leo started looking around and then, having a sudden inspiration, asked the man: "Do you have a Jewish Bible for sale?" "Of course said the man. This is the right place for that kind of books. If you wanted a Koran, this would be the wrong place, but I have several Tanakhs, even one with the English translation on the left pages and the Hebrew on the right." The old man dug out of a lower shelf a black book, covered with dust and he tried to clean it with a cloth. "This is new, but I let you have it at a discounted price, like it was used. Nobody reads the Jewish Bible these days. Do you read any Hebrew?" Leo had to admit that he was very ignorant and did not know a word of Hebrew. The old man then smiled and said: "Then you

have also to buy this book, it's a Hebrew grammar. It will teach you Hebrew in a couple of weeks, then you can start reading the Tanakh. By the way, Tanakh is the short acronym name for Torah, Nabyim and Khetubim, meaning the Pentateuch, the Prophets and the Books. If you have any questions, come to me and I will teach you to read, but with the help of the grammar, you should be able to learn by yourself." Leo was convinced and bought both books for only 12 Rand. Paolo Baldini was silent all the time, but when they left the book shop he commented: "Why did you buy those books? You are already with the shit up to your neck with one religion, Catholicism, why do you want to learn a new religion?" And Leo smiled: "I bought the books because I liked the old Jew and I wanted to make him smile. But I have another reason. I want to get to the root of the real Bible to find out what the ancient Jews knew about the rules of the game of poker that is our life." Paolo laughed and said: "You will never find out!" "Maybe so, but one has to start from somewhere!" Concluded Leo.

When the well reached total depth, Dr Joubert came by plane to Sutherland to explain to them their next assignments. Paolo Baldini was supposed to go to Bloemfontein in the Transvaal to take care of some shallow coring for mineral exploration there, and Leo was supposed to go to Merweville, in the Karoo, half way between Sutherland and Beaufort West to take care of a new exploration well there. Their little setup in Cape Town all of the sudden collapsed, but in retrospective it was a good thing for both of them, because it affected their future. The rest of their lives was not supposed to be spent in South Africa.

The night before leaving Sutherland Leo and Paolo discussed the situation more in detail. Paolo said that it was obvious that the South Africans treated the young Italian geologists like second class citizens, only slightly above the Zulus and the Cape Colored. Leo did not entirely agree but he said that the apartheid system was unacceptable to him since it was a rather unfair system. Their Italian culture and civilization was opposed to such a system: in his opinion they had therefore to continue their training and find something else, somewhere else, in a different country. Paolo told Leo that he had thought about it and decided to get married to his girl friend from Rimini and ask her to join him in South Africa with the child. Later on it would stop being Baldini's problem what to do next. Two families, both

of them powerful and economically well off would be involved in finding a solution for the return to Rimini of their children. He admitted that he had loved the girl that was very young when he met her, and was ready to give up his career as a playboy for the sake of having a family. Having reached some important decisions that night they slept like logs with a clean conscience.

## **Merweville**

Of the year spent in Merweville, for the rest of his life Leo remembered clearly only two basic things. Hugo Muller and his wonderful family and the visit of the Angel of Probability in June 1967 to inspect the premises of the drilling rig.

Leo and Paolo left together the Sutherland drilling location in the morning, following each other. Paolo drove first with the Government Landrover and Leo following him with his beetle. Paolo drove from Sutherland to the Railway station of Prince Albert Road in a couple of hours and waved to Leo to stop there. The station was a lonely red brick building located along the railways truck Johannesburg-Cape town, and on its lower floor it had a very basic pub, used mostly by the occasional road travelers than by the train passengers. Each ordered beer and sandwiches in the pub of the station, so as to exchange the last few words before leaving. Leo asked advice to the manager of the pub about the road to Merweville, and the manager explained that the drilling rig was exactly 40 miles away to the north of Prince Albert Road station.

Occasionally the oil workers drove to the pub to have a beer and they had said to him that the distance they had driven to drink a beer was exactly 40 miles. It was not unusual in South Africa to drive a hundred miles to go the pub. First Leo should drive 30 miles to Merweville and then, after passing the only supermarket of Merweville he should turn left and continue North and open the gate of Hugo Muller's farm, and continue North for 10 miles, until he saw the derrick of the oil rig. There were several other gates to open, before arriving at the rig, and he had to remember to close them after passing otherwise the sheep would escape. After greeting and saying goodbye and wishing good luck the two friends

continued their trip and their individual destinies. Paolo continued driving towards Beaufort West on the tar road and Leo took the dirt road to Merweville.

The farm of Hugo Muller, where the oil rig was located, was huge. Leo figured out that it took one hour to cross it from South to North and certainly as much time from East to West, therefore it was nearly as big as the province of Ragusa in Sicily, where Leo used to live. The reason for the huge extension of the farm was that Hugo Muller had a large flock of sheep, and very little grass to feed them with. The land was a semi-desert barren expanse of dry soil with few bushes and very little grass, with occasional trees called thorn tree, a thorny type of acacia that was growing along the dry streams.

After opening and closing several gates, that subdivided the territory into irregular plots designed to separate the sheep, Leo eventually saw the derrick and arrived at the drilling site. The layout was the same of every other diamond core drilling site he had seen before, except that this one was a larger settlement. There were caravans for three families of drillers with corrugated iron annexes and living quarters, a round swimming pool in the middle of the camp, but there was something new that Leo had never seen before: one large caravan was the mud logging unit and written on its side stood in large characters the writing "Géoservices". Around the mud logging unit in circle were several caravans for the technicians and one for the geologist. The blacks had their compound about half a mile away from the camp and as usual it was a very basic and drab construction made of wood and corrugated iron. The camp had its water well supplying plenty of water for the families, for the drilling rig and the drilling mud and for the swimming pool. The rig had its own diesel power generation unit. Everything was ready to spud the well and start drilling and the drillers would begin the well in a few days, as soon as all was in place.

Johan, Willem and Pieter, three South African boys that were the mud loggers hurried to introduce themselves to Leo and shook hands with him: " You are our Boss, welcome to Merweville." They said smiling and Leo had to admit that nobody had informed him of the situation and of the fact that he would have so many white helpers. Then he solemnly said:"Don't worry, I will not boss you



around. I believe in freedom!" They all laughed relieved at that declaration of allegiance to basic human rights and started explaining what their work consisted of on the rig.

Basically they were trained to control the gas quantity and type coming out of the hole with the drilling mud during perforation. They were supposed to work 8 hours shifts night and days and record the types of gas and the total gas contained in the mud system. Inside the mud logging unit they had two instruments, one called Chromatograph that was supposed to identify the types of gasses that were coming out of the hole, and one called Total Gas detector, that would record the amount of total gas that the well would produce during the perforation. The instruments belonged to a French company called Géoservices , with head office in Paris, France. They were employees of the French company on contract to the Geological Survey. Leo admitted that Dr Joubert had forgotten to inform him of the set up, but immediately understood what their work consisted of and was glad to share his work with them at the rig. Hans, Willy and Piet were younger than Leo, all in their early 20s, and they were all ethnic Boers, speaking Afrikaans between themselves. Each of them had his personal car to the maintenance of which he devoted most of his free time at the well site. The conversation with them was in English but, as a matter of fact instead of improving his English Leo after only six months understood perfectly his mud loggers when they were talking to each other in Afrikaans and when they were bragging about their adventures with girls the night before, especially because they were accompanying their accounts with waving of their hands in an unmistakable way. They were constantly zooming around in all directions of the Karoo looking for girls, and destroying their cars in the rough dirt roads. Leo felt like their older brother and shook his head thinking of their youthful recklessness.

They never slept during the night because, if they were not on duty, they were never there. But during the day usually the mud loggers were in bed recovering from the night before, or under their cars replacing a cylinder, a piston or the oil cup. Very seldom by chance they spent more than ten minutes in the mud logging unit checking the instruments or calibrating the gas with an injection of gas in the gas trap, located near the mud pit. There was no problem however because there

was no gas in the well. The rock formation of the Table Mountain Sandstone was partially metamorphosed, was injected with volcanic rocks, called dolerite sills, and if it contained some gas or oil in the Ordovician, by now it would obviously be transformed into diamonds, concentrated in the rocks of the volcanic pipes called Kimberlite. South Africa was rich in diamonds but poor in oil and that was an expensive exploration program of the Geological Survey to confirm the situation.

Leo was often invited to participate in girl chasing expeditions around the Karoo, all the way to Oudtshoorn, on the other side of the Drakensberg Mountains, not far from the Indian Ocean. Strangely enough when he was accompanying them nothing worth writing home about it to the Bar Roma of Cervia was happening with the girls. The boys started calling Leo “ou beast” , a friendly expression meaning in Afrikaans “old cow”, that resembled the famous expression “wildebeest”: some other time depending on the mood they were calling him” ou bobbejaan” that meant “old baboon” or “ou kalfie” meaning “old calf”.

## **The Boer tribe of Oom Hugo**

One week after his arrival at the rig the owner of the farm Hugo Muller came to visit the camp with a truckload of girls. Oom Hugo, meaning uncle Hugo in Afrikaans, as everybody familiarly called Hugo Muller, was a friendly, round-faced, smiling individual in his mid forties. In Afrikaans Oom meant uncle and the bonds of brotherhood and solidarity among the Boers were such that young people called Oom and Auntie, that is uncle and aunt, the older people of both sexes.

Oom Hugo wore an old South African broad-brimmed hat, stained of machine oil, which he never took off. He was constantly trying to light his pipe or playing with that blackish object even when driving his truck or eating his dinner.”I came here to introduce my girls to you boys and to invite you to come and have dinner at the farm.” Said Oom Hugo with a nice smile, showing some nice, tobacco-stained, brown teeth in the process. In reality the girls were only three: two large size daughters weighing each about hundred kilo each, and one medium size niece

that was on visit to the farm. Leo had the impression that Oom Hugo was driving some cows for a country fair exhibition. The boys introduced Leo to Oom Hugo and the girls:” Oom Hugo, meet “ou biest” Leo, our Italian boss.” And they smiled and shook hand saying: ”Hoe gaan dit med you, ou biest” which in Afrikaans meant; how are you old cow. Leo was immediately adopted as a member of the Boer family. That evening they drove with the government vehicle, an old Landrover, about 20 miles to the farm and were greeted there by Auntie Sarie and discovered why the daughters were so big. Their mother was at least two hundred kilos worth of smiling mamma. Running around the house there were about half a dozen children of all sizes, some just toddlers, some older. The older boy Hugo Junior was only sixteen. Oom Hugo picked up a toddler, a beautiful blond baby and told Leo in English:” You wonder why I have so many children. Look at this one, if he had not been born he wouldn’t be here now! Correct?” “ Correct, the logic is impeccable!” agreed Leo. They all sat around a huge table in the dining room of the farm. Leo counted 8 children of Oom Hugo, 1 niece, the two parents, Jaap, a young nephew on visit to his uncle, and four from the oil rig, in all sixteen people. Oom Hugo sat at the head of the table and for a second dropped his pipe, took off his hat and said a prayer thanking God for the food, then everybody started eating with good appetite. The menu consisted mostly of lamb, stewed lamb, lamb chops, fried testicles of lamb etc. prepared in the most exquisite way with baked potatoes and French fries. Leo understood now why the girls were good looking but fat. After dinner they cleaned the table, sent the younger children to bed and started playing bingo for a few hours with their guests before they returned to the rig. No alcoholic beverages were served: only water and homemade soft drinks, or strong coffee. There was no need to drink alcohol to be happy in good company and the atmosphere was cheerful and noisy, and they all had fun.

During the following two months two memorable events took place. First of all came a good rain storm that soaked the desert, filled the rivers with murky torrential water and caused a frenzy of celebration among the Boers. The rain lasted two long days and was such a rare event that a mass of thanks giving was decreed by the Dutch Reform Church of South Africa. Less than three days later

the Karoo became green and full of the most fantastic flowers. The Sunday following the rain Oom Hugo and his wife drove their truck full of children all dressed up in Sunday clothes to Merweville to go to church. That was a rare occasion because usually they devotedly listened to the broadcast of the Sunday mass on their radio and seldom went to town. The children with their Sunday shoes jumped in the muddy puddles of water or in the streams, without being scolded by their smiling parents. It was an unbelievable feast for the Boers' Nation and everybody was happy. Leo and the mud loggers were always welcome to go to the farm and have dinner with the family, but in that occasion Oom Hugo drove his truck full of children to invite them to a special dinner at the farm. Leo thought: " People here behave like when in Ferrara and Romagna there is a good snow storm before Christmas. Children go out and play in the snow and the adults become happy and cheerful!"

The second event was a very sad one for the Boer Nation: their beloved Leader and Father of the nation, Dr Verwoerd was assassinated. Verwoerd was responsible for the apartheid form of government that had created the Bantustans, separating the blacks from the whites. Leo had an opportunity to study the reactions, the commotion and the collective sorrow of all the Boers of the camp and of Oom Hugo's family. They were all crying, grownups and children and listening to the radio for fresh news for hours. Leo understood how culturally united were the Boers in spite of hundred years of British domination, and he felt sorry for them. On one hand he condemned the apartheid system, on the other hand he felt sorry for the Boers, the descendents of the Protestants that had to run away from France and Holland to take refuge from the religious persecutions. Those people had found refuge in that remote corner of South Africa, where they were not allowed to live in peace but they had been persecuted even there, put in concentration camps and killed by the greedy British Empire. And now the final blow, the murder of the father of their nation.

Leo realized that Oom Hugo and his large family were part of a large tribe that included a niece, a nephew, two grand uncles that lived somewhere within the great farm and that had committed the crime of marrying colored girls. In addition to them several families of Cape Colored workers loved in symbiosis with the

Muller and were helping them with the herds of sheep. In practice the apartheid system was not working at all. Even if there was a law that had to be respected, humans feel the need to cooperate with others and follow the impulse to mate with whomever they want.

After all the millions of Cape Colored were not children of the Holy Spirit, but of Boer ancestors, recent and old ancestors who had not been able to resist the temptation of the flesh. The Cape colored were usually beautiful women that made you want to love them, rather than obey the apartheid laws! The old uncles of Oom Hugo were right to follow their feelings and to marry the women they loved.

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The adventures and the fun of Leo came to an abrupt end when one day all of a sudden he realized that he was stuck in South Africa, far from home, with a contract of three years before he would get a ticket to fly home on vacation. Of course he was reading his Hebrew grammar and the Tanakh, to occupy his mind. He was taking notes all the time in a note pad, and by the end of two months he had reached page 27, the story of Abraham. Only once he had returned to Cape Town bringing the books to ask the help of Mr. Nahum on a grammar problem: when does the long vowel "a", the Qames, transformed itself in "o" and became Qames-hatuph ? Nahum explained the rule, that was very easy, then read a few pages of the book of Genesis to explain him the correct pronunciation. Finally, before leaving Nahum said: "The Bible contains the secret of life. Continue reading and you will find it for yourself. "" You found it? "Leo asked with curiosity. "Sure, but I will not tell you. Everyone must try to find it with his own strength. "

That activity helped some to fight his melancholy, but it was not enough to fill the void that he was beginning to feel in his soul. Very often he would visit Oom Hugo, and spend the day at the farm: the children and the girls called him "ou biest" and were always happy to play bingo with him in the evening. There were times when the rig broke down and was waiting for spare parts, sometimes for weeks, therefore Leo with his beetle, often accompanied by one of the mud loggers,

would drive around all the way to Beaufort West, Oudtshoorn, to Knysna and spend a few days in some nice hotels. The hotel price was very reasonable those days in South Africa so they could afford the price without any problem. There was a lot to see, the ostriches farms of Oudtshoorn or the beautiful beaches of Knysna and the Drakensberg Mountains. There were girls to visit, sometime a little love affair lasting a couple of days in a remote place and the time was passing.

Time passed slowly, too slowly and the reading of the Tanakh progressed slowly, but after one year in the Karoo the germ of doubt had entered the mind of Leo. Did he choose the right profession? Did he want to live in South Africa for the rest of his life?

Leo after one year in the Karoo desert had reached bottom and had lost all hope of finding a way out of there. One day, feeling the need to talk to someone, he returned to Cape Town to chat with Nahum and had a conversation with the old Jew for over an hour. Leo explained that until now, reading the Book of Genesis, he understood that God must occupy all the infinite space that existed before the creation of the world. That space was the infinite kingdom of God, but the kingdom of God was also the place where occurred all the events that could occur. If you take away all the matter created by God, what remains is only the space and the time that existed before the creation.

*The Arabs call it Allah* like he had learnt in Morocco and for them what happens, all that happens, is the will of Allah but for him what happened was due only to chance, like in a game of dice. Chance is however governed not by God but by Probability, that is measured by the infinite series of positive numbers ranging between 0 and 1.

Zero was the failure and 1 was the success, all other results of the game of dice were falling between 0 and 1. It was useless to pray because God would not listen, but now Leo needed help to get out of the Karoo desert and go home. But how could he influence and modify the probability?

Nahum smiled and said: "I see that you have made significant advances in the study of the Bible and everything you said is true, except for one thing: God deals with the world

but cannot intervene directly because he lives outside of time and His

probability is only certainty. He can do only what is certain, not what is only probable, unlike the Devil, the king of the kingdom of darkness and the absolute negation of the Being."

Then Nahum went to look among his books and came back with a book of essays written by Bertrand Russell. "Here is the explanation. God is probability **1**, that means : *certainty*. The probability of Satan must then be the opposite of that of God, that is **-1**, the opposite of certainty, because he is the opposite of life, the embodiment of nonexistence.

But here's written what Bertrand Russell thinks, in his story: The meta-physicist's nightmare. Russell said that his friend, the philosopher Andrei Blumblowski, had a nightmare in which he dreamed of the Devil. Faced with Satan in his dream, Blumblowski realized that the Prince of Darkness and the Spirit of denial had a negative body as well as a negative mind. In other words his body consisted of an absolute vacuum, devoid not only of particles of matter, but also of light. The empty region of his body was absolutely black, not just black, but infinitely black. Therefore he represented an absolute nothing, even if that absolute nothing was a black hole that had the shape of the devil, complete with horns and tail. "

"Wonderful description of God and the Devil, but I do not understand where you want to arrive. " said Leo surprised by that story.

"I want to get to tell you that God is the Being, and in the realm of the Being, everything is possible. The Devil does not exist, because he is not. But do not doubt. Even though God cannot intervene personally, He can always send his *messengers angels* to ensure that his will be done."

Leo replied that those were interesting concepts but now he needed that something good happened to take him out of the Karoo desert and he was convinced that he could not rely on God's help. Nahum at that point went to look for another book, which contained some of the stories of the ancient wisdom of the Arab Middle East, which could explain the situation. He opened the book and began reading:

*Daleel ala Allah ( Introduction to God )*

*A Guy asked a wise friend, the Imam Jaafar: "what is the proof of the existence of Allah? Please don't give me the normal answer that is well known, obvious or usual."*

*Jaafar answered: "Have you been out at sea?"*

*He replied: Yes*

*And he asked: "Have you ever experienced a wind so strong that you feared that the ship would sink?"*

*He replied : Yes*

*And Jaafar continued: "Did you lose all hope in the ship and in the sailors?"*

*He replied : Yes*

*And Jaafar asked: "Did you realize that after that, after all you were saved at the end?"*

*He replied: Yes, of course, I am still alive.*

*Then Jaafar concluded: " Well, that was Allah!"*

Nahum smiled and concluded saying: "If you are a believer, the obvious meaning of the story is: when everything fails, you are in the hands of Allah and He will decide what to do. At this point in time you need a Divine intervention, maybe an angel will appear to show you the way."

Leo bought the two books at the discounted price of 10 Rand, even if one of the two was written in Arabic, a language he did not know. Then he returned to the field.

Fine words those of Nahum, but Leo had stopped seeing himself in the movie "King Solomon's mines" and had also forgotten completely its soundtrack. In addition to that the Voice had jumped out again from nowhere and had pressed him, saying that he must try to get out of that situation, but it did not give him any useful advice. He needed a change, but how?

## **Albert Ribstein**

Albert Ribstein came to the camp early one morning accompanied by a Geological Survey driver with a Government vehicle. He explained immediately the reason of his visit: he was making a tour of inspection of the various units of Géoservices in the various drilling rigs of South Africa, among them the large rotary rig drilling near Beaufort West . He said that he had spent the night in a Hotel in Beaufort



West, but could stay a couple of days with them at the camp if they had a bed for him. He was used to the life of the mud loggers and well site geologists. His driver could certainly be accommodated in the Black boys compound.

Albert was a blond, fair skinned Alsatian in his mid thirties, looking more like a German than a Frenchman. He spoke English with a strong French accent and his manners were soft and polite and reflected his French nationality and education in spite of his Germanic looks. He introduced himself to Leo in English, but Leo quickly switched to French to inform him that he spoke his language. He was surprised and pleased to find that somebody in the middle of the Karoo could speak his language. "Fine. Just in case I have a problem explaining myself in English, you can translate for me."

Two of the mud loggers squeezed themselves into one caravan and Ribstein could get organized with one caravan all for himself. The next couple of days Ribstein checked the calibration of the instruments, the gas line, the gas trap, and each time he explained the function of each individual piece of equipment: unfortunately there was no gas in the mud, but he had carried with him several gas containers to inject gas in the chromatograph to show how it worked to Leo that was observing him and following him everywhere. Unfortunately there was no gas in the drilling mud, but Ribstein had brought many bottles of steel that contained various types of gas to be injected into the gas-trap to control the operation of the chromatograph. Each type of gas, methane, ethane, propane, butane etc.. produced its special curve that could be detected by reading its trace on the instrument. Ribstein explained very clearly the work that needed to be done to check if the rock samples that came from the well contained traces of hydrocarbons. In the cabin there were many different tools and chemicals for the analysis of the samples. Ribstein patiently explained the use of the fluoroscope that indicated the fluorescence of the rock, the use of the heater for drying the samples that were stored in plastic bags, with the depth marked with a marker for future analysis, the use of the microscope and the copying machine to make hard copies of the Masterlog which indicated the lithology, the content in gas and the depth of each sample. In short, every activity was clearly explained and each instrument was analyzed in detail in its functions to be able to be used in the best

way. That was the first time that a serious professional geologist explained to Leo the complex work of well site geologist. The South Africans had sent him into the fray to learn the job from Giovanni and Baldini, without any theoretical training to know what he was supposed to do. The only activity that did not need instructions was the description of the lithology of the cores, because that was the job that he had learned well at the university.

In the evenings they would grill meat together with Ribstein and drink South African wine having a friendly conversation in Leo's caravan with all the mud loggers. The days passed quickly and when eventually he left Leo offered to drive him around to Knysna where we could spend the week-end relaxing and see a beautiful part of South Africa, and Ribstein accepted the invitation with a polite smile: "You could pick me up Saturday morning in my Beaufort West hotel around 10 am and I will be pleased to accompany you."

On Saturday at ten a.m. sharp Leo parked his beetle in front of the Hotel of Beaufort West. Ribstein was already outside waiting for him and he was carrying only a small bag. He informed Leo that he had taken only some spare clothes and his toilet gear for the week-end. "No problem, we will spend only a night at the Knysna Hotel and return Sunday evening. You don't need to bring a jacket, because the atmosphere of the restaurant is very casual and the hotel is right on the beach." Said Leo reassuring him then started driving South, chatting pleasantly and carrying out a conversation in French. Leo drove on the Cape Town road to the train crossing of the Prince Albert road and from there he took the dirt road to the Swartenberg Pass and to Oudtshoorn. The day as usual was beautiful and sunny. On the way they passed in front of a large township of poor corrugated iron barracks inhabited by Cape Colored. While he was driving Leo was explaining to Ribstein that South Africa was a rich country, rich in minerals and was lacking only Petroleum. There were immense natural resources and a beautiful pristine nature and very few white inhabitants, if you excluded the blacks and the colored. "I disagree with you Leo, said Ribstein, how can you call this a rich nation? Italy and France are rich nations. This is a really poor nation: you cannot ignore the

blacks and the colored and pretend that they don't exist! Look at this shanty town!"

"Touché, I meant that this is a country full of opportunities. I agree with you that the conditions of the blacks and the Cape coloreds are appalling. In any case this is the only place where an Italian geologist like me could find a job."

By the time they reached the Swartenberg Pass Leo had explained to Ribstein the details of his background, and the story of how he ended up in South Africa. He told him that in the beginning he was having fun and liked that work, but now, all of the sudden he was beginning to be tired of the routine because he couldn't think of a future in that kind of life. Ribstein told him that there were jobs around in the oil business for young geologists like him, especially in Algeria and in Libya, and in any case he could start working with Géoservices if he was interested. The Company was in continuous expansion and always needed qualified workers. By the time they reached Oudtshoorn they stopped for lunch in a little pub in town. The small city looked like the typical small cities of the films Western, only the Cow Boys were missing. It had two main roads crossing each other at right angle, basic and drab wooden and brick two-stories buildings with porches lined up alongside the dirt roads. Ribstein was right: that wasn't a rich country. Having lunch in the pub Ribstein continued asking Leo how often he could go home from South Africa, and when he replied that he had a trip paid every three years, Ribstein laughed very amused." If you join Géoservices you could go home every three months with the trip paid from everywhere in the world to your home town." "Then I will join Géoservices" said Leo with enthusiasm "do you think they will take me?" "Of course they will take you. You speak fluently French and English and I will recommend that they hire you. I am one of the directors."

Leo was smiling from ear to ear and could not believe what he had just heard, but he did not want to push his luck, therefore he said:"Fine, I will apply, but for the time being let us enjoy our tour and visit this part of South Africa."

That evening during dinner in the Hotel Ribstein described in detail the function of Géoservices in the oil business. It was a company created by three geologists in the mid fifties to take care of the collections of samples of rocks, of the analysis of

the samples to detect possible traces of hydrocarbons, of the analysis of the drilling mud for traces of gas and oil, and storage and collections of cores and other important samples of rock. The company had started its activity in Algeria and now, ten years later, it was rapidly conquering new markets for its mud logging units all over the world. Leo said that he was enthusiastic and ready to join them immediately but Ribstein suggested to write first his CV with the details of his experience and his studies of geology, accompanied by a very simple application. He could ask an envelope from the reception, put his application in it and give it to him. Leo remained awake most of that night preparing the application and next day at breakfast he gave the letter to Ribstein. They spent the next day at the beach, where it was advisable to avoid swimming because of the dangers of sharks, that could be seen very close to shore swimming in the breakers and therefore they swam in the swimming pool. The day was pleasant and what they saw was certainly worth seeing, but despite the beauty of the area it was not possible to avoid commenting how much more enjoyable was life on the Mediterranean beaches where there wasn't the danger of those nasty beasts.

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Three month later Leo landed at the Airport of Paris full of hope to start a new future, and started winning again his poker game with life. From that moment his good luck continued uninterrupted for the next twenty years, as long as the oil price continued to climb.

During the time spent with Géoservices he had worked in Southern France, near the Pyrenees, then for a long time in Libya and finally he had been transferred to the Norwegian and English sectors of the North Sea, where the oil exploration had began with great success. He often spent a few weeks of vacation in Ragusa where his Sicilian friends Frank Spadaro and Globo were taking it easy with their studies and were still in University. As for Frank Parrino, he taught mathematics in a high school of Piazza Armerina, in the center of Sicily. So Leo could often visit his old friends, but something had changed. Leo had become member of an international élite of oil workers, while they remained attached to their traditions and frozen behind their narrow provincial mentality. Meanwhile, the friends who had shared with him the South African adventure, Piero Biancoli and Paolo Baldini had returned to their Rimini, with their new young wives and had began working in completely different fields, that had nothing to do with

geology. Frank Parrino instead followed the advice of Leo and applied to Géoservices as well, and with a good push from Leo began the career of petroleum geologist that finally took him to Milan to work for Agip.

Géoservices, after two years, helped Leo to enter the world of big oil because, having started at the bottom and having made a lot of experience, he had now the qualifications to find a well-paid job as an oil geologist. So it happened that at age of 29, no longer so young, he was finally hired by the Texan company Ocean Oil as a well site geologist for their program of exploration in the North Sea.

Consequently Ribstein had not only affected the future of Leo, but also of Frank Parrino, because without the tip of Leo, he would have continued to teach mathematics in a provincial high school and his future would have been completely different.

## **Chain of probable events controlling the Future**

Prophet is a big word that means that one not only foresees the future, but very often guesses right even in his forecasts. But who really can predict the future? It can be shown that many stories of the prophets were written by their successors, who were familiar with the facts, and that, by bluffing, they put in their mouths prophecies of events well

known, that had already taken place. Amos, the mouth of God, used to say : *and you will wander from sea to sea* (Amos, 8, 12). When his prophecy was written, the Jews had already gone wandering from sea to sea. What a discovery! Instead, the true prophet does not predict the future, but is illuminated about the meaning of the present and is often lucky enough to guess right. It is not only a matter of getting lucky or not, it's about being inspired by "something" that gives you the "right explanation". This "something", call it God if you want, but in the case of Leo that was the "Voice", and when a voice guides you, I think you're either crazy or you are a prophet. Leo was a Prophet that instead of predicting the future, predicted the past. There is nothing to laugh at this, in fact if the future, before becoming the past was unpredictable, why not admit that the past had inherited from the future a part of its unpredictability? Does one know the endless chain of past events that cause the future, starting from the beginning of the universe? If only a link of the chain is missing, the future is no longer the same.

Sitting in a nice cafe at Avenue Des Champs Elysées, Leo enjoyed the view of the varied crowd that moved frantically from right to left and vice versa in the afternoon of

September. He had finally escaped from the Karoo, for the skin of his teeth, but what had happened according to his theory of probability?

Leo had to analyze the past in order to predict it and then figure it out.

"Here I am in Paris," Leo thought "how the hell did I end up here? "

Does one really know the past? Like the future is unknown and unpredictable, is also the past unknown and unpredictable? So much had happened, an unpredictable chain of events. When did the chain begin, in the Karoo or before, when he was born? One does not remember what happened to him before birth and during early childhood. It seems a silly question: of course the past must be known, if only one could remember it.

But do we change our interpretation of what happened as time passes, as our experiences evolve, as the present is transformed into history? When does what was only *probable* become *history*? As soon as the *present* becomes *past*, or much later, after it is filtered by human perception? Leo continued to remember and to think: " If you are a believer, you probably believe that God interferes with the lives of men and modifies their futures according to his Superior Will and Plans. But Nahum dad told Leo that God, to fulfill his will, could not intervene directly, but through his messengers, the Angels. God being everything in everything must have an infinite substance made of atoms of space-time that cannot change the future events of the universe, much less predict them, but as a good chess player God must be able to foresee many moves in advance, so that His will be done. Surely God does not know the future, but knows the past and the present: how does He then influence the future? From what I understood reading the Bible, we are all like olives in the bath of brine of His substance that is the space and the time. This is how God must be able to influence the minds of his messengers that should carry out his plans on Earth. They must act through space and time. Albert Ribstein was only a man, and not an angel sent by God, however, without realizing it, he had transformed my future, perhaps in fulfillment the will of the God of Probability. "

## Part II

### Ocean Oil

**“The Lord gives, the Lord takes: may his Holy Name be praised. ( Job 1, 21 )**

Like we have already said, from Géoservices, after two years Leo got a golden opportunity to become well-site geologist for a big American Corporation: Ocean Oil, that had exploration activities everywhere in the World. Just when Ocean was looking for a well-site geologist for the Norwegian sector of the North Sea, Leo was already there, on the same floating platform that the company used for its first exploratory wells. He was one of the mud loggers of Géoservices assigned to the cabin that was working on that platform, therefore, according to the Voice, he occupied the right spatial-temporal position. He became suddenly well known for his knowledge of geology when he stunned the American well-site geologist of Ocean Oil, by identifying small amounts of mica muscovite in the sands of the Miocene that were coming out of the well. That kind of mica contained potassium, Leo had explained, and on a sheet of paper he had written the exact formula and designed the crystalline structure of that type of mica. Potassium in turn contained the radioactive isotope K 40, which explained the radioactivity of sand found in the radioactivity log.

This was what he had learned at the University of Bologna, that was second to none in terms of theoretical geology, although from the practical side it lacked equipment and means. So the American geologist had been able to explain the radioactivity of the sands to his headquarters in Oslo. So Leo had had eye ( the identification of muscovite), experience (the knowledge of its content of K 40) and good luck (the fact that they were looking for a good well-site geologist ) and so he was immediately hired by confirming the theory of his cousin Zorz.

Starting to work for Ocean Oil the life of Leo made a sudden leap of quality because he started spending most of the time in the office in Oslo with only occasional trips to the offshore drilling platform. This allowed him a decent social life and he had also found a Norwegian girl with whom he would spend most

part of his free time. That relationship was almost stable and no longer a kind of "hit and run" as before.

His boss was a fantastic man, an American named Hank, the chief geologist of the Norwegian operation. In addition to being a leader, Hank was also an excellent teacher with plenty of patience because he had taught Leo the art of interpreting the electrical logs and the technique of correlating the lithology of the exploration wells. He had also showed him how to interpret the seismic lines to define the structure of the various sedimentary basins of the North Sea. Leo learned in a hurry because he was fascinated by that science, so having added to his experience of well site geologist the teachings of Hank, he had begun to be an expert geologist.

Those were the glorious days of the start of exploration in the North Sea, when the first large deposits of oil and gas began to be discovered, and only by chance Leo found himself sharing with a few others the glory and the honor for those fabulous finds. Very often he wondered what had caused the chain of fortunate events that had brought him to Norway at the right time. It was clear that everything had started with the offer of the work of Albert Ribstein and without realizing Leo had become one of the pioneers of oil exploration in the North Sea. After only one year Ocean transferred Leo from Norway to Nigeria. While usually he drew a sigh of relief when he finished with a girl because he regained his beloved freedom, this time a strange feeling of regret hit him like a stab in the back thinking of leaving Eva, his Norwegian girl friend. To cure this strange state of mind there was no other remedy: two months after his arrival in Nigeria Leo and Eva were married in front of an officer of the Nigerian government. Leo was 31 and Eva was 27 years old and for both of them the time was ripe to start a family, because that was the fate of most of the people.

"Dura lex, sed lex" thought Leo with a shrug after the simple marriage ceremony in the presence of a couple of Italian friends, who were the only witnesses, and all four then went to celebrate in best restaurant of Lagos. Leo stopped to hear the music of Lawrence of Arabia or to identify himself with Stewart Granger in the film King Solomon's Mines and suddenly he became a serious person.

Exactly one year after their marriage, their first child, Albert, was born in



Norway, where the hospitals were better equipped. Little Ali, was given that name in honor of Albert Ribstein. Having now a family to care for, his brain suddenly became free from other thoughts beyond family and work, so Leo soon became a good geologist specializing in structural geology and interpretation of seismic lines.

## **Sicilian Vacations**

Ever since he came back from Morocco Leo had spent every year a few days of vacation at the beach in the home of Aunt Maria, in Santa Maria del Focallo. The house was near the sea and in front of the great beach which stretched from Pozzallo to Cirica without interruption for more than 12 km. The house was a very basic construction, like all those of the surroundings, since it had been built with an eye to saving, but unlike the other houses, was surrounded by a large vineyard and many oleander trees. The place was not idyllic, much less chic but the sea was nice and clean and in front of the house, a mile from the beach, there was the Isle of Leeks, a popular destination for all those who had a boat. Leo had stopped going to Cervia once married, and instead with his little family he had begun to spend their holidays in Santa Maria, because the place was perfect for small children. In front of the house a road had to be crossed to reach some large sand dunes, covered by dense Mediterranean scrub of leafy acacia mimosa trees, and then there was the beautiful sandy beach where one could play and where the sea was shallow and one could swim without danger, and then there was Zia, who was like a grandmother always caring and always ready to devote herself to them. Leo had bought a fiberglass boat with a flat bottom and with a small, light 4 horsepower outboard engine, which led them slowly to the island for a swim in the beautiful sea that had nothing to envy to the Caribbean. When he had to leave, at the end of the vacation, with the help of some friends, he placed the boat in the garage, to be put back on the beach when returning the following year. So the family and especially the children had a point of reference and a target to aim for a holiday. From anywhere in the world they came from, what was their summer paradise. Over the years Leo had increased the size of the house and built a second floor for his little family. Then, with an eye to the future, he had build a regular standard-size tennis court and a large covered porch with a pizza oven, thinking that a bit at the time, if necessary, the

house could be transformed into a B & B. In Pozzallo Leo had bought to Zia a nice apartment on the seafront Pietre Nere where Aunt passed the winter before moving to the beach house. Pozzallo had become the city to which everyone thought when they were thinking of home.

## **Plate Tectonics**

Unfortunately there is no Nobel Prize for geology. If it existed it should go to the Canadian John Tuzo-Wilson for his work on the theory of plate tectonics. He is the geologist that discovered the role of “transform faults” as the mechanism that allows sea-floor spreading to take place between the various plates of the Earth’s crust. He wrote his famous theory and published it in the journal Nature in 1965. Finally the geologists had the mechanism that allowed mountain building, sea floor spreading and island arcs to be formed according to a very elegant and simple theory. Leo had received his degree in February 1964, more than one year before the discovery of plate tectonics, so like all the geologists of his generation he had a lot of trouble figuring out what caused the geological process called “orogeny ” and all the other related phenomena. But now, thanks to Tuzo-Wilson, everything made sense, now everything was clear.

The new theory had now to be applied to the interpretation of the geology of petroleum, since Leo had discovered that Ocean, like many other oil companies, was left behind in the field of scientific research. Working in Nigeria and then in Houston, Texas, the general headquarters of Ocean, Leo had at his disposal million of kilometers of seismic lines from the continental shelves of the oceans from all over the world, so he found the niche suited to his specialization and began to apply the theory of Tuzo-Wilson to the interpretation of the structures of the sedimentary basins that extended into the sea from the mainland of the continents around the world.

The plate tectonics revolution had started as a consequence of all the data collected by the US Navy during the war. Magnetic profiles and seismic data, in addition to depth soundings from all the oceans of the World, were being

interpreted and the scientists began to understand the structure of the sea floor and its peculiarity.

Two main institutes owned oceanographic vessels that were actively collecting new data from the oceans of the globe: the earth observatory Lamont Doherty at the Palisades of New York and Woods Hole Oceanographic institute near Cape Cod. Leo was often visiting both Institutes as member of the Industrial Association that supported financially the research and not only he got a lot of ideas by talking to the scientists and by getting copies of their publications, but he was personally informed of the new theories that were constantly producing the top scientists in the field of Geology and Oceanography. He could meet Walt Pittman III, John Dewey, Walter Alvarez and Phil Rabinowitz at Lamont and K.O. Emery at Woods Hole. In Boston at the prestigious MIT he met Peter Molnar and other important members of the University. All these were important scientists that had contributed a lot to the understanding of the theory of plate tectonics, yet all of them were modest, down to Earth, almost shy individuals, without any air of superiority. With them Leo could drink a beer in a pub or eat a pizza in a little Italian restaurant, while discussing the wonders of the global tectonics.

If you understood the theory of plate tectonics, certain areas of the oceans, proved to be more promising, for oil accumulation and entrapment of hydrocarbons, than others, as evidenced by the seismic lines. Leo was writing his reports to his managers, and they, without losing any time quickly were going around the World to act on his recommendations and acquired large concessions in the areas indicated by him offshore west Africa, offshore Asia and South America. In Houston a new important member was added to the family: his daughter Karen Maria, therefore between work on plate tectonics and a growing family the brain of Leo was now fully booked.

Now he had all that new situation to manage, and, to paraphrase Anthony Quinn in the movie Zorba the Greek of 1964 that Leo had seen in Ragusa before his military service, he had: a house, a wife, two small children to raise, all that good stuff that

God gives to make life interesting, but unlike Zorba fortunately he didn't have also a mistress. But Eva still handled everything, family and babies and helped him to

solve the problems that he wouldn't have if he had not been married. And Leo, coming home from work, sat smiling and happy in a chair listening to the music of Zorba that echoed in his brain while reading his Bible. He tried to understand the secret of life, and she was in charge of running that very life and all the rest. Despite all the action those were the most productive years of his life, between the ages of 33 and 36 when he made his greatest scientific discoveries. In exploration, as in any human activity, it took eye, experience and good luck, and Leo had all three of those qualities although only the last mattered. For three consecutive years he won the "bull-shit-throwing-award" that is the prize for shooting the thicker "bull shit" at the annual meeting of the exploration leaders held at the hotel which Ocean Oil owned in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Those were the years of glory and professional success and a lot of money circulated around because the price of oil increased. Ocean sent Leo around the world to find out where the oil was hiding in the complex structures of island arcs, mountain ranges and in deep water basins. In London he had the task of coordinating the study of the complex structures of the North Sea basins. A lot of discoveries were made when he was director of interpretation in London with the title of regional geologist.

At that time he lived with his family in Wimbledon and it was there that he had known his Jewish friend Jacob, who was born in Iraq, and spoke perfectly Arabic. They became great friends and visited each other often with their wives and children, but sometimes rarely they went to the pub together for a beer and to discuss politics, philosophy and religion. Both had excellent knowledge of the Bible, and Jacob was very impressed by the fact that Leo knew well enough Hebrew. But Jacob, who knew very well also the Koran, convinced Leo that, as a matter of symmetry, he also had to study the Koran in the original language. "Even though I personally don't believe and I am a complete atheist Jew, I know that not only the Bible and the Gospels contain revelation, but there is much revelation also in the Koran! "

So he said, Jacob, and Jacob used to say sensible things, for which reason Leo had bought a grammar of Arabic and Jacob had recorded the lessons for him in a recorder with excellent Arab pronunciation from Iraq.

When Leo was transferred with his family to the Philippines with a promotion to chief geologist, Jacob had come also there, stopping on his return from Hong Kong where he used to buy some merchandise, and had checked the level of knowledge of Arabic that Leo had reached, finding it satisfactory but not yet sufficient to begin the study of the Koran.

## Anilao

The study and the reading of Arabic lessons and the work of chief geologist, even if they occupied him during the week, did not prevent Leo and his young family from having a few moments of recreation during the weekend. When there was a day off, they set off together to Anilao, a small village of fishermen who was in one of the three peninsulas of Batangas, just an hour's drive south of Manila. Anilao consisted of a few huts located at the mouth of a narrow stretch of sea between two narrow peninsulas. The fishermen had built a second rustic village about

two kilometers further south, on the eastern peninsula and with their large canoes, called bankas, they were carrying tourists from Anilao to the village and returned to pick them up when they left. The bankas were large canoes, long and narrow with two large bamboo rockers, which guaranteed the stability. Equipped with outboard engine, they flashed fast around all the seas of the Philippines, and were the most common transport system for local people.

The village was a marvel of the Philippine technology. Built entirely on the sea on bamboo stilts, was made of bamboo and cane intertwined and enabled clients to dive straight into the sea from their huts to swim in a fabulous sea. There were fish of all

colors to be observed with the mask, there were several species of sea urchins, some with long sharp black spines to be avoided when swimming, others harmless with red quills large and rounded. There were corals of all types and large multicolored sponges. The kids could swim in shallow water with their masks under the watchful eyes of the mothers that watched them from the bamboo pier. At an early age Ali became a very good swimmer who spent hours in the water studying all

enchanted details of the seabed and his little sister Karen had already learned to swim with rubber bracelets. If any marine snake, with black and white stripes was nearby, he walked away quietly about his business. There was no danger. All the huts had their private bathrooms and showers, very basic but always

impeccably clean. Then there was a large living room with several bamboo armchairs and a large coffee table of bamboo on which was brought the food for lunch and dinner. In the morning there was coffee and tea and Filipino cakes, exotic local fruits, bananas, pineapple and papaya, and at noon or in the evening, for lunch and dinner there was only one large plate of rice, a kind of paella with

fish and shrimp in a sauce of coconut. In the evening, miraculously jumped out of nowhere some San Miguel beer and sometimes a providential bottle of whiskey, for the consumption of men, while for the ladies there were delicious cocktails made with rum and exotic fruits. When they were not eating or sleeping they were soaking in water as calm as a table. The village was run by a few nice people, always smiling, some waiters and cleaning women who did their job always smiling and without being noticed. The organization and the style of the village, as well as the professionalism of the cooks, of the waiters and boatmen had impressed Leo that in all his travels had not yet experienced a tribal system so advanced and so efficient. The cost of weekend at the resort, including trip by bankas, was really cheap, even in comparison with the affordable prices of the Philippines. Anilao, in the mind of Leo, had become a model of tribal life to imitate, if one wanted to live happily.

## **The return to Norway**

After Manila Leo was transferred to Singapore where as a regional geologist directed the work of four exploration geologists dedicated to study the geology of the entire Asian Pacific area, which included Australia and New Zealand. That continued to be a wonderful period, not only for Leo but also for his wife and young children that were growing up in that super technological and organized city. Leo had become member of the most famous Yacht Club of Singapore, the Changi club, where he bought a sailboat and where the family spent the weekend at the beach, while he participated in the numerous regattas around the island. In Singapore he also took classes in Koran by a local Imam, an ethnic Malay, Imam Taleb, who had Arab blood in his veins. For a year he had learned to read the Koran chanting, as did the Muslims, and after the first year he already knew by memory many of the most famous verses of the holy book. Leo often traveled for business in several countries of Asia and the Pacific, and when he was traveling always carried with him a small pocket Koran that he read in the airports and on the plane to pass the time and to make sure he got the blessing of Allah. In addition to its knowledge of Arabic also his professional experience grew exponentially with the passage of time. He had become a really good petroleum

geologist.

Once when he was flying from Singapore to Bangkok with Thai Airways in first class, his Thai seatmate tried to pick up the beautiful stewardess who was serving them champagne and caviar. He whispered little words in Thai and she smiled amused, but it was evident that she was enjoying the attention. Then, turning to Leo in English, the neighbor gave him a brief but significant lesson in Buddhism. "The difference between you Christians and us Buddhists is just a small detail: your reference is God, who is perfect and therefore you're frustrated by the fact that you can never achieve His perfection. For us, we start from the bottom trying to perfect ourselves during our life and so even if we are sinful 90% of the time, we are justified by the fact that abject beings as we are cannot hope to behave well more than 10% of the time. "

Another time along with some Italian friends Leo had gone on a trip to an island of Malaysia. As he read the Koran in the shade of a palm tree the director of Alitalia in Singapore, which at an age of almost fifty had started a love affair with a wonderful Danish hostess, abandoning his wife and children in Italy, looked at him with suspect and asked: "Have you fucked enough when you were young?" Maybe he meant that Leo was losing time to read that strange book while there were many beautiful women around with whom he could get busy. "Maybe not, certainly not enough. "Leo replied with a little smile of excuse. In that multi-ethnic city that was Singapore, there was much to learn from the different cultures, that were either Chinese or Hindu or Buddhist and the Italian culture certainly had much to teach to everyone.

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To reward him for his skills Ocean had promoted him first to Chief Geologist in Manila, then to Regional Geologist in Singapore and finally to Manager of Exploration in Stavanger, Norway, but that was a serious error that caused the progressive decline of Leo in subsequent years.

Although the return to Norway was a desirable event for the integration of the children in the country of origin of their mother, it was at first taken with little enthusiasm by the whole family. Of course, sooner or later they would have to go back, but life in the Far East was so interesting and full of adventure, that it was hard to think of another style of life different from the one they had become accustomed to.

The problems therefore began when Leo was transferred from Singapore to Norway at the age of 43 years, with a promotion to Manager of Exploration.

A manager does not do any work himself but he causes the work to be done through other people and in Leo's case, by 56 persons. As the Manager Leo had a vision of what he wanted to achieve, and had caused some important oil discoveries to be made during the time in which he had been the leader in Norway. The problem was that he had little control of the budget and of the financial situation where the company was, due to the oil prices which had begun to show signs of instability and had begun to fall two years after his transfer.

In addition to that Leo started having strong objections about the way the Company was handling people.

While in the old days Ocean was like a big family and there was a spirit of cooperation and brotherhood which regulated the relations between a manager and his employees, now the employees had begun to be judged and cataloged according to very questionable standards of productivity. Immediately Leo had developed a negative attitude towards the management tool called "performance analysis" that had been imposed from above. How could he catalogue people with complex minds and varied work experience? It was also difficult to categorize dogs and cows, because each animal has its own personality and its quality. There were truffle dogs, feather dogs, hounds and guard dogs, and there was the Chianina cow with an excellent and tasty meat yield and there was the Modicana breed to make the caciocavallo cheese.

Some were good at solving practical problems and they were good geologists for the development and exploitation of the oil fields, others were good to imagine in three dimensions new exploration prospects. Among the geophysicists some were good at interpreting the seismic lines to build some good maps of the subsoil, while others were strong in mathematics to process seismic data and to obtain clean lines that were easy-to-interpret. Then there were the designers, the secretaries, the computer specialists. How could you judge who was the best between an apple, a pear and an orange, or rather between a fig tree and a cauliflower?

The employees were artificially divided into five categories: at the bottom were the IN, meaning improvement needed, "those needing improvement", in reality they should have been called OUT because they, rather than being helped to



improve, were regularly kicked out of the company. Then there were the PR, meaning the proficient ones, “those that did their job and nothing else”. Then came the PR+, “those that did a bit more than just their work”: example, if you asked a secretary to bring you a cup of coffee and she brought it together with sugar and biscuits, she would be listed PR +.

The best performers were catalogued HC, meaning “highly competent ones” and a secretary with beautiful “balconies” would be certainly catalogued at least HC. At the very top of the pyramid were the EX, meaning “excellent performers”, in other words the geniuses. It was a very unfair system and Leo had soon discovered that it was used by the upper management to justify firing people in the lower categories each year. You get rid of the weak, the dead wood to improve the “race”, to keep only the best and the winners. It sounded like Nazism, didn't it?

A psychosis was created by that system, and it spread not only to the office, but also around town, throughout Stavanger. You went to a supermarket to buy something and you noticed a PR with his wife and children doing their shopping. They all, including the small children, looked PR, wearing scruffy clothes, dragging their feet as they walked like zombies through the shop. Or you overheard at the company cafeteria Keya, an American geophysicist rated IN, telling another girl, a geologist called Estella, rated PR+, that she met a nice boy, a young engineer quite good looking that was rated nothing less than HC.

The company policy provided that the managers were supposed to say clearly to the employees to which category they belonged, so everyone knew everything about everyone else. It resembled the system used by the Nazis to divide the Jews, as soon as they came out of the train, into categories: gas chamber immediately, gas chamber in a few months, men fit for hard work and women for housekeeping, girls for the brothels of the German soldiers etc ... Nice system, right?

Keya was fired first because the management declared her hopelessly super-incompetent, without any hope of improvement and Estella survived another year moving idly around the various offices of the exploration department with a sad face and uttering fatalistic expressions of gloom and doom.

Once she brought a sick plant into Leo's room asking him to water it because she had lost the will to care for it. On top of the lack of water the plant had suffered from cold exposure during the cold Norwegian winter as Estella forgot to open the radiator to warm her room. Estella during the routine of her wandering around the office was coming every day to visit the plant in Leo's office with the same concern of a mother that visits her sick daughter in the hospital. Leo managed, after six months, to rescue the plant but he could not save Estella, a highly intelligent Jewish girl that ended up being fired, contrary to his recommendations. Leo learned later that Estella got a good job in Washington working for the US administration. Keya, on the other hand, had become a science schoolteacher in Vermont, where her family lived.

Leo tried to resist implementing such horrible system as long as he could and one year he went as far as rating all his people HC and EX. The upper management however said that it was impossible, that some people had to be at the bottom of the performance pyramid, so they forced-ranked some of his people, without any reasons and fired them, the next year. That included firing Leo's buddy Bill van Goidsthoven, his chief geologist, who was a very intelligent and witty 55 years old man, just because he was considered too old to have a future in their aggressive company. Leo tried to save Bill with all his forces, claiming that by firing him they would lose many years of irreplaceable experience and that Bill was happy to remain a chief geologist until the retirement age of 65. No way: their Nazi mentality was set to eliminate the old and the weak. And Bill was fired leaving a big gap of competence behind. Leo found out later that Bill was hired by his Houston friends of UMC to be sent as General Manager in Equatorial Guinea, so being fired was a good thing for him and for his career.

Bill had a great talent, cunning, a virtue that was hard to categorize, but that was important to deal with the very clever mafia of the leaders of that African country. As we shall see, this is the same Bill that many years later offered Leo to take his place in Equatorial Guinea, when he eventually retired.

As for Leo, he was always ranked EX by his bosses, but he started giving them some trouble. He developed a wrong attitude: instead of being on the side of the

management, he was on the side of the workers. He became a real nuisance. This is basically what caused him to get into conflict with his boss and what caused him to have to quit Ocean after 19 years of wonderful productive work with them.”

## **The final solution**

Economic recessions had occurred many times in the history of humanity, since biblical times when they were called famines, but this time only the oil workers were the target. The world economy was booming and continued to grow, instead the oil workers began to be persecuted and eliminated and to be treated as second-class human beings: they were deprived of their dignity, not because of a Nazi ideology, but for economic reasons and for envy. Indeed especially because of envy. The persecution of the oil workers was not justified by the decrease in the price of oil, and could be avoided considering the fact that after a few years the prices would have risen even more than before. World reserves were limited and most of them were in the hands of the Arabs, and to them it was only important to make money. No, also in Norway the persecution was not due to a strange demagogic theory but to the greed of the financiers and to the envy of the Norwegians towards the foreigners.

Although Leo agreed that it was an exaggeration to compare the problems of the oil workers to those of the Jews, that comparison illustrated perfectly well the situation. The persecution of the Jews in Germany, but to a certain extent in every part of Europe through the centuries, was motivated by envy for their economic success, for their high level of education and for their intellectual superiority in all fields of human knowledge. Leo was sure to be right, even if one could argue that there were other reasons. The different religious culture was not sufficient to justify alone the level of hatred that had arisen against the Jews, because then other religions were supposed to cause the same problems of coexistence in other parts of the world where people of different religions instead were living in harmony with each other, as for example in the Asian countries. But the Jews were different, they were successful people who had managed to survive the discrimination and the abuse of power, and human being did not like this: everyone should be equal, everyone should have the same opportunities, no one would have to excel and become more important than his fellows. There was envy of course even among members of the same ethnic group, for example an Italian

could individually be envious of another Italians, but certainly not all the Italians in general. The real hatred needed targets and clear reasons to justify its existence and the Jews were not aa individual target, but a collective one, toward which should be directed the arrows of hate and envy just because they were different. Not only different, but happy be different. This was what Leo, analyzing the past, had prophetically predicted that had happened to all the foreigners who worked in those days in Norway. There was an exaggerated reaction of the headquarters to cut the budget due to the weakening of the price of oil and the Norwegians had taken advantage of this to implement a gradual ethnic cleansing to eliminate the foreigners. Ethnic cleansing motivated by jealousy over the fact that foreigners were rich people, were successful and they were different.

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Leo remembered that one evening, it could have been November 1987 since he remembered that outside the windows it was already quite dark, all the managers were gathered into the office of the Big Boss to discuss the situation. Ocean had its operation base in a large and impressive cement building near Tananger, a little harbor some kilometers West of Stavanger, on the North Sea coast. The Big Boss, an American and Leo were the only two expatriate of the group of Managers, the rest were all Norwegian as the process of ethnic cleansing, a couple of years earlier, had already eliminated all the expatriate managers and substituted them with Norwegians. The meeting was called by the Big Boss to discuss cost cutting in the face of lower oil prices. And of course the only neck that was being proposed to be cut in that meeting was Leo's.

"How many expatriate geologists and geophysicists have you got Leo?" asked the Boss with a thunderous voice. Leo felt the hairs along the length of his spine raise like a dog when he feels threatened and is getting ready to attack. "I have seven geophysicists and thirteen geologists all expatriates, the rest are all Norwegians, all young and inexperienced." Leo replied with a dull, barely audible voice.

"Keep one geophysicist and five geologists to follow the fields development program and fire the rest. We are going to stop exploring for a while!" was the verdict of the Big Boss. Leo looked out of the window and what he saw was not nice. There was no sunshine, no beauty and no poetry out there. Everything was

dark, so different from a Mediterranean landscape! “Poor Norwegians, Leo thought, you won: you can keep all this for yourselves. For five years, since I arrived, I had been persecuted by the second in command, the Norwegian Vice-Boss, a dull individual without charisma. One tight lipped individual with a Nazi expression on his face. He had made a fast career by planning the takeover of the operations by the Norwegians. *Fornoskning* were called those plans. We made our careers by finding oil, he made his career by firing those that contributed to make Norway one of the richest oil Nations of the world.”

With a faint voice he replied: “The cost of personnel amounts to about only 5% of the total costs in a typical exploration-production operation. If you do that the Norwegian Oil Directorate will take away the Operatorship from you, because you will lack the expertise to operate in Norway!” And the Boss replied with irritation in his voice:” You are too soft, you don`t have the guts to be a Manager!”

Needless to say that six months later Leo was gone! Recognizing his ability the bosses wanted to keep him as Chief Geologist to substitute Bill but he said” “ No thanks, put me on the same list with my people! “

That was a tough decision to take, a decision that he would certainly regret having taken in the future, but at that time it saved his dignity and his self respect.

## **The persecution of the oil people**

Leo read somewhere that the amount of people employed in the oil business worldwide had gone down progressively from 2.5 million people to only half a million in a ten years period, a reduction of 80%. Maybe they were exaggerated figures, yet the crisis was there and it was tangible.

There were many tragedies, many suicides and many people struggled to find new jobs. Some geologists became waiters, some started working for McDonald, and some changed completely careers. Not only geologists were affected, but also drillers, engineers, accountants, people of all professions were affected, including some managers.

Yet all that could have been avoided! One did not need to be a financial genius to figure out that the oil price would soon bounce back. As a matter of fact, as it were predictable, the oil price started soaring again and this time it reached unbelievable new heights past 100 dollars a barrel in the early 2000s. But that was too late for most oil people of the 80s and 90s. They were gone because they had to survive!

Leo had been lucky, because his good reputation as a successful exploration manager opened for him the road to a new job, the same day that he left Ocean. He started working as manager of the exploration team with a Norwegian Geophysical Contractor that was organizing group shootings of seismic on the Norwegian continental shelf. But his happiness did not last long! The difference in mentality and in pay between Ocean and the Contractor was too great to be tolerated in the long run. So after one year and a half Leo started looking seriously for another job in an oil company and in spite of having filled fifty years, strangely enough he succeeded, this time without any divine intervention, but because of the law of probability of his cousin.

## **Life as a guru**

“Once out of Ocean Oil, after the first few days of enthusiasm for the acquired freedom, Leo immediately realized the tough reality in which he now found himself. Did it happen also to the suicides that threw themselves down from the skyscrapers, that having reached the fourth floor, before crashing to the ground, they repented of having made that mistake? If he had learned the lesson from the various books of ethology that he had read or the many documentaries about animal life that he had seen, Leo should have known that a lion ousted by a younger and more powerful lion, or in general an animal kicked out of his heard by a stronger rival, will have to wander off in search of a new territory, where he will never be accepted. Who wanted an old mangy lion? The loser would become a refugee, hardly tolerated in a new heard or a new pride. To a certain extent, on a larger scale, that was what explained the problem of the Jews. Out of their

territory because of the "*Diaspora*" caused by the Romans, they were never accepted anywhere and they were refugees around the world.

First of all, true to animal behavior theory, Leo had to move from Stavanger, where he owned a house and where his family was happy and settled down. He was obliged to move to Oslo, more than 500 km away, where the new company had its head office. The company however agreed to utilize Leo also two days a week in Stavanger to take care of their little office that they had there, so he had to travel a lot by plane between Stavanger and Oslo.

Ousted animals also have to move a lot and change often territory. On the one hand Leo was now an employee of the Geophysical Services Company with a well defined job function: director of geological studies and interpretation. The job consisted in promoting regional studies of the continental shelves surrounding the territorial waters of Norway, to define new potential areas where new hydrocarbon discoveries could be made. Seismic was always in short supply in the new areas of interest, hence new seismic was warranted there and the company would therefore propose new seismic shooting that would later sell to the oil companies. On the other hand in addition to his main duty Leo was being constantly being proposed to the oil companies as a great expert of exploration problems, a sort of guru that could be hired to fix the companies problems. Companies were hiring him to figure out the future oil price taking into account the supply and demand of the international crude oil. At that time he had been saddled with the nickname "Prophet the price of oil " that stuck with him for a couple of years. Sometimes he was hired to calculate the potential reserves of Norway and some companies hired him to advertise their potential to obtain financing and new capital from the various European stock exchanges. As the time passed his role was more that of guru around Europe and the work as director of interpretation had become secondary. There was much travel and almost always by plane and Leo was beginning to tire, and besides he was beginning to suspect that the new company wanted to push him out and to get rid of him. The problem was that at the age of 49 years it was difficult to integrate into a new working environment and into a new corporate culture. An old lion or an old wolf would never have been

accepted into a new pack and would lead a lonely life trying to survive on their own until they would inevitably starve to death: that was the lesson he had learned.

The problem was not only his own, but also extended to the family. When played bridge with the wives of the employees of the oil companies Eva was no longer the wife of a manager of Ocean Oil, but the wife of a director of an unknown geophysical service company and therefore she felt humiliated. Even the children had fallen down the social scale. They were no longer the children of an expatriate who worked for an American company, but the children of an Italian immigrant who worked for a Norwegian company in Norway. Leo had begun to devote most of his free time to try to get out of that situation. There had to be a way out and the space-time position was no longer the right one, because no foreign company would have hired him in Norway at that time of crisis. He had to look abroad.

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A consultant is like a salesman: instead of selling a product he is selling himself. To be a consultant opens the door to a new dimension: business. If his services were in high demand, there would be no limit to what a successful consultant could achieve in terms of economic success and benefits, but he would be never praised for achieving his goals and for doing a good job. The praise would invariably goes to those that had hired him to do that job for them. Usually the job assigned to a consultant was one that the men or the companies that hired him couldn't do or didn't want to do. Success for the consultant was not to be praised but to keep his assignment as long as possible, by suggesting additional work. Failure of the consultant would mean his immediate dismissal and the blame will be all his.

During his lonely nights in Oslo Leo started reading the Bible and the Koran looking for a reason for the precariousness of human life and to find analogies that would explain real life events. Was every thing in the hands of Allah and God, or man could influence the course of his life and change his future?



That was the time when “the Voice” started talking to him more and more frequently and , instead of chasing it away he started listening to it because “the Voice” occasionally gave him some good advice.

During this difficult period of his life he met some poor wretched individuals, a category of people that he had known only superficially during his carrier with Ocean: the consultants without success and without hope. One classical example was Alan Grant, a geophysical consultant of whom he had completely ignored the existence during his days of glory. Alan had been hired to interpret some seismic lines that nobody wanted to interpret because they were of very poor quality. At the end, he was supposed to prepare a map, therefore Leo had spent several days in the company of Alan and had a chance to discuss with him his life story and his confessions.

Alan had been fired at the age of 45 years from BP and the only work he was able to do was to interpret the seismic. If he could find a job, it was an intermittent employment of short duration, but since there were thousands of geophysical consultants that offered the same services, the work was little and badly paid and Alan had fallen into a deep depression from which only the bottle of whiskey saved him.

Having studied for weeks Alan Grant Leo began to understand the biblical Patriarch Abraham, whose behavior would not be easy to justify, let alone to understand if one had not experienced the kind of depression caused by that lack of opportunities and of hope. Abraham too was a consultant hired by God to do a difficult job that nobody wanted to do: invent a new religion. Abraham too was a depressed human being, a refugee, a person that was running away from his roots, a man without a home, without a territory. Alan had his own method to survive one more day. He tried to drown his problems with whiskey, drinking half a bottle every night and then fell blissfully asleep prey to the fumes of alcohol. He had a child only seven years old to raise until at least the age of 24, a housewife without work to keep forever, and a mortgage on the house to continue to pay for another twenty years. In other words, as Zorba the Greek would have said he had all that *fucking stuff* to worry about. Being now 47 years old, before he could retire he had to work another 18

years without a steady job and as a consultant. For this reason he went to bed drunk every night: the whiskey alleviated the immediate problem of falling asleep and in the morning, the hangover of the previous night helped him to interpret the seismic creatively. For this reason he was appreciated by those who hired him. So he had found a kind of balance, but was his a life worth living?

Thinking about Alan and his biblical equivalent Abraham Leo thought that there were many similarities between the two: one had thousands of miles of seismic lines

to interpret and the other had thousands of miles of desert to cross. The Arab proverb that he had just learned was saying: *The Earth has shrunk in front of us and once it used to be broad.*

The situation for Leo was not so tragic yet. For twenty years he had earned very well and owned houses and land both in Sicily and in Norway and thanks to his father and to Aunt Maria he would have been the heir of many houses and land. He had not even a penny of debt and a discrete bank account. According to the book written by Robert Ardrey, *African Genesis*, man is a territorial animal and a man without a territory is lost and vulnerable to the attacks of his enemies. So in case of need Leo could always invent something new, for example open a small seaside hotel on the model of Anilao. His territories gave him an assurance that poor Alan had not. Anyway, once reached that point, he had to start to get seriously busy. It's a long story because Leo had tried all the roads and had played all his cards, but statistics say that in the world of oil, it took on average 18 months to find a new job, and that is the time it took Leo to find work with OMV. It is not easy to find work when you are almost fifty and when your specialty is the prophecy in the oil price and your hobby is the interpretation of the Bible and the Koran in the original language. But the voice had advised him to follow the suggestion of his cousin Zorz, so after more than a year of desperate search, his watchful eye had noticed in the weekly journal World Oil an announcement of OMV, the Austrian state company, which sought a chief geologist for its operation in Libya. With the help of his American ex chief Geophysicist Steve Connary, who had also left Ocean to go to work with OMV in Austria, he had inquired about that opportunity and had discovered that it was true and that OMV was about to open an office in Tripoli and that the salary was great. Then he wrote a long letter of application

with a very elaborate CV, that the leaders of OMV fortunately had not read, and had sent it to Steve, asking him to put it on the desk of the Big Boss, with a strong recommendation. The letter began:

*Dear Director,*

*I am a free spirit and I love the deserts of the world. I have the honor to apply for the job of Chief Geologist in Libya, believing to be highly qualified because I have spent the last twenty years to study the Koran and the Arabic culture, which I admire very much ..... etc ...*

Luckily enough the Director never read that letter and took Leo with closed eyes, blindly trusting the recommendation of Steve. If he had read it, he would have thrown it in the trash laughing heartily.

Thus, unexpectedly, at the age of 50 years, Leo had found a good job, an event which happens very rarely. Again he had eye ( the announcement of World Oil), experience (understanding that be recommended by Steve was the best solution, because a good recommendation is worth more than a hundred degrees), and finally good luck (because the director had never read his job application).

### **The oil companies are run by incompetent leaders**

A proverb taken from the wisdom of the Italian drillers says: *if you have a problem do nothing to solve it, in the end all the problems are solved by themselves*. That was also the method of the engineer who directed the operations of OMV in Libya, but there was indeed a variant: *the problems solve themselves from below, not from above*.

First of all it must be said that the Austrian director was the wrong person as the administrator of an office that had the task of exploring five blocks that had already been explored previously by Total and other big companies and then were released after several dry holes. The blocks were like squashed orange with no hope of containing any more juice, but it was hoped that with the experience of Leo, some new ideas would come out.

The problem was that the director had no idea how the exploration for oil worked and thus was concerned only with logistics and the task of balancing the budget. Besides he was deeply suspicious of Leo, not because he had something special to reproach him or to the Italians in general, but because he believed, perhaps from personal experience, that all geologists were telling lies.

The team that was responsible for the five exploration blocks consisted of a chief geophysicist who had to deal with the acquisition of the seismic, a young geophysicist who had to interpret the new seismic and integrate it with the old obtained from the NOC, that is the National Oil Company, Leo as the chief geologist and two inexperienced Libyan geologists, who were unaware of everything, but that moved well in political maze of the NOC. When there was a decision to take the Director listened patiently to the proposal of Leo and took notes in a notebook. Then he stood up and said, "I'll let you know!" Without ever revealing what he thought. Two weeks later came two Austrian geologists from Vienna, and the proposal was discussed again, in the presence the Director, who took more notes. At the end of the discussion the Director sought to advice of all the geologists and took the mean average of the proposals. If the majority was yes, he would approve. If the majority was against the proposal of Leo 2 to 1, he did not approve. If instead the three proposals of the geologists were in disagreement with each other, he called another meeting at a later date, when the time was right after studying more fully the problem. That way the decisions were made democratically from below and from the majority consensus. A nice system, if you had to build a dam or a bridge, but a bad system if you had to find new oil, because only the old ideas passed and the innovations that would have fetched the large discoveries, were challenged and then discarded. In that way, after the first year they were able to shoot the new seismic on all the blocks and complete the interpretation of the old seismic obtained from NOC, without too many doubts. When the integration of the old data with the new revealed a small round structure on western edge of the Sirte Basin, where in the past was discovered the great field Intisar on a coral reef, Leo and the chief geophysicist, and all the experts from Austria had agreed that it was a small reef. So the well was approved and resulted in the discovery of a small oil field. All had been pleased when that little discovery came after less than two years, because it showed the management's efficiency and the skill of his crew. But the problems were not long in coming. In the block of Masrab there appeared a dilemma difficult to resolve: was it worth drilling a small deep structure on the low side of the fault, or the truncated series of sandstones on the raised side of the fault, which according to Leo was the stratigraphic equivalent of the sands of the large oilfield Sarir ? A potential of 10 million barrels in a small closed structure against a potential of one billion barrels in a stratigraphic trap. Choose, Leo said the Director. The Director had issued a Technical Committee in Vienna, where the experts fought in long technical discussions for two days. Eventually from below

came the decision: the proposal of Leo was too much up in the air and not supported by valid technical arguments, so they were recommending drilling the small deep structure on which everyone agreed. And so it was. The well was drilled and turned into a beautiful dry hole that had found salt instead of sand and it had cost a fortune, while the most promising side was released and returned to the Libyan company Waha, which many years later made a great discovery right there finding a large field in the Sarir sands, as Leo had suggested. But what matters is the present, not the future and unfortunately Leo was not able to push through his exploratory prospect. The problems of interpretation were so difficult that the Director needed an assistant to help him in making decisions. So the headquarters decided to send a politically valid individual, an exploration manager who had experience of chemistry and who headed the laboratory of geochemistry. The new manager therefore had no idea of what a campaign of oil exploration was all about, because he was a chemist and not a geologist or a geophysicist. So now they were two to fail to understand when Leo was submitting a proposal.

Studying the new seismic that had been processed with care Leo had discovered an acoustic impedance anomaly which occupied a large area of the block of Ghadames, at a depth of about two thousand meters. For him that surely meant that the anomaly was what in geophysical jargon is called a "bright spot", that is a shiny spot due to porous gas-rich sands who occupied a large area of the block. If that interpretation was correct, the gas field would be enormous. The anomaly was also discussed with the geologists and geophysicists of the NOC who were enthusiastic of the idea.

Those were probably the same sands of the Silurian which according to Leo were equivalent to those of the large deposit of "El Rar" field, discovered further south in the same basin, near the border with Algeria. Those sands showed a "bright spot" identical to that of the block of Ghadames.

A technical committee was organized in Vienna in which were discussed the various opinions of the geologists and geophysicists. The result was a draw, so neither the Director nor the new manager of exploration knew what to do. It was decided to take an English guru, specialized in geophysics, who decreed, after one month of study, that it was certainly an anomaly due to hard rocks and not to very porous sandstones, which created the "bright spot" caused by the contrast with the clays of the Silurian. So one had to decide between two different opinions that contradicted with each other: rocks dense and impermeable or porous gas-filled sands. NOC was in favor of the opinion of Leo, who often went to their office to shoot the breeze with some Arabic sentences and to quote verses from the Koran

to strengthen his statements. NOC and Leo on the one side, against the experienced guru on the other side.

Two against one, and so the well was drilled and bad luck would have it that the well discovered a huge deposit of limonite, an iron ore that had a high density. The core that was recovered revealed that it was an enormous reservoir of iron ore, yellowish in color and with variable density between 2.92 and 4.02 instead of porous sands of density 2.3 as supposed by Leo. Above the limonite were also found 6 meters of oil, an oil of excellent quality but that was too little to justify putting it into production. Perhaps it was those six meters of porous oil sands that created the anomaly? The fact is that the guru was right, confirming that in exploration you never know what can happen. Leo had strengthened the belief of the Director that all geologists told lies, so after almost four years the OMV his contract was not renewed and Leo was fired at the end of the fourth year. Ironically, the last few months with the OMV Leo had dedicated his time to evaluate the proposal from RomPetrol to sell its operations in the Murzuq basin to OMV. Leo had studied the data and suggested that the Director should buy those blocks because the potential was huge and the price very reasonable. RomPetrol had discovered about two billion barrels in sands of the Ordovician at shallow depth, and many more discoveries could be added by drilling many prospects that existed at the

block, located in southern Libya. Just as he was preparing the luggage to leave Libya

Leo learned that OMV had accepted his proposal and had bought 25% of the block of RomPetrol while Agip and other partners had secured the remaining 75%. The incompetent Director had made a decision worth billions of barrels of oil, demonstrating to Leo that it was not necessary to be competent to conduct a program of exploration. Leo, however, who was more than competent, was eliminated.

So goes the world if you're a lone wolf and not a member of the pack.

And the family during all that time, what had happened to it? Eva had been in Norway to raise their children and run the house, but she made frequent trips to Libya paid by OMV, in addition Leo had six weeks of holiday per year, therefore he acted as the classic Norwegian sailor. He spent just a short time with his wife and family, but earned well to meet their commitments. In the period spent with OMV, with the money earned in Libya he had managed to buy a beautiful house on the Oslo fjord, with a beautiful view and a private beach. A real gem that he had purchased at a very reasonable price and where his family had gone

to live when they finally had moved from Stavanger to the part of the country where Eva was born.

## **Waha**

The job of chief geologist was given to a friend of the Exploration Manager, and OMV focused to work on the discoveries made by the Romanians because with their own efforts they were not able to find any new oil field.

But Leo had a lot of friends among the Libyans and therefore was easily integrated into a new pack. The good reputation that Leo had built with NAO, due to his interpretation of the sands of Masrab and of the "bright spot" in the block of Ghadames, had not been slow to bear fruit. It doesn't matter if the theories are right or wrong, the important thing is that they are innovative and stylish. In Libya everyone recognized that his imagination was exceptional and his knowledge of classical Arabic was very much appreciated, so they proposed to enroll him as a senior geologist at Waha, which was the largest of the U.S. companies nationalized and confiscated by the Libyans in the early years of the reign of Gaddafi. The salary was 15% lower than at OMV, but it was just enough right to continue leading a decent life.

From Manager, when he worked with Ocean, he became chief geologist for OMV and was now employed as Senior Geologist with Waha. It did not escape Leo the notion that he was going rapidly down the drain, but to go down the drain had its advantages, once you reached bottom. Leo had analyzed the past to draw useful lessons to predict prophetically what had happened and here is his reasoning.

*"The downward spiral of his career was clear and there were logical reasons and a geometric explanation easy to figure out to understand his downfall. Take a pyramid, indeed, the "Tetractys" of the Pythagoreans. At the top is the number one, in the second row there are two numbers, 2 and 3, in the third row there are three numbers, 4, 5 and 6, while 7, 8, 9 and 10 are four numbers that are at the base of the pyramid. So for a manager there were two chief geologists, three senior geologists and four well site geologists. He understood perfectly the*

*problem of the Peter Principle, when at the age of 48 he had already reached the top of his competence, but it was clear that his hopes of finding a job increased gradually coming down in the hierarchy. There were more jobs in the lower steps and therefore it was much easier to find a menial job than an important one. But this was not all. The job which was more humble, required less technology and therefore was suitable for older people that were left behind technologically. "*

Leo soon discovered that in addition to the security due to a bottom position in the pyramid, there were other significant advantages for working with Waha. First of all there was no pressure to move up the ladder of his career: the high positions were occupied by the Libyans, who shut up the access to the higher steps of the ladder. One lived in a flat universe within which one continued to move sideways until he decided to move out. The opportunity to make a career were zero but also the opportunity to be fired were very scarce: the leaders would have to write a letter, explaining why you were fired, since it was they who had hired you.

Would they have the strength to admit that they had made a mistake? That had to be ruled out because it was tantamount to admit to being incompetent. But what is worse, they would have to find a replacement for you and all that involved work and effort. Therefore they would prefer to ignore you and forget that you existed. You would begin to be covered with dust and cobwebs while you were sitting in your corner until you were dead stiff or you decided to retire. On the other hand you had a lot of time to think, to philosophize, to develop your own theory of the Universe. As Leo foresaw the past but not the future, in that period of his life he did not know that this abundance of time to think would form the foundation of the book, the Talmud of Scicli, written by him together with his Jewish friend Jacob, fifteen years later.

Another advantage was that the competition between colleagues was non-existent and non-existent also was the attempt of the subordinated of Leo to undermine his stability in the company to take over his work (which happened regularly in the normal oil companies). All expatriate employees were at the same level and had no subordinates, so they could not be stabbed in the back as regularly occurred in the Western world. In fact, by definition, the Libyans could only be *leaders* and could not be subjected to the humiliation of being subjected to foreigners: it was a fixed rule of Gaddafi, to give dignity to his people.



The leaders, by force of circumstances, were ignorant and incompetent, but this was a good thing because all decisions were suggested from the bottom and by the expatriates. From the point of view of stress, life was very pleasant. There was no stress. This situation led to a good philosophical introspection and fostered scientific reasoning.

His life in the office of Waha and his adventures around Tripoli with his Turkish colleagues Racib and Yasher have already been told in great detail in the book, the Talmud Scicli, so here I will only describe a few episodes of the private life of Leo in Tripoli to shed light on the causes of his future prophetic inspiration.

### **Under the acacia tree**

Working for Waha Leo continued to live in the same village "Regatta" but in a different apartment from the one where he had lived during the past four years with OMV. It was a nice little apartment in a low white building which was divided into two apartments and so it was a duplex with a garden, where survived a single large acacia tree. In front of the apartment there was a large terrace paved with white bricks where Leo sat down to read when he came back from work. Leo could devote his free time to continue the study of Arabic that he had started a long time ago with the help of his friend Jacob and took lessons of Koran with the help and supervision of Imam Fathallah, who taught Arabic to the expatriates of OMV. But on weekends he often went to the beach to relax and swim in the beautiful waters of the transparent sea around Tripoli.

One day there was a major event that changed his way of life in his spare time. Helge, a Norwegian colleague from the old days of Stavanger, had been transferred by Agip to Libya to be trained as international manager. In the past he was the financial manager of the Ocean operation in Stavanger. Leo knew him well and admired him for his unconventional presentations that he made to the company leaders. The data showed by Helge left no doubt that the financial policy of Ocean was wrong. Helge was not afraid to tell the truth and often collided with the big American boss, to the point that he eventually had decided to resign from Ocean to start working with Agip. After a few years with Agip, his boss had identified him as a possible future leader of Agip in Norway, but he had decided that Helge needed exposure to experience in some international operations

before being promoted to the important position. Libya, in the opinion of the great leaders of Agip, would have strengthened him and would have taught him the skills of the great leaders in an environment challenging on all fronts. To his surprise, Leo found out by chance that Helge lived in the village "Regatta" a few meters away from him. As it was to be expected Helge and Leo began to get together and to share their free time, spending long hours together when they were free from work commitments.

In Libya, it was easy to live with very little: first of all the black market of U.S. dollars made everything cheap, because at the official market a dollar was worth 30 cents of a dinar, while at the black market it was worth 3 dinar, i.e. ten times more. The goldsmiths and some special shops changed the U.S. dollars at black market rates with the blessing of the leaders of the regime, so in practice the true value of the dollar was the official black market rate.

The bread cost almost nothing and Leo and Helge bought their salad once a week, on Friday or Saturday at the "souk thalatha", the largest vegetable market in the center of Tripoli, spending a maximum of 10 dinar. One could have dinner with only 5-6 dinar from the "Lebanese" restaurant, close to the Grand Hotel, so they learned to be happy with less. It must be said that Gaddafi had done a great thing: he had restored dignity to his people by creating an economy based on government subsidies and on the black market. The people seemed to be happy even though it was deprived of political freedom and well-being seemed to be real. Expatriates were happy to go around Libya to enjoy the natural beauty and archaeological monuments, of which the country was rich, living a quiet life and spending very little and without major concerns.

Leo and Helge sat on the terrace to philosophize, waiting to go to the beach without worrying about having to really go. They felt good to sit on the terrace and sometimes they spent the whole day waiting to go to the beach and at the end they skipped going there and they instead waited until evening to go to the "Lebanese" to dine with a clear conscience. If they could find the enthusiasm to go to beach, they were never disappointed by that decision because the beaches of Tripoli were really beautiful, the sea was clean and had some fantastic colors. If

instead they remained in the village, they sat in the balcony of Leo, to read books or to discuss about this and that. Both were on "bachelor status," that means that they lived as bachelors because they had left their wives in Norway to deal with their teenage children. Sometimes for short periods of two weeks at a time, their wives came on holiday in Tripoli and on those occasions Eva and Berit, the wife of Helge, kept each other good company and went around together to explore the exotic markets of Tripoli. In Libya, unlike other Arab countries, women were free to go where they wanted without being harassed. Their husbands during the weekends had plenty of time to discuss any topic of interest with each other. They called that activity "*analyze the problem*," even though the majority of the subjects of discussion were down to earth, nothing really deep and the problem was non-existent.

The day when Helge cut the tip of his index finger with the shears while pruning the acacia of the garden of Leo, the conversation took a more serious tone. This happened naturally before Helge cut himself. Perhaps he had been so deeply affected by the philosophy of Leo, that he was distracted while pruning. That's what Leo had said:

"When I was a boy, maybe I was sixteen, I spent a year in the Veneto region in a boarding school run by the Jesuits. In the spring, the priests had brought us for a week to a monastery to the Euganei Hills to indoctrinate us the pillars of the Catholic faith. We were surrounded by beautiful nature, the days were sunny and the temperature was mild. The peace and tranquility of the place led to introspection and deep philosophical thoughts. I remember we were sitting in a church and a Dominican monk was giving us a demonstration of God's existence, and the demonstration was so logical that it was difficult to refute. He told us of a small spider coming down from heaven with a spider web. Once he landed on Earth, he cut the web and started to go around. Immediately he forgot where he came from and began to act like all of us: he forgot that he had come from the sky. If something exists it must be created by someone, ergo we are created by God and we are all hanging by a thin thread that connects us to our creator. Why do we cut that thread? "

After telling the story Leo paused to study the reaction of Helge, who listened to him with a smile. "Helge, I think there was some truth in what the Dominican said.

Going back in time, generation after generation, we arrive at a point at the beginning of the Universe. The tip of a cone of probability whose apex is likely to be the substance of God. Ergo we are infinitesimal portions of His infinite substance. If in the beginning there was a black hole that had exploded, our soul must consist of material from that black hole, that is the substance of God." Helge said, " Okay, what you say seems logical, but why do you invoke the need for a God? Isn't it enough to think of a substance, a primordial substance, without any divine intervention? "

"If a kilo and a half of brain allows us to think, even the immense space that existed before the universe, if it were made of a substance different from nothing, may be able to think. In this case we could call it God, if He exists indeed! " Leo said, trying to defend his thesis. At this point is when Helge asked for a pair of scissors and began to trim the acacia deep in thought. And in that moment is when he cut his finger. Helge was losing a lot of blood and due to the emergency Leo had to take him to their friend, Dr. Morgenroth that also lived in the village Regatta, a few hundred yards away.

"The flesh will not grow back, but at least you have not lost even a small piece of bone. I'll stitch your flesh together and in a couple of days your finger will be back being as beautiful as before, only slightly shorter." Was the verdict of Dr. Morgenroth and Helge seemed to be happy with that diagnosis. From that day forward Leo called Helge "chief pruner of the village Regatta".

That kind of conversations, deep or superficial that they might be, were like a medicine for their spirit. They could reduce the stress of their solitary existence in a foreign country and away from home.

Time passed and finally Helge at the end of his two-year contract had returned home, without aspiring to become a great leader, because he really was not interested in making a career. Leo instead continued for a few months to live in Libya, until came the "miracle" of the phone call from Bill that proposed him to take his place in Equatorial Guinea and to become General Manager of the UMC operation with a fabulous salary. Looking at that event which was a spontaneous act of the law of probability, Leo came to the following conclusion: *" It was a settling of accounts between his "karma" and the potential energy of the field of probability, because it was an unexpected event, not wished for and entirely due to*

*chance. At the time of Ocean, Leo had fought valiantly to save Bill, and therefore he built a good karma, that now was returned to him. Analyzing the past, that was the prophecy that Leo made to explain his windfall. God had nothing to do with it, everything was due only to the law of conservation of energy, a matter of balance between potential energy due to a good deed and kinetic energy due to his promotion to General Manager. So, even if that good job lasted only two years, because after two years he had been fired, by a lucky chain of events that had begun in Equatorial Guinea, in front of him opened the road that brought him finally back to Sicily, after so many years of wandering around the world.”* A month after his return to Sicily Eva and Leo celebrated his 60 years birthday in the best restaurant in Pozzallo. They had a beautiful house on the fjord in Norway and a nice beach house in Sicily. The children had grown up and they didn't have any more commitments. After ten years of turbulence finally peace had returned.

## **The company “Iblea Gas “**

*"And the stars will continue to break down and fall into the bowels of the cosmos until of all the sounds will remain only the silence, the son of catastrophe. "*

This is what their friend Saro Iacono a few days before his death had read aloud to Leo and Frank Spadaro from the introduction of his Book: *The fault is of the Lambs* (novel that had never been published). They had visited him at his home, one of the many modest houses that leaned to the rock at the bottom of the steps of the Sacro Cuore neighborhood, because there was a rumor that Saro was very sick. In those days, if someone had said that Saro Iacono was a saint, both Leo as well as Frank Spadaro would have believed him. This was because Saro was really a special kind of person, indeed. "He was a voice crying out in the wilderness" had commented Frank Spadaro when they went to his funeral, just before Leo left for

Morocco. Saro had died at the age of 26 and when Leo had asked Frank what had happened to his book, Frank as usual, replied: "You never know!"

That quotation showed that after the great disasters usually follows silence and peace and Leo remembered it when eventually the project of the gas had failed. Finally came the peace.

The failure of the "Iblea Gas" was in the air and had been predicted by many people including even his barber who had said: " Engineer, the project will turn out to shit! "

His favorite barber, Pippo, was the typical classical barber: he "whispered" without mentioning names and spoke in parables more than in some kind of talk easier to understand. The facts that he whispered were known to all his customers, therefore one could recall them without mentioning names and without clearly revealing the facts. All his customers waiting to cut their hair or to shave understood and nodded, with mouths twisted with indignation.

From the barber Leo had learned some stories about the politicians of the region that raised the little hair he had left on his head while the barber cut them for him. The barber did not mention names, ever, in order to avoid compromising himself and never revealed his personal opinion to avoid to be accused, but he always spoke from hearsay: "It is said that psss ...which was psss ..... twice and psss ..... once ran away with the cash of the psss ...

(And here he spoke so softly that it was impossible to understand).

And he whispered a name, explaining that apparently he needed the money to go womanizing, a goal more than legitimate to swindle the money from the people. Money better spent is that spent on women. Be careful of that one, because he is always in search of *pussy and he needs all sort of cash.* "

On another occasions Pippo said: "They all agree with each other," and quoted softly in Leo's ear the names, without being truly understood

".... I don't really know, but it is said that if you do anything here in the area, you have to pay them a share, *feed them a slice of the pie. Here I say this and here I deny it* but they say that a truck driver had been forced to bill a double price for each load of gravel to the town of psss ... and then he received only half of the money in his pocket. If this is not corruption, what is it? "The barber spoke in parables, but if it was possible to interpret his parables, there was good reasons to worry seriously.

The events had developed as follows. Before returning from Equatorial Guinea after he had been dismissed with a nice severance package, Leo had gone to visit his U.S. chief Jim. He too had been fired by the new leaders that had bought the

operation with a “hostile takeover” of the shares of the UMC in the Wall Street market.

Even Jim was swimming in gold having received a good severance package that would allow him to start doing business on his own. After discussing several ideas for exploration projects around the world, the proposal of Leo was to do something together in Sicily, since he was returning home and there was an interesting project that he wanted to discuss with him. "Enough working for someone else, it's time to risk flying with our own wings!" said Jim, explaining to Leo that to start his own business was now his main goal. Leo then explained the details of the project that he had in mind.

According to Leo there was a wide open area on the Iblei Mountains, north of the Ragusa oilfield, where it was possible to find gas. He had discussed his ideas with his close friend Frank Parrino who was chief geologist with Agip in the old days when hundred of exploration wells were drilled in the area that went from Gela to Monte Lauro. Frank confirmed that there was the potential to find gas in the area structurally up dip from the rich deposits of Gela and Ragusa, because all wells drilled there had shown varying quantities of gas in the tests that had been made. Jim had understood the project immediately and was excited to the point that he expressed his willingness to fund the research project, now that he was fired and had no other major projects going on. So they started to get going and their activity after four years of hard work had resulted in the award of an exploration license that covered an area of 750 square kilometers in the Iblei Mountains. The license was granted for an initial period of six years from 31 July 2004. To start with Jim had financed the activities, but then, when they had to drill the first exploration wells, he had found some French investors, which in exchange for shares in the joint Venture had paid all the expenses. Leo had become the manager of exploration and Jim was the Chairman of the operation at the head of the Joint Venture. All proceeded at full speed. It is known that the beginnings of each operation are hard, however the office of Iblea Gas administered by Jim had managed to drill some preliminary exploratory wells, all resulted dry, before finding the right place to drill at the Gallo location in the district of Contrada Maltempo on the hills North of Ragusa. Leo, in front of a group of representatives of the French investors, who had come from France at the presentation of the project, had solemnly declared to reassure them: "Finally we understand that to be successful we have to drill a structurally closed structure, an ancient structure, where the gas has been able to accumulate. This is the structure of South Gallo that today we propose to drill and if this well will be found to be dry, I authorize you to execute me in front of a firing squad."

All investors laughed and declared themselves ready to finance also the new project, and acquiring the absolute majority in the Joint Venture. Unfortunately, the devil put his horns into the deal at the last minute, just when the rig was about to get to the Gallo South # 1 location to start drilling.

It is a long and complicated story, but in short, suffice it to say that despite all permits were obtained and there were no more obstacles to start drilling, a new big problem had occurred as a bolt from the blue sky: the attack by the environmentalists against the Iblea Gas. The real problem were not the local authorities or the rulers of Sicily, but a group of environmentalists who had been unleashed to stop not only the Iblea Gas operation, but also all the oil exploration and research activities of Sicily. While in the past the cause of all evil was the price of oil and gas, now a new dark threat was on the horizon. The environmentalists had enlisted geologists specialized in hydrology of the subsoil, to present a petition to the Prefect, i.e. the head of the Province, calling for the immediate stop of the drilling operations of the South Gallo # 1 because the well would have polluted the groundwater in the valley below. In the months that followed there had been discussions and court cases at the TAR courts and at the CGA high courts that Iblea Gas, after so much effort, had managed eventually to win, but there was nothing to do. At a meeting in a theater of Noto, where Leo had spoken to the representatives of the environmental groups, he had pronounced these famous words: "I'm sure many of you have come here to this theater on board of a camel, to avoid using gasoline. Gandhi, would have done that to demonstrate consistency between his preaching and his actions. Unfortunately I have seen many Land Rovers and many large four wheel drive parked out here and very few camels! "

The arm of the Sicilian Ministry of the Environment issued a decree declaring the entire area of operations "green area" where it was impossible to operate. But who was the puppeteer behind that theater of puppets? No one knew. So goes the world and at the end of 2008, after almost five years of strong commitment, the French fired first Leo and then Jim and put in stand-by the operation waiting to see clearly what to do.

## **The visit of Jacob to Sicily**

From 2009, when Leo, by force of circumstances, had begun to have much free time, Leo and Jacob had spent nearly three years writing their essay which was published in English under the title: *the Prophet of the Libyan desert* and then was



simplified and translated into Italian by Leo and published under the title: *The Talmud of Scicli*.

Immediately after Easter, in April of 2012, Jacob then returned to Sicily alone to escape from the bad weather of London and perhaps even from his wife and to spend a week in the sun of Sicily with his old friend Leo. To his wife he told that he had to study the final draft of the Italian version the book before approving it to be printed. As usual they were sitting under the old olive tree behind the farm of Leo. Drinking red wine the two friends were telling each other the latest episodes of their lives and Leo had just finished telling what had happened with the project of the Gas in Sicily: "Counting the catastrophe of the gas, I got fired at least four times in my career as a geologist and now I can finally quote the saying of the unsuccessful oilmen: *now that I have lost all hope, I feel much better*.

Jacob laughed heartily and said. "Forget the gas, we must continue our effort: you know a lot when it comes to dogs, because among other things you had some dogs here at the farm and you have seen many documentaries and studied their behavior, but you don't know the dog that is within me.

I am determined to go ahead with the interpretation of the Talmud of Scicli, because a Talmud is never finished and after writing the Talmud we must continue to interpret what we have written. "

Since their book was about the God of the probability  $\Psi$ , Jacob suggested that they should now begin the Talmud of the Talmud explaining better the concept of probability that in the book was left much too vague. Jacob recommended that, if possible, mathematics and physics had to be avoided to explain the concept of probability, so to attract an audience larger of the few Nobel Prize winners that had read and appreciated the Talmud of Scicli. Leo replied with enthusiasm that he had just the right example to illustrate that *chance* was the fundamental characteristic of space-time, when it woke up and from probabilistic ( i.e. potential ) it became kinetic. Leo, without disclosing his thought to Jacob, remembered that his father, before his death at the ripe old age of 99 years had told him: "Pretend, but with honesty. That's what I learned from my Jewish leaders when I was in Morocco."

What did the old man mean? Pretending meant to lie: how could one lie with honesty? But when it is necessary, it must be done, Daddy was right !

To explain the tortuous game of chance to Jacob, once and for all, it was time to pretend. So Leo said to Jacob to relax and drink another glass of wine because he would tell him a long story that had its roots in the world of oil and illustrated the coincidence connected with the probability. And after having poured more wine Leo began to tell him a story.

## The story of David Ellis

“I am relating to you a story that was told to me by Gisela, the German secretary of OMV when I was living in Tripoli. If I remember correctly it was in June of 1997, a few weeks before I left from Libya to go to Equatorial Guinea, when I was invited by Gisela to her apartment with some friends. Like all of us Gisela too lived in the Regatta Village. Charlie the geophysicist was invited although he had stopped working for OMV and Harry the accountant, that was working with Waha like me, was there too, hanging out as a permanent fixture in Gisela’s apartment. The ex-girl friend of the main character of the story, Sarah, was there too and she was nodding to confirm the account, since she was obviously a witness of what had happened.

Gisela had prepared some spaghetti with a sauce of her own invention that contained a lethal mixture of harissa paste and tomatoes’ sauce. For those that don’t know it, harissa is a red peppers paste quite well known in Tripoli, because it was produced locally from diabolically hot red peppers that appear to have aphrodisiac effects if consumed in industrial amounts. Gisela told us laughing that her sauce would turn even her useless boy friend Harry into a reasonable lover. Thinking about their relation it was difficult to guess what attracted Harry to Gisela. Between us we were calling her Grizzly, because compared to other women she was ugly, but not compared to a Grizzly bear. On the other hand her girl friend Sarah was not particularly good looking, but she was at least sexy: men like us didn’t have to study her face since she managed to polarize our attention on her nice décolleté as she was wearing a very low cut blouse. Charlie had managed to find three bottles of red wine smuggled from Tunisia by one of his British field helpers and as far as I was concerned, the promise of drinking a few glasses of wine among friends instead of staying home to watch television tilted the balance in favor of the party. I was probably invited only because I was famous for my strange philosophical ideas and my knowledge of Arabic proverbs and stories learned in the desert. Most of the proverbs, however, were adapted from Sicilian proverbs and the stories were actually invented by me to show off my

knowledge of classical Arabic. I was invited perhaps because

I told funny lies or I quoted false Arab proverbs translated from Sicilian in order to make them laugh. Like for example: *better a live dog than a dead master*, which of course made no sense. Even Charlie told strange tales that had occurred in the desert, so the two of us had to be the clowns that were supposed to liven up the evening.

As for Harry, besides being a useless lover, he was also a bad member of a party, because he never listened and spoke exclusively of economy when it was his turn to speak.

The aura permeating the party would have been one of despair and sorrow, thinking about the prospect of eating Gisela's spaghetti, had that not been for the hope of drinking wine to swallow them. It turned out however that during dinner we were told a very interesting story.

Sarah had told the story to Gisela and Gisela told the story to us because she was good at telling stories. Jacob, I will tell you my version of the story which is 15 years old and which by now has passed through at least three interpreters. What happened is characteristic of the atmosphere that was permeating the world of the oil business when the price of oil had reached its historical minimum value."

Leo started telling the story while Jacob was listening with interest.

"Dave Ellis was an ordinary computer nerd that in the 80s was working for a Canadian oil company as a computer programmer in Calgary, Alberta. The sky was the limit for the computer programmers those days of oil boom and Dave was earning a good salary. In his early thirties Dave was still a bachelor: why get married when you have all the girl friends that you need and you are as free as a woodpecker in the forest of Calgary, with its lively social life? When the oil price dropped to 9 dollars a barrel from its peak of 32 dollars, the company looked around for people to fire and discovered that they could survive without Dave, basically because Dave had always kept a low profile in the office, had minded his own business and avoided socializing with his supervisors. His policy was to avoid being a "prima donna", yet with his hard work he could demonstrate that he was a useful member of the computer team, although almost nobody knew precisely what he was doing. Oil companies were so rich and powerful those days that people keeping a low profile could spend years hiding within the system without

being noticed. In reality Dave was working on a very interesting project: accounting security.

Dave was fired in the fall of 1987 and was given 4 hours to clean his desk and leave the office, for fear that he would get hold of the Company's secrets and sell them to the competitors. Being young he quickly recovered from the shock and started looking for another job through a head hunter. He found out that there were no jobs in the Calgary district, because the low oil price had depressed the job market, but there were opportunities for computer specialists in Libya. After a few days of hesitation, because Dave felt that a good computer programmer should be in high demand, seeing that no jobs were available, he gave his CV to the head hunter and only one month later he arrived in Ras Lanuf, Libya, in the refinery located in the middle of the Sirte Gulf. The idea of an adventure in North Africa appealed to him: "I can always come back to Calgary if I am tired of Libya!" he thought. What he saw when he arrived in Ras Lanuf was worse than he had imagined before getting there: it was a refinery in the middle of the desert, with a small village of white prefabricated houses for the employees and a sterile square building, the main office of the operation. A similar square building was the Hotel of the camp, used by visitors and clients of the refinery on business trip or by employees before they could find accommodation in the apartments of the village. The hotel had a cafeteria-restaurant on the lower floor, where employees occasionally would go to drink coffee or eat a frugal meal. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire and looked like a luxury concentration camp. The Libyan village of Ras Lanuf consisted of about a dozen drab buildings lined up along the road Tripoli-Benghazi, a police station and one small grocery and vegetable shop. There was a squalid bar-restaurant, where tired truck drivers and Bedouins were hanging around drinking coffee.

The camp was a few hundred meters North of the village and a monumental gate with tall pillars marked its entrance. There was only one positive aspect about the camp: it was located on the shore of the Mediterranean sea, and the beaches surrounding it were white, sandy and clean. Due to the strong desert winds large white sand dunes had developed along the shore, like if the desert had tried to conquer the Mediterranean. The sea water had beautiful light blue reflexes, was

transparent and clean. Several pipelines were extending into deep water and linking the refinery, through single buoy moorings, with the ships that were coming to load the refined products to bring them to Italy, France or wherever the products were needed. Dave immediately appreciated the beauty of the sea as a positive element in his dull new environment: "I'll go swimming, skin diving and fishing, during the week-ends and when I am off work." he thought. "The pay is good enough, and with one month vacation a year and two tickets paid all the way to Calgary I'll keep in touch with the job market back home."

The apartment assigned to Dave was quite well equipped: it was large enough to have a kitchen, a dining-living room, two bedrooms and a large bathroom, that contained a modern washer and drier. The kitchen had an electric oven, a large refrigerator and gas cooker and stove. There was a large TV set in the living room linked with a huge parabolic antenna that was serving all the units of the camp with hundreds of channels. The apartment was located inside a low white bungalow that contained two duplex semidetached units sharing a reasonably large plot of land among them. Sitting on a lounge chair in front of the apartment Dave could enjoy a limited view of the sea a few hundred meters away.

"I don't know how long I'll be living here before I find a good job in Canada, but at least I have a TV and some house appliances to help me survive." Thought Dave as he sat in front of the TV and started zapping the next-to-infinite choice of channels.

At the office the situation was even better than in his apartment. The chief accountant to which he reported was a polite middle aged Libyan of very few words who hardly spoke any English at all. Best of all he didn't have a clue of how computers worked and why somebody had hired Dave. Dave immediately realized that it was an ideal condition to be left alone, like he preferred to work.

He had an individual office for himself with two brand new computers, a real luxury in Libya. The first thought that Dave had when he sat behind his desk was to take a clean A4 sheet and with a pencil he started scribbling what in his mind became known as "The List" .

Number 1 on the list he wrote Sea, number 2 became Garden, number 3 : Kitchen, number 4 : Italian, number 5: Malta, number 6: Accounting, number 7 became .... Dave knew exactly what he wanted to do, but on purpose he left the number 7 on his list unknown, so if the list was discovered he would be safe.

“Even God rested the seventh day. I will assign six years of my life to this place but on the seventh year I will get the hell out of here.” Thought Dave and immediately started working towards fulfilling his plan.

Sarah was an Irish secretary, red headed and, although not very pretty, she had a certain sex-appeal and a good figure. She was thin with beautiful legs and with big breasts: she was therefore rather attractive to most men and always happy and smiling. She used to work as a secretary but at the age of 38 she was laid off by an oil company, because they had closed their office in Ireland in 1987. She was not married although she had had several lovers, but nobody had taken the step of going further than a casual love affair with her. At the age of 38 a woman is past her prime age, but technically speaking she is at the apex of her career, both professional and sentimental. “Now I need a radical change”, thought Sarah, and went to a clever head hunter in Dublin, to find out what was available.

There were jobs for English speaking secretaries in Saudi Arabia and in Libya. Libya sounded a bit better for several reasons: it was closer to Ireland, the climate was warm, but still reasonably mild most of the year and the work was: personal secretary to the head of a Refinery. The location was Ras Lanuf. She would be provided with her own apartment in the village, one month a year paid leave and two paid trips a year to go home to Dublin, economy class. The salary would be even better than the salary she was making with the old company. After some day dreaming about finding in Ras Lanuf the real love of her life, she gave her CV to the head hunter and took the job.

Dave was lucky because he preceded Sarah by a couple of months in Libya, therefore he could quickly act to get hold of her as soon as she arrived because a good morsel like Sarah would soon disappear and would be taken by somebody else. The day after her arrival they met at the cafeteria of the refinery when they

went there for a cup of coffee, they smiled at each other and it was love at first sight.

They knew that they had to be careful because the policy of the Refinery did not allow the secretaries to have love affairs within the premises of the camp and they were not allowed to share their apartment with men. It was Islamic law applied to the expatriate community and it was very strict. Dave and Sarah were quickly informed of the situation by their colleagues, so they had to become organized from the first day. Avoid being seen together and sneak into each other apartment only at night without being seen. The week-ends in the Arab lands consist of two days: Friday and Saturday. On Thursday night Dave would sneak unseen into Sarah's apartment and hide himself there for most of the week-end making sure that he was not noticed by anybody. On Saturday night he would return to his own apartment while everybody was asleep. It was a perfect setup. Occasionally they would spend only part of the night together and return to their respective apartments to be seen during the day hanging around their respective gardens, to avoid suspicion. This situation lasted for 9 years, until the late summer of 1996, when Dave suddenly disappeared.

Dave did not hide "The List" from Sarah, actually he discussed freely with her all his projects:

- Sea
- Garden
- Kitchen
- Italian
- Malta
- Accounting
- .....

During the long hours spent together he discussed his plan to become a scuba diver and a clever fisherman, in order to take advantage of the beautiful sea in front of them. A few days after arriving in Libya, from an expatriate leaving the refinery, he had bought a small Fiat Panda for a very convenient price. Now he could move around during the week-ends and visit the country and the

surroundings of Ras Lanuf. Driving around he discovered that there were a few families of Tunisian fishermen living in a village only a couple of Km West of Ras Lanuf. They were tolerated by the police because they sold their fish to the Hotel and brought fish, most of the time free of charge, to the police station. They sold their fish every day in Benghazi because the Libyans were Bedouins but not seamen. Fishing was done along the coast of Libya most of the time by Tunisians that were given fishing licenses that allowed them to fish everywhere in Libyan waters. Dave used to go there in the afternoon after work to buy fish and to have a chat in French with the Tunisians, since being a Canadian he had learned in school French as his second language. One week-end he drove his Fiat to Benghazi where he got organized with spear gun, skin diving equipment, such as mask, fins and wetsuit and most evenings of good weather, summer or winter, he would go out to fish after work and occasionally he would come home with a grouper, some octopus or an occasional delicious bream. He would buy shrimps from the Tunisians and cook a delicious couscous for Sarah, because he explained to her that cooking was his secret ambition, number three on the list of things to do.

Dave also quickly got organized with his Garden, a plot of land around his side of the duplex of about 200 square meters. Libya was a big country with a lot of territory and only about 5 million inhabitants, so they had been very generous when planning the plots of the village. To carry out his project number two, Dave started working the land with a hoe that he had bought in Benghazi. He divided the land into small regular squares. He planted rucola, basilicum, garlic and spring onions, salad and sage. Each sort of vegetable had its personal separate square of land separated by irrigation grooves. At the back of the cottage, facing South he planted three rows of tomato vines that would tolerate the strong Libyan sun. Three times a week he would water his plants and occasionally add some fertilizer. Being treated with tender loving care his plants thrived and the results were soon evident. He managed to turn an arid plot of land into a marvelous garden.

Sarah became the recipient of abundant vegetables from Dave's garden: not that vegetables were a rarity in Libya, since there were plenty of good fresh vegetables in the small market of Ras Lanuf, but these were special. Dave to



occupy his week-ends while hiding inside the apartment of Sarah, would get busy to prepare delicious salads using his garden produces or cooking the fish that he had caught.

In the spare time of his busy schedule, especially in the evenings of working week days Dave had started item number four of his list: to learn Italian. Why Italian, was asking Sarah, why not Spanish or German: Dave was replying that he was particularly attracted by the Italian cuisine, art and culture. More than of a culture we can talk about the Italian “civilization”. When he eventually retired from work he would visit extensively Italy, from North to South and maybe buy a little house there.

In his apartment Dave would switch on the TV and sit for hours listening to Italian news or entertainment programs and his knowledge of French helped quite a bit to understand what was said. In Benghazi he got an Italian grammar for English speaking and he would spend at least one hour a day studying it.

Item five on the list was a bit more complex to achieve. He could only visit Malta on his way to Canada, twice a year. Before January 1992, when the sanctions were imposed on Libya and air travel had become restricted, Dave used to take the plane Benghazi-Malta on his way to Canada and spend a few days in the island.

He explained to Sarah that the reason for his interest in that island nation was due to the possibility of establishing an accounting/computer business there to provide his services to future clients in Libya and the Middle East from there. Why live always segregated into a camp in the middle of nowhere when he could make a good living working as a consultant from Malta. Malta offered all sorts of advantages to a nerd specializing in accounting security. It was an English speaking platform in the middle of the Mediterranean, with good air and sea connections to all the capitals of Europe and the USA and Canada. The small island nation had also its charm and its interesting history.

After 1992 the refinery had organized a taxi service to take their employees to the harbor of Tripoli to take the Malta catamaran and reach Malta by sea, or to go to Djerba, in Tunisia, from where one could fly to most destinations in Europe. Dave

explained to Sarah that he considered the trip to Djerba the best solution because Djerba was a tourist town, used to tourists and there it was almost like being already in Europe. You avoided the long queues and the Libyan police searching your suitcases and treating you like a terrorist, when in reality the terrorists were them. In Djerba if you were a European or a Canadian they would not even open your suitcase: just check it in at the departure counter, like in any civilized part of the world. On top of that on the short flight to Malta from Djerba, Malta Air would serve you drinks and red wine, a real luxury for the tired traveler coming all the way from Ras Lanuf.

Item six was easy to explain to Sarah: Dave was a computer nerd specialized in Accounting, but not an accountant. In view of starting his own consulting activity he had to become very proficient in accounting and its computer applications. Unfortunately the Internet and Microsoft were so advanced now that they had made the profession of computer programmer redundant. There existed dozens of good accounting programs that one could download from the internet to help do one's job. But there was another face of the coin: it was becoming easier for hackers and computer nerds to break into the security systems of banks and companies to do some illegal operations using the Internet. This is why Dave thought that his future consulting activity based in Malta would succeed.

How about number seven on the list? " I will tell you when the time comes, it will be a surprise." Said Dave to Sarah and she stopped asking.

It's unbelievable, but Sarah and Dave continued happily their lives and love affair for nine long years in that concentration camp that was Ras Lanuf without any change and without complaining. They had each other, their routine, Dave was progressing well in his Italian studies, occasionally he would spend a night out on a Friday night with his Tunisian fishermen friends fishing in the Gulf of Sirte and coming back with fish that he would cook for Sarah. All those years they had managed to continue their love affair undetected by the Directors of the Refinery.

So unexpectedly, one Thursday night, in the beginning of September 1996 Dave disappeared, never to be seen again.

Sarah waited for him all the week-end but he did not show up. On Sunday morning he did not show up for work and the Libyans were looking for him all over the office and the camp because they discovered that they could not open the safe of the refinery, containing all sort of documents and a lot of cash. Dave had organized the combination of the safe in such a way that it would be safe from theft and only himself and the chief accountant would know the combination that would be changed daily with a complex formula linked with the day of the week. The safe remained stuck for several days, since the new combination was unknown, in fact for nearly two weeks it could not be opened until they could get hold of a technician from England that could come to Ras Lanuf to open it. In the mean time the clothes of Dave and his shoes were found on the beach neatly wrapped in a towel. The police and the Head of the refinery jumped to the logical conclusion that Dave was drowned or was killed by a shark, and the search for his body continued for several days, but nothing was found. When they eventually managed to open the safe they discovered the truth: 2 million dollars cash, the last payment of an Italian ship that had come to load gasoline at the refinery, were missing. The money consisted of banknotes of 100 dollars denomination, a real pile of money that the Regime of Libya needed to pay cash some material forbidden by the economic sanctions.

It had been calculated that a million dollars in 100 bills was a stack of the size of 20cm x 15cm x 33cm, which is great more or less like a 15" TV set and is weighing about 9 kg, therefore Dave would need at least two suitcases or a suitcase and a backpack to carry all that money.

Sarah had been destroyed and grieving during those two weeks, but managed to hide her sentiments. When she found out the truth about her lover disappearing with 2 million dollars, she was relieved but began to feel unhappy in Ras Lanuf, although nobody suspected her involvement in the theft. Sarah and Dave had been unbelievably clever to avoid being detected and they had kept such a low profile that nobody thought of linking Sarah with Dave."

If I recall correctly Gisela at this point of the story said:"Theorizing about what could have happened, Sarah developed her own version of the solution of the mystery that I would summarize for you except that Sarah is here with us and it's

better if she tells you her theory herself” Gisela looked at Sarah and she nodded her approval: “ Gisela is a much better story teller than me, and when it comes to theories it’s always better to use the interpretation of a third person to analyze the facts and the evidence. But let me tell you straight away that I immediately suspected the Tunisian fishermen to have helped Dave to arrive by sea to Djerba, with one of their largest fishing vessels. It was out of discussion that Dave would try to leave from Tripoli by catamaran or cross the Tunisian border by car because his suitcase would have been searched and the money found immediately. He staged his disappearance cleverly pretending to have drowned in the sea, and he did it on a Thursday night in order to have the whole week-end to run away. Also changing the combination of the safe with a new code gave him two weeks time to run away and disappear without being caught. From Ras Lanuf to Djerba the distance is about 800 km, and a good fishing boat can travel at an average speed of 10-15 knots therefore they could arrive there in less than 48 hours, in the evening of Saturday, if they left Ras Lanuf about 10pm on Thursday night. Dave had always mentioned that in Djerba the check-in was exactly like in Europe and one would check in a suitcase at the airline counter without much fuss. So on Sunday morning he could have boarded the first flight to Malta. I am sure that in Malta he must have organized to get a Maltese passport with a new identity: this is only a clue but I remember him saying that a lot of traffic passed through the port of Malta, that visas for Libya could be obtained easily by paying a local travel agent and all sort of business took place in Malta. I calculate that he must have gone to Malta at least 15 times in all the years that he had spent in Libya, so he has had enough time to get organized there. What he did in Malta and after getting there is anybody’s guess. He could have gone to London, or to Rome or anywhere in the world. More than that I cannot guess, sorry, but I have not seen my fiancée now for many months and naturally I have not heard any news from him all this time. Feeling sorry to continue living alone in Ras Lanuf, I took a secretary job with Agip in October 1996 and I am happy to have moved to Tripoli where I have some good friends like Gisela. Life in general here is much easier and more interesting of that rat hole that is Ras Lanuf!”

When Gisela and Sarah finished talking Charlie applauded enthusiastically and interpreted the story his own way." I am always happy when somebody manages to screw the Libyan Regime, and this certainly beats all the stories that I have heard. I agree that your fiancée could not travel from Tripoli, or even cross the boundary with Tunisia by road, but with all his money he could have hired a small private plane and go to Malta by plane. There are literally dozens of European or Canadian pilots that bring daily oil workers to the desert from Benghazi or even from Marsa Brega, next door to Ras Lanuf." Sarah shook her head:" No, Dave never mentioned to me any pilot or any connection with people working in the desert. He had become quite friendly with the Tunisian fishermen, therefore I think that a Tunisian connection could have been his way to escape from Libya."

When my turn came to talk I also agreed that getting to Djerba by sea was the only possible escape route to avoid the search of the luggage by the Libyan Police. I quoted an Arabic proverb of my invention: *the desert fox will always find the shortest way to its hiding place*, therefore I also agreed that getting to Malta by Air Malta would have been the best solution. Then, quoting another Bedouin proverb invented for the occasion: *a wolf will feel safe only among wolves* , I also added that once in Malta he could have taken the boat from Malta to Pozzallo, Sicily, to hide among the Sicilian Mafia. It would have been an easy ride, a trip that most Sicilian oil workers would do to return home from Libya. The trip would take only 2 hours in good weather conditions . I said that I had made a couple of time the trip Malta-Pozzallo by ferry, and if I recalled correctly the Italian authorities were always very relaxed, and never searched the suitcases of the oil workers. From Pozzallo he could have reached by car or by train other countries such as Luxembourg or Montecarlo and he could have opened an account without a problem but I was sure that in La Valletta he could have opened an account in several banks without any problem. God knows!

Harry the accountant could not believe that Dave could have so easily access to the safe of the refinery. Somebody must have helped him, maybe his chief. The discussion about what could have happened continued all the evening and eventually Charlie concluded:" There is certainly an Italian connection in the plan

of Dave: why would he spend years learning Italian if he did not plan to end up in Italy?"

### **The role of coincidence in the theory of probability**

Jacob had listened to the long story of Leo without interrupting and at the end she said. "You've been so good at telling it in detail that I hope this story is not autobiographical, although I do not see what you want to prove!" And Leo replied immediately: "Absolutely not. It is not at all autobiographical. I had nothing to do with it. They were people that at that time I didn't know. But here comes the interesting part: this story reveals the role the coincidence in the theory of probability. Not only the events occur as a result of chance, but sometimes there are very strange coincidences that occur when two probabilities collide to give origin to a new event. Let me finish by telling you the happy ending! "

Jacob was tired of sitting to listen and therefore proposed to postpone the conclusion of the story to that evening during dinner and asked Leo to drive him back to his hotel in Pozzallo. "I'll see you tonight, I invite you to dinner at the Lampara. I need to lie down to rest my old bones. Pick me up at 8 at the hotel. " That evening dining in a secluded and quiet corner of the Lampara Leo had begun again to tell: "A couple of years ago I noticed that had started work of restoration in a masseria next to mine on the other side of the San Bartolomeo valley.

The work of restoration continued for nearly two years, until last summer.

Certainly money was not a problem for the owners because the result finally was a luxury farm house, completed with good taste. When the work was completed, having noticed some cars parked in the yard in front of the masseria, I walked over there there to introduce myself to the owners that were my neighbors. A tall man in his sixties introduced himself: " Hugh Stivala" he said with a broad smile as we shook hands. I told him who I was, a neighbor from across the valley and pointed my finger towards my masseria that could be seen between the carobs: " I was curious about the work that you have done, and wondered if I could be of some help." I explained. We spoke Italian together and he told me that he was Maltese. He spoke quite a good Italian but with an accent that sounded British, on top of that he looked like an Englishman, rather than a full blood Maltese that looks like a Sicilian. Hugh was working in his garden with a hoe in his hand. " You are a Maltese that look more like an Englishman." I said to start a conversation and Hugh replied politely that the Maltese were a mixed people and in his case his

parents were in fact English. "I am glad you bought this land and restored the houses to their original beauty." I commented and added that now there were a number of restructured farms in the neighborhood. Farms that had preserved their charm and integrity of the old style and that added a touch of elegance to our district.

"We have so little land in Malta that we must expand to Sicily to begin to breathe." said

Stivala smiling shyly almost apologetically. "I hope you realize that through your land one day will pass the highway Catania - Gela, when they find the money to build it. But do not worry, it will take another thirty years to begin work. In Sicily there is always shortage of money. "

"Well," exclaimed Stivala, "that day I will transform the farm into a nice B & B or in a restaurant on the highway. I am an excellent cook! "

Leaving after that first meeting, I noticed that Stivala was very good at working the land and had divided the garden into small regular squares in which perhaps he had the intention to plant some vegetable.

In the next few months I had occasions to visit Stivala again, because he showed that he was reluctant to visit me. During that visit two things surprised me immediately. The first was that Stivala didn't understand me whenever I was quoting my famous Arabic proverbs, as I often did to show off my knowledge of that beautiful language. Maltese is a hybrid language containing at least 70 % of Arabic roots, and the rest are Italian and English, and any Maltese understand very well Arabic. So being curious I asked:" Do you speak Maltese?" "No, I speak only English, French and Italian and that is enough to get by in Malta where people are pretty good with languages." Replied Stivala continuing to smile politely and I continued to ask him if he had gone to school in Malta. Stivala seemed a bit slow as he was searching for words to explain:" In reality I came to Malta only as a grown up man, to establish a business there, so I did not bother to learn Maltese, an extremely difficult and ugly language that was not necessary for my business." "What business did you start, if I may ask?" " Actually it was really two businesses: I bought a large house that I transformed in Bed & Breakfast, that is managed by my partner for the English tourist market and I started a consulting computer business for the Maltese market." Replied Stivala shortly, then excused himself

because he had to make a phone call."I have to call my partner in Malta to tell her something urgently. I beg you pardon!"

As I was leaving the masseria the second thing that surprised me was his garden that had changed considerably since my first visit. It had become a garden divided into perfect squares separated by deep drainage grooves, and each square contained different types of vegetables. There was salad, rucola, basilicum and onions. Some neat rows of tomatoes hanging on bamboo reeds and already blossoming. What I saw ringed a bell in my mind, but I dismissed my suspicion: it was impossible yet I couldn't cancel completely the suspicion. The description of my neighbor fitted very well with a story that I heard before I left Libya to start working in Equatorial Guinea, the story of a computer nerd that had disappeared from Ras Lanuf stealing a bunch of dollars."

Leo stopped and studied the expression of disbelief on his face Jacob.

"Don't tell me that Hugh Stivala was Dave Ellis." Jacob asked incredulously.

"Exactly," said Leo. "I could not believe the coincidence that my neighbor was the same character in the story told by Gisela. The probability of such a coincidence had to be less than one in a billion, or nearly zero. But I received confirmation that it was just so when last year, before Christmas I went to visit Stivala him for the holiday wishes. "Come into the house to drink a glass of champagne with us!" said Stivala cheerfully. "I want to introduce you to my partner and companion Sarah, who has come to spend Christmas in Sicily! " Sarah had become fatter and older, but I immediately recognized her reddish hair that now was streaked with white and her big breasts, which were outlined under the sweater. And Sarah recognized me? I doubt it because I had only seen her once for a few hours in the apartment of Gisela and I also had aged and became fatter and in order to rebuild my image she would have to divide me by 1.2 with her imagination.

I'm not a moralist and I will not judge whether what Dave had done was right or wrong, but I think their story deserved a happy ending, finally, after all they had suffered in the ruthless world of the oil business. "

Jacob ordered a bitter "amaro Averna" to toast the end of that story and then said: "The coincidence of what happened seems to me extraordinary, but sometimes strange things happen. " and he shook his head in disbelief.



Leo, of course, had invented the whole story by putting together episodes of other stories he had heard in Libya, but the people described were real people whom he had met in Libya. He had lied to impress Jacob and to illustrate his concept that coincidence due to probability is never zero. Then, being tired of telling Jacob stories of the world of oil, which always ended in disaster, he had given the that story a happy ending. Leo, being happy that Jacob had believed the story, proposed a last toast, this time with a good grappa and called the waiter to order it. Then to conclude he said, "This strange chain of events is part of life. *C'est la vie!* If an event is possible in space-time, despite its infinitesimal likelihood to occur, it can still occur and its probability of happening is never zero. This is what makes the world go, it is the Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, it is the zero-point energy!

A quantum system must always vibrate and can never have zero energy. Something always happens even at absolute zero! I think this is also the mechanism that controls gene mutations and the evolution discovered by Darwin!"

Jacob gave a pat on the back to Leo and smiled indulgently: he was not stupid and he knew that Leo often told lies to demonstrate his scientific theories.

## **The tribal system**

It all began the day after with a bet between Jacob and Leo.

In the Talmud of Scicli Jacob had told Leo: " *How about you, Leo, starting another mystic movement in your farm, your "Masseria" in the same Sicily?* "

Jacob was now returning to hammer the same idea and suggested that Leo should create "The academy of the Cabbalists" in his farm of Scicli. They were again sitting under the olive tree. Leo watched absently a low branch to see how many blossoms it carried while Jacob had returned to the conversation of the night before saying: "If the probability that an event will occur in space-time is never zero, but always possible, why don't you try to prove your theory starting a project almost impossible such as the academy. If you succeed, you will prove to me that you're right. "

The idea in fact represented an old dream of Leo: he didn't necessarily wish to create a new religious sect, based on the cult of probability but for years he had been thinking about a new political system, to save Italy from its economic and political troubles. He was calling his new political system: the Tribal System. In his life around the world he had studied the tribes of several ethnic groups: the Berbers, the Zulus, the Boers and the Filipinos. To a certain extent even the Expatriates of the Regatta village were a sort of tribal community with common interests, even if it was regulated by Libyan laws. Also the kibbutz that had an enormous economic success in Israel were tribal systems. *In the tribes life was easier, there was a spirit of brotherhood, there was human solidarity and social justice.*

When Leo explained the concept to Jacob he said: "If you are really interested in Politics, of course you will understand my new electoral system, TR, total representation. But I know that you are not interested in politics, you are interested only in religion and science." But Leo protested that he cared about politics and economics to the point that he was so fascinated by the book of Dr. Schumacher "Small is Beautiful" that he was dreaming of applying it to a new type of human society: the tribal system. This new type of society would have provided jobs and social justice for the masses, without replacing capitalism and would please the communists, because most of the concepts would be social-communistic at their root. The rich people from the cities would have continued being rich and would be happy because this system would not involve them, instead the poor and the dispossessed, and all those who were in need of assistance and needed a job, would have been delighted of that system. "I'll explain in a few words the Tribal System, have just a little patience, but before let's address the issue of the elections." said Leo said while his voice was lit with renewed enthusiasm. He couldn't find anyone to explain his theories and Jacob was the only one who listened patiently to him. "When it comes to elections my dilemma is the same that the good soul of Gaddafi had expressed in his famous "Green Book". Regardless how fair are the elections, the resulting majority will represent a dictatorship system vis-à-vis the minority. Who wins makes the laws. How does your TR system cure or hope to cure this

reality?" Jacob took a few seconds to reply. When he replied he showed some irritation in the tone of his voice:" Leo, leave that crazy man and his crazy ideas out of this discussion. Gaddafi and his Green Book have no practical values in modern democracies. You must read my book and understand it before discussing possible political solutions to the problem of dictatorship of the majority. Read the introduction by Dr. Ken Ritchie, chief executive of the Electoral Reform Society first, then the commentaries by Professor Gideon Doron, president of Israel`s Political Science, followed by pages 19-28 of my book, i.e. paragraphs 1.2-1.24 of the book. Then you will understand what I mean."

Hearing what Jacob suggested gave Leo a sudden attack of panic. He was not used to read the instructions of any complicated subject, but preferred to base his conclusions on vague "hearsay", popular anecdotes or on brief synthesis of the concept based on common sense. In reality to please Jacob, in the past when Jacob had sent him a copy of the book, Leo had tried to read his book. The title sounded great: TR ( Total Representation), a new electoral system for modern times. He had unfortunately to admit that all his attempts had failed. The book after the first couple of pages caused him to fall asleep into a deep slumber from which he woke up with an headache. The arguments described in it did not interest him or were too difficult to grasp or beyond his comprehension: what was the proportional system or the first-past-the-post system? He had tried to bring the book at the masseria and sit under his favorite old olive tree in an armchair to see if the country air would stimulate his brain. No luck. He would fall asleep after only the first page. He tried to put his feet in a bucket of cold water and wrap wet towels around his head. No luck. He continued falling asleep like a baby.

"Jacob, I simply agree with Gaddafi that the dictatorship of the Majority causes the Minority`s unhappiness and its inability to make its voice heard in the management of the government. To a certain extent the Jamahiria system invented by Gaddafi is like a TR, but extended to all the people, instead to only a few minority Parties. It could be called UR, that is Universal Representation." Leo herd a strange sound, like if Jacob had a sudden attack of cough that was almost choking him and he became red in his face. When he recovered he said: " Read my book and if you understand it I will propose you for the prize "the Cross of David"

in Israel. I promise to give you the explanation of how you can cure the problem of the dictatorship of the majority when we see each other the next time. "Leo felt relieved by the proposal of Jacob that shifted the problem to the future and said: "I'll send you by e-mail my theory and I hope you will comment it with your political acumen. I promise to do my best to read the book, but I do not guarantee that I will understand something."

## **The Jamahiria**

The good Gaddafi, with his "Green Book" had invented the system of the Jamahiria, the Government of the Masses. The basic idea was that every man has the right to express his opinion in running the country. Millions of opinions and good suggestions were recorded during the People`s Congresses invented by Gaddafi as instruments of government. There was only one party, the Jamahiria, and therefore it was solved the problem of the dictatorship of the majority since every citizen rightfully belonged to the Jamahiria. Everyone was free to express his opinions and to give suggestions.

All these opinions and suggestions were written down carefully and preserved to be later studied leisurely. There were People`s Congresses every year. Let`s suppose that at a Congress Ahmed, any citizen, for example had proposed to distribute free harissa (strong red pepper) to spice the spaghetti of the Libyans. "Good idea. Fine: write it down." Said the president of the Congress and ordered the secretary to write down the proposal in a book. Mahmood had proposed to give free bicycles to the Libyan house wives to go shopping faster in the Tripoli`s traffic jams. "Fine proposal: write it down." Then the Central Committee would eventually decide what to do with those proposals and Ahmed and Mahmood would go home happy to eat their couscous. Then nothing would be happening for a long time, but who cared? Ten years later the proposals and the decisions of the Central Committee would be forgotten and would have become obsolete. A study had discovered that the use of harissa could cause upset stomach and bowel bleedings in the long run and bicycles were not a good solution to fend off into the

traffic of Tripoli. More people were killed on bicycles than on any other system of transportation. Didn't Gaddafi say in his last book, that in the city cats and human beings had the same destiny: that of being run over by a car? Only in the desert you didn't run any risk, because camels were very clever to avoid people when running around. The Jamahiria had solved the problem of the majority because it had

eliminated the minorities: they all belonged to the same party. Instead, the problem was that most of the good proposals were lost, forgotten, ignored or misunderstood, and the Central Committee at the end did only what Gaddafi said. They would let you speak, but at the end Gaddafi was the only decision maker. In spite of all, there were some good things in that system, surprisingly good things that were happening here and there without any rule. Since the supermarkets were always empty of the stuff that was needed they were called in the Tripoli's expatriate community jargon: *super-mafish*, since *mafish* in Arabic means nothing. So the supermarkets were called super-nothing to illustrate their content of goodies for sale. For instance you went there to buy underpants for your son and socks for yourself and found that the whole *super-mafish* was full to its ceiling of Russian boots and Chinese fur hats, just the right sort of equipment needed for life in the desert with 40 degrees Celsius temperature. The boots and the hats were however quite cheap and you ended up buying a couple of them, just in case you were transferred to Norway.

To compensate for the shortcomings of the *super-mafishs*, occasionally a *tauziaah* would appear out of nowhere in the middle of Tripoli. *Tauziaah* in Arabic means distribution, taking place in special distribution centers that would materialize out of nowhere for no reason at all. A Libyan had to be lucky to be in the right place at the right time where in a *tauziaah* he could buy cheap computers, radios, TV sets or any good things that he could dream of. Even BMW cars at very cheap prices were distributed occasionally to the surprised citizens. The *tauziaah* lasted only a few minutes because the merchandise disappeared immediately therefore long queues would occasionally form in the most unusual locations where people had the suspicion that from there would start a *tauziaah*. A Libyan friend of Leo, Omar, once told him that one day that he had a strong headache he had stopped in front

of a window in a little secondary street of Tripoli and leaned on the window with his eyes closed to see if the headache disappeared. When he reopened his eyes he saw with his big surprise that a typical *tauziaah* queue long 20 meters had formed spontaneously behind him.

The bread was subsidized and so was the pasta that you could buy from the state bakers. The gasoline was being sold by the state petrol stations and was very cheap so the system of the Jamahiria had his tricks, invented by Gaddafi to keep up the morale of the people waiting for the next *tauziaah*. You could fill up with petrol and wearing Russian boots and a Chinese hat you could drive through the streets of Tripoli in search of the queue of a *tauziaah*.

The Jamahiria had its advantages, and it was better than other forms of Dictatorship, if well managed. First of all, like every Communist regime, it had given the people the security and stability that were necessary for them to live a life without worries. Gaddafi had given huge subsidies so that all Libyans owned a house.

They were all poor, but they had a house and plenty of bread, spaghetti and couscous, tomato paste and harissa at bargain prices and then they could move in cars, bought at very low prices in a *tauziaah*, using a gasoline that cost almost nothing. But more important of all, all the Libyans had a job. Okay, they were sitting all day long in their government offices to do nothing, but they were all fixed up with a job, even if they were poorly paid. Of one thing Leo could testify, to honor to the memory of Gaddafi: in the long years he spent in Libya he had never seen a single beggar or one homeless person wandering around Tripoli or Benghazi or anywhere else. Unlike the countries of the so-called civilized world, such as Italy, France and the USA, there wasn't the shame of the beggars and of the homeless on the streets of Libya.

## **The revelation of the Tribal system**

For years as he was going around the world Leo had been thinking about a new political system that, in his mind at least, would save mankind. The few times that Leo had a new idea, it was naturally a grandiose one, an idea of Universal proportion. Why limit yourself when you think? Thinking does not cost anything. The new system was based on his experience made at Anilao, in the Philippines and the fundamental ideas had been expressed by Dr. Schumacher in his book

“Small is beautiful”. Analyzing prophetically the past Leo had had a great revelation that later he had written in this "prophetic essay" and sent it to Jacob:

*Prophetic essay*

“ The objectives of mankind could be divided in two basic groups: the objectives of the rich, the capitalists, the leaders, the self starters, the “alpha” of mankind, and the objectives of the poor, the workers, the followers, the “beta” of mankind. To be a beta wasn't necessarily a bad thing since many philosophers, many artists, philosophers, advanced thinkers and scientists were betas: to be a beta wasn't something different or inferior to the alpha , but only to have different human values and a different "mindset". The goals of two groups according to Dr. Schumacher can be described as follows: the alpha typically like change, challenge and growth, while the beta love beauty, happiness, and status quo. The alpha prefer to manage their own future without government interference. Betas are unsure of their ability to survive without government help and need the safety and the stability offered by a strong government. The objectives of the two groups could not be more distant than that. There was a way to reconcile them? Of course not. But here's the *revelation*. You could think of a system of government in which both groups could be represented. Human society could be divided into two communities: an independent community where reigned free enterprise and individualistic and selfish values, ruled by alphas, and a tribal community with strong altruistic values and social ruled, run by the betas. The two communities could be intertwined in one system, common to all, fully integrated and functional. Both communities would govern independently the side of society to which they belonged: they were two liquids impossible to mix, such as oil and vinegar, but that shaking the bottle formed a good vinaigrette for the salad dressing. The first thing to do was to elect a leader to shake the bottle and mix the two liquids. In a democratic system the election of a leader could take place only with an election, but in the new system the two groups had to vote separately, in fact they had to live separate lives in the same country. How could that be done? Here is the originality of the *revelation*: it was necessary to create the tribes. Two basic ingredients constituted the tribe: individuals linked by ties of kinship or ideological affinities and social territories to be divided among the members of the tribe. Gandhi, according to Dr. Schumacher called the tribes "ashrams" in the Hindu language. Everyone, rich or poor, intelligent or stupid, educated or ignorant, chief or peon, had to belong to a tribe and to a tribal territory. "

Jacob was back in London for a few days when he received an e-mail with the prophecy of Leo and immediately replied to Leo asking details on how he intended to organize the new political system in Italy.

Leo responded with this e-mail at the speed of light, because he had for some time he had a ready answer

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Dear Jacob,

since our last meeting in Sicily as you can see I have worked on the project of the Academy of Cabbalists, expanding it a bit to include all mankind. The project has now become the "tribal system" and the Academy could become one of the clans of a tribe where its members are bound by common interests such as the interpretation of the scriptures and the integration of science with religion. The tribal territory, to begin with, could be my farm in Scicli, but here is how I think to organize the new political system in Italy.

Italy, with its 60 million inhabitants can be divided into one million tribes, each consisting of 60 individuals. Not more than that, because the large tribes become unmanageable and may give rise to civil strife or tribal unrest. Each tribe consists of a dozen clans or families of about 5 – 6 individuals typically linked by ties of kinship or elective affinities, such as their interest in religion or their love for red wine.

A million tribal territories becomes necessary to complete the organization. Dividing the country among all the Italians would give about 5000 square meters of land for each individual or 30 hectares for each tribe, which, considering the small extension of Italy, is not too bad.

Thirty hectares make a small farm operated with intensive cultures.

The calculation has to write off the mountains, the lakes and all the inaccessible places, so the 30 hectares for each tribe, in practice became 20. But not all the tribes would be farming communities. There would be the town tribes to manage hotels, restaurants, pizzerias and artisanal craft centers and hill tribes to manage mountain hotels, winter ski resorts and ski schools, then there would be many tribes to manage marine B & B, beach resorts, sailing schools and so on and so forth. Of course all this already exists in Italy, you just need to change what exists, expand it, pooling together different existing homes and territories. There are everywhere unused second houses by the sea, especially in the south. There are everywhere abandoned rural areas, houses in ruins to be restored and a tendency to return to rural life already begins to be evident among the young people.

In Italy there are about 60,000 farms managed by young people and recently, to raise funds to heal the economic difficulties of the country, there was a proposal to sell abandoned farmland, belonging to the government, to young people to create another



40,000 farm units to add to the existing ones so as to create even 100,000 new jobs on farms managed by young people. Young agricultural entrepreneurs, with their energy and initiative, should give a strong evolutionary impulse to the agricultural sector that had been abandoned for many years in favor of the industrial sector.

In addition to the agricultural activities in Italy are growing like mushrooms the hotels in the countryside, the so-called “*agriturism*” that have had great success with tourists and families looking for relaxation, families with young children who spend the week end in farmhouses to entertain the children with the farm animals. Not to mention the agricultural and industrial cooperatives Emiliane- Romagnole that are constantly expanding and this year have continued to grow and to hire new people in spite of the crisis. The only thing we would need, really, would be ***the absolute exemption from taxes on the earnings of the tribes***. This would be the incentive for an innovative start of the new system.

The most important task of the tribes would be the production of food of high quality for the needs of the tribe and of the nation. The secondary task would be the production of cheap renewable energy for the needs the tribes. To carry out a project of zero growth and a return to the origins with zero unemployment, the tribal revolution would create the incentives for the transformation of society. The people should demonstrate enthusiasm for a system which provides for the return to country life, not for everyone, of course, but only for those who need it and appreciate it. The other, perhaps eighty percent of the people, would continue to live as before, with the only requirement to belong to a tribe where they could go to spend the holidays or spend the weekend without the obligation to live there. Who pays for the tribe? Everyone pays in proportion to their income, but also the state pays, with special funds and incentives. The question is, communism had not tried to put into practice exactly that revolution and had failed miserably? Yes, of course, but communism had made the mistake of eliminating capitalism when they seized power in Russia, Romania and in the various countries of the Soviet bloc. The tribal society would keep capitalism in harmony with itself, relying on capitalism to create the means to feed its welfare. In many ways, this symbiosis between capitalism and communism explains the success and the economic boom of the Modern China.

I wish you a good day and I hope to receive your comments.

Leo

Jacob replied laconically as follows:

Leo,

you are the prophet of the God of the probability  $\Psi$ . If your revelation is

a new religion, what are its commandments? When I receive them, like Moses, I will know what to say!  
Jacob

## **The three commandments**

Leo was sure that Capitalism would be still the engine of the economy, while the tribes would be the oases of freedom and social justice necessary for an harmonious social coexistence. He imagined Italy full of farmhouses everywhere, where people lived happily and in harmony with each other. Those were not commandments but were obvious facts. The tribal society was not a project difficult to achieve, and from the point of view of the territory the project was certainly feasible and useful to the economy: it would stimulate the construction industry which was one of the most important voices of the Italian economy.

One big problem to solve was the energy problem. In keeping with the teaching of Gandhi her the sources of energy of the tribes should be renewable ones. There were power generation systems that were easy to install, such as photovoltaic and wind power, but then there was also the possibility of producing rapeseed oil that could replace the diesel as automotive power for cars. Tribal territory (the ashram) and renewable energy were the commandments contained in the book of Dr. Schumacher, it was enough then to read the book and that became the first commandment. The tribal society system would revolutionize the world by promoting only renewable sources of energy, that gradually would replace the other sources of fossil energy.

But everything had to be tried with practical examples, so one had to make some hands-on experiments to demonstrate the concept, and that was the second commandment. The practical model of a tribe that worked, as Anilao, was the third commandment. One had to go to the Philippines to study the model.

Leo had read somewhere that humans can remember well only three things at a time, which explained why they were great sinners and could not remember all

the ten commandments. So Leo, after selecting only the fundamental commandments that were easy to remember, he chose only those three.

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There remained the problem of how to organize the elections and the political life of the two groups into a cohesive and workable unity. This was a field of knowledge that Leo was lacking, but that was the specialty of Jacob, for this reason, he sent him an e-mail illustrating his tribal game and asking his help to figure out how to make it work in practice. Jacob after all was an Alpha, a successful leader. There remained the problem of how to organize the elections and the political life of two groups in a single functioning system. Most likely it would be necessary to eliminate the Senate and to replace the senators with the Congress of the tribal leaders who would have to approve the resolutions of the House of Deputies. Perhaps the TR system could help solve the problem, for this reason Leo decided to ask Jacob to help him and he replied with this e-mail:

Dear Jacob

Here are the three commandments:

- 1- Our Bible will be the book: Small is Beautiful.
- 2- The "Tribal Society" will be tried at my masseria.
- 3- The model of the tribes will be the village of Anilao.

Before starting, though, given your experience in the political field, I ask you to give me a hand to organize the elections to choose a first Minister and to coordinate the political life of the nation trying to amalgamate the group of the capitalists and entrepreneurs with that of the tribal chiefs.

Leo

He did not have to wait too long for the reply because next day he received the following e-mail:

Dear Leo,

As usual your project is ambitious and impossible, but it could be tried. It has three ingredients that suggest a possible success: it is new, it is ambitious and, with reservations, it is feasible.

First of all you would have to change the constitution of Italy to include rules and regulations relative to the new tribal society, second you would have to change the electoral system to accommodate two groups of electors: the tribal chiefs, on one hand, and the normal Italian electorate on the other hand. Both groups would have to participate in the running of Italy and its economy. There is a problem though, all these changes would take money, and you are not rich like Berlusconi to achieve your results with your limited resources. But there is a solution: you can write a book about your third commandment, about the model village of Anilao showing in your book the result of experiments to prove to the Italian people that your system works. Then you can start your new party, the "Partito Tribale Italiano" and hope to win the elections. About 25 year later, if everything works, when you are approaching 100, you can start your tribal society.

Your friend Gaddafi took the power in Libya in only a few days and, with the power of the army and the police that he controlled, he was able to start the system of the Jamahiria to run the country of Libya. But you are not Gaddafi, and knowing you, violence and revolution are not your style. I am ready to give you my advice, if you want, as the project, at least on paper, fascinates me. You know that I have my feet on the ground as a social anthropologist by training and I have made experience of government in Gaza, when I was young. I therefore suggest that you try first what you wrote in your second commandment: *The "Tribal Society" will be tried at my masseria*. If that works you can then continue the experiment and write the book "Anilao".

I wish you good work.

Jacob

## The pilot project

Far from being scared by what had written Jacob, Leo ignored the length of time necessary to finish the project and took the advice of Jacob.

Immediately he began to get organized to make experiments of "happy coexistence" in his farm. Italians are a bunch of unruly individualists who don't obey the rules and do the "slalom" between the laws to avoid obeying them. Was it possible to make them live together in a tribe? He decided to invite some couples of friends to do the experiment. For years he was in contact with old friends, but now there were big problems to trace them. Among his Sicilian friends Frank Parrino had been dead for several years because of a prostate cancer, Frank Spadaro had become alcoholic and it was difficult to manage him because the only thing he said was: "You never know!" And he drank one glass after another, very often forgetting to go to the toilet, and doing it in his pants. Globo had disappeared, after retirement, and had changed his address without leaving a forwarding address. The neighbors said that perhaps he had gone to live in Addis Ababa, being tired of Italian politics, but they didn't have the address. Among his old friends from South Africa, according to Gianni Camuffo, Paolo Ventotto had disappeared in the Kruger Park already thirty years ago, maybe killed by a crocodile. The body was never found. With Gianni Camuffo instead they had kept in touch because Gianni came to Norway at the time of Ocean Oil to direct the exploration department of Agip and Leo had frequented him a lot in those days. It was Gianni that, being an experienced fisherman, had taught Leo to fish trout with the fly. "You have to bring down the fly on the water with kindness, as if it were a real fly, if you want to catch the large trout otherwise giving the lashes as you do, you take only the teenager trout without experience of life!" was the advice he had given Leo, but while Gianni was catching giant trout, Leo was limited to catch teenagers or fish in kindergarten. When Leo worked in Libya with Waha, Gianni worked with Agip in Libya, and even there they had become good buddies and went together to fish in the sea. Gianni

went underwater with wet suit and spear gun, and Leo stayed on shore to look after his clothes, his money and his car, while he was reading his Koran. Gianni would sometimes return with a nice grouper which was then cooked in the oven in the evening. In short, we were often together and were great friends.

So Leo invited Gianni and his wife Anita to spend ten days at the farm with him and Eva and Gianni accepted. Among his friends from Romagna Paolo Baldini unfortunately had died already a few years before, because of a brain tumor and Piero Biancoli had divorced and lived somewhere in the Rimini countryside like a hermit.

Instead Serz was alive and well and over the years had already come to Sicily once to visit Leo, and Leo in turn had gone more than once to Cervia to visit old friends and his cousin Zorz who had always given him excellent "advice" on how to beat the bad luck. So Serz accepted with enthusiasm the offer to spend a holiday at the farm with his wife Fiorella. Actually he said he would come by plane with a niece of his wife with her husband, to help him to be brave because it was the first time

that he was traveling by plane. Instead Zorz, who had come several times both to Norway and to Sicily (and every time had sold a boat to Leo ), this time had said that he was working to solve the "crisis of the luxury boats" and could not come. Then Leo had also contacted Dr. Morgenroth, his friend from the time of Libya, who was now retired and living in Germany. He too had accepted the invitation to come with his wife Brigitte.

At this point Leo had managed to find four couples of friends, who together with him and Eva were five. Enough to make the experiment. The experiment was to begin May 10, 2012 and last until May 20 when the temperature was mild and ideal for

life in the country. Camuffo and Serz rented two cars at the airport while Leo went to Catania to pick up the Germans, who did not know the language and had never been to Sicily.

He had also contacted Helge, who was now retired and living in Stavanger with his wife Berit and he had agreed, but had said that he would rather come with some friends in October, because in the spring he preferred to stay in Norway. So Leo was able to organize at least two groups to do the experiment.

When they were all gathered at the farm, on the evening of May 10, after a nice welcome dinner in Scicli based on grilled sausage and pizza, Leo assigned to the two guys from Romagna and Camuffo, with their wives, the rooms in the main house which had three double bedrooms, each with its own individual bathroom, and several living rooms where the three pairs could divide themselves

in individual groups. There was a living area with armchairs on the first floor, then a large terrace with deckchairs in front of the bedrooms, and on the ground floor there was a large library-reading room with a fireplace, a spacious kitchen with a big table where could comfortably sit ten people and a huge dining room with a 4 meters long table that could sit comfortably twelve people. The idea was that the couples could use the kitchen and have breakfast together, but they could sit apart in individual groups if they felt the need for privacy. For Dr. Morgenroth and himself Leo had prepared two double beds in the renovated stables,

which were two large adjacent rooms separated by a door, each with its cuisine and its own bathroom. This arrangement was made as a special regard for the doctor, who was a very tall man and needed very much space or as the Germans say, "leben-raum", then, since he didn't speak Italian, he had constant need of Leo to translate his philosophical concepts to the others members of the experiment.

The first problem occurred immediately when Eva, the wife of Leo, said that she did not want us to stay in the country, because the bed was hard, the room

in the stable was dark and she preferred to live in Santa Maria del Focallo in the house by the sea. "It's a problem easy to solve." Leo said, "I'll sleep alone, and you, with your car will go back and forth to be with us during the day! " " We'll see! "Eva replied defiantly.

The second problem occurred because of the language. The Doctor was very useful because with a group of elders, you never knew when there would be the need of medical assistance. All had passed the seventy, except the niece of Fiorella and her husband, but they were already in their fifties (which is the ideal age for a heart attack) and especially the wife of Camuffo, Anita, had some major health problems. She was always sitting on a foldable lightweight wheelchair, not because she could not walk, but because she had balance problems. She was in fact suffering from *dialectic aphasia* due to brain surgery to remove a "benign" tumor. Her problem was that she had difficulty to choose the right word: to say for example to the cook *you're good*, she would say *you're a bitch*.

Wherefore she had created immediate problems with Fiorella on the first day, when working in the kitchen to prepare breakfast.

Camuffo spoke English very well, but the Romagnoli spoke only Italian and romagnolo between them. So were immediately formed two language groups,

on the one hand the Romagnoli and on the other hand Leo, Morgenroth and Camuffo

that communicated with each other in English. When there was rarely Eva, of course she spoke great English, but she preferred to sit with the Romagnoli for spirit of contradiction. Anita also spoke good English, but unfortunately cross purpose: she would said smiling to the Doctor *you are stupid*, instead of telling him *you are intelligent*, but Morgenroth he understood anyway and smiled. The problem was Brigitte, in that, Teutonic as she was, took everything to the letter and was inflexible and if Anita said smiling to praise her *you bastard*, she took it badly.

The third problem was the division of labor between the two groups. Leo had identified two main projects: clean the baglio (i.e. the courtyard) of the weeds growing between the stones and plant 100 tomato seedlings in a field of 400 square meters which was located near the southeast corner of the farmhouse. He saw at once that the two groups had different visions of the community work. Although they were all convinced Communists the Romagnoli they didn't

seem to appreciate the manual labor. The niece and her husband spent their days going to the beach or driving around the province of Ragusa to do some tourism. Serz, who had been a bank clerk, had never held in his hand a hoe or a shovel in his entire life. He would sit in the shade of the large shed on the southwest side of the baglio to observe the others who worked, all the time saying, "How nice, how peaceful, how well we feel here! "

Camuffo, that was a hard worker, took care of weeding the courtyard, while his wife was sitting in a wheelchair under the canopy and she encouraged him saying, "*Asshole, bad job!*" The couple Morgenroth had taken very seriously the task of digging along with Leo the plot of land where they were to plant tomatoes. They worked at a good pace, encouraging Leo to continue with reproaching glances, if by chance he sat for a moment to rest. After an hour of hard work Leo had already come blisters on the palms of both his hands, so he would sneak away every half hour with the excuse of going to monitor the work of Camuffo in the courtyard. When it was noon Leo was exhausted, but fortunately the Doctor had appeared out of the kitchen, holding a frying pan and a large wooden spoon he used as a Gong to call everyone's attention on the fact that it was time for lunch. He had woken up already at six, and had breakfast at 6:30 am but the others had eaten breakfast at 9.30 am, having woken up at the comfortable time of 9am, so they were not hungry, yet. All, however, took the opportunity to stop work and sat down to wait for lunch. Eva had not come out to the farm for fear of having to



cook for that bunch of people, but Fiorella was a good cook, willing to work, but for her to prepare lunch at noon was out of the question. She would put on the water for the noodles at one.30, but not before, because her niece and her nephew would not be back before two. The doctor who was tall and thin and had a great metabolism, needed frequent injections of calories, and then he and his wife made some frugal sandwiches of ham and cheese with some nice salads and large mugs of black coffee. No wine at lunch to avoid losing the concentration at work. Leo, to avoid leaving the Germans alone, ate a little with them and a little later with Camuffo and with the Romagnoli. The diet at noon was based on pasta, served with a little cold cuts and salad, all washed down with plenty of Sicilian wine, which was very good but had a high alcohol content. After the espresso coffee, they reached three o'clock, and then who had the desire to work? All were enjoying a fabulous nap, some in lounge chairs under the carob, some in bed, and forgot completely about working. The Germans instead continued undeterred to work giving a practical demonstration of the reason for the economic supremacy of Germany relative to Italy.

In the evening they went to the restaurant or they barbecued outdoor and that was the only period of the day when they felt a great human solidarity and a spirit of brotherhood stimulated by wine. After dinner there were philosophical conversations that crossed between the two groups in different languages. Eva continued to be in hiding for fear of having to end up working for all those drifters, but Fiorella set the table and cleared the table after they had finished dinner. Serz sat under the canopy without making anything constructive, but constantly exclaiming: "That's nice, how peaceful, we love it! "Leo was the leader of the barbecue, aided by Camuffo, because

the fire excited both of them and they knew very well how to do it having learned in Africa: "Give a drink to the cooks otherwise they get dehydrated!"

They said to their companions, so when they had finished to barbecue they were already tipsy and ready to face any kind of philosophical discussion at the table.

Usually, depending on the weather, they had supper in the shed, or, if the evening was cool, they had dinner in the large dining room. The Morgenroth went to bed with the chickens immediately after dinner, to be refreshed the next day when there were 100 tomato seedlings to be planted, but the Italians remained awake until late at night to discuss and drinking grappa. If Leo tried to talk about his theory of probability or of the God of the probability  $\Psi$  the Romagnoli shut him up unkindly saying: "But go to hell!"

Leo thought that another time he would have to invite eminent theologians such as Vito Mancuso, Roger Lenaers and Antonio Thellung, of whom he had read the

books and with whom he and Jacob could reason. Instead of religious discussions or on the meaning of life, they always ended up discussing politics between the Communists Serz and his nephew, and the followers of Berlusconi, Leo and Gianni Camuffo. At the end Serz, when he was cornered by some valid arguments, would become pissed off like a beast and began to inveigh against Berlusconi, so there was no way to reason and they went to bed angry.

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At the end of ten days the tomatoes were planted in geometric rows supported by reeds and each plant was attached to the reeds with a cotton thread to support it, the courtyard had been cleaned of weeds and all had gained several pounds of weight, but they had a great time. With regard to the tribal system they had not proved a damn thing, but only confirmed that it was good to live in the countryside in Sicily. The concept of the agriturismo for the elderly had been confirmed. If one was elderly and wealthy, he could spend the holidays in the countryside with his friends and have fun, despite the differences in political party and job attitude.

## **The other experiments**

Leo then decided that it was necessary to demonstrate that the tribal life functioned

even with a group of young people working together in harmony. In July and August he gave the farm in the hands of his son Ali saying: "I will spend the summer in Norway, as usual, but I encourage you to invite your friends in Sicily and you can do whatever you want, but, in exchange for free lodging, you have to clean all the olive trees from suckers and make bundles of them to burn, then please

cut all the branches of the big stack that was left by the pruners, to make firewood of 30-40 centimeters in length to be used in the fireplace. You have the power saw for the thinner branches and the motor saw for the coarse firewood. Please then round up all the weeds and make a bonfire, being careful not to burn the farm.

These jobs are

quite easy for young people as smart as you are and I don't ask anything else. I will leave the keys to Mrs. Angelika, my German neighbor who is willing to oversee the farm and ask somebody to clean it when you're gone. "

At the end of the summer Leo, after speaking with Angelika, calculated that

fourteen had come between friends and girlfriends, divided into various tranches. Most were Norwegian, but there were also some from Roma, including two gay actors of the TV and a beautiful starlet with her boyfriend. Some Norwegian had also invaded the beach house, because all of them could not find room at the farm, but in any case they were constantly on the go between Scicli and Santa Maria del Focallo, so Leo, when in mid-August returned from Norway, had trouble relaxing, feeling invaded in his privacy, because there were still some Norwegians at the beach house.

Angelika, which they called Diabolika, had tried to keep some order and cleanliness in the farm, but with little success. They also had almost set fire to the house when they had made a bonfire with the weeds, which they had failed to control with the rubber hose used to water the garden.

They had managed to burn even an old almond tree at the corner of the house. The kids still had a great time and before leaving they had thanked Leo for the hospitality. The only problem was that, unfortunately, between the sea and the visits to the tourist sites, they had no time to clean the olive trees from the suckers, and much less to cut the wood in segments of 30-40 centimeters. The house was dirty and Leo had to give Angelika 250 Euro to get it cleaned when everyone was gone.

Even there, Leo was able to show that young people amused themselves to spend wonderful holidays in the countryside, enjoying life with friends. Great discovery!

The final proof of the pudding was in October when arrived Helge leading a group of five Norwegians, who, together with him made six people, i.e. three couples, that came to spend two weeks at the farm. The Norwegians were always happy because they could drink beer at bargain prices, enjoy the mild temperatures of the

Sicilian fall and spend the morning at the beach of Sampieri to bathe with water temperatures still like those of the summer. The Norwegians occupied the main house while Leo was installed in the renovated stable alone because also this time Eva, despite the fact that they were her countrymen, had refused to come to the country house. With the Norwegian things were proceeding very well because they were older people, well behaved and always cheerful and everyone was excited about the Sicily. Leo was also able to make them work to pick the olives to be crushed and to be put into brine in large sealed glass jars. Then they cooperated with Eva, who would show up during the day, to cut all the bushes of intrusive *tree of heaven*, a wild plant that reproduced all over

invading the garden and should rather be called *tree of hell*. They also had to apply the herbicide with a brush, plant by plant, to prevent the roots to grow back. Berit, the wife of Helge was specialized in making baskets with reeds, that grew wild around the farm, using also the wickers of the suckers of the olive trees. So they had found another activity to spend time together working on baskets, when they returned from the beach. But the biggest success was obtained when they decided to build the experimental gas plant from the fermentation of manure. Leo had read that in Switzerland they had produced biogas from the manure of pigs. The system was simple: it used green waste, coffee grounds, pig manure or liquid substances such as liquid fertilizers, oil from the food industry and sugary water, the remains from the milk production. He had spoken about it with Helge. Helge in turn, after consultation with the two other Norwegian men, one of whom was an engineer and another a helicopter pilot, both retired, had said that they could build a pilot plant for the production of gas at the farm. The Norwegians took charge of the task to draw a model of a large funnel with many pipes that made it resemble a large alembic, that was supposed to be placed on top of the manure to collect the gas. The plant require much cow manure and a good locksmith to build the alembic. That's it. Leo went to talk with Pasquale, his the old farmer, which showed up at the farm two days later with a huge load of manure that cost 360 Euro. Pasquale had brought with him another old manure expert, Salvatore, a type with happy and lively eyes who knew a lot about manure. When the ladies were complaining about the stench, Salvatore had explained in Sicilian dialect a concept that Leo had then translated into Norwegian, namely that the fertilizer was good for the respiratory tract, because it was made of good shit, shit of horse and cow. Shit of good clean animals who ate grass, not shit of bad animals like that of humans and of carnivorous animals. They unloaded a pile of manure behind the renovated stables and with the shovel worked an hour to fix the stack in a geometric pyramid. Then they went away happy with 360 Euro for the manure and 80 Euro for the job. The drawings were ready and now it was necessary to build the alembic. The biggest problem was to find a locksmith that could build it in a few days, because the Norwegians would be leaving in a week.

Despite the economic crisis, they failed to find a free locksmith around Scicli and also in Modica that would ensure to complete the project in less than a week: they were all busy until Christmas. Thus the project was postponed to next year and the Norwegians promised to return. There remained the smell to waft around the house to open up the airways tracts, yet that mountain of manure was not wasted. When the Norwegians were gone Leo called back Pasquale and Salvatore and asked them to give abundant fertilizer to all plants in the garden and around the house.

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What did Leo manage to show through his experiments? That living in the country was good when there were no economic problems and that the farm was a great institution to spend a good holiday. But now there remained the task to prove the theory that collectivism, as a political, social and economic system might work.

### **The conference on Karl Marx in Ragusa**

One evening in November Leo received an unexpected phone call from the former mayor of Ragusa, Mr Giorgio Chessari whom he had met at the time of Iblea Gas. One of the wells was drilled by Leo just below the country home of the mayor. Mr. Chessari had invited Leo to his house to see the problem from above. It was impossible to deny that the rig was in full view of his house which was located on a hill in Contrada Maltempo. Not only you could see the ugliness of the drilling unit, but you could also hear the deafening noise that the drilling activity produced. Leo apologized saying that the drilling activity would only last a few days and that the plant would soon be gone. In case of discovery the rig would be replaced with a small production plant and some pipes, which would be carefully camouflaged. Since the well resulted mercifully dry, a few months after drilling the location was dismantled and the area was returned to be a green pasture in the mountains, just as before.

Chessari had proved himself to be a true gentleman on that occasion and had even invited Leo and some drillers to lunch at the local restaurant "The Old Station". After a good lunch and abundant very good red wine, everything was resolved in the best possible manner.

Chessari now was inviting him to participate at the cultural center: "Centro Studi

Feliciano Rossitto" to a conference on Karl Marx. In addition to that, Chessari, knowing Leo's interest in Jewish history, wanted to show him some documents that he had discovered relative to the ancient Jewish community of Ragusa. Both arguments were very interesting for Leo at that point in time, since he needed facts to discover how had evolved the organization of the Kibbutz from the Ghettos and naturally he needed a better grounding in Communism, on which he was trying to base his tribal society.

The conference started half an hour late, like it was common in Ragusa. The problem was that the main speaker, the author of the book didn't show up, with the excuse that he was suffering from a flu and could not take the plane from Milan, being sick. The problem was solved craftily by Chessari by organizing three speakers, that had read the book, to give their version of their interpretation of what they had read.

The first speaker devoted most of 20 minutes to discuss the title of the book: *welcome back Mr. Marx*. What did it mean? Where had Marx been? Hiding after the disasters caused to mankind by his theory? Was he now coming back? His conclusion was that the writer had written a very good book, giving a lot of good evidence that Marx was not a Marxist, but unfortunately the book had a wrong title.

The second speaker made a more convoluted speech demonstrating that in reality Marx was not a great philosopher, like Hegel, whose ideas he was copying, and neither was he an anthropologist or a great economist. What was he? Basically he was a person that was good at criticizing human society and the system of capitalism. He was a good critic. But what was he preaching? That was difficult to figure out, but certainly not Marxism.

The third speaker was more direct in his interpretation of the book: Marx was a prophet that had predicted the future of capitalism and its disasters. Now, after 150 years the situation was even worse than when Marx had written his 105 volumes' Opera Omnia : *Das Kapital*. In Italy 10 % of the people owned 50% of the wealth, and the situation was getting worse every year as the richer were getting richer and the poorer were getting poorer.

When the third speaker finished talking, Giorgio Chessari, the chairman of the meeting opened the floor to the debate by allowing people to talk and ask questions. Several distinguished speakers, most of them professors of philosophy said what they thought. It turned out that none of them had read the book, and none of them was asking questions. Basically they were eager to show off what they knew and how clever they were, but they all agreed that the interpretation of Marx was made by many scholars in Italy and there was no need for a new one, albeit clever as it was. ( How would they know if they had not read the book?)

The last commentator, a professor of philosophy, was the best of all the bunch. He spoke slowly spending several seconds between each word, and for this reason he was easily understood. " I will....be.....short.....in.....my  
....comments....I....have.....not.....read ....this .....book.....only the cover..... and... the  
....list ....of.... quotations.... At the end....of the....book." He went on to say that he was amazed that the author, a young man of only 28 had read thousands of books and made thousands of comparisons between the many authors and commentators of Marx. As for himself for the last 30 years he had not read any books except one ( but he forgot to say which one ).

He said that one should forget about what Marx had written, just concentrate on what Anaximander of Mileto had said 2500 years ago about justice. I am hansom.... and you are.... ugly: why? I am healthy.... and you are.... sick: why? I am intelligent..... and you are .....an asshole: why? His voice was increasing of one octave each time he was quoting a new sentence, presumably from Anaximander. At the end he started screaming with high pitch voice: I am rich.....and ....you....are .....poor. Why?

There was a roaring applause, as everybody had understood the meaning of his observation. It was pointless to concentrate on only one aspect of the injustice: economy, social injustice: there were a lot of other injustices that had to be considered.

Leo whispered to his neighbor, a distinguished looking retired University professor: " You have a long dick and I have a short one. Why?" The professor smiled and thanked Leo for the compliment.

To conclude the meeting Chessari suggested what any chairman would suggest: further studies were needed to figure out what Marx had said in reality. He suggested buying the fifty books missing from the Marx's collection available in Italian and translate them from German, put 20 scholars to study them and see what they would come up with.

Leo had learned that Marx was not a Marxist, not a philosopher and not an economist. His only success was his critique of capitalism. Marx was not responsible for the disasters caused by Marxism and had not really suggested what to do. He had only predicted the disasters that had happened. On top of that he had strongly criticized capitalism, and capitalism in Leo's mind was needed to drive the economy forward and was not a bad thing at all, if properly managed.

Clearly Karl Marx had to be abandoned in favor of Dr. Schumacher as the theoretical ground on which to build the future tribal society.

Before Christmas he sent this e-mail to Jacob:

Dear Jacob,

I am writing to inform you that the tribal experiment worked. I managed to prove that at the farm live well and in harmony both old and young people and that living together is not impossible. Pure communism does not work because it takes money to keep the world going around, so I've dropped Karl Marx, although he was a Jew, in favor of Dr. Schumacher, putting into practice the tips of the first commandment.

Now I'm leaving for the Philippines to document myself on how a tourist village works in detail and on how the members of the tribe manage to earn enough money to keep going.

Then I will write the book: Anilao.

To you and all your family wish you a Merry Christmas.

I hope you will celebrate in joy the anniversary of the birth of another great Jew (besides yourself): Jesus of Nazareth.

A warm embrace

Leo



When he was flying over the Mediterranean and the seat belt warning light was switched off Leo began to write the story of Anilao on the PC.

The Voice suggested he begin to tell the story from the time he was young to understand the path that had led him to that *revelation*.

Leo obeyed this time and began to write:

“ When you are winning, victory is printed on your face. Your face, as the poet says, illuminates of immensity, your eyes are shining. You walk looking up and away, regardless of where moving on the sidewalk, without fear of stepping on a piece of shit.... “

### **Moral of the Story**

The probability, when it occurs, becomes history. So history is a fossil probability. The study of fossils is a branch of geology that is called paleontology and it is one of the specialties of Leo.

The probability of the advent of the tribal society will ever become history?

So I told you the story of Leo, a guy generally lucky, but sometimes also a loser, with a destiny fluctuating between positive events and negative events, with a sinusoidal curve similar to that of all the other particles that populate the space-time. Leo is a prophet who has specialized to predict the past, rather than the future, but the profession of prophet who once was very profitable, now makes little sense. So Leo recycled himself as party leader of the PTI, i.e. the Italian Tribal Party, which for the moment has no followers, but maybe in the future will have some. Who can predict the future?

But you'll wonder, "Who is this man who knows a lot about Leo?"

Well, do not be afraid, I tell you a secret: I am "The Voice" of the God the probability  $\Psi$  and now that I have told you who I am, I return back to the future ...

### **Author's Note:**

The symbol  $\Psi$  (the Greek letter Psi) is the probability of quantum physics that appears in the equation of Schroedinger:

$$i \hbar \frac{d}{dt} \Psi (r, t) = H \Psi (r, t)$$

Since the probability occurs only in the future, the God of probability lives only in the future, while the Eternal Father, that the Jews call Adonai, lives only in the present. The Voice is called by the Christians Holy Spirit, while the Jews call it Shekhina.