

Bwana Brian

Brian Mulroney & Co. are the latest, but by no means the first denizens of Ottawa, to contract the dreaded disease called Zambesi fever.

A highly contagious infection passed easily by incestuous ideological intercourse, Zambesi fever first erupted and spread like wildfire through Ottawa during the Pierre Trudeau years.

Here is how you get the dreaded malady. An Ottawa bureaucrat first goes to an outfitting store and stocks up on chic bush wear. Then it's off on a government aircraft for an all-taxpayers'-expense junket to black Africa. On arrival, a greeting by droves of smiling, salaaming officials. Then cocktails, dinners, a lion safari, watching leopards by moonlight, more sightseeing.

Next, the big moment. A fat aid check is handed over to beaming African hosts. Millions of tax dollars from Canadians that will likely as not end up in Switzerland. No matter, though. Ottawa's aid bureaucrats and junketing politicians are now stars, celebrities — nay even luminaries. They are ... *bwanas!*

For Canadians, deprived in the past of an empire or colonies, being a *bwana* is heady stuff. One whiff of this elixir and you come down with Zambesi fever. Pastyminded bureaucrats from Hull suddenly see themselves transformed by the magic of taxpayers' money into great white hunters.

Indeed, where else in the world can Canadians get such a reception? Who else lays out red carpets and safaris for our officials better than threadbare African nations like Zambia, Tanzania, Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe?

and the great white hunters

and now by Mulroney, southern Africa is a vital "sphere of influence" for Canada. Sure.

After all the money we've spent there, southern Africans should be saying "eh" by now. The influence is, not surprisingly, only in the fuzzy heads of our legions of glad-handing, expense-account, high-living aid officials and their delighted wives.

And while Mulroney postures over sanctions against South Africa, many financial experts are predicting that our wretched beaverbuck will sink downward to 60¢ U.S. — or even lower. Talk about fiddling while Rome burns.

Now, I wonder, what will happen in our "sphere of influence" when our African pals suddenly discover that their Canadian aid dollars will only buy half the number of blondes and only half the bottles of champagne in London. Will they still smile and say *bwana* when Claridges Hotel won't accept Canadian funny money any longer?

Well, if Africans won't take Canadian wampum, our bureaucrats will have to dish out U.S. dollars. We can't afford to allow minor details like our collapsing economy and runaway federal deficit interfere with funding Canada's African pals. Nor those nagging reports that Canadian aid is being used by Ethiopia to run concentration camps.

You just don't worry about such things when Zambesi fever strikes. And there's only one possible cure. If a high enough level of concern could be developed for the oppressed Tahitians, perhaps our hard-working aid officials might shuck off Zambesi fever in favor of Polynsiatits.



Eric MARGOLIS

So what if they are Marxist police states, or that Canadian aid money never seems to produce anything except toothy smiles? When you have Zambesi fever, such trivial details amount to less than a baboon's bark.

If you, as an oppressed taxpayer, have ever wondered why our Ottawa fat cats are so concerned about oppressed Africans, think about this. Giving your money to Bangladesh, for example, means going to some horrid, dusty village in the middle of nowhere — or to a frightful urban slum. Aiding hungry South American Indians means a slog across the bleak, icy-cold Andes Mountains. That's no fun at all.

Why deal with such miserable places when you can go on safaris, ride elephants and have lots of happy African socialist officials pat you on the back and tell you how wonderful you are?

Perhaps it's just a coincidence that most of Ottawa's aid missions seem to head off to southern Africa during January, February and early March. Are Africans hungrier during those months? Or do Ottawa's winters somehow sharpen concern for the hungry blacks in Africa?

Of course, as we were gravely informed by Trudeau,