

JUNE 1973

Saturday Review

ONE DOLLAR

BANKRUPTCY

One into Four Won't Go

The Rise and Fall of Nick Charney's Saturday Review



DON BATTERSHALL

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SR UP FRONT

JUNE 1973

Psychology Today tomorrow the ..er.. World

BY JON SWAN

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.—There was a sense of unreality about the whole shebang from the start. Hardly surprising, perhaps, considering that two potent hallucinogenic agents, Nicolas Charney and John Veronis, of *Psychology Today* fame and (after selling it off for millions) fortune, were in charge of the operation. Speaking a lingo that mingled McLuhanese with standard entrepreneurial jabberwocky and which conjured up visions of a newfangled West Coast Time, Inc., Blarney and Zeronis induced a marvelous high among their fans on the fattened staff of their new *Saturday Review*—and, apparently, among the investors who provided them with a total of \$17 million, too. The move from New York, a critical city, to San Francisco, pretty but dumb, added to the delusional air surrounding the enterprise. Many Easterners, plunked down in Northern California, suddenly felt like exiles in their native land—street names sounded funny, the names of local celebrities rang no bell, the vegetation was exotic, the birds weren't the same, the sun shone, wine was cheap, dope was abundant and very good. True, reality did threaten to intrude on Sybaris-West. No sooner had the exiles settled down in this novel ecological niche in which newspapers contain next to no news and bookstores thrive by stocking non-books, than the word was out that some \$5 million were needed to keep *SR* alive

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and ailing in San Francisco. But, lo, the millions arrived, enabling Blarney and Zeronis to go ahead with a scheme that called for converting one wobbly weekly into four nimble and prodigiously profitable (given time—i.e., more millions) monthlies.

Madcap? Well, no, not exactly, but certainly risky—perhaps even foolhardy, considering that, so far, very little had gone according to plan (Norman Cousins, *SR*'s longtime editor who had gradually built its circulation up to 630,000, was *not* supposed to walk off in a huff to found a biweekly *World* of his own; the renovation of *SR*'s San Francisco home was supposed to be completed in July, not December; etc.) and the Blarnezonian scheme called for all systems working without a hitch. Meanwhile, the race to meet the demands of the company's most pressing creditors gave an edge of panic to the manic-depressive office atmosphere. Shortly after April Fool's Day, 1973, the shebang began to shudder in earnest. Screws loosened. People began to see visions—of themselves in exalted positions on the cut-back staff of a mythical monthly, or of themselves as jobless and stranded 3000 miles from home.

On April 24 (16 months after Cousins broke with Charney and Veronis; eight months after an uprooted 60 or so employees, many with families in tow, arrived, blinking, at San Francisco Airport; and just two days before *SR* was to have held open house in its posh, leased, four-story headquarters at the foot of Telegraph Hill) *SR* filed for reorganization under Chapter 11 of the bankruptcy law, and a press release was handed out that was headlined: *SR* Suspends Publication, Cousins to Head New Venture. With lunatic logic the venture had come full circle.

Herewith, a personal, incomplete, strongly biased narrative—divided, appropriately, into 11 cunningly reorganized chapters—of the final frenzy, as well as of a few of the shuffling or vaulting steps that preceded it.

CHAPTER VIII

(In which Nick Charney explains the difference between "the new magazine

and the old," and instructs his audience on how to captivate readers.)

It was in the first week of February 1973 that Chairman, Editor-in-Chief, and just plain Editor Nick Charney (to get his full array of titles out of the way) assembled about 50 people, members of the editorial and production staffs of the four magazines—*SR of Education*, of *The Arts, Society*, and *Science*—for a slide show he'd long wanted to get around to giving but hadn't been able to find time for. The point of the meeting, Chairman Charney began, was to explain the difference between old magazines, kept alive by a dying-off breed of subscribers, and the new. What made new magazines new? Well, their use, their exploitation of the nonlinear mode. So what was the nonlinear mode? Everything that wasn't linear. So what did "linear" mean? Lines of type. Words. So a grasp of the importance of the nonlinear mode meant exciting graphics, for one thing.

Meanwhile, the exciting graphics that had been prepared for Nick's show had just arrived. They had arrived scrambled and were being unscrambled. At last the first slide appeared on the screen. The lecture was formally launched.

Which were the new magazines? Nick clicked the slide switcher. Pictures of magazine covers, of representative pages from various magazines, flashed on the screen. Nick's pick: *New York, Psychology Today* (his brainchild), *Intellectual Digest* (ditto), *Clear Creek* (which had recently folded), *West* (ditto), *Ms.* Which were the old? *The New Yorker* ("Having a hard time. I give it about four or five years."), *Harper's* ("Just breaking even. Trying to change over to nonlinear mode. New wraparound's interesting. Confusing, but a step in the right . . ."), *Atlantic* ("Just breaking even"), *World*. Nick clicked the switcher. Up popped a cover of *Newsweek*. Picture of a huge light bulb. Slash headline: THE ENERGY CRISIS. Nick glanced up at it. Effective cover. "Oh, is this where this belongs?" Voice from the projection room: "Yeah, Nick." Never at a loss for words, Nick went on to explain why *Newsweek* was an oldie.

Where, then, did the four *Saturday*

Reviews belong? They were on their way to becoming new, Nick said, but one big fat linear foot was still stuck in the past. His job, our job, was to see that all four got nonlinear fast.

Was exciting graphics all it took? By no means. There was a lot more to the non-linear mode than that. What then? Slides and talk hammered and tonged the answer home: jazzy type faces for headlines, for "sells"; "pacing and rhythm," the way a magazine moves; "service-oriented" articles, articles that involve the reader, get him to sound off, write off, write in, connect. There followed a brief explanation of the 100-second flippership test. New subscribers, coaxed into laying out cash for a trial subscription, supposedly put every magazine to this crucial test. They flipped through the pages and if everything but the prose itself intrigued them they might actually go through the agony and the ecstasy of reading the printed word. The printed word, in whose name so many editors had been brought West (why?), was made to sound like the last resort of a literate scoundrel.

CHAPTER I

(In which Skipper Nick explains to all hands the unsinkable structure of the good ship SR.)

Norman Cousins had left in December 1971, taking with him a handful of loyalists and the pictures of Canby, Morley & Co. that had lined the halls for decades. By now it was—when? January 1972, as I recall. Nick called a mass meeting to explain corporate structure, clarify publishing objectives, and all hands, old and new, drifted into the biggest room in SR's Madison Ave. office until people were wedged together, locked into place like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle; outside, the corridor started filling up with tiers of faces. I—who had slipped into SR in November by a back door when neither Charney nor Cousins was looking—had not known there were so many. It was a motley crew. The middle-aged holdovers, dressed in traditional Eastern office wear, glowered or smiled tentatively at the recently hired-on lot, who were dressed in flashier costumes or wore work shirts, blue jeans. Nick was hiring brains, or talent, or people who simply seemed with it, by the carload. Most were dropped into think tanks on a nether floor, from which a few would subsequently crawl away, bored and bedraggled; a few would surface with pearls of thought; a few would break water, spouting the new rhetoric like whales. These last would have their reward.

Nick, standing by a desk cluttered with charts, looked very young and invulnerable and square: horn-rimmed glasses, white shirt, tie, plaid sports jacket, slacks, loafers. He was so openly smug it was almost disarming. He had a cold. He talked for two hours in a rather



“Motivation involves giving people a chance to grow, giving people a chance to develop and do what they want to do, to express themselves and to get credit for it, and not to have things rammed down their throats.”

Nick Charney
Saturday Review

high, even-toned, somewhat rasping voice, and drank 14 glasses of water.

SR was financially secured in so many ways it wasn't funny, we learned. It was, in essence, the *Titanic* of the magazine world. What made it unsinkable? Well, to begin with it was only a comparatively small part of the publishing empire he and John and the other investors had recently acquired, and all around it there were these various watertight compartments: Saturday Review Press, Saturday Review Book Club, Saturday Review Programs, Saturday Review Syndicate—moneymakers all. "At Saturday Review Industries," he went on, "other divisions can both create new products out of editorial inventory and sell additional products to subscribers." Additional products? Such things as records, posters, luggage, Smithfield hams, fruitcake, you name it.

The Brooklyn Bridge.

SUBSECTION 1 TO CHAPTER XI

(Being a report from a still-bobbing survivor of what caused the ship to founder:)

1. Cousins's leaving spooked advertisers. Subsequent announcements of all sorts of changes further spooked them. Adopting a wait-and-see policy, they waited, they saw. The result: a persistent "advertising shortfall." Each monthly, to pay its own way, had to bring in roughly \$135,000 in advertising per issue, \$35,000 of which was regularly supplied by classified ads. This left \$100,000. None of the magazines quite made this mark, with *Education* lagging far behind at between \$50,000 and \$60,000.

2. Hotshot Blarozeronian talk at the start (Zeronis: "We don't consider the reader as a \$12-a-year subscriber to a magazine, but as a potential \$100-a-year customer") spooked the press. Reporters, who had a hard time figuring out what was going on, tended to serve up garbled information with a dollop of snide sauce.

3. The failure of two big mailings to attract subscribers resulted in a tremendous cash loss. In August 1972 a nine-million-piece mailing went out, which cost \$1.4 million. Business plan called for two percent return in subscriptions—the norm. Result of August mailing: "about one percent return." In the last week of December a 17-million-piece mailing went out (which cost close to \$3 million), got stuck in post offices in the Christmas rush. Result once again: "about one percent return." (Something wrong with those mailings? According to one knowledgeable source: "The mailings were slick but didn't relate to the magazines. There was never time to test the mailings thoroughly and develop presentation material that really represented the magazines.") About a month before SR filed for reorganization under Chapter 11, it stopped guaranteeing advertisers a high of 750,000 for *SR of the Sciences*, a low of 600,000 for *SR of the Society*, began guaranteeing only 525,000 for each of the four.

Question: Was it the quality of the magazines themselves that caused guaranteed circulation to drop?

Answer: Moot point. Renewals on subscriptions were due to start coming in in June. The shebang folded before readers could vote on this issue.

Question: What did you personally think of the four magazines?

Answer: With few exceptions I read only the articles I edited—many of which were very good. A few—Edward Hoagland writing on wolves, Roy Bongartz on the British Wildlife Recording Society, Tony Hiss on Oscar Ichazo—were first-rate.

Question: Well, then, what did other editors, who read more widely, think of the magazines?

Answer: All managing editors were, I believe, proud of their magazines. Often just proud that under a variety of rough circumstances they had been able to bring out a magazine at all. Example of circumstance: William Honan, managing editor of *The Society*, has a cover

story, on home security, all ready to run. A week before it's scheduled to go to press, the Veronis brothers fly out from New York, say: "If you hold that cover for a couple of months we can sell \$50,000 of advertising to home-security-oriented industries." Honan, knowing how shaky things are, obligingly pulls the story, plugs the hole as best he can in the little time left. Two months pass. The held-up cover story goes to press. The Veronis fail to bring in any home-security-oriented ads. Example: three-, four-, five-hour-long conferences with Charney talking nonstop to entire staffs of this or that magazine. Meanwhile, work to be done gets undone; supposedly inspired troops emerge dazed.

Question: And nonmanaging editors—what did they think of the magazines?

Answer: I just spoke to five editors. Their praise was faint. Only one had consistently read a major portion of all magazines. "I had to force myself to read them," he said. "Most of the stories just weren't interesting. No point, and no urgency. They could have been run any time." All five agreed on one point: As special-interest magazines the four magazines were awfully general.

Question: One last, personal question. The shebang aside, were you glad to have had this opportunity to visit California?

Answer: Delighted.

CHAPTER II

Spring of '72. Those white patches on the walls where Cousins's pictures had hung bothered Nick. As did the down-at-heels look of the New York office in general. So walls and offices were painted, new carpets laid, partitions put up—the works. Nifty, but not really necessary, since Nick had already decided that the whole shebang must go west—and soon. Why move? To escape the myopia from which New York-based magazines supposedly suffered. To clear out of a grimy, problem-ridden corner of the country and pitch camp on sun-soaked, solution-oriented terrain. To . . . oh, basically, to allow Nick to operate and relax in an atmosphere he felt at home in. New York and New Yorkers got on his nerves. "Everybody I meet around here reads *The New York Times*, and I just don't know what they're talking about."

The decision to renovate so soon before leaving the premises to a skeleton staff struck some as evidence of a fat exchequer, others as a sign that Nick and John felt that *SR* had to look rich even if—especially when—it was running short of cash.

Some months later such spendthrift practices were to seem just this side of criminal.

CHAPTER III

Excerpt from form letter received in



July or early August 1972 by all remaining members of cut-down motley crew who were planning to go to San Francisco:

WELCOME:

YOU WHO ARE ABOUT TO EMBARK ON THE GREAT ADVENTURE WESTWARD WILL BE MOVING WITH NORTH AMERICAN VAN LINES, THE VERY BEST IN THE BUSINESS OF TRANSPORTING HOUSEHOLD GOODS, AND WE ARE DELIGHTED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE IT. . . . THE STEPS DESCRIBED ARE THE METHODS BY WHICH WE WILL GET YOU FROM THE NEW YORK AREA TO SAN FRANCISCO. IT WILL REQUIRE APPROXIMATELY 7 TO 10 DAYS TRAVEL TIME TO GET THE VAN HERE TO THERE.

SO RELAX—WE WILL MAKE THIS YOUR HAPPIEST MOVE.

SUBSECTION 2 FROM CHAPTER XI

Excerpt from form letter sent by North American Van Lines, which some 20 *SR* employees received on May 4, 1973—for most of them, the last day of their employment:

Dear Mr.

North American moved your household goods in interstate commerce from New York to California. The freight charges on that shipment still outstanding are \$ _____ Your employer, Saturday Review Magazine, agreed to make full payment for these charges.

To date, no payment has been received from your employer. . . . In performance of our duty as an interstate carrier, we must now . . . collect this amount from you. . . . I fully realize this burden may come to you unexpectedly and may impose some degree of hardship. For this we at North American are truly sorry. . . . We did, however, attempt to prepare you for this risk by placing on the back of the bill of lading which you signed. . . .

CHAPTER IV

(Being a brief ode on the occasion of a flight from New York to San Francisco, August 20, 1972:)

California, here I—
with wife and three children,
plus a dog numb
with dread and sedation—
come,
courtesy of *Saturday Review*.
For reasons that appear
to have something to do
with sunnier outlook in sunny location
—a nice bit of optimystification—
the whole shebang's going west,
like the ghost
(the ghost of literature,
Leslie Fiedler might say)
and today
(hooray?)
it's our turn to fly.

Evicted from our house on a Connecticut hilltop as of August 23 (the California landlord's stated complaint: too many kids), and with no other job on the Eastern horizon, flight seemed prudent. It wasn't, of course. But then what if everything had turned out differently—if Charney's dream magazines had had time (i.e., more millions) to catch on? Hindsight is a warped lens.

CHAPTER V

(Being a short digression on Charney in hindsight:)

Charney was never what I would call a breath of fresh air. But he was an energetic windbag. A breezy guy, a true son of Aeolus. He could listen to himself talk for hours without being bored for a minute. (He left that part of living to others.)

Many *SR* editors who were by no means his fans considered Nick not just bright but brilliant. His penchant for talking Blarnezonian obscured that insight from me. One thing: He was almost invariably in high spirits. He appeared in the office in Mad Hatter costume one day. In the San Francisco office, of course.

For a man with a Ph.D. in psychology, he was remarkably insensitive. Or rather, he was aware of others' moods but didn't give much of a damn about them, and clanked right on. Was he more than insensitive—was he cruel? In hindsight, true, it could seem cruel that he should uproot and transport so many people so far when he knew that keeping *SR* going, and growing, was going to be a tricky business. (At a meeting with employees held two days after *SR* filed Chapter 11, Fred Wyle, chairman of the executive committee, let slip the startling fact that some four months before the transcontinental move, in March 1972, "there was talk even then of pulling the plug." But then could any rational adult really expect an entrepreneur like Nick to worry about what might happen to people in the unlikely event that the successful enterprise he projected—lived by projecting—should flop? Hardly.

According to people who talked with him more often and freely than I did,

Nick considers himself a liberal Democrat. According to novelist Herbert Gold, shortly after *SR* filed Chapter 11 Nick put his \$15,000 Maserati up for sale for \$4,000. Nick reputedly sank and lost around \$750,000 in *SR*. This is roughly the amount it cost to move everybody and everything west. He is, I am told, an admirer of Walt Disney, his life and entrepreneurial savvy. He has, I have heard, often toyed with the idea of branching out into the theme-park game. His Bible? Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock*. Chief guru? Economist Peter Drucker, author of *The Age of Discontinuity*, supposedly high on the White House's recommended-reading list before Watergate zapped contact there with the linear mode.

I toss out these facts and possible fictions like yarrow sticks, but lack an *I Ching* to interpret them with. Or the requisite patience born of fascination to sit down with Nick for five hours at his ranch at Bolinas or his house at Del Mar or his suite, if he still has one, at the Pierre, or his S.F. apartment just off the crookedest street in the world, in an attempt to discover what Nick thinks makes him tick, and whither the next tock will take him.

He reminded me of a precocious college junior who loves to hold court among freshmen. There was, to begin with, the remorseless self-indulgence of his monologues—in which “now” was invariably enflated to “at this point in time,” and into which every magpie fact or vaguely relevant reminiscence was dragged as if it were gold (“Last night I was having a drink with my wife,” to quote a revelation offered to the *Society* staff, “and I turned to her and I said, ‘Ann, when I think of all the worries and trouble connected with the job, sometimes I wonder whether I really want to go on being an entrepreneur.’”) Then there was his *SR* fan club—boyish men, young goodlooking women, bright kids flattered to have a corner on the boss. At the office they served as benevolent bugs, reporting to Nick every scrap of gossip or information that might interest him. On weekends they flew off with Nick to his house in Del Mar (“One of the most unusual and spectacular homes in San Diego County,” according to the For Sale ad that appeared weekly in *SR*). They were having the time of their lives. In the final delusional week when the single mythical monthly that would replace the four about-to-be scuttled magazines was being secretly planned, fans were assured that they would be among the elite left clinging to the new masthead. They were fit to be tied when they found out that their pal had deceived them.

He was, to use his own jargon, an “opportunity-oriented” fellow to the very end.

SUBSECTION 3 TO CHAPTER XI

Cousins had the careful manners of a

professional gentleman. (Charney's were as sloppy as cowlop—“Oh, well, I might as well kiss you, too, since we're all going to have to get to know each other,” being his farewell speech to a managing editor's wife at the close of a party at the Charney ranch in Bolinas.) But Cousins's *SR* was, by and large, a slipshod Grub Street publication. So far as I know, only one editor, Rochelle Girson of the book review section, ever edited copy; in general, the policy was “hands off the prose,” which would have been wise had the prose been good.

There was a weary, cranky atmosphere about the shop Cousins ran. One kept tripping over wires of conflict, running afoul of ancient feuds. The staff had been kept on short fiscal rations so long and had clogged the same cobblestones for so many years that a good half of them looked ready to drop in their traces. One longed for . . . oh, for a start, anyway, a breath of fresh air. In lieu of which in blew Nick Charney. At least he banished the mildew, stirred up the dust, got things moving at a clip that made people gasp. (Has not this restless Satan saved thee, Cousins?)

CHAPTER VII

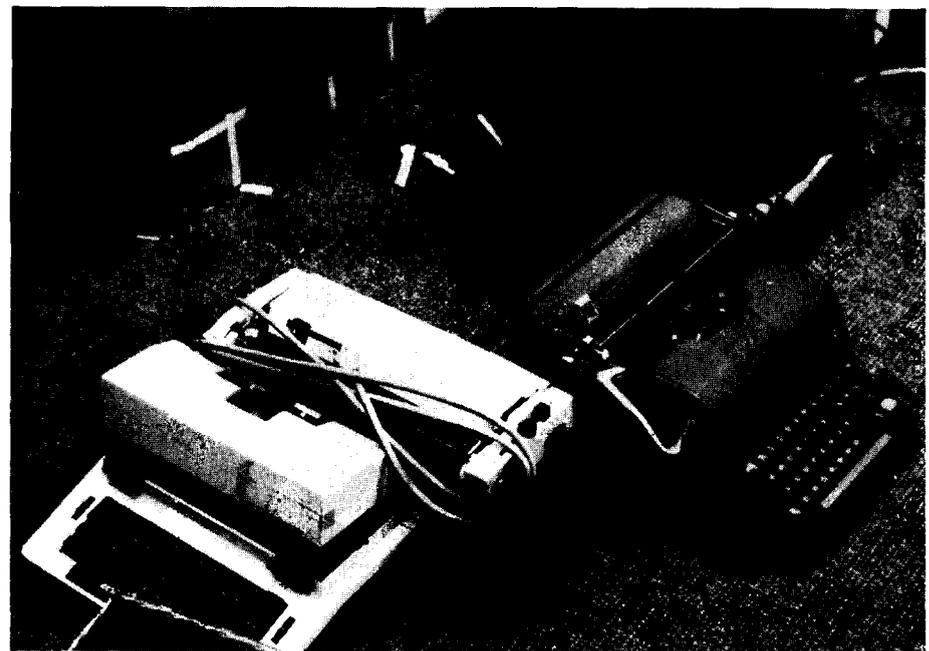
For about four months—July-October 1972—I had about as much fun as an office-hater can have working in an office. Rob Cowley, who had been managing editor of *Horizon*, joined *SR* in June as managing editor of the weekly portion of the magazine. Very bright, and delighted to be doing something new—namely, or mainly, putting together a freewheeling section called *Up Front*, which consisted of short, timely articles of general interest—Rob was eager to make the section as sharp and memorable as *The New Republic* had

been when his father, Malcolm Cowley, was in charge of that magazine. Unabashedly fond of the linear mode, he went after the best prose he could get. He enjoyed being able to give young writers such as Mary Breasted and Lucian Truscott, whose articles appeared mainly in *The Village Voice*, a chance to report and sound off in a national magazine. If their prose and/or stance jolted readers, well, why shouldn't readers be grateful? “Damn braces. Bless relaxes.” I liked Rob's attitude. The Veronis brothers, John and Peter, who were in charge of advertising, didn't. Nick left reading to others that summer, just as during the winter he had left to others the writing of editorials that bore his name. Ronald P. Kriss, the executive editor whom Nick and John had induced to leave *Time* back in January, was too preoccupied with trying to establish order in the midst of horrific chaos to read everything that appeared in each issue. (He was to remain preoccupied with trying to cope with chaos to the bitter end. Bemused by the incessant Blarozeronian drone, he was also to become increasingly silent, a hired king drowned out by the jester who ran the palace and wore three crowns for the hell of it.)

Shortly before the move west, Charles McLaughlin, a bouyant veteran of the sinking of *Look* and an editor who possessed a calm sanity that *Up Front* could use, joined the section. The three of us closed ranks and in an unspoken agreement decided to give the rascals who ruled *SR* a run for their money.

The fun lasted until in September, by which time the move had been made, the money ran out, with a gurgle that gave househunting Easterners pause.

(Continued on page 59)



MYSTIC POLITICS

Refugees from the New Left

*To communicate with Mars, converse with spirits
To report the behaviour of the sea monster,
Describe the horoscope, haruspicate or scry,
Observe disease in signatures, evoke
Biography from the wrinkles of the palm
And tragedy from fingers; release omens
By sortilege, or tea leaves, riddle the inevitable
With playing cards, fiddle with pentagrams
Or barbituric acids, or dissect
The recurrent image into pre-conscious terrors—
To explore the womb, or tomb, or dreams; all these are usual
Pastimes and drugs, and features of the press:
And always will be, some of them especially
When there is distress of nations and perplexity
Whether on the shores of Asia, or in the Edgware Road. . . .*

—T. S. Eliot
The Dry Salvages

*“Everybody in our house is here, but we’re marching under
the banner of Crunchy Granola and Vitamin E.”*

—Fragment of a conversation over-
heard at an anti-Inaugural demon-
stration, Chicago, 1973

The topography of American political culture in this strangely suspended season is strewn with the skeletons of abandoned movements, lowered visions, dying dreams. No truces but tacit cease-fires have stilled the war on poverty, the war of the classes, the war of the worlds. In the white and middle-class field of action, at least, explicitly political energy and imagination are in short supply. Ideologies based on mechanistic analyses of power and history may not be wrong, but they are seen to be external to the lives of many whom they once moved, and irrelevant, too, to long-untended needs for peace of body, soul or mind.

But anyone who looks around can see the force behind the spiritual, religious and existential cults that have developed in the spaces where political organizations are usually found. Gurus, swamis, roshis, dervishes, gods and therapists are building impressive movements and extensive institutions while the traditional left sects contract in size and influence. Rennie Davis, once the New Leftist *par excellence*, has become a devoted organizer for the aggressive religion of the Satguru Maharaj Ji, the teenage Avatar (that is, God). Davis draws enormous crowds of both the curious and the faithful, at a time when it’s hard to summon a *minyan* for a political demonstration. Although stars of Davis’s magnitude have not, as yet, appeared in other cosmic constellations, it is apparent at once from a browse through any bookstore, a stroll through a college campus, *Andrew Kopkind is a free-lance journalist now living in Boston.*

or a glance through an underground newspaper that mystic chic has replaced radical fashions on the trend charts this year.

It is easy for an unreconstructed radical to dismiss the New Mysticism as bourgeois escapism, mass-psychological deviation, or an inevitable (and insignificant) historical retreat before the next revolutionary offensive. Perhaps it is all of that, the varying interpretations implying only the various perceptions and ideologies. But it is more, too: there is a spirit which connects the political movements of the last decade with the spiritual movements of this one, and a style as well. Although a community of yogis and a collective of radicals may see their lives and their work as vastly different in content and purpose, in the current American context they appear driven by many of the same incessant impulses, haunted by the familiar fears, baffled by the old perplexities. Class, race and sex; bureaucracy and authority; love and distance; alienation and integration; rationalism and spontaneity: the energies which create and destroy social movements act on the cosmic ones as well. It’s more than coincidence (and even more than economics) that lures foreign mystics and masters to America in these last/first days of an imperial era. The spreading decay nurtures a full garden of revolutionary and mystical blooms, and they grow together from the same rich and rotting soil. And it is neither wise, nor useful, to call them flowers of evil or of good.

I’ve been trying to make sense of the phenomenon of politics-into-mysticism, which this spring seems to have exploded into some new level of social importance. I don’t mean to exaggerate the prevalence of the syndrome, nor romanticize the starring personalities, nor mystify the mystique. After all, most of us have dabbled in this or that Eastern philosophy, tripped out on drugs, or encountered some transcendental psycho-cosmic therapy over the course of the last few years. Some people have been quietly doing “spiritual work” in a room, an ashram, a zendo or a mountainside. Moreover, there is an honorable tradition of Western intellectuals—Huxley, Isherwood and Eliot, for three examples—incorporating certain Oriental and mystical elements into their world-view.

But for some reason that is all comprehensible, if sometimes peculiar. Private head trips seemed to be adjuncts or companions of social movements, rather than replacements or alternatives. They were encouraged for a sense of philosophical “balance,” and tolerated as “experiments” in self-understanding. But now, what was only a tendency has reached a stage of critical mass, a spiritual movement with a material and manpower base, concerned with cosmic consciousness and personal enlightenment, whether divinely or circumstantially inspired. And in some ways, in certain areas, it supersedes the politics of the ‘60s.

by Andrew Kopkind

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MASAMI TERAOKA