

The TRUE GREEN ALLIANCE

Press Release

Kenya's Ivory Burn 2016 History repeating itself?

Kenya's disgraceful burning of 105 tonnes of elephant ivory and 1 350 kg of rhino horn, on 30th April 2016, was history repeating itself.

In 1992, The South African Guardian and Weekly Newspaper invited me to share a public platform at Wits University with Kenya's sycophantic animal rightist, Richard Leaky - who was, at that time, still the Director of the Kenyan Wildlife Service (KWS). We debated the elephant management controversy.

Kenya's controversial burning of 12 tonnes of ivory in 1989 was, then, still a very hot topic.

During the intermission - whilst Leaky and I were having a quiet cup of tea together - I asked him outright: *"How can you justify burning US\$ 3 million worth of ivory on a continent which is crying out for international aid, and where poverty faces many human communities?"*

"Hah!" he retorted with delight. *"You obviously don't know the full story. You see..."* he explained, *"The American government approached me and asked me what the value of Kenya's stockpile of ivory was. I already knew the answer so I told them – US\$ 3 million".* (The price of ivory is much higher today!)

“ ‘Would you be prepared to publicly burn it?’ they asked me.”

“ ‘And why should I do that?’ I asked them.”

“ ‘Because we believe that you support the proposed CITES ivory trade ban’ they said. ‘And because we believe that, if the proposal is to succeed, it will be necessary to create a huge spectacle - one extravagant enough to catch the imagination of world society. A huge pile of burning elephant tusks will do just that,’ they replied.”

“ ‘And what will Kenya get out of it?’ I asked them.” Leaky smiled at me then: *“That is how it started,”* he asserted.

“And, in the end, what DID Kenya get out of it?” I asked Leaky.

“We were given an outright grant of US\$ 150 million to restructure Kenya’s tourism industry,” Leaky grinned smugly. *“And that was followed by another US\$ 150 million which is being spread over the next ten years. This latter amount is being used to reinforce the tourism enterprises that we set up with the original grant. The second 150 million dollars is a soft, low interest loan. And we are in the middle of spending that money right now,”* he beamed.

“So you burned the ivory!”

“So we burned US\$ 3 million worth of ivory,” Leaky agreed, *“and in return the Americans gave us US\$ 300 million for doing so.”* He grinned then like a Cheshire cat. *“So, at a cost of US\$ 3 million,*

Kenya gained US\$ 300 million. That, to my way of thinking, is a pretty good bargain.... don't you think?"

Two most important messages emanate from this tale:

(1). The burning of the ivory was not Kenya's idea - although the 1989 ivory bonfire was hailed by the international press as giving a clear message to the world that "AFRICA" was not prepared to tolerate the alleged continued commercial poaching of its elephants by the much vaunted Chinese 'mafia'.

(2). The American administration was working "in cahoots" with the accredited animal rights NGOs at CITES - who, that year, had proposed and unanimously endorsed the ivory trade ban. There is no doubt at all, however, that the American administration also wanted the ivory trade ban established; and there is no doubt at all that their connivance with Leakey over the bonfire was to reinforce what the animal rightist NGOs had planned and were doing at CITES.

Furthermore, although the proposal for the CITES ivory trade ban in 1989 was signed by the Tanzanian president, it was Britain's Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) (A radical animal rightist NGO) that compiled and wrote the protocol; and it was they who orchestrated the entire charade. Without their intervention, planning and the execution of their plan, there would have been no ivory trade ban proposal in 1989.

So the 1989 CITES trade ban proposal was not an African initiative at all. Nor was the proposal made by an official CITES

delegate. It was contrived and executed entirely by a British animal rights NGO.

And now we have a repeat performance in 2016. Just prior to this year's CITES convention in Johannesburg, we have had an ivory bonfire in Kenya that is 10 times bigger than the one in 1989; and what do we have on the forthcoming CITES agenda? An animal rights' orchestrated proposal to place a complete ban on the entire wildlife trade worldwide!

I wonder who paid who (in Kenya) this time round? Someone, or some organisation, must have greased at least one very important Kenyan palm to get the country to agree to such an expensive bonfire(?) - which, this year, sent over US\$ 200 million worth of ivory and rhino horn up in smoke.

The irony of this whole debacle is that when the fires were roaring, Uhuru Kenyatta - Kenya's current president - proudly proclaimed: *"Ivory is worthless unless it is on elephants"*.

I don't think Uhuru's mother, 'Mamma Ngina' - currently considered to be the richest woman in Africa - will agree with him!

Ngina Kenyatta is reputed to have been 'the chief butcher' in the continuous commercial poaching events that took place in Kenya in the 1970s and 1980s. During that period - as First Lady of the Land - it is alleged that she promised immunity from arrest to her army of village poachers who systematically reduced Kenya's elephant population from an estimated 270 000 to 20 000 in less

than 20 years – during which time she also ordered the killing of 10 000 black rhinos for their horns.

Between 1977 and 1993 Tanzania's elephants were said to have been reduced from 365 000 to 53 000 in a similar, but separate, exercise.

The so-called '*Chinese mafia*' and East Africa's '*greedy peasants*' - whom the animal rightist NGOs accused jointly of being the people behind these wildlife crimes - were not the real culprits at all. Those who orchestrated the poaching events were Kenya's and Tanzania's political and social elite!

Nevertheless, a mass of poverty-stricken and unemployed rural peasants were guilty of pulling many of the triggers. They acted, however, (according to the media and others) under instructions from '*the highest authorities in the land.*'

The poached ivory (and rhino horn) was periodically containerised and shipped out to the Far Eastern markets, without CITES export permits (but with presidential approvals), from East Africa's own Indian Ocean seaports. The raping of East Africa's elephants and rhinos in the 1970s and 1980s, therefore, happened within what amounted to national, institutional and industrial business phenomena.

The 1989 CITES ivory trade ban - ostensibly instituted to 'save' the African elephant from extinction - therefore, was a complete farce.

Now we have the same cycle - almost act for act - repeating itself. The animal rightists' objective, this time round, is the total destruction of the wildlife trade. And when you add up all the markers, the current American administration is, once again, deeply embedded in the conspiracy.

The tragedy is that, if the current American administration and its animal rightist NGO surrogates succeed, wildlife throughout Africa will be doomed. And South Africa's commercial wildlife industry will be destroyed.

Don't anybody think otherwise than that the current American administration is working hand-in-glove with the animal rights brigade (again) with regard to their joint onslaught in Africa at this time! Neither of them, therefore, can be called a friend of Africa; of Africa's people; or of Africa's wildlife.

“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.” Sun Tzu. The Art of War.

There is a lot at stake here, and the people of southern Africa should not be in any way complacent about all the animal rights propaganda that is being constantly forced down their throats.

Ron Thomson.