

3rd April 1981.

Green End,
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England

Dear Mr - or perhaps Dr? - Brokensha,

Thank you very much for your letter of 9th March which has just reached me - I expect Weidenfeld & Nicolson sat on it for a while. I appreciate deeply your remarks about the biography of my mother, Nellie. You are, of course, congratulating the wrong person, since she, not I, wrote about 80 % of it. It is her outlook and intelligence and wit that give the book its character, and I am so pleased that it has come across to you, and to others. I am sure she would not have approved at all of having extracts from her letters shown to the public, she hated anything that smacked of personal publicity. The reason I went ahead was the one that you give in your letter - that her letters over the years show what life was really like at grass-root level in the colonia era, not what so many people have supposed it to be. So I felt the letters had a value as a footnote to history and shouldn't just be thrown on the fire.

How remarkable that you are reading Colin Maher's reports on soil erosion etc.: in Kenya all those years ago. He was one of the first people to grasp the situation and warn of the dangers and incurred great official disapproval for so doing. No one wanted to know in those days. He had an unfortunate manner and didn't put his ideas across tactfully, Yes, he used to see my mother in the Algarve as he retired there and lived just outside Lagos. He died about two years ago.

I have just returned from 3 weeks in Tanzania, but it was spent entirely in the Serengeti National Park, Ngorongoro and Manyara, with a few days in Arusha, so I can't pretend to know anything about the politics. I can only say that, economically, the country is in a mess. There is a shortage of almost everything, from posho to petrol, spare parts to batteri bread to babati and so on. No foreign exchange. Tanzania gets, I was told, more foreign aid than any other African country - and it runs into millions but somehow it all disappears, never getting beyond Dares Salaam. As you know, everything is nationalised. That doesn't seem to be working all that well in this country, but in Africa, with no trained civil service to speak of, it becomes chaotic. It is sad. In Arusha I was told that a lot of discontent is building up food is very short - but of course I don't know how deep this is, and "I'm told" is not a good guarantee of veracity.

I have read with interest your piece of Hadeni. Your experience of the warmth of greeting a colonial official receives on his return is very much borne out by a friend here who was original a DC (and rose higher) in Kenya. People almost fall upon his neck with enthusiasm. An ability to speak Swahili makes the whole difference- A friend who recently was in Kenya told me that there is a category of European, pre independence vintage , known as "watu ya colony." They receive different treatment from tourists, particularly those, main German, who have embarked on what I believe are advertised at "sex safari's" Swahili is the key.