

'Giant Green Wave' Sweeping Western Europe

An LA Times-Washington Post news dispatch out of Rome in May describes "an unprecedented tide of environmental concern sweeping Western Europe," and suggests that Europeans are looking at the United States and "determined to learn from our mistakes."

Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands is quoted as saying "The Earth is slowly dying, and the inconceivable — the end of life itself — is actually becoming conceivable."

Margaret Thatcher of England, speaking to 180 scientists, doctors, diplomats, and senior government officials, warned that people may "unwittingly have begun a massive experiment with the system of the planet

itself." She cited specifically the greenhouse effect, the shrinking ozone layer, and acid rain.

Politicians across the continent are playing to the growing national preoccupation with environmental concerns which, according to an American senior consultant at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris, "hasn't hit the top yet."

What the Rome correspondent, William D. Montalbano, refers to as "the giant green wave" is a product of "better scientific monitoring and better communications that have underscored Europe's own ecological horrors to its people." Italy's deputy prime minister has

called environment "the one issue that can unite us now" in the face of a threat that knows no political boundaries, to wit:

"Acid rain spawned in England kills forests in West Germany and Scandinavia. Eighteen nations on three continents help pollute the Mediterranean Basin. Chemicals spilled into the Rhine in Switzerland kill fish in the Netherlands. Mercury contamination from a plant in West Germany fouls drinking water behind barbed wire fences 20 miles away in East Germany."