

The Ebola bats: How deforestation unleashed the deadly outbreak

By James Grundvig

Four decades after the first outbreak of the Ebola virus in Central Africa, misconceptions and misinformation about the disease abound. No one from the CDC to the WHO has been able to articulate the scope of the problem well.

During the first outbreak, Zaire wasn't the first place where Ebola crossed into the human population. It was the second area. But it was the first place visited by foreign disease investigators and where a nun, who succumbed to the virus, had her blood sent to Peter Piot in Antwerp to be tested for yellow fever. Dr Piot would become the co-discoverer of Ebola, so named for the river in the northern part of the country.

That was in October 1976.

Earlier that year, and just a couple of weeks before America's bicentennial celebration when Operation Sail would complete the pipeline that would deliver yet another

unknown virus to America – AIDS, a cotton manufacturing plant across the border in Nzara, Sudan, became “ground zero” for the Ebola outbreak.

At the plant, three workers would fall to the disease. They didn't live in the same village, didn't socialise in the same groups and didn't have much contact during the workday. Then how did each one of them get infected?

Recalling the outbreak of Ebola in Sudan, in *Ebola Then and Now* in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, doctors Joel G. Breman and Karl M. Johnson wrote:

“In 1976, in the 120-bed Yam-buku Mission Hospital in Zaire, the virus initially spread through use of unsterilised syringes and needles. Of the hospital's 17 staff members, 13 became sick and 11 died. The hospital was closed when the medical director and three Belgian missionaries died from Ebola.”

Bats as the Ebola ‘reservoir’ species

What the WHO/International Study Team later found on the

roof of the 2000-employee Nzara cotton factory were thousands of free-tailed bats.

Although no bat samples were ever collected off the roof and tested for Ebola antibodies at that time, African migratory fruit bats have since become the most likely vector, the natural “reservoir” for the Ebola virus.

Dr Piot, with Sebastian Funk, noted in a recent epidemiology paper, *Mapping Ebola in wild animals for better disease control*:

“Fruit bats, on the other hand, do not appear to fall ill when infected with Ebola. As such, bats are considered the most likely candidates for the reservoir species in which the virus lingers between outbreaks in humans.

Antibodies against the Ebola virus have been found not only in three bat species in Central Africa (Leroy et al, 2005), but also in four bat species in West Africa (Hayman et al, 2012).”

Besides direct contact with fruit bats, there are two other modes of transmitting Ebola

to other animals. They are bat guano, in which Ebola is passed through the stool, and fruit dropped during daily migrations. Then animals on the ground, from pigs to primates, can acquire and pass the virus on to humans.

The Ebola outbreak of West Africa

The latest and most lethal eruption of Ebola, already outstripping all previous Ebola outbreaks combined in terms of the number deaths and those infected, began in December 2013 in a remote forest village of Guinea.

The first victim was a 2-year-old infant, who was bitten by a fruit bat. The child would fall ill and die, with Ebola claiming both his sister and mother. At their funeral, Ebola spread to the viewers.

Five months later, Ebola would show up in people in Liberia and then Sierra Leone. The WHO just declared Nigeria “Ebola-free”.

What makes this outbreak so different, beyond Ebola's jump to healthcare workers in Spain and the United States, has been its move into densely populated



A fruit bat at the Amneville zoo, eastern France.

towns, where the virus used to be only found in the most remote regions of the African jungle.

A New York City ICU nurse, who treated dozens of AIDS patients during the 1980's epidemic, said, on condition of anonymity: “Ebola is far worse and scarier than AIDS ever was. The Ebola virus appears so easy to transmit, even when wearing contamination suits, respirators and double-gloves with taped seams in isolation. Better protocols and training need to be put in place than what has been demonstrated so far by the CDC.”

Like New York City taking over

its own security from the Federal Government to defend against terrorism after the 9/11 attacks, New York hospitals have come together to get prepared for the first group of Ebola patients. They are doing so without the CDC.

So what has changed with Ebola in the past 40 years?

Deforestation run amok

In a prescient report by disease author Sonia Shah in the October 2009 *Yale Environment 360*, *The Spread of New Diseases: The Climate Connection*, wrote:

“Look up into the tree canopy of the urban tropics in South Asia,

Australia or equatorial Africa, and as often as not you will find masses of *Pteropus* fruit bats, hanging from the branches like so many furry stalactites. Their forests cut down by bulldozers, torched by slash-and-burn farmers or desiccated from a disrupted climate, fruit bats increasingly intrude upon human communities, adapting to the orchards and cultivated fruit trees of the cities, farms and suburbs that have subsumed their forests.”

With those bats come diseases that spread to humans and a growing body of research suggests that their microbes – as well as other

pathogens that jump from animals to people – are spreading more rapidly because of climate change and deforestation.

The outbreak in West Africa is Zaire Ebola, one of five species of the virus. So how did it travel from the middle of the Congo to the western forests of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone?

Studies on the migration of fruit bats confirm their thousands-of-miles-a-year range. All three nations have deforested more than 75 per cent of their land, forcing the inexorable meet-up between Ebola-carrying bats and people. This was the cause for the 2007 Ebola outbreak in western Congo.

Ebola ‘Out of Africa’

In 1989, a new strain of Ebola showed up from the Philippines with monkeys quarantined in Reston, Va, since called “Ebola Reston”. That fifth species has not been harmful to humans, but a 2009 outbreak on a pig farm in the northern part of the Philippines gave WHO investigators pause.

With evidence that deforestation has pushed virus-host bats to the edge of civilisation, with warming and changing rainfall patterns impacting the climate of Africa, the next Ebola outbreak will likely come sooner and be more virulent than the current scourge of human suffering. It will also be more global.

Since the next outbreak is what governments and health organisations of the world need to focus on and plan for, it's going to take a lot more money and resources, with an array of professional disciplines greater than the recently appointed “Ebola Czar” to contain the disease in the near future.

Ebola 2020 should be planned for now and not put on the back burner. It should start with the study of the migratory routes of fruit bats, continue with persuading a change in the local diets that include the bats and bush meat, and deliver forest management and sustainability practices to rebuild the natural barriers that once separated people from the dark recesses of nature.

Without a focused, collaborative effort, the next Ebola eruption might become a global pandemic. Then it will be too late.

James Grundvig is a contributor to *Epoch Times*.

Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party

The ‘Nine Commentaries’ is the book that is disintegrating the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and changing China. This award-winning Epoch Times editorial series discloses the true history and nature of the CCP. Now it is serialised here.

Commentary Nine (cont) On the tyranny of the Chinese Communist Party

V. The Great Leap Forward: Creating falsehoods to test people's loyalty

After the Anti-Rightist Movement, China became afraid of truth. Everyone participated in listening to false words, telling false tales, making up false stories and avoiding and covering up the truth through lies and rumours. The Great Leap Forward was a nationwide, collective exercise in lying.

The people of the entire nation, under the direction of the Chi-

nese Communist Party's (CCP) evil spectre, did many ridiculous things. Both liars and those being lied to were betrayed. In this campaign of lies and ridiculous actions, the CCP implanted its violent, evil energy into the spiritual world of the Chinese people.

At the time, many people sang songs promoting the Great Leap Forward: “I am the Great Jade Emperor. I am the Dragon King. I can move the mountains and rivers. Here I come.”[i]

Policies such as achieving a grain production of 75,000kg (165,347 pounds) per hectare (2.47 acres), doubling steel production and surpassing Britain in 10 years, and the United States in 15 years, were attempted year after year. These policies resulted in a grave, nationwide famine that cost millions of lives.

During the eighth plenum of the Eighth CCP Central Com-

mittee meeting held in Lushan in 1959, who among the participants disagreed with General Peng Dehuai's[iii] view that the Great Leap Forward initiated by Mao Zedong was foolish? However, supporting Mao's policy or not marked the line between loyalty and betrayal, or the line between life and death.

In a story from Chinese history, when Zhao Gao[iiii] claimed that a deer was a horse, he knew the difference between a deer and a horse, but he purposefully called a deer a horse to control public opinion, silence debate and expand his own power.

The result of the Lushan Plenum was that even Peng Dehuai was forced to sign a resolution condemning and purging himself from the central government. Similarly, in the later years of the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping was forced to promise that he

The Great Leap Forward was a nationwide, collective exercise in lying.

would never appeal against the government's decision to remove him from his posts.

Society relies on past experience to understand the world and expand its horizons. The CCP, however, has taken away opportunities from the people to learn from historical experiences and lessons. The official censorship of the media has only helped further lower people's capacity to discern good from bad.

After each political movement, the younger generations have only been given the Party's uplifting

accounts and have been deprived of the analyses, ideals and experiences of the insightful people from older generations. As a result, people have only scattered information as the basis for understanding history and judging new events, thinking themselves correct while deviating thousands of miles from the truth. Thus the CCP's policy of keeping people ignorant has been carried out thoroughly.

Notes

(i) Both the Jade Emperor and Dragon King are Chinese mythological figures. The Jade Emperor, known formally as the August Personage of Jade and called informally by children and commoners as Grandpa Heaven, is the ruler of heaven and among the most important gods of the Chinese Daoist pantheon. Dragon kings are the divine rulers of the four seas.

(ii) Peng Dehuai (1898–1974): communist Chinese general and political

leader. Peng was the chief commander in the Korean War, vice-premier of the State Council, Politburo member and minister of defence from 1954–1959.

He was removed from his official posts after disagreeing with Mao's leftist approaches at the CCP's Lushan Plenum in 1959.

(iii) Zhao Gao (birth date unknown, died 210 BC) was the chief eunuch during the Qin Dynasty. In 210 BC, after Emperor Qin Shi Huang's death, Zhao Gao, Prime Minister Li Si, and the emperor's second son, Hu Hai, forged two wills of the emperor, making Hu Hai the new emperor and ordering Crown Prince Fu Su to commit suicide. Later, conflicts grew between Zhao Gao and Hu Hai. Zhao brought in a deer to the royal court and said it was a horse. Only a handful of the officials dared to disagree and say it was a deer. Zhao Gao believed those officials who called the animal a deer were against him and removed them from their court positions.

QUITTING THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY
www.NineCommentaries.com

181,884,336 Quit
as of 3.30am, 30/10/14

Thousands of Chinese people are quitting the Chinese Communist Party and its affiliate organisations every day through a special website established by Epoch Times. Others are quitting by calling an

international hotline, posting statements on public walls and poles, or writing on banknotes. Read the full “Nine Commentaries” book, as well as recent statements from Chinese people who have quit the Party:

