

# ★ The Continuing Crisis ★

SPRING! and overwhelming love was in the air. Mr. Zadok Nager took for better or for worse the hand of Miss France Peretz in whom he once had planted thirteen machine gun bullets during a lovers' row. The nuptials were held under the vigilant eyes of plainclothes men in Kfar Sava, Israel. In Utica, New York, sixty-three-year-old Mr. Martin Galt, a retired sword swallower, married his fascinated eighteen-year-old sweetheart during a church ceremony wherein he disgorged both wedding rings and a walking stick. In Mexico, Señor Domingo Gasca Araujo, 52, who has sired seventeen children by Señorita Virginia Rosas Gonzales, 42, was so touched when she asked him to marry her that he quietly stepped into the bathroom and blew his brains out.

■ The third largest contributor to Mr. Nixon's second administration might prove to be none other than Mr. Nixon himself. On April 3 he agreed to pay nearly half a million dollars to the IRS for back taxes and penalties—without any promise of an ambassadorship or even partial immunity to prosecution. This astronomical figure was launched by the IRS and a special congressional investigating committee some twelve days before the silent majority picked up the tab for a year of truly amazing governmental monkeyshines. Surprisingly many Americans do not seem to feel that they received their money's worth, and some are taking it out on Mr. Nixon, whose popularity is not what it was a year ago. In New York City, Mrs. Milton Kravenstall has brought a class action suit against the President for "consistently and maliciously interfering with my sleep," and Mr. Claude Hammer, also of that fair metropolis, has promised to sign a reciprocal suicide agreement with the President so long as the President acts first. On the other hand the people are also sour on Congress, for its public popularity now falls somewhat beneath that of the news media, though it still remains above that of the Manson family.

■ In France, the limits of governmental intervention were dramatically shown when, notwithstanding months of governmental communiqués attesting to the soundness of his health, President Georges Pompidou died. Senate President Alain Poher became temporary chief of state, and elections have been scheduled for May 5. NATO celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, and Miss Blossom Seeley died as did Mr. Frank McGee. On April 13 Mr. Arthur Krock, one of the century's most admirable journalists passed on. Finally our nation's leaders are dutifully making preparations for the dignified interment of Mr. Smokey the Bear, now a senior citizen of Washing-

ton's National Zoo, where he apparently struck up an acquaintance with Democratic Representative Harold Runnels. The Hon. Runnels it is who, early in the month, introduced a congressional resolution assuring a state burial for Mr. Smokey in his home town of Capitan, New Mexico—a bit of harmless legislative facetiae perhaps, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between waggishness and high affairs of state as life goes on in the nation's capital.

■ There is the preposterous imbroglio over the presidential tapes. Is this a solemn prelude to the impeachment of a president or is it an elaborate and tasteless parody of the politics of Idi Amin's amazing Uganda? On April 11 the House Judiciary Committee subpoenaed the mysterious tapes whereupon followed two weeks of confused hemmings and hawings from members of the committee who seemed besotted in doubts as to how serious their historic summons really was. Even the moguls of the media seemed to fall in with what became a pandemic shrug of rotting indignation. But when Mr. Nixon surprised his dizzy antagonists by turning over transcripts of his tapes during a nationally televised speech, they unbosomed a furious bellow and carried on like a lynch mob. In less than twelve hours editorialists at newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* had analyzed some 1,308 pages of transcribed presidential conversations and found them all beneath the salt. Further, many members of Congress concurred rancorously, though it has long been suspected that several of these grumpy fellows are functional illiterates. For weeks the whole affair took on the idiotic atmosphere of our last Democratic convention without a sober voice to be heard. The transcripts themselves indicate that American policymakers give themselves over to grave sessions of almost incoherent babble punctuated by "vulgarieties" and orders for more anchovy pizza.

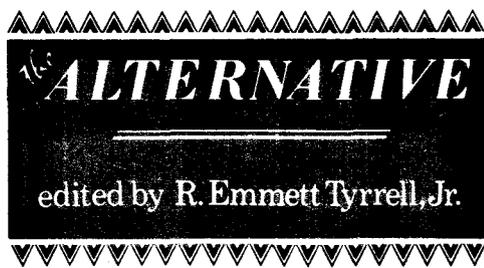
■ Still politics is not all comedy and fustian. It bears its tragedies too. In Bridge-water, New York, Mayor Gerald Wisnoski ran for reelection unopposed and finished third. In Niger, President Hamani Diori left the presidential palace for a morning stroll with his favorite chicken only to return and find that he had fallen victim to a bloodless coup led by Lieutenant Colonel Seyni Kountie. But then there is the lovely land of Portugal, and the *New York Times* reports that carnations are flowering from gun muzzles after General Antonio de Spínola toppled that country's forty-year-old dictatorship. So there you have it.

■ On April 15 friends of Patty Hearst were relieved to learn that she is indeed alive and intends to take up a new career as a bank robber in the San Francisco area. Killing whites has become a favored past-time for a small and anonymous group of San Francisco Negroes, and Mayor Alioto now believes that as many as eighty whites may have been murdered. That wilderness enthusiast who invaded Central Park Zoo's deer pen and clubbed five deer will now have to climb over three strands of barbed wire in order to indulge his innocent fancies. Sixty manhole covers have been spirited off from the streets of Pittsburgh, and Mr. Babe Ruth's home run record of 714 was finally surpassed by Mr. Henry Aaron of Atlanta just days before a tire salesman from Modesto, California, Mr. Stanley E. Jacobsen, became the 511th known suicide from the Golden Gate Bridge. Friends have hastened to report that the late Mr. Jacobsen is not politically active. Records were also set by Mr. John Duncan of Sydney, Australia, who drove his car backwards for 131 miles; by West Germany, which won the World's Beer Drinking Championship; and by Mr. Harold Smith of Forgan, Oklahoma, who became the first man ever to win the World Cow Chip Tossing Championship three times.

■ Suspecting some sort of lascivious doings a hastily raised posse broke into the North Dakota Society of Philatelists meeting in Silver, North Dakota. Poor Mr. Ronald Faye Leigh of Crestview, Florida, whose only celebrity to date has been his indictment for first-degree murder, had to face up to the ignominy of hearing his public defender ask for a new trial on the grounds that Judge Charles Wade repeatedly had drifted into the Land of Nod during Mr. Leigh's unimaginative defense. Mr. Maurice Stans and Mr. John Mitchell were found not guilty on April 28, but on April 29 Mrs. Mitchell's lawyers initiated divorce proceedings anyway. In Israel Mr. Yitzhak Rabin has replaced Premier Golda Meir, who retired two weeks before Secretary of State Henry Kissinger embarked on his fifth Mideast peace-seeking mission.

■ Mr. Abbie Hoffman, the American author and lecturer, was declared a fugitive when he failed to appear for the third time at a hearing in connection with charges that he is nothing more than a common cocaine salesman. And an indication of just how dreadful American penal institutions are came from Mr. E. Howard Hunt, adventurer and patriot, who, in a plea for prison reform, went so far as to say that his term in a federal calaboose was "the most incredible period in my life." Reformers, there you have it! □

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The *Alternative* was founded in 1924 by George Nathan and Truman Neuberger over a cheap domestic beer in McSorley's Old Ale House. Originally published on restroom walls, only since 1967 has it come under purview of the Saturday Evening Club which publishes it monthly October through June. One year

subscriptions (nine issues) cost \$6.00, and all correspondence (manuscripts, subscriptions, threatening letters, federal grants, etc.) should be sent to The *Alternative*, c/o The Establishment, R.R. 11, Box 360, Bloomington, Indiana 47401, Continental U.S.A. Microfilm editions of The *Alternative* are

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# The Alternative, Since Yesterday

IT HAS BEEN four years since one Elizabeth Taylor wrote me to the effect that the students of White Pines College were not interested in receiving a subscription to *The Alternative*. As Madame Taylor was then dean of that illustrious citadel of learning, I could easily understand the matronly vigilance for her flock's virtue, and, enjoined by my effortless compassion I replied, "Your name has been sent to the F.B.I."

I have been sending such genial notes to readers ever since, and though some like Madame Taylor already knew quite enough about our high-minded endeavor, others have sought to know more about the magazine and the idealistic young people who serve it up every month. It is with them in mind that I have confected this little essay about the nature and origins of a magazine which remains, so far as I can ascertain, the only magazine in the country still capable of giving scandal to college girls.

Our season of gestation was the late 1960s, a time when authorities were breaking down all across the Republic. Whether it was the authority of high culture, the university, the courts, or whatever, it did not seem to matter. There was a fever on the land, and swarms of pests rose up where once only nice bright liberals had dwelt. These pests proved many old verities, the most salient being man's enduring tendency to become the very ass he had heretofore warned us about. These descendants of rationalism, humane sensibility, and democratic process became dervishes of antiintellectualism and authoritarianism.

Not all of them goose-stepped to the same tune. Some became revolutionaries while others merely opted for hectoring the citizenry with all sorts of idiotic and inconvenient reforms. Pecksniffery, puritanism, and philistinism were revived on a gigantic and wonderful scale hitherto unimagined even by the Women's Christian Temperance Union. But now the liberal audience had fragmented, and many thoughtful liberals found themselves nursing their prejudices with many modern conservatives. *The Alternative's* writers emerged from this pothering milieu. It became our credo that the test of a civilized individual is how infrequently he inflicts himself upon his fellows.

Most of the young writers who bedazzle our pages today came out of the 1960s with an amused disrelish for radicals, manifestoes, and intellectual slovenliness. Further, most of us have had a bellyful of moral indignation. By 1970 it had become obvious that there were cells of enlightenment on campuses across the country, notably at Harvard and the University of Chicago; so I suggested recasting *The Alternative*, which had been an off-campus antiradical magazine at Indiana University, and presenting it to a national audience. For the most part the staff of the old *Alternative* assented, and after making organizational

changes to include our associates in Cambridge, Chicago, New York, and Washington, we blossomed for the first time as a national magazine in the fall of 1970. Since then it has been an extraordinary literary spree, constant, stupendous, and delightful. Obviously, Bloomington, Indiana, and its environs constitute a highly congenial atmosphere for publishing. Not only does the area abound with many philosophical bartenders, hordes of nubile cuties, and the cow that jumped over the moon, it also has every species of clown from America writ large. What is more, thanks to the recent penetrations into these parts of mass communications and the aeroplane, we now have access to all the amenities of New York and Washington plus the colossal advantage of being able to shut them off at will.

Now *The Alternative* has been assayed as beneath the salt, when compared to such magazines as the *New Republic* or the *Nation*. But the merit of this criticism withers with every issue we publish. Our growth has followed the anfractuuous pattern of evolution which is typical of a normal individual's growth to adulthood. *The Alternative* grew from an off-campus magazine into a national magazine of opinion *pari passu* with its editors' growth. It should surprise no one that our performances have been uneven, but I believe our development has been rapid and steady. The average age of our staff today is twenty-four, and our budget could not match the *New Republic's* budget for coffee. Though we are not one of those voluptuously packaged products that appear on the American scene accompanied by a blast of trumpets and public relations persiflage, I believe we are superior to most of them. Typical of these is a new magazine that recently inflated itself into national prominence through a million-dollar advertising barrage lurid with adjectives like "provocative" and "iconoclastic," and full of assurances that whatever sacred cows still reign in America, they will soon be filled with terror and contrition. Needless to say, *New Times* is a multimillion-dollar bore, mainly because it is a Taj Mahal to the only sacred cows left, to wit: those mountebank journalists who roll themselves in the antique dust of Lincoln Steffens and compliment themselves on their audacious contemporaneity. If *New Times* ever debunks the sham pretensions of modern journalism and if it ever does it intelligently or even eloquently, I shall take the oath of silence and off to a monastery with me. But until then I shall sit back with my cohorts and snicker while *New Times* whoops it up for itself and for a newly christened journalism that is as old as the art of gossip.

Our contributors constitute a varied lot, all of whom stand on the common ground of respect for democratic process (especially American democratic process) and appreciation for cultural excellence. Some are Democrats and some are Republicans. We publish liberals and conservatives. It is our boast that any intelligent reader of any era

would find us interesting. We pant after no trendy enthusiasms and peddle no nostrums. We behold America, we relish its fullness, we are enchanted by its bouquet. Too much of the stuff makes us dizzy, even sick, but the sickness is our own doing and no reason for discommoding our neighbors.

Naturally, in the era of Watergate and the Great Milk Conspiracy, some people are curious about shady operators whose feet protrude beneath the drapes. Rest assured. *The Alternative* is the property of no political party, cabal, or moon-struck Jeremiah. We are bankrolled by no labor union, no tycoon, no university, and no government cornucopia. There is no sinister force about the place, not even a small band of Black Handers, but merely a constantly expanding circle of writers interested in preserving an intelligent discourse about the educational value of business, politics, the arts, and in fact all the gorgeous elements of Americana. New writers often contact us, and we occasionally ferret a few out for ourselves. *The Alternative* accumulates a vast and one might even say lavish debt, much like the Penn Central. But as Congress has yet to be persuaded that we are critical to the public interest, we have had to raise money from friends in general fund-raising appeals. Our success has been slim, but it has been enough to keep us in paper, ink, pretzels, and beer. Further our circulation has steadily climbed, and the day is coming into view when we will about break even—though I doubt I shall ever share the tax problems of our great President. So *The Alternative* raises its funds from its readers, and is owned by no mysterious junto—though this is not to say that I would turn up my nose on a reasonable offer.

Then there is the matter of our staff. Readers have been making scholarly inquiries about them for years, and so I shall take this opportunity to lay down the facts for the historical record. The tallest is Jim Grant, a nearly seven-foot-tall retired French horn virtuoso, who anchors himself in size 15½ D shoe. The shortest is P.D. Tyrrell, twenty-four inches, who spends most of his time in bed, a trait which has become a family hallmark. As to who is the sweetest, there is a running battle between Joyce Goldberg and Neil Howe, and bearing in mind that the latter is given to cheating in such contests, I give the nod to Miss Goldberg. Joyce is also the most liberal, having voted for the famous tailor, Louis Fisher, in the last presidential sweepstakes. Ron Burr is the most conservative. In fact he has actually refused to brush his teeth until Brooks Brothers markets toothpaste. He is unmarried. I am undoubtedly the most idealistic, though Von Kannon has also supported many public-spirited endeavors, notably his recent crusade to get the Code of Hammurabi adopted as a replacement to the states' various criminal codes, or what remain of them. Our most intelligent colleague is Barry Burr, who recently dropped out of

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