

INTERVIEW: PAUL REITER, Ph.D.

## Global Warming Won't Spread Malaria

*Paul Reiter, a medical entomologist, heads the Insects and Infectious Disease unit of the Pasteur Institute in Paris. Prior to 2003, he spent 22 years at the Division of Vector-Borne Infectious Disease of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He is one of the scientists featured in the film "The Great Global Warming Swindle," produced by Wag-TV in Great Britain.*

*Dr. Reiter was interviewed March 23 by Greg Murphy.*

**EIR:** For our readers to get an idea of who you are, please describe a little of your background, and how you became involved with the IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] process.

**Reiter:** First of all, my whole career has been in mosquito-borne diseases—some other diseases as well—but basically, the ecology, the natural history, the transmission, and the control of diseases like dengue, yellow fever, West Nile virus, and all those kinds of things. I've been involved in malaria as well. Vector-borne diseases covers the lot of it.

We're quite a small corner of science; we all know each other, and we meet at the same meetings. So, about 12 or 13 years ago, it was really surprising to us that we started to see articles appearing even in relatively respected journals like *The Lancet*, which were predicting doom and gloom on vector-borne diseases from global warming. People were saying that in the future you might have malaria moving into southern Europe. I, for one, had some correspondence in *The Lancet*. I said: "This is rubbish."

In fact, what very few people realize outside of our field

(and certainly not the people who are pretending to know), is that malaria was once rampant throughout Europe, the United States, and into Canada, and that major problems with malaria existed even into the 20th Century. For example, in the 1940s in the Russian/Finnish War, malaria in Finland was one of the major causes of morbidity in troops. Even before then, in the 1920s, there was a massive epidemic of malaria—a devastating epidemic—in 1922 and 1923—which went right up through Siberia, and into Archangel on the White Sea, close to the Arctic Circle.

So, I got frustrated with all this, and about seven years later I wrote an article that's quite well cited, titled "From Shakespeare to Defoe: Malaria in England in the Little Ice Age." If you have a look at that, you'll see the whole history of a time when it was really freezing in the wintertime in Britain, and yet there were Eskimos—I mean Inuit, that's the politically correct term—Inuit landing in their canoes in Scotland. And the Thames was freezing over; the King was having parties on the Thames.

At that time, I think it was in 1995, I looked at the web, and on nine major websites on global warming, I found that eight of them had malaria and dengue as the top dangers of climate change; things like "sea level rise" were at the bottom of the list. I've kept up the pressure on these people, and really denounced them in many places. And in the end, it's sort of become less popular, now it's further down on the list. But it keeps coming up, and as you say, it came up in this article from Buenos Aires, I think you were referring to. It was talking about, I think, mainly about dengue [and global warming] in Bolivia, and it's just complete bull.

So, now to your question about how I got into the IPCC.

**EIR:** Yes, how did they select the authors?

**Reiter:** That was an interesting thing. You know, they



Courtesy of Tech Central Station



From P. Reiter, "Climate Change and Mosquito-Borne Disease," *Environmental Health Perspectives Supplements*, Vol. 109, No. S1, March 2001.

*Malaria in cold climates: The map shows the distribution of malaria in Sweden in the late 19th Century, with endemic and epidemic areas. The isotherm shown (inset) was the approximate northern limit of transmission. Note the location of Archangel, Russia, site of a major malaria epidemic in the 1920s.*

boasted that they had 2,500 of the world's top scientists. Well, to begin with, it's the United Nations, so they essentially are encouraged to select scientists from many nations. They say it's 2,500 of the world's top scientists—you should check this—from 160 different countries. You and I know that there are many countries that don't have the world's top scientists. And, in fact there are very few that do.

And so, that's one selection criterion. But the others are much more, shall we say, insidious. Put it this way: I was nominated by the U.S. Government for Chapter Eight of Working Group Two of the IPCC, which is "public health impact and adaptations." You can find details of this, by the way, if you look on the House of Lords [web] page.

**EIR:** You were talking about how you became part of the IPCC process.

**Reiter:** For the 2001 report, I was a contributory author. And we had these meetings that were absolute bullshit. I mean they had an agenda, and that was it. And in the end, I decided to concentrate on the U.S. Government Climate Change Research Program—the same kind of review—which I was also on, and to resign from the IPCC.

They sort of accepted it after a while. Tony McMichael, who was the guy who was in charge then, accepted it with regret. And when I finally saw the final draft of the group, my name was still on it. And I thought, no, if I resigned from it, I

don't want my name on it, because otherwise it just essentially gives my blessing on the whole thing. And I told them: "I'm not interested. I don't want to be listed."

And they said: "Well, the rules are that you do have to have your name on it. You've contributed."

I said: "No, I haven't contributed anything, and I don't want my name on it. And if you put it on then I'm going to make a big fuss and I'll go to a lawyer." And so, they took it off, regretfully. And I think that happens a lot.

**EIR:** Yes, in the film "The Great Global Warming Swindle," you mentioned. . . .

**Reiter:** There's one case in which I believe the details are the same: Chris Landsea, the guy on hurricanes. Isn't that the same? He had pushed to get his name taken off it.

**EIR:** Yes, he wrote a very eloquent open letter to the IPCC, basically saying the same thing, which was that they were pushing an agenda instead of the science.

**Reiter:** There's another thing that I think is very wrong with the IPCC. When we did the U.S. Government Climate Change Research Project, our deliberations were in the public domain. In other words, when we had an exchange of views you could find it on the web—I think you can still find it on the web somewhere. So it was open.

Also, the peer review process with the IPCC is completely contrary to the normal scientific peer review.

You know, if I send an article for publication, the editor, if he accepts it—you know the process—sends it off to maybe three people in my field, sometimes up to five, sometimes just two. And they give their opinion whether it should be accepted, or modified, or refused—rejected. But the reviewers are anonymous. Right? So they can write freely about it—we're always trying to guess who they are.

But with the IPCC, it's the opposite. The discussions that go on are not public domain. But when you write as a reviewer, they know who you are. You have to put your name on the review. So that already taints what goes on. . . .

The IPCC sent me the first draft for review, even though my understanding was—I may have been wrong—that the first draft final date had actually passed. So I worked very hard on it, worked for about three days, through a weekend—and I essentially very carefully wrote 140 careful discussions of the ridiculous things that they'd been saying. And, to my surprise, when the second draft came, they had taken up a lot of these suggestions, which were completely contrary to what they'd been saying in the 2001 or 1995 IPCC reports.

So my suspicion is, that I had been so vociferous in this, hammering at them for so long (and the House of Lords Report, for example, puts all the details that I just told you in their big report), that they probably think: We've got to shut this guy up. We'll essentially do all the things that are logical in this, and that'll be the end of it. We've got plenty of other things to deal with. We've got sea level rise, and the bloody pollen issue, (and Christ knows what else that they've been

pushing recently).

Anyway, that's the story with the IPCC. But, the selection process is quite clearly biased. I can tell you another thing. There was a British-government-organized meeting called "Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change." Did you know about it?

**EIR:** No.

**Reiter:** It was in Exeter in January 2005. . . . So, I wrote to Exeter with my abstract, because they called for abstracts, and I decided: "Well, if they're going to do any shenanigans on this, I'm going to send it in four times." So I sent it to them, and then said: "Oh, I made a mistake here . . . please could you change it?" And I did various things like that. So I sent it to them four times, right? Nothing happened. So, in about December—the thing was in January—I wrote to them and said: Well, has my abstract been accepted, because I need to make my travel plans. And what did they reply?

**EIR:** I can't guess.

**Reiter:** "We've never received anything from you." So I was furious. I said: "Look, here are the four things that I sent you."

And they said: "Oh, we're really sorry, but it's really quite late to do anything. But you can do a poster session."

So, I did a poster and brought it along, and found that the posters—there were maybe five or six posters—weren't a poster session at all. It was a period of coffee, and you could have a look if you wandered by. But, mine was placed parallel to a wall about a meter-and-a-half from the wall so you couldn't read it; it was too close. In other words, it was hidden.

And these are all the people that are in charge. So, quite frankly, it's absurd. And, you know, what really angered me so much, what really made me agree to do that "Great Global Warming Swindle" film, was Gore's film, Gore's documentary. I've read a lot about Soviet propaganda within the Soviet Union, the way that they used to, essentially say: "The science is unanimous; the glorious people will solve all the problems." And I don't see any difference, except maybe the technology is better. I don't see any difference between the Gore film and some of that propaganda.

**EIR:** The whole thing is that they push the idea that the consensus is made, the science is settled, there is no more need for discussion; but yet you have people like Svensmark and others who put out papers with research showing that cosmic rays have a major impact on the climate.

**Reiter:** But we're never quoted; they're so selective. I'll tell you another thing: Have you looked up the House of Lords Report?

**EIR:** I've got it, but I haven't read it.

**Reiter:** If you look in the main part of the House of Lords Report, you will see that there are people from all spectrums, or all sides of the discussion, that have their depositions. And

from that they synthesize a thing which is even-handed. And what they basically came up with is the Summary, which is very honest. (I can send it to you.) One of the things they said was "We are concerned about the selection methods used by the IPCC." Now, that report was very carefully done, and was supposed to come out on the evening, or the day before the Gleneagles [G-8 summit] meeting, you remember, when Tony Blair. . . .

**EIR:** Oh, yes, when Bush ran over the Scottish policeman with his bike?

**Reiter:** Did he? Oh, that's right. Well, yes, but the sad thing was, that the day before the House of Lords report was supposed to come out, those bombings happened in London. So that completely covered the press. It was sort of like your 9/11—I don't know, the whole world's 9/11. So, it just got lost in the wash.

## Excerpts from Reiter's Testimony In the House of Lords Report

*Prof. Paul Reiter submitted written testimony on March 31, 2005 to the House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs, which was included in the committee's report, titled "The Economics of Climate Change." Here are selections from his testimony, grouped by each IPCC Assessment Report.*

### IPCC Second Assessment Report, Working Group II

This chapter appeared at a critical period of the climate change debate. Fully one third was devoted to mosquito-borne disease, principally malaria. The chapter had a major impact on public debate, and is quoted even today, despite the more informed chapter of the Third Assessment Report (see below).

The scientific literature on mosquito-borne diseases is voluminous, yet the text references in the chapter were restricted to a handful of articles, many of them relatively obscure, and nearly all suggesting an increase in prevalence of disease in a warmer climate. The paucity of information was hardly surprising: not one of the lead authors had ever written a research paper on the subject! Moreover, two of the authors, both physicians, had spent their entire career as environmental activists. One of these activists has published "professional" articles as an "expert" on 32 different subjects, ranging from mercury poisoning to land mines, globalization to allergies, and West Nile virus to AIDS.

But then the Stern Report came out, commissioned by Blair. And you know, in my field it's absolute bloody rubbish. It talks about 80 million new cases of malaria south of the Sahara. This is the latest thing: They've dropped talking about malaria and other tropical diseases coming to temperate regions, and now they keep moaning on and saying that the people that will suffer the most are the poorest, when in fact they're not to blame, because it's all of us driving around in four-wheel-drives that are doing the damage. You know the picture.

So, they concentrate on malaria in sub-Saharan Africa. Well, it's complete bullshit. You know, for a start, as you can imagine, most of Africa is hot. Right? You don't have to emphasize that to most people. In most of Africa, malaria is, what we call, stable. In other words, every year there is transmission. Those people who've survived a malaria attack (and of course, most of the mortality is in young children),

when they survive, they have a certain immunity, which means that generally, they can be re-infected, and the parasite often makes them feel very ill, but they survive.

So, in the places where we have stable malaria, you have transmission going on every year. Everybody gets infected by it. You have places where people will get 300 bites from infected mosquitoes, those that have the parasite in them. So, if the temperature goes up by, say, five degrees, or whatever they're going to say, it isn't going to make an ounce of difference. I mean, it's like having a glass of water and you try and fill it when it's already full. It's just not going to take any more water. So, that's that bullshit.

Then there's the bullshit about highland malaria. This is something that Gore really pissed me off about. I'm getting angry now.

**EIR:** That's good. Well, you just vent it out.

Among the contributing authors there was one professional entomologist, and a person who had written an obscure article on dengue and El Niño, but whose principal interest was the effectiveness of motor-cycle crash helmets (plus one paper on the health effects of cell phones).

The amateurish text of the chapter reflected the limited knowledge of the 22 authors. Much of the emphasis was on "changes in geographic range (latitude and altitude) and incidence (intensity and seasonality) of many vector-borne diseases" as "predicted" by computer models. Extensive coverage was given to these models, although they were all based on a highly simplistic model originally developed as an aid to malaria control campaigns. The authors acknowledged that the models did not take into account "the influence of local demographic, socio-economic, and technical circumstances."

### **Third Assessment Report, Working Group II**

The third assessment report listed more than 65 lead authors, only one of which—a colleague of mine—was an established authority on vector-borne disease.

My colleague was a top civil servant. He felt obliged to sit the IPCC project out, and to attempt to force a compromise. In a sense I believe he (we) succeeded. The 2001 report is much more comprehensive, more accurate, and gives a much better perspective of the diseases and their dynamics.

Thus, despite the improved quality of the Third Assessment Report, the dominant message was that climate change will result in a marked increase in vector-borne disease, and that this may already be happening. The IPCC message has been repeated in the publications of other

Agencies, often with inaccuracies that appear to have their origin in the Second Assessment Report. Thus the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency persists in making the statement: "Global warming may also increase the risk of some infectious diseases, particularly those diseases that only appear in warm areas. Diseases that are spread by mosquitoes and other insects could become more prevalent if warmer temperatures enabled those insects to become established farther north; such 'vector-borne' diseases include malaria, dengue fever, yellow fever, and encephalitis."

### **IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, Working Group II**

It will be interesting to see how the health chapter of the fourth report is written. Only one of the lead authors has ever been a lead author, and neither has ever published on mosquito-borne disease. Only one of the contributing authors has extensive bibliography in the field of human health. He is a specialist in industrial health, and all his publications are in Russian. Several of the others have never published any articles at all.

It is often stated that the IPCC represents the world's top scientists. I copy to you the bibliographies of [the two lead authors], as downloaded from MEDLINE. You will observe that [the first] has never written a single article, and [the second] has only authored five articles. Can these two really be considered "Lead Authors" with experience, representative of the world's top scientists and specialist in human health?"

I also pointed out that one Lead Author is a "hygienist," the other is a specialist in fossil faeces, and both have been co-authors on publications by environmental activists.

**Reiter:** What Gore did was to say that this fellow Paul Epstein (I'm sure you know that name [Associate Director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School]). Paul Epstein was one of a group of people who started this off. We had an exchange of letters in *The Lancet* in 1994, or thereabouts. First there was an article that said there would be malaria in the U.S.A., and in southern Europe. And I told the authors this was bullshit, because there once was malaria as far as Ontario.

And, the next thing Epstein came up with—and he did it all over the place—was that malaria, and mosquitoes, are moving to new altitudes in the highlands of Africa. Well, I happen to know Kenya very well, and I know the history of malaria there. So, I was really, really pissed off when he kept doing this. And, I wrote something about it which was also published in *The Lancet*, with a graph showing the altitudes of malaria between 1880 and 1945—because it was well documented (you know, the colonials used to document everything)—and then the so-called recent increases in elevation. And, in fact, all the recent claims were well below the transmission levels before 1945.

So, then, Epstein wrote back and said: Well, Paul Reiter just doesn't get the point, you know, and the fact is that plants are moving up, and etc.

So, I wrote back and said: It's quite true, I don't get it. In fact, I quoted—I think it was Patrick Michaels who first used this thing—I quoted *Alice in Wonderland*, where Alice says, "I see nobody in the road." And the Red Queen says, "You're so lucky, to be able to see nobody, and at that distance, too!"

And people told me I've been really stupid to write that. But I don't think so at all.

**EIR:** No, that was absolutely correct.

**Reiter:** So, that's the way it's gone. Gore shows an animation—you've seen his film, I'm sure.

**EIR:** Unfortunately, I have.

**Reiter:** It's nauseating. Gore shows a little animation of mosquitoes moving up a mountain. And it's almost the same sort of format as Paul Epstein's diagram of the same thing in *Scientific American* in 2000. There were actually six people given special credit at the end of his film, and one of them is Paul Epstein, and another one of them is Eric Chivian [Epstein's colleague at the Center for Health and the Global Environment].

**EIR:** Yes, this same crowd that's pushing the idea that malaria's increase because of global warming is going to hurt the poor Africans and the underdeveloped areas, are also the same people who are opposing using DDT to get a handle on that.



*Paul Epstein's mosquito misinformation in the service of Al Gore.*

**Reiter:** Absolutely, and even more so. . . .

But just going back to Gore: Gore says what Epstein and Jonathan Patz [Associate Professor of Environmental Studies and Population Health Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison], and all those people have been saying for ages, which is that Nairobi and Harar were founded at altitudes where it was healthy—in other words, above the malaria levels. But now, with global warming, the mosquitoes have moved up to their altitude, so there is malaria in these cities. Well, I know Nairobi very well—Nairobi, as we used to call it—and I lived in Kenya. Nairobi is close to—essentially, close to—the Rift Valley, where you have a very steep escarpment. It goes down a few thousand feet, certainly three or four thousand feet, very, very steep, a tremendous sort of crack in the Earth there.

And, the British government was building a railroad from Mombasa to Kampala, in Uganda. And when they got up to the edge of the Kukuyu Escarpment, they decided to make a hub for the construction of the railroad. But everybody was coming down with malaria. It was a marshy place—Nairobi means sort of "place of still water" in the Masai language. And it was infested with mosquitoes. The doctors on the project said that they shouldn't have the hub there, because it was just too sick—the whole place—but they didn't change it.

Nairobi was well known for its malaria. In fact, after World War I, when a lot of white people started settling in the Kenya highlands, which are much higher than Nairobi, they had big problems with malaria; they had at least ten major epidemics. And those continued until the advent of DDT in the 1950s. Nairobi is at 1,600 meters, and Eldoret, in Londiane and the farming country around there, goes up to 2,500 meters. I think the maximum for malaria transmission in those times was about 2,250 meters, much higher than Nairobi. So the whole thing is a lie.

But, you know, Epstein has had his way, and Gore has got his Oscar.