

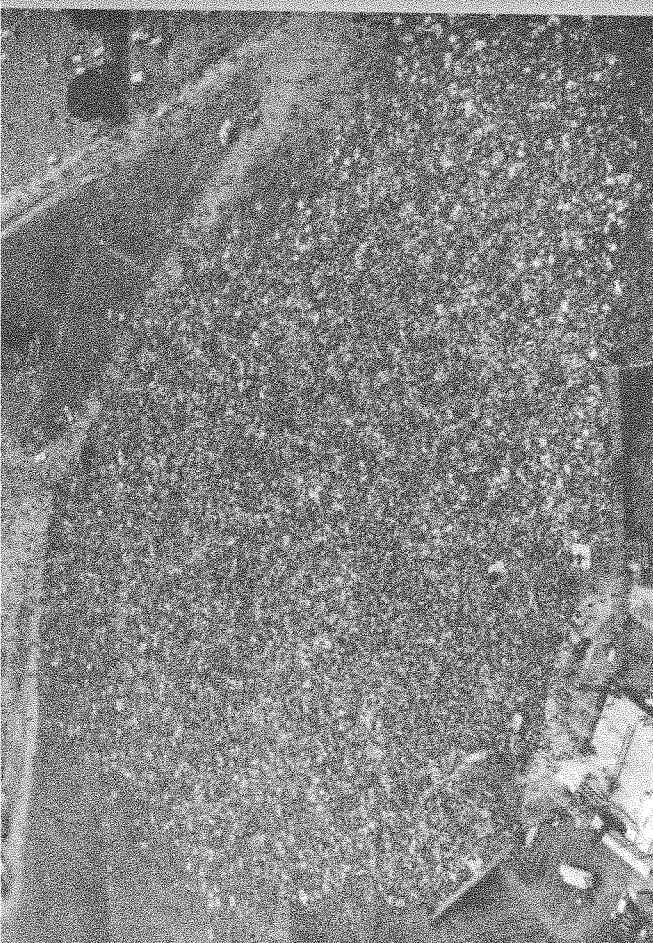
Under The Mushroom, Over The Rainbow

MANNA FROM HARVARD

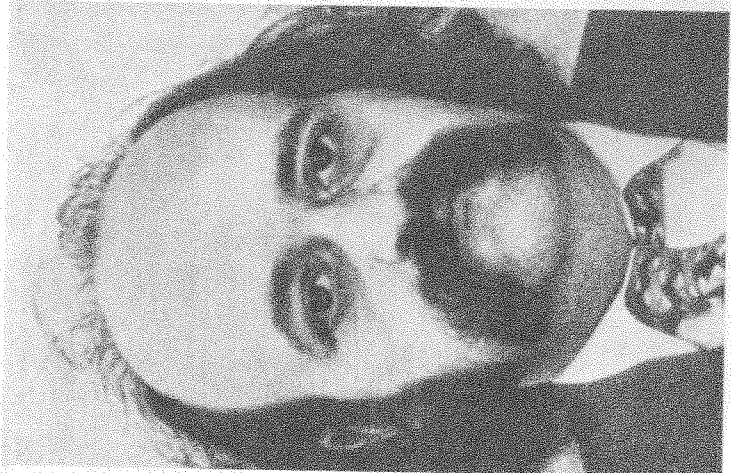
Henry Luce, president of Time-Life, was a busy man during the Cold War. As the preeminent voice of Eisenhower, Dulles, and Pax Americana, he encouraged his correspondents to collaborate with the CIA, and his publishing empire served as a longtime propaganda asset for the Agency. But Luce managed to find the time to experiment with LSD—not for medical reasons, but simply to experience the drug and glean whatever pleasures and insights it might afford. An avid fan of psychedelics, he turned on a half-dozen times in the late 1950s and early 1960s under the supervision of Dr. Sidney Cohen. On one occasion the media magnate claimed he talked to God on the golf course and found that the Old Boy was pretty much on top of things. During another trip the tone-deaf publisher is said to have heard music so enchanting that he walked into a cactus garden and began conducting a phantom orchestra.

Dr. Cohen, attached professionally to UCLA and the Veterans Hospital in Los Angeles, also turned on Henry's wife, Clare Boothe Luce, and a number of other influential Americans. "Oh, sure, we all took acid. It was a creative group—my husband and I and Huxley and [Christopher] Isherwood," recalled Mrs. Luce, who was, by all accounts, the *grande dame* of postwar American politics. (More recently she served as a member of President Reagan's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, which oversees covert operations conducted by the CIA.) LSD was fine by Mrs. Luce as long as it remained strictly a drug for the doctors and their friends in the ruling class. But she didn't like the idea that others might also want to partake of the experience. "We wouldn't want everyone doing too much of a good thing," she explained.

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Woodstock rock festival, August 1969. (New York Daily News Photo)



Ronald Stark manufactured 50 million hits of black market LSD in the late 1960's and early 1970's. He was later exposed as a CIA informant by Italian authorities. (Ansa)

lets. In May 1957 *Life* magazine ran a story on the discovery of the "magic mushroom" as part of its Great Adventure series. Written by R. Gordon Wasson, the seventeen-page spread, complete with color photos, was laudatory in every way. Wasson, a vice-president of J. P. Morgan and Company, pursued a lifelong interest in mushrooms as a personal hobby. He and his wife, Valentina, journeyed all over the world, treading a unique path through the back roads of history in an effort to learn about the role of toadstools in primitive societies. Their travels took them to the remote highlands of Mexico, where they met a medicine woman who agreed to serve them *teonanacatl*, or "God's flesh," as the divine mushrooms were called. As he chewed the bitter fungus, Wasson was determined to resist its effects so as to better observe the ensuing events. But as he explained to the readers of *Life*, his resolve "soon melted before the onslaught of the mushrooms."

We were never more awake, and the visions came whether our eyes were opened or closed. . . . They began with art motifs, angular such as might decorate carpets or textiles or wallpaper or the drawing board of an architect. They evolved into palaces with courts, arcades, gardens—resplendent palaces all laid over with semiprecious stones. . . . Later it was as though the walls of our house had dissolved, and my spirit had flown forth, and I was suspended in mid-air viewing landscapes of mountains, with camel caravans advancing slowly across the slopes, the mountains rising tier above tier to the very heavens. . . . The thought crossed my mind: could the divine mushrooms be the secret that lay behind the ancient Mysteries? Could the miraculous mobility that I was now enjoying be the explanation for the flying witches that played so important a part in the folklore and fairy tales of northern Europe? These reflections passed through my mind at the very time that I was seeing the visions, for the effect of the mushrooms is to bring about a fission of the spirit, a split in the person, a kind of schizophrasia, with the rational side continuing to reason and to observe the sensations that the other side is enjoying. The mind is attached as by an elastic cord to the vagrant senses.

The visions lasted through the night as Wasson lay on the floor of a tiny hut enraptured by God's flesh. "For the first time," he wrote, "the word ecstasy took on real meaning. For the first time it did not mean someone else's state of mind."

Wasson's account constituted nothing less than a journalistic breakthrough. A mass audience was introduced to the mysterious world of chemical hallucinogens, and soon hundreds of people started

Dr. Albert Hofmann conducted a chemical analysis of the divine mushroom at Sandoz Laboratories. He extracted the active ingredients and synthesized a new compound: psilocybin. Upon learning of Hofmann's achievement, the CIA immediately procured samples from Sandoz and forwarded the material to Dr. Harris Isbell at the Lexington Narcotics Hospital, where it was tested on drug addicts.

Among those whose interest was piqued by Wasson's article in *Life* was a young professor named Timothy Leary. At the time of Wasson's groundbreaking explorations, Leary was pursuing a successful career as a clinical psychologist. Between 1954 and 1959 he was director of clinical research and psychology at the Kaiser Foundation Hospital in Oakland, California. He published extensively in scientific journals and established himself as a rising star in the field of behavioral psychology. He wrote a widely acclaimed psychology textbook and devised a personality test called "The Leary," which was used by the CIA, among other organizations, to test prospective employees.

Leary's work culminated in an appointment as a lecturer at Harvard University, where students and professors had for years served as guinea pigs for CIA- and military-funded LSD experiments. His first semester at Harvard was relatively quiet compared to what lay in store, he taught his classes and collaborated on another psychology textbook. While all seemed well outwardly, Leary was beginning to have second thoughts about the career he had charted for himself in the charmed circle of academe. He was mired in a mid-life crisis stemming from two failed marriages; his first wife had committed suicide. The turning point came in the summer of 1960 while Leary, then thirty-nine years old, was vacationing at a sunny villa in Cuernavaca, Mexico. A friend procured a handful of magic mushrooms from an old Indian woman, and after a bit of prodding Leary washed them down with a few slugs of Carta Blanca. At the time Leary had not even smoked marijuana. Like many who experimented with psychedelics, he found that his first trip had a profound impact on his way of viewing the world. "It was above all and without question the deepest religious experience of my life," he wrote later. "I discovered that beauty, revelation, sensuality, the cellular history of the past, God, the Devil—all lie inside my body, outside my mind." The transcendent implications of that initial journey into inner space convinced him that the normal mind was a "static, repetitive cir-

cuit." Leary reevaluated his task as a psychologist, from then on he would dedicate his efforts to exploring substances that hinted at other realities and a new conception of the human psyche.

Leary returned to Harvard and established a psilocybin research project with the approval of Dr. Harry Murray, chairman of the Department of Social Relations. Dr. Murray, who ran the Personality Assessments section of the OSS during World War II, took a keen interest in Leary's work. He volunteered for a psilocybin session, becoming one of the first of many faculty and graduate students to sample the mushroom pill under Leary's guidance. Leary had obtained a supply from Sandoz, which distributed the new drug to researchers free of charge.

Among those most impressed by Leary's research project was Richard Alpert, an assistant professor of education and psychology at Harvard. He and Leary became partners and together set out to investigate the emotional and creative effects of the mushroom pill. At first glance they were an unlikely team, given their contrasting personalities. Alpert, the son of a wealthy New England lawyer, was ten years younger and obsessed with "making it" in the academic world. He seemed to be well on his way, having acquired all the accoutrements of success—the sports car, the cashmere sweaters, the cocktail parties, a faculty post at a prestigious university. The last thing Alpert wanted was to rock the boat and jeopardize his career.

Leary, on the other hand, always had a rebellious streak in him. His mother had dreams of his being a priest, and his father wanted him to become a career military officer. Neither wish came true. Leary passed up an opportunity to attend a Catholic seminary and dropped out of West Point after committing a rules infraction that led to the "silent treatment" (a form of ostracism) by the other cadets for nine months. He later enrolled at Alabama University to study psychology, only to be expelled for getting caught in a girls' dormitory. After a brief stint in the service Leary resumed his psychological studies, earning a doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley. And now he was ready for another tussle with the establishment. In his own words Leary was "handsome, clean-cut, witty, confident, charismatic, and in that inert culture unusually creative."

While drawing up plans for a psilocybin experiment, Leary and Alpert consulted two essays by Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Per-*

ception and *Heaven and Hell*. By coincidence Huxley was in the area as a visiting lecturer at MIT. The elderly scholar was brought into the project, first as an adviser and then as a participant in a psilocybin experiment. He and Leary took the drug together, and after the session they spoke about what to do with this "philosopher's stone." Huxley felt the best way to bring about vast changes in society was to offer the experience to the talented, the well-born, the intelligent rich, and others in positions of influence.

When Dr. Humphry Osmond passed through Boston, Huxley took him to meet Leary. It was the night of the Kennedy election. "We rode out to his place," Osmond remembered, "and Timothy was wearing his gray-flannel suit and his crew cut. And we had a very interesting discussion with him. That evening after we left, Huxley said, 'What a nice fellow he is!' And then he remarked how wonderful it was to think that this was where it was going to be done—at Harvard. He felt that psychedelics would be good for the Academy. Whereupon I replied, 'I think he's a nice fellow, too. But don't you think he's just a little bit square?' Aldous replied, 'You may well be right. Isn't that, after all, what we want?'"

Leary was a relative latecomer to the psychedelic research scene, but right from the start he and his cohorts made no bones about where they were coming from. "We would avoid the behaviorist approach to others' awareness," Leary asserted. "We were not out to discover new laws, which is to say, to discover the redundant implications of our own premises. We were not to be limited by the pathological point of view. We were not to interpret ecstasy as mania, or calm serenity as catatonia... nor the visionary state as model psychosis."

The first formal experiment conducted by Leary's group was a pioneering venture in criminal psychology. Psilocybin was given to thirty-two inmates at the Massachusetts Correctional Institute in Concord, a maximum security prison, to determine whether the drug would help prisoners change their ways, thereby lowering the recidivism rate. At least one member of Leary's research team took psilocybin with the prisoners while another observer stayed straight for the entire session. The pilot study proved successful in the short term; only 25% of those who took the drug ended up in jail again, as compared to the normal rate of 80%.

Leary's research methodology was quite different from that of the CIA's Dr. Harris Isbell, who administered various hallucinogens,

including psilocybin and LSD, to inmates at the Lexington Narcotics Hospital. Some were kept high for six weeks at a stretch. These studies were not designed to rehabilitate criminals; on the contrary, Isbell and the CIA were interested in drugging people to gather more data on the disruptive potential of mind-altering substances. Leary rejected this manipulative approach, believing that research should be conducted *with* subjects rather than *on* them. All of the Concord inmates were briefed beforehand on the effects of the drug, and Leary encouraged his test subjects to provide input and criticism during every phase of the experiment.

Another aspect of Leary's research focused on the relationship between drug-induced and naturally occurring religious experiences. In an unusual experiment he sought to determine whether the transcendent experiences reported during psychedelic sessions were similar to the mystical experiences described in various holy scriptures and reported by saints, prophets, and religious teachers throughout the ages. Although university officials refused to sponsor the experiment, Leary and his assistant, Walter Pahnke, a doctoral candidate at Harvard, proceeded to administer psilocybin to ten theology students and professors in the setting of a Good Friday service, while ten others were given placebo. It was a "double-blind" experiment in that neither Leary nor his subjects knew who was getting the mushroom pill and who was part of the control group. The results of the study were dramatic. Nine out of ten psilocybin recipients reported having an intense religious experience, but only one person from the control group could say the same. In his doctoral dissertation Pahnke concluded that the experiences described by those who had taken the drug were "indistinguishable from, if not identical with" the classical mystical experience.

"The Miracle at Marsh Chapel," as the Good Friday experiment came to be known, generated a highly charged discussion concerning the authenticity of "chemical" or "instant" mysticism. Some religious scholars, such as Walter Houston Clark, professor of the psychology of religion at Andover Newton Theological Seminary, and Huston Smith, professor of philosophy at MIT, supported Leary's contention that with the proper set and setting psychedelics could be used to produce mystical states of consciousness almost at will. These drugs were said to offer not only a means for enhancing spiritual sensitivity; they also opened up the possibility of bringing the

religious experience into the laboratory, where it could be scrutinized and perhaps even explained in scientific terms.

This prospect was not greeted with hosannas by orthodox religious teachers, who denigrated the drug experience as a less genuine form of revelation. Psychedelic advocates countered that the apparent ease with which the mystical experience could be triggered by drugs did not negate its spiritual validity. On the contrary, they believed that the high incidence of drug-related religious phenomena, even in cases where an exceptional set and setting were lacking, stemmed from the fact that on a fundamental level the human mind is connected with the Infinite; psychedelics simply made manifest this basic truth. According to Leary, the personal background of the subject did not matter. "You can be a convict or a college professor," he declared. "You'll still have a mystical, transcendental experience that may change your life."

Chemical Crusaders

In addition to a series of formal studies, Leary's group also held psychedelic sessions on their own outside the university. A clinical setting was rejected in favor of the comfortable surroundings of a private apartment where subjects could relax and listen to music by candlelight. Graduate students and selected individuals from the arts were invited to participate in these off-campus experiments, and the vast majority reported positive experiences. "Anyone who wanted to take the voyage was welcome to come along," Leary said.

In December 1960 Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky arrived at Leary's house in Newton. Although Ginsberg was a veteran of psychedelic trips, he had never tried psilocybin, so when the opportunity presented itself he and Orlovsky jumped at it. The environment provided by Leary was much more congenial than the research institute in Palo Alto where Ginsberg had taken LSD the previous year. After swallowing the mushroom pills, Ginsberg became slightly nauseous, but his initial queasiness subsided as the drug took command of his being. He and Orlovsky were completely overwhelmed. They took off their clothes and padded around the house, a supernatural gleam in their eyes. Ginsberg was inundated by a rush of messianic feelings. "We're going to teach people to stop hating. . . . Start a peace and love movement," he triumphantly proclaimed.

from Harvard University but the one and only Dr. Leary, a respectable human being, a worldly man faced with the task of a Messiah."

Ginsberg's vision of a historic movement that would transform human consciousness struck a responsive chord in Leary. "We were thinking far-out history thoughts at Harvard," the LSD doctor recalled, "believing that it was time (after the shallow and nostalgic fifties) for far-out visions, knowing that America had run out of philosophy, that a new empirical, tangible metaphysics was desperately needed, knowing in our hearts that the old mechanical myths had died at Hiroshima, that the past was over, and that politics could not fill the spiritual vacuum." Leary felt that the limited vision of reality prevailing in modern society was partly attributable to the dominant drugs, alcohol and coffee. Change the drugs, and a change of heart would naturally follow: "Politics, religion, economics, social structure, are based on shared states of consciousness. The cause of social conflict is usually neurological. The cure is biochemical."

The task that lay before them was formidable. Ginsberg pulled out his little black address book and began reeling off the names of people they could turn on: painters, poets, publishers, musicians, and so on. In addition to being one of the most important poets of his time, Ginsberg was a cultural ambassador of sorts. He traveled in various circles, and his contacts were international in scope. He would carry the message to everyone he knew.

Ginsberg was off and running. He returned to New York armed with a stash of psilocybin. At the Five Spot in Greenwich Village he gave the mushroom pills to Theolonius Monk, the great jazz pianist. A few days later Ginsberg dropped by Monk's apartment to check on the results. Monk peered out from behind a crack in the door, smiled, and asked if he had anything stronger. Ginsberg also turned on Dizzy Gillespie, who was evidently quite pleased by the gesture. "Oh yeah," he laughed, "anything that gets you high."

In a sense it was Ginsberg's way of returning a historical favor; the jazz musicians had given marijuana to the beats, and now the beats were turning the jazz cats on to psychedelics. Word of the new drugs spread quickly through the jazz scene, and numerous musicians, including many of the preeminent players in the field, experimented with psychedelics in the early 1960s. John Coltrane, the acknowledged master of the tenor saxophone, took LSD and reported upon returning from his inner voyage that he "perceived the interrelationship of all life forms."

There he stood in Leary's living room, a squinting prophet (he had removed his spectacles) ready to march through the streets stark naked and preach the coming of a new age.

Leary was not particularly enthusiastic about the prospect of one of his test subjects wandering around in public without any clothes in the middle of the winter. He convinced Ginsberg this was not the best tactic. But the beat poet was still full of fire. He wanted to get Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Mao Tse-tung on the phone in a cosmic rap session that would rid them of their petty hangups about warfare. This being impractical, he decided to call Jack Kerouac, author of *On the Road*, the bible of the beat generation. Kerouac was then living with his mother in Northport, Massachusetts. When the operator came on the line, Ginsberg identified himself as God wanting to talk to Kerouac. He repeated his name, spelling it out: G-O-D. When he realized he didn't have Kerouac's number, he shuffled through his address book and tried again. This time he reached Kerouac and insisted that he take the mushroom pills. "I can't leave my mother," Kerouac replied. Ginsberg urged him to bring his mother. Kerouac said he'd take a rain check.

As Ginsberg and Orlovsky were coming down from the six-hour psilocybin high, they put on robes and sat around the kitchen table sipping steamed milk and talking with Leary about the pills. Ginsberg had some forthright ideas about what to do with the synthetic mushroom. As far as he was concerned, psilocybin had vast implications far beyond the world of medicine; psychedelic drugs held the promise of changing mankind and ushering in a new millennium and therefore no one had the right to keep them from the average citizen.

Whereas Huxley had suggested turning on opinion leaders, Ginsberg, the quintessential egalitarian, wanted everyone to have the opportunity to take mind-expanding drugs. His plan was to tell everything, to disseminate as much information as possible. The time was ripe to launch a psychedelic crusade—and what better place to start than Harvard University, the alma mater of president-elect John F. Kennedy? Leary seemed ideally suited to lead such a campaign. A respected academic, he had short hair, wore button-down shirts, and took his role as a scientist quite seriously. How ironic, Ginsberg noted, "that the very technology stereotyping our consciousness and desensitizing our perceptions should throw up its own antidote.... Given such historic Comedy, who should emerge

It was through Ginsberg that the existence of Leary's research project came to the attention of the beat network. When Neal Cassady heard about the mushroom pills, he bolted up to Cambridge for a session with the professor. "It's philosophical!" Cassady exclaimed. "This is the Rolls Royce of dope, the ultimate high." Kerouac arranged to sample the mushroom extract without leaving his mother. A "Dear Coach" letter from Kerouac to Leary described his experience tripping at her house on the day President Kennedy was inaugurated.

Mainly I felt like a floating Khan on a magic carpet with my interesting lieutenants and gods . . . We were at the extremist point goofing on clouds watching the movie of existence . . . Everybody seemed innocent . . . it was a definite Satori. Full of psychic clairvoyance (but you must remember that this is not half as good as the peaceful ecstasy of simple Samadhi trance as I described it in *Dharma Burns*) . . . The faculty of remembering names and what one has learned is heightened so fantastically that we could develop the greatest scholars and scientists in the world with this stuff.

The letter was signed, "Well, okay. Touch football sometime?"

Another writer Ginsberg brought into Leary's circle was the poet Charles Olson, formerly rector of Black Mountain College in North Carolina. A man of overpowering intellect, Olson was fifty years old at the time of his psychedelic initiation. He stood a towering six feet seven inches, had unruly strands of white hair, and spoke in a deep resonant voice. Olson remembered the first time he tried psilocybin: "I was so high on bourbon that I took it as though it was a bunch of peanuts. I kept throwing the peanuts—and the mushroom—into my mouth." He described the experience as "a love feast, a truth pill . . . it makes you exactly what you are."

Olson had a strong affinity for the mushroom. He thought it a "wretched shame that we don't have it in the common drugstore as a kind of beer, because it's so obviously an attractive and useful, normal food." But he also sensed immediately that psychedelics were a profound threat to the status quo. After the drug wore off, his first words to Leary were, "When they come after you, you can hide at my house." Leary, being an apolitical creature, shrugged off the remark without much thought. Little did he know that the CIA was already keeping an eye on his escapades at Harvard.

Olson admired Leary for hischutzpah, but he also considered the good professor a bit foolhardy in thinking that happiness would descend in one fell swoop if the world was suddenly bemushroomed.

"Leary used to argue that this was the decade of the mushroom," Olson commented, "and if we didn't get peace from turning everybody on, the race would be destroyed. . . . I myself think that was rather thin politics to begin with."

In retrospect Ginsberg admitted, "We were probably too proselytizing." It may have been his messianic enthusiasm that rankled Robert Lowell, the New England poet and Pulitzer Prize winner, who was turned on to psilocybin by Ginsberg. Lowell did not report favorably at the end of the session in his apartment. As Ginsberg was leaving, he tried to reassure Lowell by telling him, "Love conquers all." To which the distinguished poet replied, "Don't be too sure." Writer Arthur Koestler was also critical of the mushroom experience. "This is wonderful, no doubt," he told Leary the day after he tripped. "But it is fake, ersatz. Instant mysticism. . . . There's no wisdom there. I solved the secret of the universe last night, but this morning I forgot what it was."

But the sternest rebuke to the high-flying optimism of the Harvard group was yet to come. Leary was eager for William Burroughs to take the mushroom pills. Burroughs, author of *Naked Lunch*, was something of a mentor to the beat generation. In the summer of 1961 Leary traveled to Tangiers, where Burroughs was living at the time. He was working on a new novel, *The Soft Machine*, smoking a considerable amount of Moroccan kif, and experimenting with a flicker machine developed by his friend Byron Gysin that caused hallucinations similar to mescaline or LSD. The poets Alan Ansen and Gregory Corso were there for the session along with Leary and Ginsberg. Things got off to a swimming start as they sauntered in the warm moonlight high on psilocybin. But the mood quickly changed once it became apparent that the mushroom was not to Burroughs's liking. "No good, no bueno," he kept shaking his head. He split from the others and waited out the "high" in seclusion.

Burroughs was never into drugs simply for a good time. Despite his psilocybin bummer he agreed to go to Cambridge to participate in further experiments in consciousness alteration. Burroughs looked forward to working with sensory deprivation and submersion tanks, stroboscopes, machines to measure brain waves, and all the technical wonders that a prestigious university could supply. But his hopes were dashed as soon as he arrived at Harvard. All he found was a semipermanent cocktail party with a bunch of starry-eyed intellectuals talking some half-assed jive about brotherly love. Leary

kept touting psilocybin as an enlightenment pill, a cure-all for a sick society. To Burroughs, this view was far too simplistic. While agreeing that hallucinogenic drugs could open the doors of perception, he recognized that only the deliberate cultivation of new habits of consciousness could endow such visions with enduring significance. "Remember, anything that can be done chemically can be done in other ways," he insisted. "You don't need drugs to get high, but drugs do serve as a useful shortcut at certain stages of training." Burroughs had already tried drugs as a means of self-realization and was attempting to move on. After a short stint in Cambridge he dropped out of the psychedelic clan for good.

Burroughs was acutely aware of the darker side of American politics, and he had some ominous premonitions about the impending psychedelic revolution. Despite rampant enthusiasm for hallucinogens among his peers, he suspected that sinister forces were also interested in these drugs and that Leary and his sidekicks might be playing right into their hands. Burroughs feared that psychedelics could be used to control rather than liberate the vision-starved masses. He understood that the seeker of enlightenment was especially vulnerable to manipulation from without, and he sounded an urgent warning to this effect in the opening passages of *Nova Express*, published in 1964.

At the immediate risk of finding myself the most unpopular character of all fiction—and history is fiction—I must say this:

Bring together state of news—Inquire onward from state to doer—Who monopolized Immortality? Who monopolized Cosmic Consciousness? Who monopolized Love Sex and Dream? Who monopolized Time Life and Fortune? Who took from you what is yours? . . . Listen: Their Garden of Delights is a terminal sewer. . . Their Immortality Cosmic Consciousness and Love is second-run grade-B shit. . . Stay out of the Garden of Delights. . . Throw back their ersatz Immortality. . . Flush their drug kicks down the drain—They are poisoning and monopolizing the hallucinogenic drugs—learn to make it without any chemical corn.

Shortly after Burroughs left Cambridge another figure arrived on the scene who was destined to up the ante considerably. His name was Michael Hollingshead, and he had a profound impact on Leary and his cohorts. An artful Englishman with a keen sense of humor, Hollingshead had once worked for the British Cultural Exchange. While living in New York City, he acquired a full gram of LSD-25 (enough for ten thousand doses), which he divided with his associate

Dr. John Beresford. They mixed the LSD with powdered sugar and distilled water, tasting the divine confection as they spooned it into a mayonnaise jar. Hollingshead had smoked grass and hashish before, but this was another matter entirely. The doors of perception not only swung wide open, they flew off the jambs: "What I had experienced was the equivalent of death's absolution of the body. I had literally stepped forth from the shell of my body into some other strange land of unlikeness which can only be grasped in terms of astonishment and mystery, an ecstatic nirvana."

When he came down from his initial psychedelic voyage, he called Aldous Huxley to ask his advice about what to do with the magic gram of acid. At that point Hollingshead was unsure whether LSD was more confusing than illuminating. The drug had disrupted his sense of self: "The reality on which I had consciously based my personality had dissolved into maya, a hallucinatory facade. Stripped of one kind of reality, and unwilling or unable to benefit from the possibilities of another one, I was acutely aware of my helplessness, my utter transience, my suspension between two worlds, one outside and the other wholly within." Moreover, he was financially destitute and his marriage was falling apart. Huxley was sympathetic. He suggested that Hollingshead go to Harvard and meet Timothy Leary. If there was any single investigator in the United States worth seeing, Huxley assured him, it was Dr. Leary.

Hollingshead took off for Cambridge with his mayonnaise jar. Leary went out of his way to help his visitor. He offered Hollingshead a free room in his attic, loaned him some money, and invited him to join the psilocybin research team. Naturally Leary gave his guest a mushroom session, and though Hollingshead had a good trip, the drug was not as strong as LSD. Hollingshead obliged by offering his host some acid, but Leary was not eager to take it. He was apparently of the opinion that if you had tried one psychedelic you had tried them all.

One night Hollingshead was driving around outside Leary's house with Maynard Ferguson, the trumpet player, and his wife, Flo. They were smoking a joint in the car because illegal drugs were not allowed inside. Hollingshead told them about LSD, and they became very curious. Eventually he fetched his mayonnaise jar, and they all took a hit. Within an hour the drug had started to come on. Flo thought it was fantastic, and Maynard had to agree, it definitely got

you there. When Leary noticed that Ferguson's face was glowing like an electric toaster, he decided to join them. He took a heaping spoonful, and soon he was flying.

It came sudden and irresistible. An endless deep swamp marsh of some other planet teeming and steaming with energy and life, and in the swamp an enormous tree whose branches were foliated out miles high and miles wide. And then this tree, like a cosmic vacuum cleaner, went ssssuuck, and every cell in my body was swept into the root, twigs, branches, and leaves of this tree. Tumbling and spinning, down the soft fibrous avenues to some central point which was just light, just light, but not just light. It was the center of Life. A burning, dazzling, throbbing, radiant core, pure pulsing, exulting light. An endless flame that contained everything—sound, touch, cell, seed, sense, soul, sleep, glory, glorifying, God, the hard eye of God. Merged with this pulsing flame it was possible to look out and see and participate in the entire cosmic drama.

Leary was stunned by the power of the drug. In the wake of his first acid trip he wandered about dazed and confused. What to do, he asked himself, now that the mundane routines of life seemed so futile and artificial? Not knowing quite where to turn, he latched onto Hollingshead as his guru. Leary followed him around for days on end, treating the Englishman with awe. He was convinced that this pot-bellied, chain-smoking prankster whose face was pink-veined from alcohol was a messenger from the Good Lord Himself. Richard Alpert and Ralph Metzner, two of Leary's closest associates, were vexed to see him in such a helpless state. They thought he had really blown his mind, and they blamed Hollingshead. But it was only a matter of time before they too sampled the contents of the mayonnaise jar. Hollingshead gave the drug to all the members of the psilocybin project, and from then on LSD was part of their research repertoire.

Those early days at Harvard were charged with a special mystery and excitement. "Turning on" had not yet become identified with a particular lifestyle or set of values, and there were no maps or guideposts to chart the way. To those who embarked upon these shattering inner journeys, anything and everything seemed possible. It was as if all the fetters were suddenly removed. "LSD involved risk," Hollingshead said. "It was anarchistic; it upset our appiecards, torpedoed our cherished illusions, sabotaged our beliefs.... Yet there were some of my circle who, with Rimbaud, could say, 'I dreamed of crusades, senseless voyages of discovery, republics without a his-

tory, moral revolution, displacement of races and continents. I believed in all the magics."

Not everyone was enchanted by the renegade psychedelic scene at Harvard. A confidential memorandum issued by the CIA's Office of Security, which had utilized LSD for interrogation purposes since the early 1950s, suggested that certain CIA-connected personnel might be involved with Leary's group. This prospect was disconcerting to Security officials, who considered hallucinogenic drugs "extremely dangerous." "Uncontrolled experimentation has in the past resulted in tragic circumstances and for this reason every effort is made to control any involvement with these drugs," a CIA agent reported. The document concluded with a specific directive: "Information concerning the use of this type of drug for experimental or personal reasons should be reported immediately.... In addition, any information of Agency personnel involved with... Drs. ALPERT or LEARY, or with any other group engaged in this type of activity should also be reported."

It is known that during this period Leary gave LSD to Mary Pinchot, a painter and a prominent Washington socialite who was married to Cord Meyer, a high-level CIA official. (Meyer oversaw the CIA's infiltration of the US National Student Association and the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Europe, which provided financial support to numerous Cold War liberal intellectuals and writers.) Leary and Pinchot struck up a cordial friendship during her occasional visits to Cambridge in the early 1960s. She asked him to teach her how to guide an LSD session so she could introduce the drug to her circles in Washington. "I have this friend who's a very important man," she confided to Leary. "He's very impressed with what I've told him about my own LSD experience and what other people have told him. He wants to try it himself." Leary was intrigued, but Pinchot wouldn't tell him who she intended to turn on. Nor did she inform her LSD mentor of her marriage to a CIA bigwig.

Leary explained the basic rules about set and setting, emphasizing the importance of a comfortable, sensuous environment for an LSD trip. From time to time Pinchot reported back to him. "I can't give you all the details," she said, "but top people in Washington are turning on. You'd be amazed at the sophistication of some of our leaders. We're getting a little group together...." Leary had no way of knowing that Mary Pinchot was one of President Kennedy's girl-

friends and that she and JFK smoked pot together in the White House. Pinchot was murdered less than a year after Kennedy was assassinated, and her diary disappeared from her home.

When Leary learned of Pinchot's death, he recalled their conversations about LSD. At various times she had hinted that the CIA was monitoring his activities. Since drug research is of vital importance to American intelligence, Pinchot told him that he'd be allowed to conduct his experiments as long as it didn't get out of hand.

But Leary ignored her advice. In the spring of 1962 he published an article in the *Journal of Atomic Scientists* warning that the Russians might try to subvert the United States by dumping a few pounds of LSD into the water supply of major cities. The only way to prepare for such an attack, Leary maintained, was to dose our own reservoirs first as a civil defense measure so that people would know what to expect. Not surprisingly, this suggestion didn't go over well in the scientific community. A number of CIA- and military-sponsored researchers launched vociferous attacks on Leary and Alpert. Dr. Henry Beecher, an esteemed member of the Harvard Medical School faculty who conducted drug experiments for the CIA, ridiculed Leary's research methodology, stating that it reminded him "of De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium Eater*... rather than a present-day scientific study of subjective responses to drugs." Dr. Max Rinkel, a veteran of the CIA's MK-ULTRA program, denounced Leary in the *Harvard Alumni Review*, as did Dr. Robert Heath, a longtime CIA and army contract employee. As Heath saw it, the whole notion of consciousness expansion was a meaningless abstraction, and impairing the human nervous system with dangerous chemicals could only result in pathological states that might have long-term negative repercussions.

As word of Leary's acid escapades spread around Harvard, university officials began to get edgy. Tensions reached a boiling point during a faculty meeting in March 1962. Leary's opponents charged that he conducted his drug studies in a nonchalant and irresponsible fashion. Specifically they cited the fact that trained physicians were rarely present; moreover, Leary himself got high with his test subjects. While admitting that he was operating outside the medical framework, Leary stuck to his guns and emphasized that taking LSD with a patient was common practice among many psychiatrists. Besides, since psychedelics were educational as well as medical tools, they should be made available outside the medical profession for

investigatory purposes. Just because someone was a physician did not mean he was qualified to administer LSD, Leary argued, especially if he had never tried the drug himself.

Although Leary's volunteers rarely suffered untoward effects, a number of faculty members still had grave misgivings about the psilocybin project. As Dr. Herbert Kelman, recipient of a small grant from the CIA-connected Human Ecology Fund, put it at the meeting, "I question whether this project is being pursued as an intellectual endeavor or whether it is being pursued as a new kind of experience to offer an answer to man's ills."

The following day a sensationalized account of the faculty tussle appeared in the *Harvard Crimson*, the school newspaper. The story was immediately picked up by the Boston press, prompting an investigation by the US Food and Drug Administration, which assisted the CIA's drug testing efforts. A month later Leary was notified that he could not continue his research unless a medical doctor was present when the drugs were administered. LSD, the FDA maintained, was too powerful and unpredictable to be left in the hands of irresponsible individuals, especially when they advocated using it not for scientific or medical purposes but to conjure up so-called religious experiences.

In effect the government had sided with the medical establishment, thereby legitimizing it as the sole authority on these matters. Leary and Alpert were ordered to surrender their supply of psilocybin to the university health service, and a special faculty committee was formed to advise and oversee future experiments. By the end of the year the psilocybin project had been officially terminated. "These drugs apparently cause panic and temporary insanity in many officials who have not taken them," Leary quipped as he grudgingly forked over his stash. The rebellious professor felt that the doctors had a vested interest in keeping psychedelics out of the hands of laymen. He accused the government and the medical establishment of conspiring to suppress valuable methods of research.

Leary's rambunctious style infuriated members of the academic community. Even some of his would-be allies suggested that he tone it down a bit. They feared that his antics might jeopardize other psychedelic researchers. This was also the opinion of Captain Al Hubbard, the incorrigible superspy who visited Leary at Harvard. "I liked Tim when we first met," Hubbard recalled, "but I warned him a dozen times." In no uncertain terms the Captain told Leary to

keep his research respectable, to play ball with the system. Hubbard was keenly aware of the potency of Harvard's name and tried to lend a hand by supplying drugs to the young professor. But eventually the two LSD pioneers had a falling-out. "I gave stuff to Leary," said the Captain, "and he turned out to be completely no good.... He seemed like a well-intentioned person, but then he went overboard."

The dispute over Leary's research methodology quickly became tangled up with reports that sugar cubes laced with LSD were circulating on the Harvard campus. Unconfirmed stories about wild LSD parties and undergraduates pushing trips on the black market were rife. Leary did little to placate his superiors. "LSD is so powerful," he observed wryly, "that one administered dose can start a thousand rumors." While Leary was never directly accused of dealing drugs, his reputation as a freewheeling and euphoric type led many to assume that he was connected with the underground supply. It was a case of guilt by alleged association, and it proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back.

In May 1963 Richard Alpert was summarily dismissed from his teaching post for violating an agreement not to give LSD to undergraduate students. It was the first time a Harvard faculty member had been fired in the twentieth century. "Some day it will be quite humorous," he told a reporter, "that a professor was fired for supplying a student with 'the most profound educational experience in my life.' That's what he told the Dean it was." A few days later the academic axe fell on Leary as well, after he failed to attend an honors program committee meeting—a rather paltry excuse, but by this time the university higher-ups were glad to get rid of him on any pretext.

Leary was unruffled by the turn of events. LSD, he stated tersely, was "more important than Harvard." He and Alpert fired off a declaration to the *Harvard Review* blasting the university as "the Establishment's apparatus for training consciousness contractors," an "intellectual ministry of defense." The Harvard scandal was hot news. In the coming months most of the major US magazines featured stories on LSD and its foremost proponent. Leary was suddenly "Mr. LSD," and he welcomed the publicity. The extensive media coverage doubtless spurred the growth of the psychedelic underground.

Rebuffed by the academic and medical authorities, Leary decided to take his case directly to the people—in particular, young people.

He was convinced that the revelation and revolution were at hand. The hope for the future rested on a simple equation: the more who turned on, the better. It would be a twentieth-century remake of the Children's Crusade, with legions of stoned youth marching ever onward to the Promised Land. Leary would assume the role of High Priest, urging his brethren to "turn on, tune in, and drop out." With the help of the media his gospel would ring throughout the land. "From this time on," he said, "we saw ourselves as unwitting agents of a social process that was far too powerful for us to control or to more than dimly understand."

The Crackdown

When LSD was first introduced to the United States in 1949, it was well received by the scientific community. Within less than a decade the drug had risen to a position of high standing among psychiatrists. LSD therapy was by no means a fad or a fly-by-night venture. More than one thousand clinical papers were written on the subject, discussing some forty thousand patients. Favorable results were reported when LSD was used to treat severely resistant psychiatric conditions, such as frigidity and other sexual aberrations. A dramatic decrease in autistic symptoms was observed in severely withdrawn children following the administration of LSD. The drug was also found to ease the physical and psychological distress of terminal cancer patients, helping them come to terms with the anguish and mystery of death.* And chronic alcoholics continued to benefit from psychedelic therapy. One enthusiastic researcher went so far as to suggest that with LSD it might be possible to clean out skid row in Los Angeles.

The rate of recovery or significant improvement was often higher with LSD therapy than with traditional methods. Furthermore, its risks were slim compared to the dangers of other commonly used and officially sanctioned procedures such as electroshock, lobotomy, and the so-called anti-psychotic drugs. Dr. Sidney Cohen, the man who turned on Henry and Clare Boothe Luce, attested to the virtues of LSD after conducting an in-depth survey of US and Canadian psychiatrists who had used it as a therapeutic tool. Forty-four doctors

*The CIA used terminal cancer patients as guinea pigs for testing knockout drugs and psychochemical weapons under the rubric of Operation MK-ULTRA.

replied to Cohen's questionnaire, providing data on five thousand patients who had taken a total of more than twenty-five thousand doses of either LSD or mescaline. The most frequent complaint voiced by psychedelic therapists was "unmanageability." Only eight instances of "psychotic reaction lasting more than forty-eight hours" were reported in the twenty-five thousand cases surveyed. Not a single case of addiction was indicated, nor any deaths from toxic effects. On the basis of these findings Cohen maintained that "with the proper precautions psychedelics are safe when given to a selected healthy group."

By the early 1960s it appeared that LSD was destined to find a niche on the pharmacologist's shelf. But then the fickle winds of medical policy began to shift. Spokesmen for the American Medical Association (AMA) and the Food and Drug Administration started to denounce the drug, and psychedelic therapy quickly fell into public and professional disrepute. Granted, a certain amount of intrasigence arises whenever a new form of treatment threatens to steal the thunder from more conventional methods, but this alone cannot account for the sudden reversal of a promising trend that was ten years in the making.

One reason the medical establishment had such a difficult time coping with the psychedelic evidence was that LSD could not be evaluated like most other drugs. LSD was not a medication in the usual sense, it wasn't guaranteed to relieve a specific symptom such as a cold or headache. In this respect psychedelics were out of kilter with the basic assumptions of Western medicine. The FDA's relationship with this class of chemicals became even more problematic in light of claims that LSD could help the healthy. Most doctors automatically dismissed the notion that drugs might benefit someone who was not obviously ailing.

In 1962 Congress enacted regulations that required the safety and efficacy of a new drug to be proven with respect to the condition for which it was to be marketed commercially. LSD, according to the FDA, did not satisfy these criteria. From then on, authorized distribution of the drug was tightly controlled. Anyone who wanted to work with LSD had to receive special permission from the FDA. The restrictive measures were supposedly designed to weed out "the bad apples," as one report put it, and thereby insure against the misuse of regulated substances. The FDA maintained that it did not want to inhibit legitimate researchers who were "sensitive to their

scientific integrity and moral and ethical responsibilities."

By designating LSD an "experimental drug," the FDA had in effect ruled that it could only be used for research purposes and never as part of general psychiatric practice. Consequently it became nearly impossible for psychiatrists to obtain psychedelics legally. Some of the most distinguished and experienced investigators were forced to abandon their work, and the conditions that might have demonstrated LSD's therapeutic potential virtually ceased to exist. "It was a very intense period," Dr. Oscar Janiger recalled. "The drug experience brought together many people of diverse interests. We built up a sizeable amount of data...and then the whole thing just fell in on us. Many who formerly were regarded as groundbreakers making an important contribution suddenly found themselves disenfranchised."

Certain officials suggested that those who practiced psychedelic therapy were themselves to blame for the crackdown on LSD research. In a thinly veiled reference to Leary, Drs. Jonathan Cole and Robert Katz of the National Institutes for Mental Health expressed concern that some investigators "may have been subject to the delirious and seductive effects of these agents." AMA president Roy Grinkler harped on the same theme, proclaiming, "At one time it was impossible to find an investigator willing to work with LSD-25 who was not himself an 'addict.'"

As far as Grinkler was concerned, the elimination of psychedelic studies was necessary to insure the health and safety of the American public. In a widely circulated editorial that echoed the psychosis-producing view of hallucinogens, the AMA president stated, "Latent psychotics are disintegrating under the influence of even single doses; long-continued LSD experiences are subtly creating a psychopathology. Psychic addiction is being developed." He issued an urgent warning to the psychiatric profession that "greater morbidity, and even mortality, is in store for patients unless controls are developed against the unwise use of LSD-25."

Many LSD researchers were quick to point an accusing finger at Leary for bringing the government's wrath down on everybody. But it is plausible that one wayward individual was single-handedly responsible for provoking a 180-degree shift in official government policy with respect to psychedelic research? Was the FDA simply overreacting to Leary's flamboyant style, or were there other forces at work?

Up until the early 1960s LSD studies had flourished without government restrictions and the CIA had sponsored numerous research projects to enhance its mind control capabilities. In 1962, however, the Technical Services Staff, which ran the MK-ULTRA program, began to orient its behavioral activities exclusively toward operations and away from peripheral long-range studies. This new strategy resulted in the withdrawal of support for many academics and private researchers. Extensive LSD testing was no longer a top priority for the MK-ULTRA crew, which had already learned enough about the drug to understand how it could best be applied in selected covert operations. They had given up on the notion that LSD was "the secret that was going to unlock the universe." While acid was still an important part of the cloak-and-dagger arsenal, by this time the CIA and the army had developed a series of superhallucinogens such as the highly touted BZ, which was thought to hold greater promise as a mind control weapon.

The CIA and the military were not inhibited by the new drug laws enacted during the early 1960s. A special clause in the regulatory policy allowed the FDA to issue "selective exemptions," which meant that favored researchers would not be subject to restrictive measures. With this convenient loophole the FDA never attempted to oversee in-house pharmacological research conducted by the CIA and the military services. Secret arrangements were made whereby these organizations did not even have to file a formal "Claim for Exemption," or IND request. The FDA simply ignored all studies that were classified for reasons of national security, and CIA and military investigators were given free reign to conduct their covert experimentation. Apparently, in the eyes of the FDA, those seeking to develop hallucinogens as weapons were somehow more "sensitive to their scientific integrity and moral and ethical responsibilities" than independent researchers dedicated to exploring the therapeutic potential of LSD.

In 1965 Congress passed the Drug Abuse Control Amendments, which resulted in even tighter restrictions on psychedelic research. The illicit manufacture and sale of LSD was declared a misdemeanor (oddly enough, possession was not yet outlawed). All investigators without IND exemptions were required to turn in their remaining supplies to the FDA, which retained legal jurisdiction over psychedelics. Adverse publicity forced Sandoz to stop marketing LSD

entirely in April 1966, and the number of research projects fell to a mere handful.

The decision to curtail LSD experimentation was the subject of a congressional probe into the organization and coordination of federal drug research and regulatory programs. The inquiry in the spring of 1966 was led by Senator Robert Kennedy (D-N.Y.), whose wife, Ethel, reportedly underwent LSD therapy with Dr. Ross MacLean (a close associate of Captain Hubbard's) at Hollywood Hospital in Vancouver. Senator Kennedy asked officials of the FDA and the NIMH to explain why so many LSD projects were suddenly canned. When they evaded the issue, Kennedy became annoyed. "Why if they were worthwhile six months ago, why aren't they worthwhile now?" he demanded repeatedly. The dialogue seesawed back and forth, but no satisfactory answer was forthcoming. "Why didn't you just let them continue?" asked the senator. "We keep going around and around... If I could get a flat answer about that I would be happy. Is there a misunderstanding about my question?"

Kennedy insinuated that the regulatory agencies were attempting to thwart potentially valuable research. He stressed the importance of a balanced outlook with respect to LSD: "I think we have given too much emphasis and so much attention to the fact that it can be dangerous and that it can hurt an individual who uses it... that perhaps to some extent we have lost sight of the fact that it can be very, very helpful in our society if used properly."

Kennedy's plea fell on deaf ears. The FDA steadfastly refused to alter the course it had chosen. In 1967 a Psychotomimetic Advisory Committee (a joint FDA/NIMH venture) was established to process all research applications. Members of this committee included Dr. Harris Isbell and Dr. Carl Pfeiffer, two longtime CIA contract employees. Shortly thereafter the NIMH terminated its last in-house LSD project involving human subjects. In 1968 the Drug Abuse Control Amendments were modified to make possession of LSD a misdemeanor and sale a felony. Responsibility for enforcing the law was shifted from the FDA to the newly formed Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. Two years later psychedelic drugs were placed in the Schedule I category—a classification reserved for drugs of abuse that have no medical value.

While aboveground research was being phased out, the CIA and the military continued to experiment with an ever more potent

variety of hallucinogens.* In effect the policies of the regulatory agencies were themselves "regulated" by the unique requirements of these secret programs. As an official of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (of which the FDA was part) explained, "We are abdicating our statutory responsibilities in this area out of a desire to be courteous to the Department of Defense... rather than out of legal inability to handle classified materials." The same courtesy was proffered to the CIA. The FDA collaborated with the Agency in other ways as well. FDA personnel with special security clearances served as consultants for chemical warfare projects. Information concerning new developments in the field of psychopharmacology was exchanged through confidential channels. The FDA also provided laboratory facilities and samples of new drugs that might prove useful to the CIA.

In light of the FDA's relationship with the intelligence community, it is highly unlikely that a major policy decision regarding LSD would have been made against the wishes of the CIA. If the Agency had wanted aboveground LSD studies to proliferate, they would have. But this type of research was no longer essential as far as the CIA was concerned. The spymasters viewed LSD as a strategic substance, as well as a threat to national security, by virtue of its photomimetic properties, which had been fully explored during the 1950s. Creative or therapeutic considerations were not part of the covert game plan. When push came to shove, the medical establishment implemented a policy based on the psychosis-producing view—that is to say, the CIA's view—of hallucinogens, even though this perspective was vigorously contested by many scientists.

By the early 1960s, when the new regulatory policy was enacted, a large number of people had already heard about LSD. Some were

*During this period the Army Chemical Corps and the CIA's Office of Research and Development initiated a project to create new compounds "that could be used offensively." A major portion of the OFTEN/CHICKWIT Program, as the joint effort was called, was geared toward incapacitants. A CIA memo dated March 8, 1971, indicates that a backlog of more than twenty-six thousand drugs had been acquired "for future screening." Information gathered from this screening process was catalogued and data-banked in a "large, closely held" computer system that monitored worldwide developments in pharmacology. Under the auspices of OFTEN/CHICKWIT at least seven hallucinogens similar to BZ were tested; inmates at Holmsburg prison in Pennsylvania were used as test subjects for some of the drugs. Very little is known about these experiments, although CIA documents mention "several laboratory accidents" in which a drug designated EA-3167 produced "prolonged psychotic effects in laboratory personnel."

eager to try the drug, but they no longer had access to psychedelic therapists, who were the original "gatekeepers," so to speak. "The whole thing was just moving geometrically," Dr. Oscar Janiger recalled. "Obviously those people who couldn't get it from us would be seeking to get it elsewhere." A certain momentum had been generated—thanks in no small part to the CIA—and it quickly reached a point where the government could no longer contain it. Black market acid began to turn up on the street to meet the growing demand. This remarkable social phenomenon continued to gather strength despite the repeated admonitions of educators, doctors and politicians. Soon the "laboratory" would stretch across the entire continent as millions of young investigators undertook their own experiments with this consciousness-quaking chemical.