verts the river itself into new channels, inundating homes, farms and villages.

One of the monumental floods of history took place in China's Honan Province in the year 1852, when the Yellow River, choked with silt from the erosion of surrounding mountains, overflowed its banks, destroying villages and smothering the life of *millions* of human beings. The Chinese called this yellow, muddy waterway "The River of Sorrows."

Not only the lives, but the centuries of labor performed by those millions of peasant farmers, were lost in that catastrophic flood. It was caused by the sometimes ignorant but more often wanton and greedy rape of hillside vegetation.

The tragedy of Honan Province was only one of thousands of holocausts resulting from erosion.

America's South in the areas of Lousiana, Alabama and Georgia known as the cotton belt, is heavily eroded. Great gashes and gullies mar the beautiful red clay soil. Stuart Chase, when he was gathering material for his book *Rich Land,Poor Land* nearly forty years ago, traveled through that countryside and marked the great numbers of eroded chasms in the earth.

"You ain't seen nothin' yet," said a farmer, and directed him to a spot in Georgia near the Alabama border.

Chase described what he saw:

> The land fell away almost sheer for 200 feet. We stood over one of the gully's arms and far down caught a glimpse of the central basin. Shaped like an octopus, it covered more than 3,000 acres. . . .
>
> The chasm was awful and beautiful. The earth strata changed from red to yellow to brown, mauve, lavender, jade, ochre, orange and chalk white. Along the banks trees were in all stages of collapse—some just ready to plunge downward, some holding on by their roots with might and main, some leaning crazily outward. It was something like looking into the crater of a volcano, only instead of eruption one feared a cave-in. The good earth had given up the struggle.

When a farmer was asked if it could be stopped he said that if the bottom and sides were planted with kudzu vines and black locust it might be stopped, but it would cost money. Of course the land couldn't be brought back into fertility for some hundreds of years of slow build-up of the vanished topsoil, but the forward march of the gullies could be prevented.

This writer went through that same territory in the spring of 1974, curious to know if the kudzu vines and black locust had been planted, or what changes might have taken place in those forty years, and sought out and found the spot.

It was exactly as Stuart Chase had described it, except that many more acres had fallen into the abyss! The state of Georgia had turned it into a park called "The Little Grand Canyon" and there were warnings which read, "Stand clear of the rim." There was no sign of kudzu vine or black locust on its slopes.

Modern industry adds more evils

Pollution from industrial plants not only fouls the air but poisons streams and lakes, killing hundreds of thousands of fish which formerly fed the working people of the world. Dangerous pesticides like DDT and a dozen other chlorinated hydrocarbons further vitiate air, land and water. These chemicals are persistent —they do not break down into their essential elements, but are tied tight in a chemical bond; they sink into the earth, enter the underground waterways, and flow out to every corner of the globe. (Even polar bears have been found with alarming amounts of DDT in their tissues.)

The greatest peril from the use of these often lethal pesticides comes from their cumulative effect. Very small amounts kill mosquitoes, but fish and birds eat thousands of mosquitoes and the poison builds up in their bodies. Fish meal has become a widely used fodder for cattle and sheep so that the accumulation grows geometrically.

Humans drink cow's milk and eat cattle and sheep.

And, as a crowning irony, insects develop mutations impervious to certain chemical poisons and continue to multiply.

DDT and a few more of the most deadly chlorinated hydrocarbons have been banned in most of the United States, but the great competing agricorporations, interested only in getting rid of plant pests in order to raise bumper crops in a hurry, have substituted other insecticides just as dangerous—dieldrin, aldrin, chlordane and mirex.

But all the evils listed in this chapter which limit production of wholesome food for the peoples of the world are insignificant in face of one overwhelming annihilator.