



The Invention of Ecocide: Agent Orange, Vietnam, and the Scientists Who Changed the Way We Think About the Environment

By David Zierler

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As the public increasingly questioned the war in Vietnam, a group of American scientists deeply concerned about the use of Agent Orange and other herbicides started a movement to ban what they called “ecocide.”

David Zierler traces this movement, starting in the 1940s, when weed killer was developed in agricultural circles and theories of counterinsurgency were studied by the military. These two trajectories converged in 1961 with Operation Ranch Hand, the joint U.S.-South Vietnamese mission to use herbicidal warfare as a means to defoliate large areas of enemy territory.

Driven by the idea that humans were altering the world’s ecology for the worse, a group of scientists relentlessly challenged Pentagon assurances of safety, citing possible long-term environmental and health effects. It wasn’t until 1970 that the scientists gained access to sprayed zones confirming that a major ecological disaster had occurred. Their findings convinced the U.S. government to renounce first use of herbicides in future wars and, Zierler argues, fundamentally reoriented thinking about warfare and environmental security in the next forty years.

Incorporating in-depth interviews, unique archival collections, and recently declassified national security documents, Zierler examines the movement to ban ecocide as it played out amid the rise of a global environmental consciousness and growing disillusionment with the containment policies of the cold war era.

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Editorial Review

Review

David Zierler's *The Invention of Ecocide* is a compelling book about Agent Orange, its path of destruction, and the unflagging effort of scientists to name a new crime?ecocide. It is an aspect of the war usually referred to only in passing, but Zierler places it center stage in his powerfully written, precisely argued study. *The Invention of Ecocide* gives readers an entirely new perspective on Vietnam, the possibilities of determined protest, and the dangers that continue to haunt the world. It is, quite simply, a brilliant work of scholarship.

(Marilyn Young *author of The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990*)

Absolutely fascinating; rich in detail, massively researched, and skillfully narrated . . . Combining the history of science with that of international affairs, the author skillfully traces the ways in which states made use of scientific discoveries to create ever more destructive weapons?and describes how scientists followed their conscience in seeking to stop such practice.

(Akira Iriye *Harvard University*)

David Zierler's important, timely book is a welcome addition to the scholarship on Agent Orange, a glaringly understudied topic. Impressively researched and well written, it should be accessible to a broad readership.

(Edwin A. Martini *author of Invisible Enemies: The American War on Vietnam, 1975-2000*)

Comprehensive, well-sourced and skillfully arranged, *The Invention of Ecocide* takes on a subject at which too many books of the war offer only a glance.

(*Asia Times*)

The book is an intellectually innovative and substantively valuable interdisciplinary contribution; one that I believe advances understanding about the development and utilization of herbicides in Vietnam while telling the story of how a group of American scientists, on the right side of the evidence and, as it turns out, history, tried to prevent the tragic consequences which now envelop generations of Americans and Vietnamese in their daily lives.

(Larry Berman *H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews*)

The Invention of Ecocide provides a rich blend of military and scientific history packaged in a lively narrative and is a pick for science and military holdings alike.

(Midwest Book Review)

Zierler uses Agent Orange as a case study of the relationship between ecological issues and international relations, within the context of the rise of a global environmental consciousness.

(Book News)

David Zierler has done yeoman's work with this book exploring Agent Orange and the use of herbicides in the Vietnam War. . . .I applaud [his] efforts and I am sure that he will prove a leader in the history of American environmental diplomacy.

(J. Brooks Flippin *H-Environment*)

About the Author

David Zierler is a historian for the U.S. Department of State. He lives in Washington, D.C., with his wife, daughter, and son.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Leonard White:

Now a day individuals who Living in the era where everything reachable by interact with the internet and the resources inside it can be true or not need people to be aware of each facts they get. How a lot more to be smart in getting any information nowadays? Of course the answer then is reading a book. Reading a book can help people out of this uncertainty Information mainly this The Invention of Ecocide: Agent Orange, Vietnam, and the Scientists Who Changed the Way We Think About the Environment book since this book offers you rich info and knowledge. Of course the information in this book hundred percent guarantees there is no doubt in it you know.

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