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Storm Over «Capdy Farm»

Just how does it happen that one gets attached to a country? Very often it is a sudden impression, perhaps the sun looming large over the bush, engulfing the whole being, a flash which captivates you, which makes your hands all hot and clammy and your eyes shine – it glues your feet to the spot as if you were part of the soil yourself.

A pungent smell of resin, the dust moving in the twinkling of an eye, the song of the language, and suddenly you know that's where you want to be and will work; and your feet get rooted yet a little more – but without turning into stone – there is so much to do!

This is how one discovers «Capdy Farm». The animals lowing as is seemly, 500, 600, 700 head of cattle providing for healthy meat in the future.

This is what went through the head of Elsbeth Kaufmann, the sensation of belonging, the moment she caught sight «Capdy Farm». She got down to work in that corner of the country where everything seemed so lasting.

Alone as she had been since her divorce, she was used to managing the big things in life. She had left the Oberland and Switzerland to follow her husband far afield, and right down there she was never afraid of work. The routine of the farm, the purchase of cattle and fodder, the selling of the animals, she managed everything with faith and determination, in the same manner she had brought up her two boys whose thick fair hair was so much like her own, Henri the elder and Dan the little one.

It is true that Elsbeth's fair hair had quickly lost some of its lustre in the hot sun and with all the worries. Specially since that Christmas of 1973 when the first guerrilla attacks began in the

north of the country, not all that far of «Capdy Farm»...

No, Elsbeth Kaufmann was not afraid; what should she have been afraid of, she was not concerned in the matter, she saw to it that her home prospered, she supervised the work at the stables and treated her workers extremely well?

Actually, in the towns any more than at «Capdy Farm», one was not really aware of the real extent of the guerrilla phenomenon which one only knew from tales told by some farmers from further north. The countryside was peaceful. There was no reason at all, at the moment, not to feel safe and secure in one's home and on one's land.

But in the course of the following years, guerrilla operations multiplied. One morning, when she heard gunfire from the side of the barn, towards the road to Shapita, Elsbeth Kaufmann experienced the first doubt. On 10th June, with stifling heat and dust on the road, she asked for police protection.

The response which, today, sounds somewhat ironic, was: «The situation is perfectly normal in our region in every respect. Just a few incidents by way of infiltration of terrorists into the country; but they are quickly dealt with by our police and beheaded.» Then followed a year of anguish, of lying in wait behind closed windows when an unfamiliar noise was heard, and then, the sun falling like a poisoned apple... During the month of August 1978, Elsbeth decides to pay a visit to her younger son and her daughter-in-law who had settled about 100 km further south. It is a lovely day. Her blue-eyed granddaughter makes an interminable tour of the house on her new

bicycle, singing jauntily all along. Elsbeth leaves them happy and confident.

Until she reaches «Capdy Farm», the building all blackened, and until Andy, the big black, meets her at the bottom of the lane, jumping up and down, crying: «Capdy Farm» has been the target of a rocket attack, «Capdy Farm» is under fire of the guerrillas... a whole wing destroyed, animals killed, but like a miracle, no human life has been lost.

Coming from a country where water is abundant, Elsbeth Kaufmann has become attached to this rough soil. Right up to that day of disaster, she has always been of a surprising optimism. Now, brutally, she is forced to admit doubt. The whole purpose of her life, all her belongings, everything is here. Does this mean I have to give it all up? Do I have to think of emigrating once again? Of course, she should have known it was coming, should have anticipated events. But when everything prospers, when the seasons come and go just as they should, when all the care and attention are concentrated on the daily work – why on earth should one think of menace and danger? It is always the same, one only really thinks of danger once one is confronted by it...

Desperate now, Mrs Kaufmann informs the Swiss Consul of the situation and the damage she has suffered. But she remains on the farm. She reduces the scope of the farm, she settles again in her new existence. She bends. Two years later, however, her health deteriorates. The upsurge of guerrilla violence causes her to fear for her life once more. She realizes that she has to come to a grave decision and to leave «Capdy Farm». Very soon, she writes to the Solidarity Fund of which she has been a member for many years. She knows only too well that she needs help. To sell the

farm will not be easy, and anyway, would she be able to transfer some of her assets abroad? Everything makes her believe that she will depart unprovided for.

But nothing else is of importance – the only thing which counts now is to save her skin! Every day, the situation becomes more critical around «Capdy Farm». In spite of the protection afforded by four soldiers, the estate is attacked twice, and it is a miracle that she survives the attacks unharmed. In December the final blow is struck – her guard is withdrawn. She learns that nearly 22000 people roam the bush, causing death and violence...

Nearly sixty years soon, and she is forced to quit. To leave this soil she knows so intimately in all its moods, the soil she watched swell under the rains and compose itself under the winds, and now she has to bid farewell after 40 years. And even if the soil is lost, she will still have to fight in

order not to be without any means of livelihood. Her lawyer, knowing the value of a medical certificate showing the deterioration of her health, tries to get some of her assets released at the country's national bank. No good. Finally, by the intervention of an international bank, she is granted the sum of 200 dollars and asked to leave the country.

This she does without delay in the company of her son Dan and his family. They join Henri and his clan in South Africa. Naturally, the reunion is a happy one and it is good to be united again. They settle in the bungalow bursting at the seams, but it works. The cousins get to know one another, they play and they fight – «a good sign», Elsbeth smiles.

But more than to be inactive, it weighs on her mind that she should be a burden to her dear ones. She begins to make plans for the future. What is she looking for? Once more, she tries to get part of the proceeds from the sale

of «Capdy Farm» which has been sold in the meantime by the same international bank which came to her aid before. Suddenly, her impatience goes overboard: there, between the two hills lies the farm which she needs, the ideal opportunity for her son and herself, if only she had the money to buy it...

In June 1981, at the moment when all hope of recovering her money she had to leave behind across the frontier, has left her, one thinks of Elsbeth Kaufmann thousands of kilometers away, at the Gutenbergstrasse in fact. Her application made to the solidarity Fund at the end of 1980 has been examined in Berne...

Before the end of the month of June, Elsbeth Kaufmann receives an answer from the Solidarity Fund of Swiss Abroad. Not for nothing had she been a wise and farsighted woman way back in 1973 when she applied for membership of the Fund! Her case was discussed, and it was decided that she had lost the basic means of her livelihood due to political events. The Solidarity Fund pays her a lumpsum compensation of 40000 Francs. Her son Dan, who is also insured, receives for the same reasons the sum of 30000 Francs.

A.-L. G.

Symposium «New Vistas»

The Second Symposium «New Vistas» will take place on Tuesday and Wednesday

14th/15th May 1985

at the European Centre for World Trade, a new building of the Swiss Industries Fair (MUBA) in Basle.

The theme on the programme is the topical subject «Job Development through Technological Progress». It will be treated by personalities from all over the world.

Swiss resident abroad interested in this event which is organised by the Swiss Industries Fair in Basle in conjunction with the Union of Swiss Chambers of Commerce Abroad, should apply immediately to the address below, as the number of places is limited:

Symposium «New Vistas»
Congress Secretariat
P.O. Box
4021 Basle, Switzerland
Telephone: prefix number from abroad plus
61 26 20 20
Telex: 62 685 fairs ch

You will then be sent an application form and all documentation.

Would you like to know more about the Solidarity Fund and its advantages?

It is good advice to fill in the slip below and send it to the Solidarity Fund of Swiss Abroad, Gutenbergstrasse 6, 3011 **Berne**, Switzerland.

Name: _____

First Name(s): _____

Exact address: _____

Occupation: _____

Registered at the Swiss Embassy/
Consulate of... _____

Do you have children under age? _____