THE ECOLOGY OF WAR

**EARTH**

**By Rick Boling**

**P*ity the nation that wears a cloth it does not want to weave…eats a bread it does not harvest…pity the nation…that boasts not except among its ruins…and those whose art is the art of patching and mimicking”.-----Kahlil Gibran***

**When Kahlil Gibran,patron saint of Lebanon, wrote these words he never imagined that the country he was describing would be his own.For like Henry David Thoreau, Gibran was first and foremost poet laureate of the land.”Everytime I close my eyes,’’he onc e said,’’I see those valleys full of magic and dignity and those mountains covered with glory and greatness trying to reach the sky”.**

**But according to Lebanese psychologist Ricardo Haber,Gibran could never describe those magical mountains and valleys today.”Where could he get his inspiration?’’ ask Haber, founder of a conservationist group called The Friends of Nature.What landscape could he see”?**

**Reflected in Haber’s despair is the environmental devastation that has left his once-lush country under an avalanche of physical and psychological debris.From the destruction of its famous cedar forests to the now-rancid shores of the Mediterranean, Lebanon is reeling under perhaps the worst ecological disruption suffered by any country in history.**

**Once a nation whose staple foods included an abundance of fish drawn from the sparkling waters of the Mediterranean, Lebanon, for the first time in its history, is now forced to import fish from Syria and Turkey.According to Haber, the scarcity has resulted from the beleaguered nation’s inability to enforce laws protecting the integrity of its seas. Perhaps the major problems, he notes; are the new preferred tools for fishing-dynamite and poison bait. These illegal techniques allow fishermen to catch larger numbers of fish, notes Haber, a professor at the American University of Beirut. The sea is further polluted by solid wastes and chemicals scattered along the rocky beach. “Treatment facilities were being built”, Haber explains, ”but we can’t construct a plant or regulate an industry with the Shiites on one side of town and the Druse on the other.”**

**At the other end of the ecological spectrum, Haber adds, stand the pitiful remains of the famous cedar forests, whose trees have been cut fir the camouflage and firewood. Another, less direct cause of deforestation is the vicious shooting of birds-a psychological manifestation, says Haber, of the anger and frustration accompanying the war.In the past ten years, he notes,some 4,00,000 people have been involved in a “virtual massacre of birds” in the skies over Lebanon.As these birds, including storks, falcons, eagles and swallows were killed, he notes, the forests’ tree-eating insects reproduce unchecked.**

**Destruction of the forests , moreover, has caused soil erosion and diminished the supply of fresh water.Without forested water sheds says Haber, much of the topsoil and rainfall just runs into the sea.**

**Finally,the disruption of war has also taken its toll on Lebanon’s agriculture.Land not destroyed by the negligence of the leuding Lebanese has been devastated by occupying forces,who build trenches and burn crops.And lack of government planning has allowed uncontrolled urbanization at the expense of fertile plants.**

**For Haber, this is where the war has had the most drastic effect.”To my mind,”he says,’’the worst oppression one can inflect on a people is to destroy their agriculture potential and leave them wanting for food”.**

**But hope for Lebanese environment appears to be as elusive as an end to the hostilities.A reversal of the situation would require an enormous cleanup effort based on cooperation among all citizens, adherence to existing environmental laws, and creation of an environmental body with full political support.**

**Such far-reaching changes in a country already losing its identity in the violence among various internal factions may be more than pipe dreams. For Haber, however, such actions are not just pie-in-the-sky ideas.Unless steps are taken and pressure is brought to bear from the international conservation community, any hope of an ecological reversal may evaporate.”We cannot afford the pace and magnitude of the damage”, says Haber, ”for the point of no return is imminent.’’**

**SAMPLE SUMMARY**

“The Ecology of War-Earth’’

This article, “The Ecology of War” by Rick Boling discusses how the once lush country of Lebanon is now faced with a devastated ecological system. He pointed out how destructions of war have affected Lebanon’s ecology. One such effect is that the country must now import fish from Syria and Turkey due to the nation’s inability to enforce laws protecting its seas. Dynamite and poisonous bait have infiltrated the once clean waters of the Mediterranean. The sea is further polluted from unrestricted solid wastes and chemicals that are dumped in the water. The cedar forests have also suffered. Trees have been cut for camouflage and firewood, while the soil has been dug out for trenches. The vicious shooting of birds has left tree-eating insects to invade the remaining trees. War has also destroyed Lebanon’s agricultural industry because the land has been destroyed by negligence, occupying forces, and poor government planning or lack of it. This total damage to Lebanon’s ecological system may be irreversible. In conclusion, according to the author, it will take cooperation among the Lebanese citizens as well as the international community to help repair the damage.