

# WARNING SIGNS

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## **The 50th Anniversary of "Silent Spring": A Lethal Legacy**

By Alan Caruba

There are books that have doomed millions to death. "Das Capital" by Karl Marx kicked off the worst economic system of the modern era, claiming the lives of millions of Russians and Chinese, along with others in the process.

Hitler's "Mein Kampf" mobilized Nazi Germany, led to World War Two in Europe, and was responsible for the deliberate killing of six million Jews and another five million Christians in its concentration camps, not counting the millions more in war dead. The Nazi leaders were ardent environmentalists.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of "Silent Spring" by Rachel Carson; a book that is credited with giving rise to the environmental movement in general and, in particular, America's unfounded fears of pesticides, especially DDT.

Eight years would pass between its publication and the first Earth Day in 1970 that mobilized the beginning of the environmental movement by putting government muscle behind it with the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency.

"Silent Spring at 50: The False Crises of Rachel Carson" (\$25.95, Cato Institute) has a publication date in September, but given the June 20-12 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, it is particularly timely. Its chapters had titles like "Elixirs of Death", "Needless Havoc", and "Rivers of Death." What their content lacked was real science and real facts.

DDT was already famous for protecting human health along with a whole range of agricultural chemicals that protected crops against the depredation of insects, rodents and weeds. The book has rightly been condemned for the deaths—literally millions—that have resulted since the 1972 U.S. ban of DDT by the Environmental Protection Agency. It "was firmly and repeatedly warned by public health officials of the United States, the World Health Organization, and the Pan American Health Organization of disastrous consequences of a DDT ban."

Even today, the EPA either manufactures or ignores evidence to justify its regulations.

Its inventor, Dr. Paul Muller, received a Nobel Prize in 1948 in recognition of the role DDT played in saving hundreds of thousands of lives of troops fighting the Axis in World War Two and the survivors of the Nazi death camps. It killed the insects that spread Typhus and other diseases. It did so without any evidence of the bogus threat of cancer that Carson advanced.

Nine contributors to “Silent Spring at 50” make a powerful case for the harm Carson’s obsessive fear of what were widely known to be beneficial chemicals. The book is a classic example of bogus science combined with deliberate lies to frighten people. That has always been the modus operandi of the environmental movement.

“Carson would have known of the great public health achievements of DDT and that it was saving lives,” writes Donald R. Roberts and Richard Tren, the authors of one chapter. “Indeed she describes some of the programs in “Silent Spring.” But the bulk of the book is a singular attack on DDT and other insecticides with scarcely any recognition of their actual and potential benefits.”

In the first chapter of “Silent Spring”, titled “A Fable for Tomorrow”, Carson invents a town so poisoned by insecticides that no birds sing there, having all been wiped out. It is pure fiction. Subsequent studies have demonstrated that the die-off she described has never happened. Years of bird counts refute that charge. Indeed, agricultural pesticides had initially been regulated by Congress in 1910 and generations of farmers took care to avoid contaminating their crops for obvious reasons.

The anniversary of the book’s publication is relevant to everyone today, even those born since the DDT ban. The coast-to-coast plague of bedbugs that has occurred in the past decade and continues today could have been eliminated if DDT was still in use. The mainstream media reported the plague, but never mentioned this salient fact, nor the fact that the EPA has just one pesticide registered for use against bedbugs and routinely refused to allow licensed pest control professionals to use it.

Carson kicked off “the precautionary principle” cited by environmental groups and government agencies that, in effect, leaves the public defenseless against the health threats that Mother Nature provides in the form of insects and rodents known to spread disease, or mold-contaminants such as aflatoxin, many times more toxic than the fumigant that was banned to control it.

Malaria, once on the brink of being eliminated, has long since made resurgence since the ban of DDT, although some nations most affected by the disease have received permission to use it.

That is Rachel Carson’s true and lethal legacy.

It is why so much of what the environmental movement advocates, from the United Nations to non-governmental-organizations like Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, the World Wildlife Fund, and dozens of others always seems to end up killing people in the name of saving the Earth.

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