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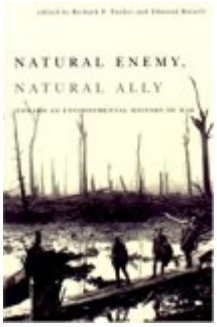

Richard P. Tucker, Edmund Russell, eds.. *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally: Toward an Environmental History of War.* Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2004. vii + 280 pp. $29.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-87071-047-6.

Reviewed by Eric G. Swedin

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Many of us remember the environmental catastrophes of the Gulf War in 1991, when the Iraqi deliberately spilled oil into the Persian Gulf and then deliberately set Kuwaiti oil wells on fire, turning the sky dark with smoke. It is an obvious statement that war affects the environment and that the environment affects wars. Very few books have been written on this subject and this collection of essays is the first volume of its kind. The editors admit that it was hard to find enough essays for the book because this new multidisciplinary approach, crossing military history with environmental history, is not attracting enough attention. The essays range across the globe and time, from India and South Africa in colonial times to America during the Civil War. Four of the ten essays cover aspects of World War II, perhaps because of plentiful source material. Considering how hard it was to find material, it is surprising that none of the essays are weak, and that the wide range of topics and approaches lend strength to the work.

Warfare has always exploited the environment. One of the essays describes the massive Mughal imperial army in India moving across the landscape like a lawnmower, stripping the countryside of fodder and food, leaving behind waste. Armies laying siege to ancient and medieval cities recognized that the siege was a race between the time the stored supplies in the cities would last and how long the besieging armies could live off the countryside while remaining tied to the siege. Armies throughout history have often had their strategy driven by the need to find fresh areas to forage.

During the American Civil War, the Confederate forces had to forage and scavenge off the land and relied on the local ecology to survive, while the Union forces relied on their entire nation, using the extensive rail network and industrial base to live off of preserved meat, hardtack, and other supplies made in factories. The Confederates were still confined to an older military ecology, with all the limitations of logistics that implied; the Union forces were a modern army, relying on industrial supply networks and not beholden to the local ecology.

At times, generals have recognized that destroying the local environment is a useful way to bring the enemy to heel, with examples found in British tactics during the Boer War, the American decimation of the bison on the Great Plains during the nineteenth century, and the American use of herbicides during the Vietnam War. Sometimes environmental damage is inadvertent, such as when whales are mistaken for submarines by ships dropping depth charges.

We often think of war as only destroying the environment. For instance, during World War II when Japan was cut off from normal supplies of raw materials, they cut down their forests for fuel, logging 15 percent of their forests in just four years. They even stripped the leaves and undergrowth from the forests in order to make compost for their fields because the raw materials formerly used to make chemical fertilizers were now needed to make munitions. Japanese scientists tried to develop new alternative fuels from pine-root oil and other organic products, most of which failed. Edible refined soybean oil, however, fueled the battleship *Yamato* on its famous final voyage in April 1945. The Japanese people used mist-netting and bird-liming to catch so many migratory songbirds for food that postwar American occupation troops noticed the lack of singing birds. But the war was not completely an environmental catastrophe; fishing stocks rebounded from over fishing because Japanese trawlers and factory ships were unable to conduct their business during the war. Fishing stocks rebounded similarly in the North Atlantic. Water pollution was reduced in Finland during the war because pulp mills and other logging operations were interrupted.

World War I and World War II both required advances in insecticides, and the terminology of war was applied to the war against insects. In order to fight the Japanese in the Pacific, American forces successfully fought malaria with medicine and insecticides at the same time, a struggle where eight soldiers caught the disease for every one who fell before the human enemy. Americans also brought pests and diseases with them, such as ticks and cattle diseases, which are still there. Another long term consequence of World War II was that before the war Japan supplied dried chrysanthemum blossoms to the United States for processing into insecticide. During the war, the Americans adopted dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane (DDT) as an insecticide, and after the war the Japanese pyrethrum industry was unable to rebound, so DDT use continued.

Military necessity has also created environmental havens. Demilitarized zones, such as that which divides North and South Korea, are places where animals and birds often thrive. Military bases around the world, while often sources of environmental problems because of toxic chemical dumps and other types of pollution, are also often refuges for endangered wildlife and provide room for ecological diversity to thrive.

Interdisciplinary research is how we build grander, more complete historical narratives, which should be the goal of all historians. I hope this book will spark similar research, because the fields of military history and environmental history need more articles like these. As one of the editors writes in his essay, "humans' collective violence toward each other has had a profound parallel with humans' violent disruptions of the natural world. Neither can be fully comprehended without the other" (p. 37).

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