

HO CHI MINH: a Eulogy

NCLE HO, AS EVERY VIETNAMESE called him, died early in the morning of September 3 in Hanoi at the age of 79. For one week he lay in state in a glass coffin; his sandals, made from rubber tires, were in a small glass box at the foot of the coffin. He was buried in Hanoi's Badinh Square, where Vietnamese independence was proclaimed in August of 1945.

Obituaries giving the details of Ho's life have appeared in American papers, and their tone has been respectful but dry. None I have seen repeated Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky's venomous comment that "North Viet-Nam is now a snake without a head." Americans did not hate Ho Chi Minh the way they once did Tojo-a fact which made it difficult to mobilize sentiment against the yellow hordes of North Vietnamese threatening to land on California beaches. Nor did very many Americans see him as the Red Menace, which prevented our rulers in Washington from turning the war into an oldfashioned anti-communist crusade. Broadcasts from Saigon had the South Vietnamese "man-on-the-street" saying: "Ho Chi Minh was a great man-too bad he was not on our side." The New York Times necrologist put his finger on the dilemma when, in his opening lines, he credited Ho Chi Minh with blending nationalism and communism. As a nationalist, Ho was good; as a communist, he was bad. So it would appear that Uncle Ho was a split personality, agonizing constantly between good ends (nationalism) and bad means (communism).

Needless to say, this is not the way Uncle Ho was seen in Viet-Nam. When he wasn't called "Uncle," he was "Chairman Ho"—the word being taken more literally there than in other socialist countries. For over half a century, he presided over the men who fought and planned for their country. His manner was that of an old rural schoolteacher lecturing his pupils. On a more cosmic plane, Ho Chi Minh was the leader of the only nation which has administered a major defeat to

the United States, the greatest empire of all times.

Nations and movements have leaders for three purposes: to lead them in the daily tasks of struggle, to unify men in the face of the conflicts which always arise to divide them, and to give them a vision of that for which they fight. A great leader is a commander, a conciliator, and a man of vision Ordinary leaders may have one of these qualities but lack the others. Lyndon B. Johnson was certainly a commander, but hardly a conciliator; such vision as he had went little beyond political manipulation. His successor Richard Nixon tries hard to be a conciliator, but has yet to show any capacity to command and makes no effort to hide his lack of vision. Ho Chi Minh, in the 60 years of his life as a revolutionary fighter, had all three capacities. From his earliest days in Paris, he took the lead in organizing groups of Vietnamese exiles; again and again he undertook dangerous political missions in Asia and Europe. In the midst of these revolutionary activities, he always managed at critical times to pull bitterly quarreling factions together into a new organizational unity. Ho's ability to unify moved the Vietnamese Revolution from the Indochinese Communist Party, to the Viêt Minh, to the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. His spirit will ultimately unify all of Viet-Nam. While Ho Chi Minh was not a theorist, he communicated to his people in simple terms a vision which is embodied in three words repeated again and again in every declaration by the Vietnamese: independence, unity, and sovereignty. The meaning of these words (which have lost much of their moral significance in America) is both the content of Ho Chi Minh's life and the spirit of the Vietnamese Revolution.

ROM LATE ADOLESCENCE to his death, Ho Chi Minh lived as a revolutionary fighter. His life can be divided into two broad periods. Until 1944, his own struggle and that of his comrades met with failure after failure

by Franz Schurmann

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—disappointments from which Ho nevertheless continually reemerged to start some new revolutionary action. After 1944, the Vietnamese Revolution finally burst through, and his life became a series of hard-won victories leading to greater challenges and then to new successes. In his biography of Ho Chi Minh, Jean Lacouture has six chapters on the first period of Ho's life, the titles of which represent various aspects of his personality: the peasant, the emigrant, the militant, the unifier, the prisoner, the liberator. The experiences which formed the personality of Ho Chi Minh during the period of failure were the elements from which the period of success evolved.

Ho Chi Minh was born in what Americans call the panhandle of Viet-Nam, just north of the DMZ. Today the countryside is a lunar landscape produced by the most ferocious and sustained aerial bombing in history. In 1890, Nghê Tinh province was one of the poorest and most densely populated in Viet-Nam. Ho's father, who was a minor official there, was fired from his post by the French and died after a long life of wandering; his mother was a peasant.

Ho Chi Minh spent most of his life among the poor. In his early days, he lived with poor Vietnamese students. He worked as a cabin boy on a ship, a cook in London, and a photographer of family pictures in Paris. Even before he became a socialist, he had close friends among the French workers and the Africans and Arabs of Paris. In the 1930's, he was a begging monk in Northeastern Thailand, the poorest part of that country. During the ten years of war from 1944 to 1954, he lived in caves and jungle camps among his peasant fighters. For Ho, being a peasant meant living like the poor—an outlook symbolized by the sandals placed at the foot of his coffin.

In 1911 Ho left Viet-Nam for travels which did not end until 1945. Aside from political repression, the French, in collaboration with the old Vietnamese mandarins, had imposed a stifling regime on the country. The stupidity and avarice of the French colonials fitted in well with comparable characteristics of the mandarins, whose tradition reaches down to Thieu and Ky. In Viet-Nam Ho might have remained *un petit annamite*, as the French paternalistically called the people they ruled. Instead, he went to Paris where he learned to think, write and act. He also learned that to be a Vietnamese nationalist, he had to fight with the proletariats of other countries, and as a result he became one of the founding members of the French Communist Party.

When the French Socialists split after World War I, Ho went with the militants. His experiences at the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919 had propelled him into militancy. Inspired, like many other colonial peoples, by Wilson's rhetoric about national self-determination, Ho had put on his best clothes and gone to the great Palace of Mirrors to present moderate demands for Vietnamese self-determination, couched in Wilsonian language. He was literally thrown out of the palace. Ho, along with many of his fellow nationals, concluded that Vietnamese independence could be achieved only through more militant action. They organized strikes, uprisings and attacks on French military garrisons. Although many Vietnamese at that time yearned for the "general uprising" which would sweep the French out of Indo-China at one blow, Ho Chi Minh decided to take the longer road of organization. He went to Russia and became an active agent of the Comintern, which sent him to China to help the revolutionaries there.

In the 1920's, revolutionary agitation erupted in both China

and Viet-Nam. But in 1927, Chiang Kai-shek, who had been brought to power by a nationalist revolution, turned on the Communists and killed every one he could lay his hands on. Meanwhile the ferment in Viet-Nam continued. In Ho's own province of Nghê Tinh, the peasants revolted and organized soviets on land wrested from the landlords. The French responded with a ferocious attempt to smash the movement.

As repression intensified, so did the quarrels within the revolutionary movement. The endemic tendency toward factionalism evident everywhere in Vietnamese politics splintered the movement into minute fragments, and the French Sûreté, the secret police, moved quickly to annihilate the fragments one by one, crushing the revolution. In desperation, the quarreling revolutionaries appealed to Ho, then in China, to help reunify the movement. Ho's abilities as a conciliator helped, but it was too late. Viet-Nam lay prostrate for a decade and a half. Ho was arrested in Hong Kong in the early '30s, where he was reputed to have died in a British prison.

In 1944, after spending almost a year in Chiang Kai-shek's prisons, Ho got the stroke of luck he had been waiting for. Chiang, in league with the Vietnamese Kuomintang, wanted to kill him. President Roosevelt, however, was seeking a way to prevent the French from getting back into Indo-China. Roosevelt's agents in China (notably the OSS) saw a way to achieve this objective by allowing Ho to organize a liberation movement to fight both the French and the Japanese. Thus, as a result of American pressure, Ho Chi Minh was freed.

Whatever the dark machinations of the Americans, the situation gave Ho Chi Minh his chance. Like a good commander, he seized the opportunity. On the one hand, he organized a broad coalition of the Vietnamese nationalists then in China—called the Viêt Minh, or Viet-Nam League. On the other, he organized armed guerrilla units to start fighting in the mountains of Western Tonkin. He himself went into the mountains to lead the battle. The core of these guerrilla units was the old revolutionaries of the Indo-China Communist Party who understood the need for organization, discipline, and patient struggle. By the summer of 1945, the Americans became alarmed that Ho Chi Minh was getting too independent, that he "really was a Communist." When the Japanese withdrew in August, the general uprising that the Vietnamese revolutionaries had yearned for for two decades took place. The people in the cities seized the colonial administration and welcomed Ho Chi Minh and his guerrilla bands as the liberators of Viet-Nam. In August 1945, Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam.

Ho Chi Minh's brilliant success, wrested from years of failure, was short-lived. French troops again landed in Viet-Nam and with them came the old colonials, determined to bring back the good old days of French Indo-China. The French government invited Ho Chi Minh to Paris to negotiate some kind of understanding, but soon after he returned from Paris, the French colonials and their Vietnamese henchmen struck in Hanoi. Ho fled back to the hills.

The resistance went badly during the first few years. The French did not hesitate to use the same barbarism against the Vietnamese which they themselves had, only a few years earlier, suffered at the hands of the Germans. French aircraft bombed villages and French troops burned houses—in the same way the Americans are doing now on a much larger scale.

continued on next page

In one day of French naval bombardment, 6000 people were killed in Haiphong. Gone was the international support that Ho had received in 1945. The Americans backed the French; Russia had other things to worry about in Eastern Europe. Mao Tse-tung's forces were far away in North China fighting a civil war of their own. Each year from 1946 to 1954, the French announced that the Viêt Minh was on its last leg; time and time again French statistics indicated that the last Viêt Minh soldier had been killed. But this time French repression was unable to do what it had succeeded in doing in the early 1930's.

The new unity of the Viêt Minh was symbolized by the men who became Ho Chi Minh's lieutenants: Pham Van Dong, skilled at coordinating and conciliating: Vo Nguyen Giap, one of the great military commanders of the twentieth century; Lê Duan, party organizer; Truong Chinh, theoretician of revolution. Unlike the experience of the 1920's and 1930's, the leaders of the Viêt Minh developed an unbreakable solidarity which diffused a spirit of unity and struggle to all the Viêt Minh fighters. Adversity now unified rather than split the ranks of the revolutionaries. What had changed?

The most striking difference between the late '20s and the late '40s was the locus of revolutionary activity. In the '20s, the revolutionaries had met in clandestine cells in Paris, Canton and various Vietnamese cities. True, currents of mass revolutionary discontent were swirling in Viet-Nam, but the revolutionaries had no binding ties to the people. Now they were literally among peasants and mountain people, depending on them for sustenance and for fighting strength. They were not merely guests in strange villages, but comrades who aroused the spirit of revolution in those villages. Ho Chi Minh brought a spark which ignited the flames of rebellion in village after village; landlords were chased out and their land taken by the peasants; colonial officials and mandarins who had fattened themselves off the people were eliminated, often by execution; French and mercenary troops who for years had plagued the countryside were defeated in battle. Ho Chi Minh realized that revolution could not begin in Hanoi; rather it had to begin in the villages and end in Hanoi. In the '20s, the Vietnamese revolutionaries had



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San Francisco Mime Troupe, Dept. R 450 Alabama St., San Francisco, Calif 94110 Phone (415) 431-1984 been mainly intellectuals. In the '40s, most of the leaders of the revolution were still intellectuals, but through years of fighting they had developed a close relationship to the people.

Peasant revolutionary, but he was also a Communist with long experience in organization. He knew that if the revolution were not organized, the flames of rebellion would subside without contributing to the final goal: the smashing of colonial power. He also knew that while nationalism gave him widespread sympathy throughout Viet-Nam, it did not give him the troops he needed to win the war. The revolution had to be organized. Ho's field com-



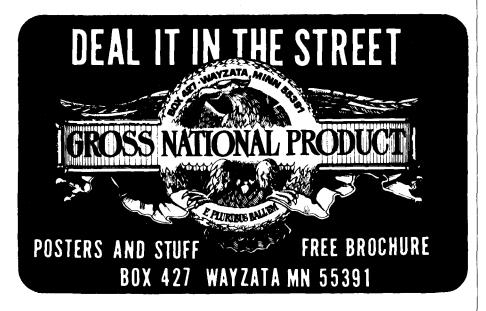
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The ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC) San Jose • California 95114 Please include your zip code manders turned the Viêt Minh into one of the finest fighting forces in the world, surpassed only by the National Liberation Front. His party cadres built a political network reaching deep into the cities. His administrators constructed a government which operated effectively throughout Viet-Nam long before his troops marched into Hanoi in 1954. What the Viêt Minh did in the years 1946-1954, the National Liberation Front has done again in South Viet-Nam. Their final march into Saigon will be the last link in a chain which has been long in the forging.

Ho Chi Minh realized that nationalism was a powerful unifying force, and that communism-in the sense of a Leninist party-provided the commanding and organizing force for the revolution and the armed struggle. But the experiences of 1946-1954 brought a third element into the picture: the liberation of the poor. Viet-Nam was controlled by a thin layer of French colonials who thrived on bureaucratic profits and the exploitation of plantations, by Vietnamese mandarins who lived on feudal sinecures, and by landlords who squeezed the peasants with impunity. The great land reform launched by the Viêt Minh in the early 1950's made the vision of the liberation of the poor a reality; it also furnished the Viêt Minh with the key weapon for their victory.

In 1953, the French decided that the time had come for the final solution. The United States, freed from the burdens of the Korean War, threw massive resources behind the French to enable them to execute their "Navarre Plan." While the Vietnamese could count on increased Chinese aid by then, their main weapon was men. The French counted on destroying the Viêt Minh regulars in a series of air-supported actions, while pacifying the villages of Tonkin through terror. Theoretically, French actions should have killed so many Viêt Minh fighters that the Viêt Minh would have melted away. In fact, however, General Giap struck back with greater manpower than ever before. No man can be coerced to fight, as the French and the Americans discovered with their own Vietnamese hirelings. Exactly as had happened in China in 1946, the radical land reform rallied the peasantry to the Viêt Minh in the most meaningful way possible: they took up arms and fought to the death for the movement led by Ho Chi Minh.



The CONSPIRAC

ACCUSED OF CROSSING STATE LINES IN AN UNLAWFUL FRAME OF MIND, EIGHT POLITICAL ACTIVISTS ARE NOW ON TRIAL IN CHICAGO FEDERAL COURT. THEY HAVE BEEN INDICTED NOT FOR ALLEGED CRIMINAL ACTS, BUT FOR PRESUMED "INTENT."

They are accused of conspiracy "to incite, organize, promote, encourage, participate in and carry on a riot" in the streets of Chicago during the week of the Democratic National Convention. The indictment of these eight men-the first under the controversial "Anti-riot" provision of the Civil Rights Act of 1968—is the most ominous challenge to political liberty since the era of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Their trial marks the opening of a calculated effort to dissolve organized dissent in America, and to silence those that the new Deputy Attorney General, Mr. Kleindienst, has branded "our modern ideological criminal."

The accused are: David Dellinger, Rennie Davis, Tom Hayden, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Lee Weiner, John Froines and Bobby Seale. Each defendant, if convicted, faces up to ten years in federal prison and \$20,000. in fines. Confronted by a blatant challenge to the right of political dissent, the eight defendants are determined to make a political response as well as a legal defense. As a sign of their refusal to be intimidated by the scare label the prosecution would hang upon them, they are calling themselves "The Conspiracy."

Despite the emphatic opposition of then-Attorney General Ramsey Clark and civil libertarians in the Congress, the "Anti-riot" rider was hastily attached to the Civil Rights Act of 1968 in the wake of the urban riots that followed the murder of Martin Luther King. The measure was specifically directed at "outside agitators" in the civil rights movement.

The effect of the "Anti-riot" act is to subvert the First Amendment guarantee of free assembly by equating organized political protest with organized violence and premeditated incitement. In this decade, countless Americans have participated in organized demonstrations and protests—boycotts, freedom rides, community organizing, the peace movement. They have revitalized democratic politics. Yet, from Bull Connor's Birmingham to Richard Daley's Chicago, civil authorities have employed police violence to suppress "the right of the people peaceably to assemble." The spectres of conspiracy, incitement and riot have been invoked again and again. The federal government has now joined the assault on political freedom. Potentially, the "Anti-riot" act is the foundation for a police state in America.

Acts of violence, incitement and disruption are explicitly covered by numerous state and local laws. Conspiracy, which deals not with acts but intent, requires no proof of the commission of a crime, or even of an attempt, As Mr. Justice Robert Jackson wrote a decade ago: "that elastic, so sprawling and pervasive offense, the modern crime of conspiracy is so vague that it almost defies definition.

The federally commissioned Walker Report, as well as the mass media, made it clear that the principal responsibility for acts of violence that occurred during Convention week lay with the Chicago authorities. The spuriousness of the present conspiracy indictment is further indicated in the fact that several of the eight defendants have helped to organize major public demonstrations in other cities, both before and after the week of the Democratic National Convention. Not one of these demonstrations resulted in riot.

Through the trial "The Conspiracy" intends to refocus public attention on the root issues that brought thousands of demonstrators to Chicago—the war, racism, the continuing enfeeblement of the nation's political processes. At the same time, the defendants will carry forward the first constitutional challenge to the "Anti-riot act."

Support for the Chicago legal defense is most urgently needed—to preserve the Constitutional right of political dissent; to insure that the costly and protracted process of litigation does not effectively stifle the act of dissent when it is more than ever crucial to the democratic political life.

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The torrent of American writing that has appeared on Viet-Nam has generally recognized all this about the Vietnamese struggle. The legions of political advisors and political scientists hired by the American occupiers of Viet-Nam know about the nationalist appeal, communist organizational strength, and the effects of land reform. They have tried for years to get the South Vietnamese to use the same methods. But how can satraps and their mercenaries attract any patriotic sentiment? South Viet-Nam's most effective organizations are the police and the paratroopers. Land reform (aside from paper legislation) cannot occur in American-occupied South Viet-Nam, as whatever force the Saigon regime still has would vanish. It is Ho Chi Minh's greatness that he was able to forge nationalism, communism and popular liberation into a force which now has successfully resisted the incredible violence which America has unleashed against Viet-Nam.

From 1954 on, Ho Chi Minh became a statesman, the president of a republic, his lieutenants carrying the burden for him. He was then 64 years old, and had every right to become a venerable schoolteacher. Immediately upon his death, the American mass media eagerly speculated on the "power struggles" which they believed would surely erupt in Hanoi. But 'Uncle Ho became the spirit of Viet-Nam long before his death, and it was his spirit as much as the man himself which led his people, unified them and inspired them again and again with the vision of independence, unity and sovereignty.

Uncle Ho knew that all Vietnamese wanted to be free. "The little annamites" wanted no more French colonials, no more fat landlords, mandarins or generals, no more kindly Americans helping them to happiness with bombs and dollars. (No master ever understands how much his slave wants to be free.)

Ho also knew that for centuries his people had been driven apart. Under the French, thousands of Vietnamese went abroad to work in mines and plantations. During the war against the French and the Americans, millions were driven from their homes into strange overcrowded cities and refugee camps. Vietnamese politics was traditionally a chaos of cliques and sects. Poverty and war tore families apart. Ho Chi Minh taught his people that they could get independence and unity by fighting for it, and his

Individuals Against the Crime of Silence

A Declaration To Our Fellow Citizens Of The United States, To The Peoples Of The World, And To Future Generations:

- We are appalled and angered by the conduct of our country in Vietnam.
- In the name of liberty, we have unleashed the awesome arsenal of the greatest military power in the world upon a small agricultural nation, killing, burning and mutilating its people. In the name of peace, we are creating a desert. In the name of security, we are inviting world conflagration.
- We, the signers of this declaration, believe this war to be immoral. We believe it to be illegal. We must oppose it.
- At Nuremberg, after World War II, we tried, convicted and executed men for the crime of OBEYING their government, when that government demanded of them crimes against humanity. Millions more, who were not tried, were still guilty of THE CRIME OF SILENCE.
- We have a commitment to the laws and principles we carefully forged in the AMERICAN CONSTITUTION, at the NUREMBERG TRIALS, and in the UNITED NATIONS CHARTER. And our own deep democratic traditions and our dedication to the ideal of human decency among men demand that we speak out.

We Therefore wish to declare our names to the office of the Secretary General of the United Nations, both as permanent witness to our opposition to the war in Vietnam and as a demonstration that the conscience of America is not dead.

On September 23, 1865, a Memorandum of Law was incorporated in the Congressional Record of the 99th Congress of the United States of America, in which leading American attorneys, after careful analysis of our position and actions in the Vietnam War, came to the conclusion that the U.S. is violating the following accords: The Charter of the United Nations, The Genery's Coords of 1954, the United States Constitution.

To Protest — To Object — To Dissent has long been an American tradition. The following are a few among the many who have signed this declaration to be on permanent record.

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movement gave them the means to do so. And lastly, Ho Chi Minh told the Vietnamese that they must be sovereign.

Sovereignty means that all men must have the dignity of being masters in their own houses and respected hosts to strangers. Ho Chi Minh's first newspaper was entitled The Pariah, which is how he saw his own people and all others oppressed by colonialism. The yearning for dignity is one of the most powerful aspirations in men; it is the yearning to be respected by others. But one cannot command or extort respect. It must be given willingly. Ho Chi Minh knew that no amount of propaganda or begging could give the Vietnamese the respect they wanted-either from the socialist countries or from the world as a whole. The Vietnamese have fought for that dignity. that respect, and they have it today more than any other people. GI's in Viet-Nam speak respectfully of "Victor Charlie," while reviling the ARVN's. The most corrupt South Vietnamese politicians cannot hide their envy of the National Liberation Front. Recently in the American mass media, Ho Chi Minh has been portrayed with a sympathy rarely shown even to leaders of the "free world." Beyond this grudging respect from those who kill the Vietnamese, is the admiration of millions throughout the world.

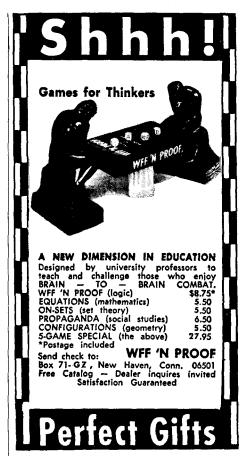
One of the slogans most often seen in North Viet-Nam is "quyet thanh," which means "determined to win." The Vietnamese are a gentle people, often sentimental, loving leisure and the other good things in life. But inside they are stubborn to a degree which has become apparent to Americans over the years. Uncle Ho shared all these qualities of his countrymen. As the leader of the Vietnamese Revolution he was determined to win. His death has made his people even more determined to win the struggle they have fought for so long.

Franz Schurmann is a professor of history and sociology at U.C. Berkeley. He is the author of Ideology and Organization in Communist China (University of Calif. Press).

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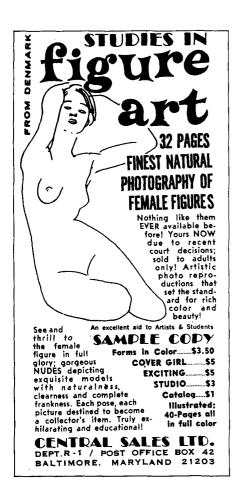
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and Dr. Ehrlich correctly implied how the underlying and causative problems of overpopulation and technocratic suicide outweigh "purely" political dilemmas. We have declared war, not only on every species of wildlife, on every body of water and land on earth; nor only on the underdeveloped and the povertystricken, but finally on ourselves. The whole earth is becoming, like the less monied regions of our American empires, a vast ghetto, where only rats, garbage and misery remain, and industry is the slumlord.

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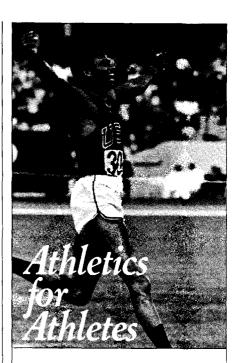
SIRS: Hard though it will be for the average reader to believe, Dr. Ehrlich's scenario for the next ten years is the most optimistic and favorable one possible. He has left several factors out of consideration. 1) Deforestation is now proceeding so fast that within those ten years the world may well run short of wood and above all of paper. 2) This, plus overgrazing, urbanization and bad farming, is leading to soil erosion so great that in ten years a significant percentage of the world's soil will be in the oceans-making a much worse mess of them than Ehrlich predicts.

3) Urban sprawl proceeds at 1,000,000 plus acres a year in the U.S., and correspondingly in other countries. The effects of this on energy balance, erosion, pollution, etc., are obvious enough already. 4) More people and more use of resources must necessarily mean more control. More control means more commitment to the status quo. This makes totally utopian Dr. Ehrlich's beliefs that the U.S. will awaken to its troubles by 1973. Instead, the controllers will easily convince the people that their problems are due to blacks, students and radicals.

5) Starvation, worldwide, will be much worse than Dr. Ehrlich predicts. The "Green Revolution" has not even touched the problems of protein shortage and vitamin C shortage. These shortages are the leading causes of serious malnutrition in the world. Thus deaths will be much more numerous and come much sooner than predicted.

Our lives are at stake. We must fight like anyone, any animal, in a corner.

E. N. ANDERSON, JR. Assist. Prof. of Anthropology Univ. of Calif., Riverside



Jack Scott, America's most prominant New Left sports writer, covered the Mexico City Olympics for RAMPARTS and is the author of "The White Olympics," an article which appeared in last year's April-May issue of RAMPARTS.

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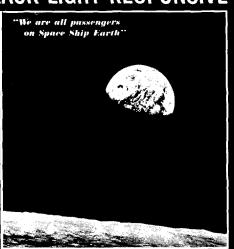






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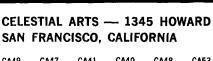
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