

The Deadly Cost of Malaria —And Not Using DDT

by Marjorie Mazel Hecht

Three Billion And Counting

Los Angeles: Frogbite Productions, 2010
DVD, 142 min., Check www.threebillionandcounting.com for availability

This is an excellent documentary on malaria and DDT, exposing how a simple program for spraying with DDT could prevent nearly a million deaths and hundreds of millions of new infections from malaria every year, and put no one in danger. The film would be flawless, if it had only gone one step further, to show that the banning of DDT is not just “how it is,” but a conscious piece of the British Empire’s intention to kill three-quarters of the world’s population.

The film is dedicated to the memory of Dr. J. Gordon Edwards, the San Jose State University entomologist who battled for years to bring the truth of DDT and its life-saving capabilities to the public. That alone should be enough to recommend it for readers of *21st Century*, who are familiar with Edwards’s many articles on malaria and DDT. But there is much more to recommend this film, even for those, like myself, who have followed the fight for DDT for decades.

The Malaria Journey

D. Rutledge Taylor, a young physician who specializes in preventive medicine, wrote and directed the film. His malaria journey began when a patient asked him in 2004 how to protect against West Nile virus. In researching the answer, he was startled to read in a *Nature* magazine article that nearly half a billion people were getting infected with malaria every year. How could that be, in

this day and age, he wondered? And then, when he asked a friend, Dr. Art Robinson, about malaria, he was shocked to hear that DDT use can prevent malaria, but was deliberately withheld from use. “Withdrawal of technology” and “technological genocide” were Robinson’s words. This couldn’t be so, Rutledge thought.



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An African baby with cerebral malaria. Every 30 seconds, one child in Africa dies of malaria.

And so began Rutledge’s saga. His friend challenged him to find out for himself about malaria and DDT, and Rutledge set out to do that, with the help of a film producer friend, Helene Udy, and a camera team. As Udy said in the beginning, all she knew about DDT was that it was “bad,” and she wanted to find out the truth.

The film follows their journey to several African and Asian countries, filming interviews, and to Washington, D.C., for more interviews and document collection.

The images and voices of malaria victims and malaria control officials and physicians are unsettling, indelibly imprinting on your mind the staggering

numbers of people who are poor, and sick, and who die, simply for lack of resources, including DDT. Some of the most telling images, however, are those of the malaria control officials who are visibly afraid to voice their opinion on DDT use in front of the camera. When Rutledge asked the head of the Division of Malaria Control in Kenya if he would use DDT to save lives, the official answered, “I cannot provide a straightforward answer to that.”

Their obvious fear belies those self-righteous DDT critics who claim that DDT was “never banned in Africa,” when the reality is that NGO and government aid programs (most prominently U.S. AID) prohibited funding any program that used DDT. Officials of those programs that now use DDT made it clear to the Rutledge team that they could do this only because they did not depend on outside funding.

Killer Lies

The killer environmentalist lies came out at their most extreme in the interview with John Ken Lukyamuzi in Uganda, who has made a name for himself as a legislator and activist attacking DDT and delaying Uganda’s house-spraying program. He is shown inciting a crowd to “get your machete” when the spraymen come to your house. “You will not be responsible in the eyes of God.” When asked by Rut-

ledge about the 350 people who die of malaria every day in Uganda, he said he didn’t believe it. Pressed further, Lukyamuzi said, “let one die if one has to die.”

There is a lot to learn in the film, and one wishes it would be required viewing for all the knee-jerk anti-DDT true believers, especially those who think there are more “friendly” alternatives for stopping malaria.

For example, it is politically correct to champion bednets as the answer to malaria in Africa, despite the fact that the Roll Back Malaria effort, focussed on bednets, has failed to achieve any roll back in malaria whatsoever. This failure



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D. Rutledge Taylor, who wrote and directed the film.

is fully admitted by the bednet promoters. The UNICEF malaria project officer in Mozambique, where the main funding for UNICEF is to distribute bednets, stated flatly, “People who use nets alone will always get malaria.”

As for the alleged “dangers” of DDT, in addition to many interviews with scientists and others, the Rutledge team visited the DDT manufacturing plant in Cochin, India, the Hindustani Chemical Company. Its chairman, Harry Kumar, told Rutledge that DDT has prevented 500 million deaths—“not a small number.” He emphasized that the government of India pays for the DDT production at a price that the government fixes. The plant makes no money from DDT production, he said, but does it as a social service. Kumar stressed that in the plant’s 50 years of operation, there have been hundreds of workers and not a single case of a problem with DDT.

Another Indian public health official stated that India doesn’t care what the industrialized countries think about DDT. They use it because it’s effective, with no negative consequences. Where it isn’t used, in some remote areas of India, there is malaria and people die.

Washington: More Lies

After 40 days travelling through Asia and Africa, the Rutledge team trekked to

Washington, D.C., to answer the question of why EPA administrator William Ruckelshaus banned DDT in 1972, even though the EPA’s own hearing on DDT ruled that it should not be banned. Rutledge found the 9,000-plus pages of testimony from those hearings in the National Archives, and photocopied every page.* There he found



ample scientific evidence that DDT causes no human harm.

Rutledge’s attempt to ask a U.S. environmental organization about DDT is met with a screechy: “DDT has never stopped malaria. It’s a myth.” This phone interchange is very brief, but conveys the “I don’t care about the truth” hysteria of the Malthusian opposition to DDT.

The film substantiates in many ways that population control is the reason that DDT was banned and is not used more widely in malarial countries. But as su-

perb as it is, “Three Billion and Counting” stays within the confines of the Empire’s left vs. right, liberal vs. conservative, established battleground, which continues to assure the status quo.

To win this fight, the knife must be thrust into the heart of that Empire, whose leading representatives, Prince Philip and the Nazi Prince Bernhard, founded the World Wildlife Fund, and the environmentalist movement, with the intention of perpetuating genocide. Telling the whole truth may not assure accolades or Academy Awards, but it would give the population a chance to understand the brutal intention behind environmentalism.

On the Mark

The film is right on the mark, however, documenting that the ban on DDT is genocide. This is backed up by interviews with a score of scientists and others who have continued to fight for DDT, leaving no doubt that DDT was banned for political, not scientific, reasons—and that this was done deliberately. Each of the common anti-DDT objections is answered one by one, reinforcing the points made in the interviews.



Three Billion and Counting

Above: National Archives boxes containing the 9,000-page transcript of the 1972 EPA hearings on DDT. EPA administrator William Ruckelshaus neither attended the hearings nor read the transcript. He made the decision to ban DDT, against the advice of the EPA hearing administrator.



Left: EPA hearing examiner Edmund Sweeney (center) in a film clip from the 1972 hearings on DDT.

Most touching for me, is the dedication at the end of the film to a dear friend, Dr. J. Gordon Edwards. He fought the lies about DDT through great personal sacrifice, and the film is a fitting tribute to his memory.

There are many zingers in the film, that will surprise even the DDT literate. But I will leave it to you, readers, to find out by seeing the film, buying the DVD when it becomes available, and getting this important documentary shown to schools and community groups.

* The summary statement of the hearing administrator can be read on the *21st Century* website.



Stuart Lewis/EIRNS

Entomologist J. Gordon Edwards speaking at the National Press Club in May 1992, at a press conference commemorating the 20th anniversary of Ruckelshaus's decision to ban DDT for "political" reasons.

Fusion's Long Road to ITER

by Stephen O. Dean

The Quest for a Fusion Reactor: An Insider's Account of the INTOR Workshop

by Weston M. Stacey

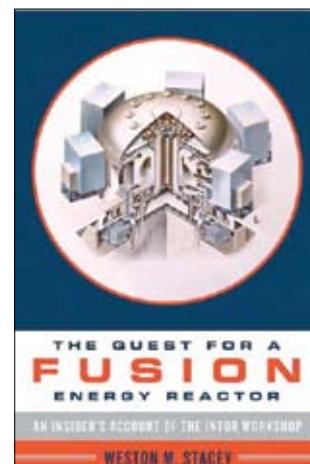
New York: Oxford University Press, 2010

Hardcover: 188 pp., \$24.95

The Arab oil embargo (October 1973-March 1974) caused many countries to seriously question their dependence on Middle East oil as a dominant energy source. In the United States, this took the

form of rapidly increased funding for research and development of alternative energy options. At the United States Atomic Energy Commission, the U.S. fusion program (then called Controlled Thermonuclear Research), under the direction of Robert L. Hirsch, was one of the beneficiaries.

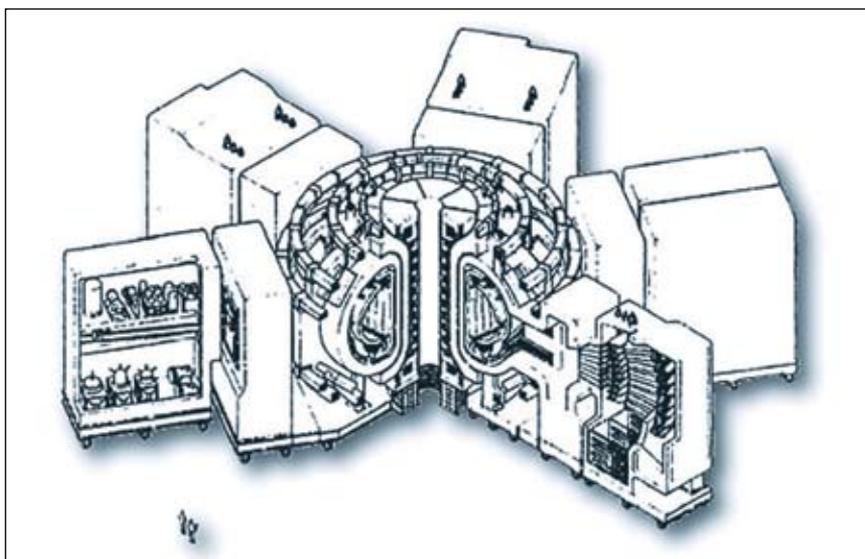
When Hirsch took the helm of the fusion program in early 1972, he wanted to move the fusion program from research into development and deployment as rapidly as possible. As director of the



largest of three divisions reporting to Hirsch, I prepared a decision tree, dated October 1972, describing a plan that included operation of a Physics Test Reactor by 1984, an Experimental Power Reactor by 1991, and a fusion power Demonstration Plant by the year 2000.

When the oil crisis hit, fusion funding was increased from its FY 1973 level of \$40 million to \$332 million in FY 1978 to a high of \$469 million in FY 1984. The Physics Test Reactor, which we named the Tokamak Fusion Test Reactor (TFTR), was authorized in the FY 1976 budget, and began operations in 1983. A similar facility, the Joint European Torus (JET), began operations also about that time.

While these physics test reactors were under construction, attention began to be given to the conceptual designs of the Experimental Power Reactor (EPR) and fusion power plants. In the mid-1970s, author Weston Stacey led a team at Ar-



A 1980s design study, for the Intor Experimental Tokamak Reactor.