

... A SIMPLE ANSWER ...

the plant cover dies, the bare ground becomes as hard as a rock through a process called "laterization." Generations must pass before laterized soil can again be farmed.

In other places, bamboo weeds grow in after the original plants are killed. So tough and stubborn is the bamboo plant that it is almost impossible to get rid of once it has taken over the land.

American planes have also sprayed herbicides over 100,000 acres of the mangroves which line Vietnam's estuaries. Estuaries are coastline bays

Saving Vietnam from the communists can be translated as saving Vietnam from the Vietnamese, even if this means destroying the whole country and the people themselves. The same goes for Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, or

attack the problem

NOW!

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and inlets where fresh water mixes with salt and where, in Vietnam, shoreline mangroves provide breeding grounds that yield premium harvests of fish and shellfish. The Vietnamese have always depended on their estuaries for much of their protein supply.

Now the estuaries of Vietnam have been destroyed. The few fish and shellfish that have survived the destruction cannot be eaten. They are so contaminated as to be poison timebombs for humans.

Poisons that get into soil and water also get into humans, even humans that are born years after the poisons were sprayed. As the lesson of Globe, Arizona shows, they are as deadly to people as they are to weeds and forests. One substance in the herbicides has been found to be 10,000 times more harmful than thalidomide. Already there are reports filtering back from Vietnam of stillborn and deformed babies. We may be crippling a whole generation of Vietnamese.

What does the ecological destruction of Vietnam have to do with the ecological destruction of America?

The same government that tells us about its concern for America's environment poisons the environment of Vietnam. The same corporations that pollute America and call it "pollution control" make products to pollute Vietnam and call it "saving Vietnam from the communists."

any country whose people want to get rid of foreign businessmen and take control over their own resources. Politicians and businessmen cry "Communism!" whenever their power over the people and resources of the earth is threatened, either abroad or at home.

Money and power is the real story behind the Vietnam war. Power for American companies to control the wealth of Southeast Asia. Power that will let them keep the money rolling in.

Vietnam and all of Southeast Asia are prized by American businessmen because of the great natural resources of the region, and because control over this area would give them an immense captive market.

American corporations value the resources because they are things that America no longer has, or never had—things like tungsten, antimony, tin.

American corporations need these markets because the American people just cannot keep buying fast enough to keep the corporations growing and profiting.

The Vietnamese know all this. That's why they are fighting back. For over a thousand years, the Vietnamese have been fighting against foreign powers that came to take away the wealth of their country.

How about us?—we have to fight the war, and we have to pay for it. 45,000 lives and over

\$100 billion dollars, and the war grinds on. We have nothing to gain from this war — we can only lose.

When you get right down to it, we really have much in common with the Vietnamese. The companies that run America make profits off both of us. And both of us are the victims of their ecological crimes.

The Vietnamese have a headstart on us in solving their pollution problem. They know very clearly what causes it. They are attacking the problem at its source.

If we really want to make America a fit place to live in once again, we also have to understand our problem. More of us have to realize that bad ecology cannot be separated from unfit housing, inflation, lousy working conditions or the rat-race life; from racism, the repression of women, starvation or wars of aggression.

The fight against ecological disaster cannot succeed if it does not recognize the common obstacle to the solution of all these problems: in America, the wealth of society is produced for profit, not for people. And the small elite that gains power and wealth from this system will use every weapon at their command to preserve it, no matter whether they see the threat rising from the people of Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America or the United States itself. Once we understand these things, it will be clear that there is only one way to deal with our ecology problem:

Attack the problem at its source.

IF YOU AREN'T PART

OF THE SOLUTION

THEN YOU'RE PART

OF THE PROBLEM

Eldridge Cleaver