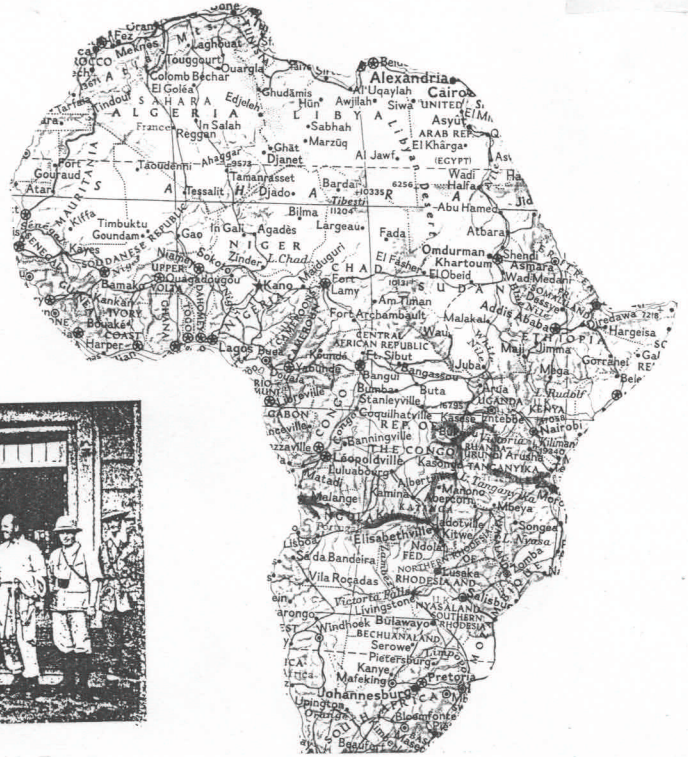
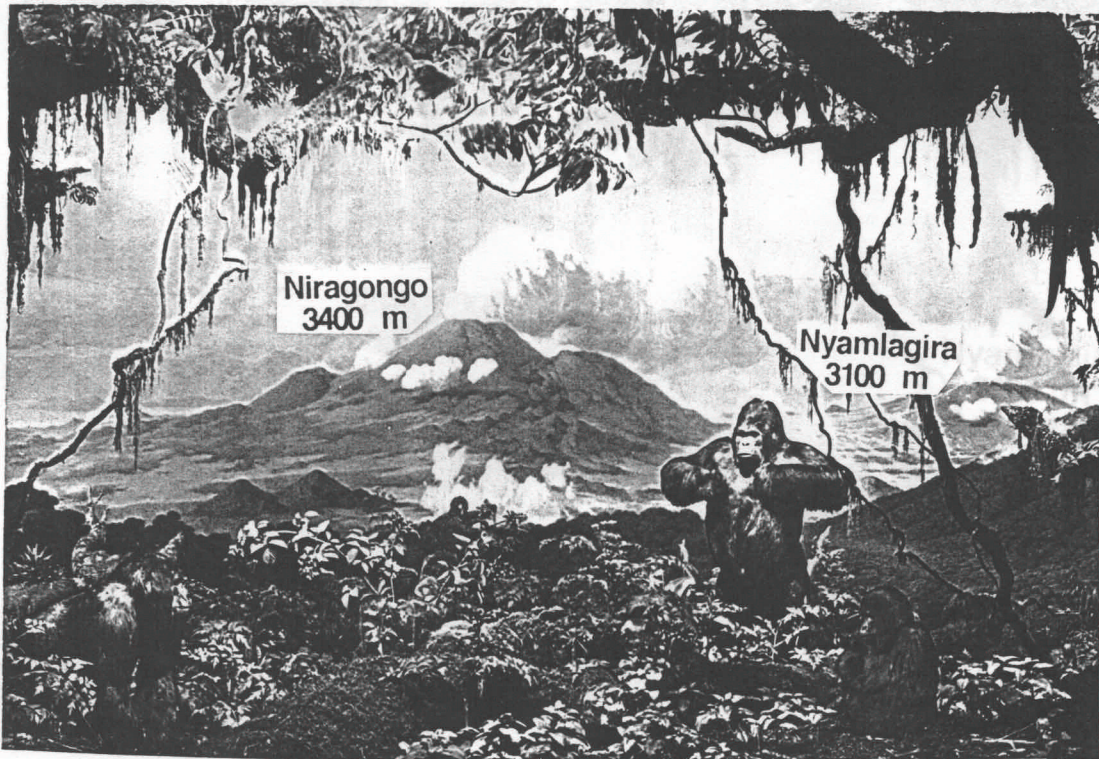


Across Africa, August to October 1938

Sponsored by Professor Franz Linke, University of Frankfurt to provide to the new generation of University Associate Professors the experience of tropical environments



At Goma ready for the *Nyamlagira Safari*,
Suckstorff
Göttingen, Geophysics,
Gley,
Frankfurt, Geography
Lettau,
Leipzig, Meteor-Geophysics
Orth,
Heidelberg, Botany
Büttner,
Kiel, Bioclimatology



Diorama in: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park, New York

Memories of Africa, recalled in a New York City Museum

-- Written down in March of 1995 --

This story is about Ruanda-Urundi.. In 1938 I, as one of the five "junior professors" selected by Professor Linke, traversed tropical Africa by rail, lake- and river-boat, and occasionally by car. We went by slow boat from Genua, through Suez, Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean. I came ashore at Dar.esSaalam on 18 Aug. 1938. I left Africa in Loanda, Angola, on 15 Oct., 1938, to return again by slow boat on the Atlantic Ocean via Teneriffa to Rotterdam.

After the war, while on "per-diem contract" with the USAF, my office was temporarily located --from Sept. 1947 to Sept. 1948 -- at Fort Monmouth, near Red Bank, NJ. On several weekends I took the short commuter-trainride to New York city. With 9-year old memories of Africa still vividly on my mind I visited the Museum of Natural History and was delighted by the sight of a huge diorama in "Akely African Hall" with a life-size group of african mountain gorillas.

It was not the apes but the naturalistically painted background which caught and held my eyes. It shows the two peaks of the Virunga mountains which I had climbed in 1938, the still active volcanos *Nyiragongo*, 11,400 ft high, close to *Lake Kivu* (just visible on the left of the picture) and *Nyamlagira*, 10,026 ft, shown in some distance, actually about 20 miles from the lake.

From September 9 to 18, 1938, we stayed at *Goma*, a resort village with a motel and inn at the shore of Lake Kivu, at an altitude of 4,700 ft. The tropical climate here is delightful. The belgian colonial government had high hopes for developing here "a Switzerland of the Central Tropics". Professor Linke knew that, and had planned Goma to be the major waystation of our traverse. It gave us the chance to extend the altitude range of our meteorological-botanical observations..

The climb of Nyamlagira had been pre-arranged. We were amazed and amused about the motel manager's cumbersome outfitting of our two-day "tourist-safari" including overnight stay in a small cabin on the flat crater bottom. This shelter was maintained by the government for use by visiting volcanologists and tourists. Provided were not only necessities, such as lunch boxes, bottled water, blankets, but also bed linen, tablecloth, silverware, pots and pans, wine bottles and glasses, and a few live chicken to be cooked at the camp. All this was carried by more than a dozen porters. Led by two

guides.our "safari" followed in single-file a marked trail, from the end of a car-track (at about 6,000 ft altitude) to the cabin at 9,900 ft. altitude. The guides forbade any step sideways into the forest or to pick leaves or twigs.

Back in Goma, Buettner, Suckstorff, and I visited the general-store merchant, an Austrian, who had climbed both peaks many times. He said, for Nyiragongo you need merely a lunch-box and two native guides for cutting the trail through the dense jungle below about 8,000 ft altitude. We accepted, let him hire the guides. One brought along a teen-age boy. We started in the morning of September 16. On the clear rocky slope, the boy and I pushed ahead and reached the crater's unbelievably sharp rim before noon. It was most fascinating to watch both the sight and the boy's reaction. Obviously, he looked for the first time in his life down the about 2,000 ft of the crater wall to the smoking bottom. On both safaris we were drenched by heavy tropical showers. We did not meet gorillas.

There were scientific benefits derived from both climbs. My measurements of atmospheric condensation nuclei were used to estimate the contribution by volcanoes to a global balance. . Most impressive was the ascent by the gradual change of tropical vegetation with altitude. The Nyamlagira trail led us for an hour through a forest consisting uniformly of 20 to 30 feet trees the tallest members of the *ericaceous* family, directly related to the heather, the lovely low weed of temperate forests.

Before my departure in July, I talked to the manager of the largest photo-store in Leipzig.. Agfa had just put on the market a 36-mm color film for slides. The manager warned that nobody knew how it would do in the tropics. I bought -- to my later regret -- only two rolls. After sixty years my slides are still worth to look at, especially the close-up showing red-glowing lava seams in a small side-crater of Nyamlagira.

In the 1950s, Nyiragongo erupted, causing wide-spread damage along Lake Kivu. But the most terrible "eruptions" occurred around 1990, with uncontrolled slaughter of and by Watusi and other native tribes.