
The DDT ban: ecologism as a weapon of mass destruction

Before the use of DDT, in India alone, 2.5 million died of malaria each year. After its introduction, deaths dropped to 1,000. Marjorie Mazel Hecht reports on the hoax that banned this life-saver.

Directly and indirectly, environmentalism is responsible for the deaths of millions of people each year, most of them in the Third World.

As a successful population control measure, environmentalism has no rival. The case study of the ban on DDT, presented here, shows why this is so. The DDT story shows how a policy that intentionally results in millions of *annual* deaths from disease and starvation—surpassing by far the Holocaust death toll—was imposed in the United States, top down, to be carried out in the name of “protecting the environment.”

The environmentalist kill factor is based on a simple principle. Advances in science and technology increase productivity and increase the numbers of people that can be supported by an economy. People live longer and better. If the advanced technologies come under attack—for whatever spurious reason—and are stopped, productivity falls, more people die, and more people die younger.

The specific environmentalist kill factor depends on the importance of the banned or restricted substance or activity for moving the society forward. The ban on DDT has a high environmentalist kill factor; restrictions on advanced energy technologies (nuclear energy, for example) have an even higher environmentalist kill factor. Cutting out more and more benefits of technology over the past 25 years has vastly increased the effectiveness of the environmental kill factor by lowering living standards and, hence, resistance of the population, particularly in the Third World, so that they are easy prey for new and old pests and diseases.

DDT was banned in the United States in 1972, not on the basis of scientific evidence, but on the basis of scare stories invented and perpetuated in order to shape public perception

that DDT was bad for wildlife, plant life, and human life. The real reason for the ban was that in the three decades after World War II, DDT had become the greatest life saver in human history. It was cheap (17¢ per pound), safe, and effective in killing the insects that carry lethal diseases and decimate crops. For these reasons, DDT was at the top of the malthusian list of technologies to eliminate.

During the war, DDT helped soldiers at the front survive without lice, fleas, and other pests that carry disease—typhus, for example—or just plain make life miserable. For those displaced persons who managed to survive the war, it prevented the spread of insect-borne epidemics in the crowded refugee camps. In contrast, during World War I, before DDT was in use, 40 million people had typhus on the European fronts, and there were 5 million typhus deaths.

In the immediate postwar period, DDT aided development efforts worldwide by making it possible to protect crops from pests and thus increase yields. At the same time, DDT spraying prevented many diseases, in particular malaria, which is known as “the queen of diseases” because it affects so many millions in tropical countries, weakening or killing its victims. It is estimated that agricultural production increases as much as 40% where malaria is controlled.

Contrary to the myths promoted by environmental groups and the press, DDT does not cause cancer in humans, does not cause birds’ eggshells to thin, and is not long-lasting in the soil or in ocean water. DDT also does not cause emasculation—the latest in a long series of scare stories (see accompanying article). In all the years of DDT usage, there were no human deaths caused by DDT use; none of the estimated 130,000 spray men during the years of DDT use ever got sick from it.

How did the ban happen?

How did a beneficial man-made substance, one acknowledged to be the greatest saver of lives in history, come to be banned?

The story goes back to 1962, when biologist Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, a diatribe against pesticides and, in particular, against DDT. Carson wove facts and falsehoods together to portray a world that would soon be devoid of birds, bees, and wildlife in general, because of indiscriminate pesticide use. Supporting Carson were the malthusian elite, including a showcase for her propaganda in the *New Yorker* magazine and support from the publisher of *Consumer Reports*. In the next few years, groups like the Environmental Defense Fund, the Audubon Society, and the Sierra Club used Carson's emotional appeals to recruit members and raise money—lots of money.

By 1971, the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) had forced the Environmental Protection Agency to hold hearings on DDT. There were seven months of hearings and 9,000 pages of testimony, at the end of which the EPA hearing examiner, Edmund Sweeney, ruled in April 1972 that on the basis of the scientific evidence, DDT should *not* be banned. "DDT is not carcinogenic, mutagenic, or teratogenic to man, [and] these uses of DDT do not have a deleterious effect on fish, birds, wildlife, or estuarine organisms," Sweeney ruled. Every major scientific organization in the United States and worldwide had testified for continued DDT use.

Two months after the hearings, EPA Administrator William Ruckelshaus unilaterally banned DDT. He admitted that he was doing so for *political* reasons, based on the public perception of DDT and not on the scientific evidence. Ruckelshaus was not present at the hearings, and he said that he did not look at the transcript.

Had Ruckelshaus read the DDT hearing transcript, he would have seen, among other things, that the testimony presented by the witnesses for the EDF, a group he personally supported, was shoddy and, in some cases, deliberately false. For example, Dr. George Woodwell, testified about a 1967 article in *Science* magazine, coauthored with the EDF's chief scientist, in which he reported very high residues of DDT in a Long Island salt marsh. When forced to testify under oath at the DDT hearings, he admitted that he had sampled the salt marsh in the very place where the Mosquito Commission spray truck emptied out! When asked if he ever published a retraction, he stated, "I never felt that this was necessary."

Almost unanimously, the press pushed the lies about DDT. The *New York Times* unabashedly advised in an editorial that EPA Administrator Ruckelshaus should ignore the verdict of the EPA's hearing examiner. The *Times* also libeled the scientists defending DDT. When a group of scientists, including Tom Jukes and Gordon Edwards, challenged the lie printed in the *Times* on Aug. 14, 1972, that

they were in the pay of big industry, the scientists won the libel suit. But that verdict was then overturned on appeal by a judge who was a personal friend of Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, publisher of the *Times*.

The death toll

Dr. J. Gordon Edwards, professor of entomology at San Jose State University in California, conservatively estimated in 1984 that *100 million people die per year* as a result of the anti-pesticide campaign by environmentalist groups. Edwards, who has taught biology and entomology at the university for 46 years, is one of several scientists who have continued to fight the lies about DDT.

"I can't see any good reason for these actions except that the environmentalists intend to cut the population in the poorer nations of the world," Edwards said.

The death toll from malaria alone, as catalogued by Edwards, is staggering. In India, before DDT, there were more than 100 million cases of malaria and the disease killed 2.5 million people each year. After the government initiated a DDT spraying program, the number of cases dropped to fewer than 100,000, with fewer than 1,000 deaths per year. After the ban on DDT, the numbers of malaria cases and deaths began to climb.¹

The pattern was similar in other nations. Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), for example, had 3 million cases of malaria in the early 1950s, and more than 12,000 deaths. Spraying started in 1946. By 1963, the total number of malaria cases was only 17, and there were no deaths. When the spraying program stopped, the malaria rates again climbed into the millions.

Edwards calculated that in Africa alone, the cost of health care, as a result of malaria, plus the loss of human resources,

What is DDT?

DDT, dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane, belongs to the family of pesticides known as chlorinated hydrocarbons. It is a contact insecticide that penetrates the external body surface of the insect (the cuticle) and acts as a nerve poison, killing rapidly. Its particular effectiveness is its staying power. In the malaria eradication campaign, one or two sprayings a year of walls inside houses would control the mosquito population.

Because DDT was nontoxic to human beings, those doing the spraying did not need special clothing or masks.

The replacements for DDT are more toxic, more costly, and less effective.

What the scientists say about DDT

The National Academy of Sciences, 1970: It is estimated that, in little more than two decades, DDT has prevented 500 million human deaths, due to malaria, that would otherwise have been inevitable.

Wayland J. Hayes, Jr., *Toxicology of Pesticides*, 1975: When DDT was introduced, there was an unprecedented increase in the production of those crops on which it was used, and the increase corresponded to the degree of its use. Crops such as cotton, peanuts, and potatoes, on which pesticides are used most extensively, showed gains ranging from 68 to 119%. The production of alfalfa seed increased from 300 to 600% in states where the crop was treated intensively with insecticides, but remained essen-

tially stable in states where the crop is raised for hay and, therefore, receives little treatment with insecticides.

Dr. Ed Remmers, American Council of Science and Health, 1993: DDT has certainly saved more lives than any other man-made chemical that has ever been made so far. . . . Who are the opponents of DDT? It's the anti-population group, by and large, the people who are trying to promote zero population growth, or the people who would like to reduce the Earth's population back down to 1 billion. . . . There are groups out there that have this policy of actual genocide.

Dr. J. Gordon Edwards, 1993: DDT saved hundreds of millions of acres of forest in North America from decimation by gypsy moths and other insect pests, and thereby prevented extensive flood damage and loss of topsoil. . . . In the 1950s, DDT eradicated gypsy moth populations in the eastern United States wherever it was properly applied.

would reach \$213 billion this year.

Malaria may be the "queen" of deadly diseases, but DDT also controlled other insects that transmit killer diseases that affect millions: for example, the tse-tse fly, which causes sleeping sickness; the black fly responsible for "river blindness"; and the sand flies that cause leishmaniasis.

According to malaria specialist Dr. Hans Lobel at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, there are 200 to 300 million cases per year of malaria.

Hoax 'mother'

The campaign against DDT was the "mother" of many environmental hoaxes that followed, from louseworts endangered by a dam, to Alar, to global warming and the ozone hole. The pattern is the same: A catastrophic scenario is put forward from the top down, the environmentalist groups campaign around it, and the media promote it via their "news" coverage. No matter how wild the scenario, once it is repeated often enough, people come to accept it as "fact."

How many people today know that the official decision made at the EPA hearings on DDT in 1972 was *not* to ban it? Even former EPA Administrator William Ruckelshaus, just last year, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Wall Street Journal* asserting that the science was on his side in the DDT ban—an outright lie. And in this year's celebration of the 25th anniversary of Earth Day, the current EPA administrator put the DDT ban at the top of her list of environmental "accomplishments" of the past 25 years.

The underlying motive in the anti-DDT campaign, as

in every other green campaign, was and still is population control. The genocidal views of England's Prince Philip, who sits at the top of the chain of command of the world's green groups, are amply documented in his own words.²

Other malthusians have been just as frank, from Alexander King, who co-founded and heads the Club of Rome, to the director of the Sierra Club, Michael McCloskey, who said in 1971: "The Sierra Club wants a ban on pesticides, even in countries where DDT has kept malaria under control. . . . By using DDT, we reduce mortality rates in underdeveloped countries without the consideration of how to support the increase in populations." Even more blunt, according to a report by entomologist J. Gordon Edwards, was the chief scientist for the Environmental Defense Fund, Dr. Charles Wurster. When Wurster was asked by a reporter whether the DDT ban would result in the further use of more toxic insecticides, he replied: "So what. People are the cause of all the problems; we have too many of them; we need to get rid of some of them, and this is as good a way as any."

Can the environmental kill factor be reversed? The answer is yes. The first step is to tell the truth about the consequences of environmentalist policies—the real death count. Instead of saving this or that cute animal, save human beings, who are, after all, the only creative resource this planet has.

Notes

1. See J. Gordon Edwards, "Malaria: The Killer That Could Have Been Conquered," *21st Century Science & Technology*, Summer 1993.
2. See "The Coming Fall of the House of Windsor," Special Offprint, November 1994, *Executive Intelligence Review*, pp. 20-23.