
Ecocide in Indochina. Barry Weisberg, ed. Canfield Press, a Department of Harper and Row, Inc., San Francisco. 1970. xiv+241 p. \$3.95 (paperback).

This provocative book seems as guilty of overkill as Americans seem guilty of ecocide in Indochina. Admitting the obscure origin of the word, Weisberg states that *ecocide* "originated in the recent concern that chemical warfare in Viet Nam required a concept similar to that of Genocide, relating to the theory of war crimes." Ecocide is more simply defined as "willful destruction of the environment," but Weisberg, continuing his genocidal parallel, qualifies the definition as "the premeditated assault of a nation and its resources against the individuals, culture, and biological fabric of another country and its environment." Such qualification excludes America's spraying, bulldozing, excavating, and channelization in America as ecocide. As Weisberg later concedes, ecocide in Indochina turns out to be ecocide in America as well. The ultimate objective is "the very negation of life itself." Defeatism, with overkill, pervades the book. "There can be no Mekong TVA to restore the nutrient value of the soil, no Marshall Plan to restore intellectually retarded children . . . Can we imagine the end of the war?"

Weisberg's biased panel furthers the overkill. Articles from journals like *Science* are partially excerpted, while articles from *Ramparts* are reprinted. Few contributions are here printed for the first time. Selections from such diverse journals as the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Center Magazine*, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *Friends Journal*, *Liberation*, *New Republic*, *New York Review of Books*, *Ramparts*, *Science*, *Science and Citizen*, *Bulletin of Concerned American Scholars*, and *Transaction* cover defoliation and other ecocidal aspects of American involvement in south-east Asia.

From the opening exclamation to the final sentence, the reader is sadly reminded "The War in Viet Nam . . . will succeed in causing hardship, but not in deterring the North Vietnamese from continuing to fight." Although I rate the book as "alarmistic", I used it as a basis for an Earth Week lecture. It takes alarmists to sound the alarm. Weisberg notes that Americans were very nationalistic in their first Earth Day celebration. His book should render a most cosmopolitan view of ecocide, the willful destruction of the environment. Americans should contemplate the cost of ecocide—to the Vietnamese and to the Americans. Some American lives were saved by the willful defoliation—ecocide—of an underdeveloped nation.

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