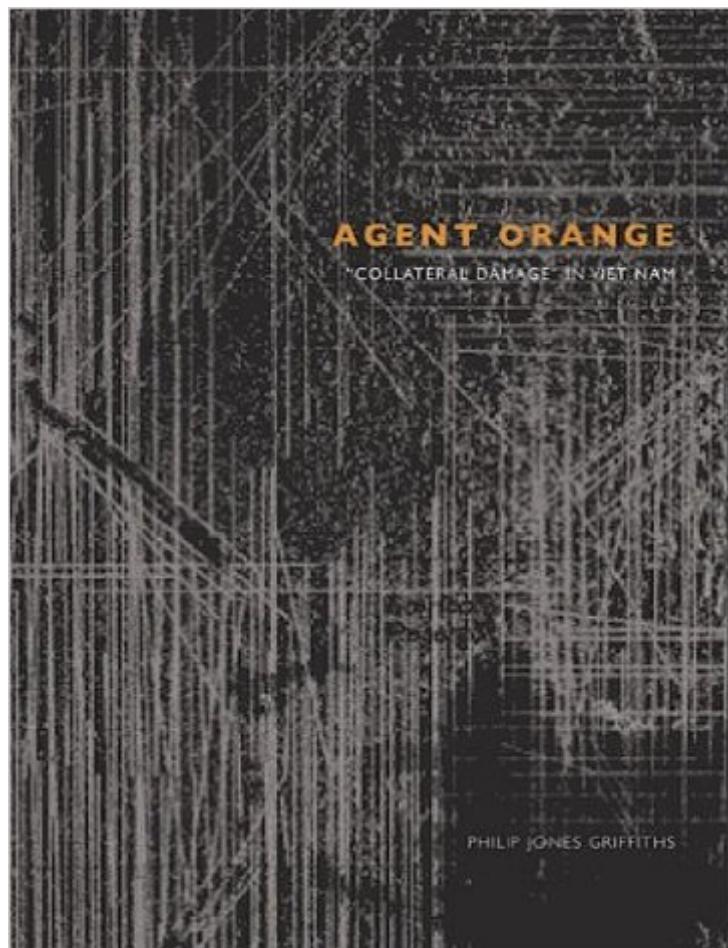


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Agent Orange: Collateral Damage In Vietnam



Synopsis

Philip Jones Griffiths, for a record five years the President of Magnum Photos, created in Vietnam, Inc. a record of the war there of almost Biblical proportions. No one who has seen it will forget its haunting images. In Agent Orange he has added a postscript that is equally memorable. In 1960 the United States war machine concluded that an efficient deterrent to the enemy troops and civilians would be the devastation of the crops and forestry that afforded them both succour and cover for their operations. Initial descriptions of the scheme included "Food Denial Program", later adapted to "depriving cover for enemy troops". They gave the idea the name "Operation Hades", but were advised that "Operation Ranch Hand" was a more suitable cognomen for PR purposes. The US had developed herbicides for the task. The most infamous became known as Agent Orange after the coloured stripe on the canisters used to distribute it. The planes that carried the canisters had 'only we can prevent forests!' as a logo on their fuselages. They were right. It was very effective. Unfortunately the herbicide also contained Dioxin, probably the world's deadliest poison. In Agent Orange Philip Jones Griffiths has photographed the children and grandchildren of the farmers whose faces were lifted to the gentle rain of the poison cloud. Some maintain that the connection between the maimed subjects of Griffiths' photographs and the exposure to Agent Orange is not scientifically established. However, the compensation payments made by the herbicide manufactures to those Americans sprayed in Viet Nam refute this assertion. Historians will find it sufficient to say that there will always be collateral damage, that useful PR phrase, in war and that Philip Jones Griffiths should understand the consequences of martial endeavours. He most certainly does. He has catalogued here a pitiless series of photographs, and there can be no doubt that they should and will be recognized.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For those already committed to voting for the so-called 'antiwar' candidate, I recommend putting this book in front of Sen. John Kerry and demanding to know what he will do as president to address American responsibility and pay reparations for the genocidal assault on the people of Vietnam. Such action will constitute a litmus test for this candidate, his "band of brothers" and future warriors about how the USA intends to solve the problem of terrorism. Will they acknowledge international law and prosecute the guilty parties including politicians, bureaucrats, executive military officers and defense contractors? Will they honor, finally, the Paris Accords and repair the ecocide brutally wrought upon the Vietnamese by their chemical weapons? Or will they continue to cover up a deliberate, malefic genocide by honoring war criminals like Kissinger and McNamara who now cries cinematic tears while his Pentagon successors plan the mass destruction of any nation that dares to oppose American hegemony? Philip Jones Griffiths's **AGENT ORANGE, COLLATERAL DAMAGE IN VIETNAM** is a complex, dense statement that can be viewed and read several ways. Foremost, it is unquestionably the greatest work of photojournalism ever published. I do not make this statement lightly or without professional judgement. For twenty-five years, I edited the work of distinguished photojournalists -- Capa, Richards, Salgado, Peress, and Nachtwey among many others. Comparable only to W. Eugene Smith's **MINIMATA: LIFE -- SACRED AND PROFANE**, a passionate chronicle of the devastating effects of post-WW II industrial pollution on a Japanese town, **AGENT ORANGE** surpasses all previous attempts to synthesize the medium of still photography with historical documentation.

In September, 1976, just back from eight years helping homeless streetchildren in Viet Nam, I wrote an Op/Ed piece for the New York Times ("Learning From the Vietnamese -- And Giving", 12/04/76) that concluded: "And I'm at a loss how to tell my own people that Vietnam's needs are our remedy - to say that what the Vietnamese people have to offer us - as they did me - is so great that for our own sake we must help them." I was attempting to make a connection between the spiritual strengths the people of Viet Nam had to offer us and the technological assistance we, in turn, could give them. Philip Jones Griffiths, in his book "Agent Orange, 'Collateral Damage' in Viet Nam" has made an even more compelling, if depressing, case for interdependency, i.e., because of the

American military's chemical spraying in south VN during the war years there are now thousands of people in both the U.S. and Viet Nam who are dealing with deformities and death because of a ticking "time bomb" planted in Indochina decades ago. Griffiths, author of "VIETNAM, INC.", an award-winning photography book on America's longest war, has included here some unsparing images of humans beings brutally deformed by man's more fiendish dalliance with Weapons of Mass Destruction. Here is a "legacy" that must give all of us pause by a brilliant photographer's tireless effort to bring almost unbearable evidence to us of man's inhumanity to man. Like the Holocaust itself, the full impact of these atrocities took years to come to the fore, but "Agent Orange" makes a compelling case that two countries once at war remain linked in a tragic bond that will not soon go away. This is not an easy book to read or, should I say, to view, but I think we ignore it at our peril.

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