

8. ENVIRONMENT



8.1. Our contaminated world

Cleaning up the world's environment is undoubtedly one of the major problems facing all the people inhabiting our planet. For many decades this issue has been neglected by many countries and the result is that it is more and more difficult to find any unpolluted place on Earth. Bearing that in mind, it seems obvious that the struggle against contamination and the need to protect the environment have become the most urgent of tasks because air, water and soil are slowly becoming unsuitable to sustain life.

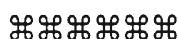
As far as water is concerned, the prognosis is really gloomy. Sewage dumped directly into rivers or the sea has polluted the water so heavily that many countries, for example China, do not have enough safe drinking water. What is more, in some parts of the world, for instance in Peru, people are at the mercy of contractors who sell the precious liquid for money! This tragic situation is a result of population growth and above all industrial development which have contributed to the depletion and pollution of the world's water supply, raising the risk of starvation and epidemic. Equally dangerous are very frequent tanker leaks as oil spills make the water in many regions unfit for any use. Whatever the consequences for people, the pollution of water has an even greater effect on other living things. Fish, birds and countless other creatures are poisoned and ecosystems are disrupted. This, in turn, results in the serious violation of the ecological balance.

As far as the contamination of soil is concerned, again mainly industry and agriculture are to blame. One source of pollution are acid rains caused by chemical substances dissolved in rain, which results in polluting water and ruining crops. Another problem is mismanaged farming techniques, for instance the world-wide continuation of irrigation and the misuse or abuse of fertilizers and pesticides which are gradually destroying the fertile upper layer of soil. Deforestation is equally dangerous. It brings about floods and soil erosion during rainy seasons. At the same time the thoughtless and uncontrolled exploitation of forests for timber results in species extinction.

However, it seems that the most dangerous problem for the world is the pollution of the atmosphere. Air is contaminated mainly by exhaust gases emitted directly into the atmosphere. From year to year man increasingly contributes to the so called "greenhouse effect" by additional emissions of sulphur, carbon dioxide from burning coal, natural gases and derivative products of oil as well as from burning forests. This short-sighted policy has resulted in the rapid change of the world's climate (the effect of "global warming") due to the depletion of ozone layer in the atmosphere, the consequences of which may well be disastrous. There is a danger that many places on the planet may be flooded while others will suffer from droughts. Numerous species of animals and plants will become extinct. Instead there may be ideal conditions for the development of noxious insects and bacteria. They, in turn, may become a source of dangerous infections which may decimate the world's population. Increasing ultra-violet radiation will bring about the escalation of tumorous

illnesses. Polluted air will also be responsible for frequent births of retarded children. Furthermore, the natural division between seasons may be disturbed and the warming up of the climate could possibly contribute to the melting of huge icebergs which are of great importance as stabilizers for the planet. This, in turn, may lead to the geological destruction of all the continents.

All these catastrophic ecological possibilities are even hard to quantify. Constantly developing technology and industry seem to be stronger than the instinct of self-preservation. To decrease the risk of self-destruction it seems necessary to take some forceful steps to clean up the world's environment or otherwise man has little chance to survive.



VOCABULARY A

to contaminate - zanieczyścić, skazić	fertilizers - nawozy
to clean up - zrobić porządek, wyczyścić, sprzątać	pesticides - pestycydy, środki owadobójcze
environment - środowisko	upper layer - górna warstwa
to face - stanąć w obliczu	deforestation - wycinanie lasów
to inhabit - zamieszkiwać	to bring about - powodować, wywołać
issue - kwestia, sprawa	flood - powódź
to neglect - zaniedbywać	soil-erosion - erozja gleby
unpolluted - czyste, nie zanieczyszczone	exploitation of forests - eksploatacja lasów
contamination - zatrucie	timber - drewno
to protect - chronić	species extinction - wymieranie gatunków
urgent - pilny	drought - susza
task - zadanie	exhaust gases - spaliny
soil - gleba	to emit - emitować
unsuitable - nie nadający się	greenhouse effect - efekt cieplarniany
to sustain life - podtrzymywać życie	emission - emisja
gloomy - ponury	carbon dioxide - dwutlenek węgla
sewage - ścieki	sulphur - siarka
to dump - wyrzucać	to burn - spalać
to pollute - zanieczyścić	coal - węgiel
contractor - dostawca	derivative products - substancje pochodne
population growth - wzrost zaludnienia	oil - nafta, ropa naftowa
precious liquid - cenny płyn	short-sighted policy - krótkowzroczna polityka
depletion - uszczuplenie, wyczerpywanie	ozone layers - warstwy ozonowe
water supply - zasoby wodne	global warming - globalne ocieplenie
starvation - głód	species - gatunki
epidemic - epidemia	noxious - szkodliwe
tanker leaks - przecieki z tankowców	to decimate - zdziesiątkować
oil spills - wycieki ropy	population - ludność
unfit for use - niezdatny do użycia	ultra-violet radiation - promieniowanie ultrafioletowe
countless - niezliczone	escalation - eskalacja
creatures - istoty	tumorous illnesses - choroby nowotworowe
to poison - zatruchiwać	retarded - opóźnione (tu: w rozwoju)
to disrupt - niszczyć	to melt - topnieć
violation of ecological balance - naruszenie równowagi ekologicznej	ice-berg - góra lodowa
acid rains - kwaśne deszcze	stabilizer - stabilizator
to dissolve - rozpuszczać się	to quantify - wyliczyć
crops - plony	self-preservation - samozachowawczy
mismanaged - chybione, źle kierowane	self-destruction - samobójstwo
farming techniques - metody uprawiania ziemi	forceful steps - stanowcze kroki
misuse - złe użycie, nadużycie	to survive - przetrwać