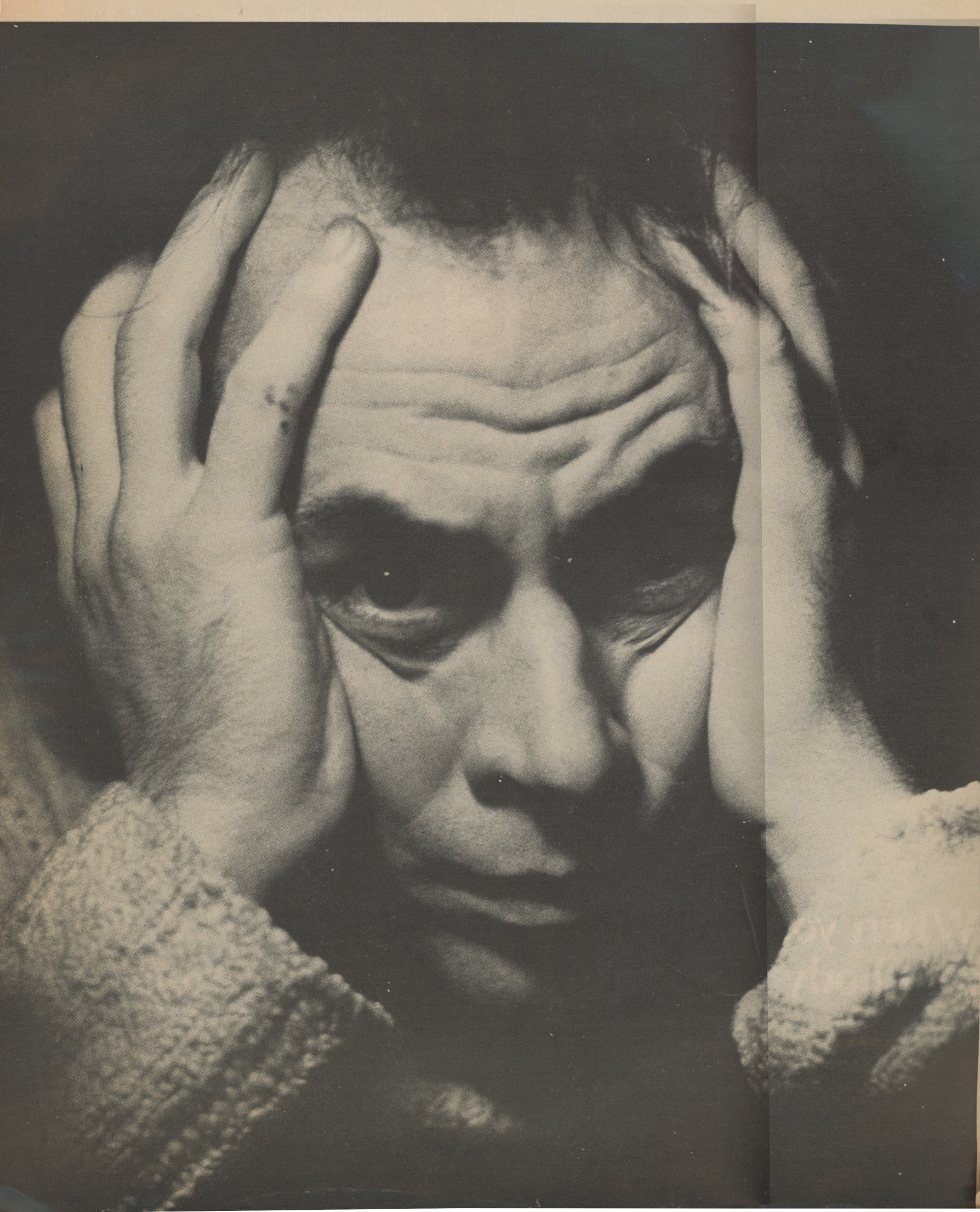


A striking look at
R. D. Laing, controversial
psychiatrist and author

Philosopher of



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His face is dour and pale, his brow furrowed, his eyes like bruises. He speaks in the thick and charmless tones of the Glasgow slums he was born in 43 years ago. But his voice carries far. Ronald David Laing is one of the best known and most controversial psychiatrists since Freud. His *Politics of Experience*—400,000 copies in paperback so far—is a campus classic. This fall brings three new volumes: *The Politics of the Family*, a collection of essays, and a reissue of Laing's best-selling psychological riddles-in-verse, *Knots*. Though a very private man, Laing recently permitted a friend, photographer John Haynes, to take the pictures published here.

Like Marshall McLuhan and Timothy Leary, R. D. Laing is a professional scholar transformed into an oracle and prophet. He began as a compassionate analyst of schizophrenia, basing his early writings on years of service in mental institutions. But unlike some other psychiatrists, Laing refused to consider

schizophrenia in isolation from the family and society. His conclusion: in a world where "normal men have killed perhaps 100,000,000 of their fellow normal men in the last 50 years," the uncertain line between sanity and madness is all but lost. Schizophrenia, Laing contends, is a label pinned by a troubled society on some of its more difficult members. It is society that is both wrong and wrongheaded. In his radical view, schizophrenia itself is not necessarily a "breakdown" at all, but may be a "breakthrough," a crucial voyage through "inner space" to a new life.

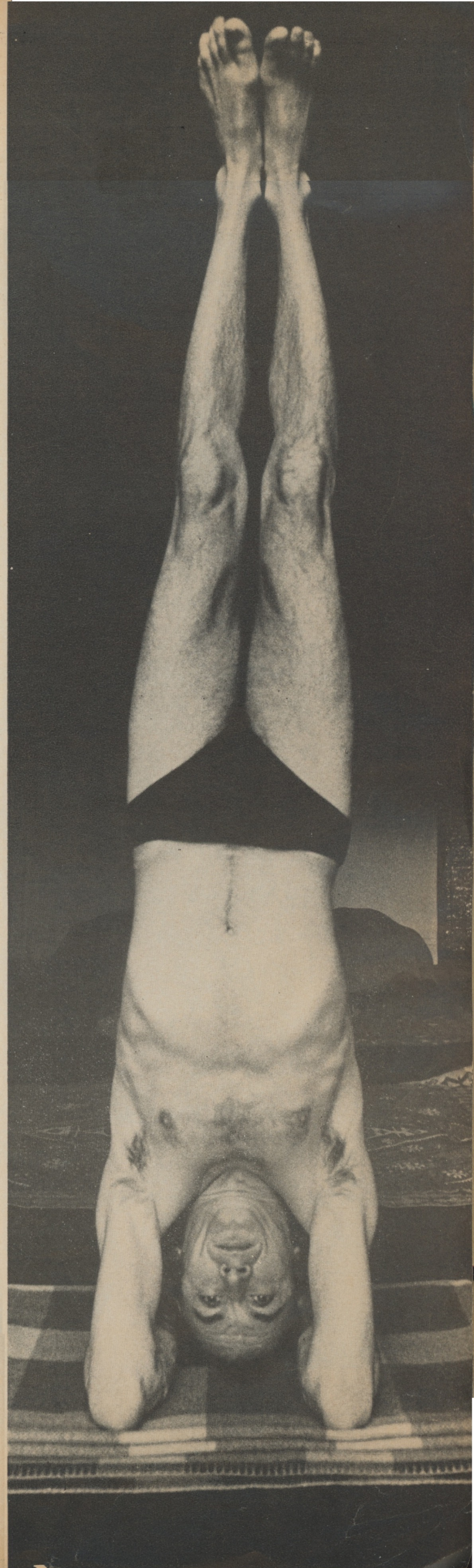
Laing's suggestion that madness is an understandable, possibly even creative, response to the evils of contemporary life has given his writings special resonance among the young. Among his peers he is far less accepted. Even those who admire his eloquence find much to criticize in his practical methods and question whether, having received such wide attention, he can now go on to justify it.



Much of Laing's work is accomplished in darkness and silence, in a study where curtains are always drawn shut (left). At ease, a barefoot Laing relaxes in a chair at the edge of a garden (above). His career has carried him from work in ordinary mental institutions—which often appalled

him—to experiments at Kingsley Hall, a commune for schizophrenics he helped found. He now retains a small private practice. A student of Yoga (right), Laing this year left England for a sojourn in the Orient, where he planned to live among Buddhists in Ceylon, India, and Japan.

Photographed by JOHN HAYNES



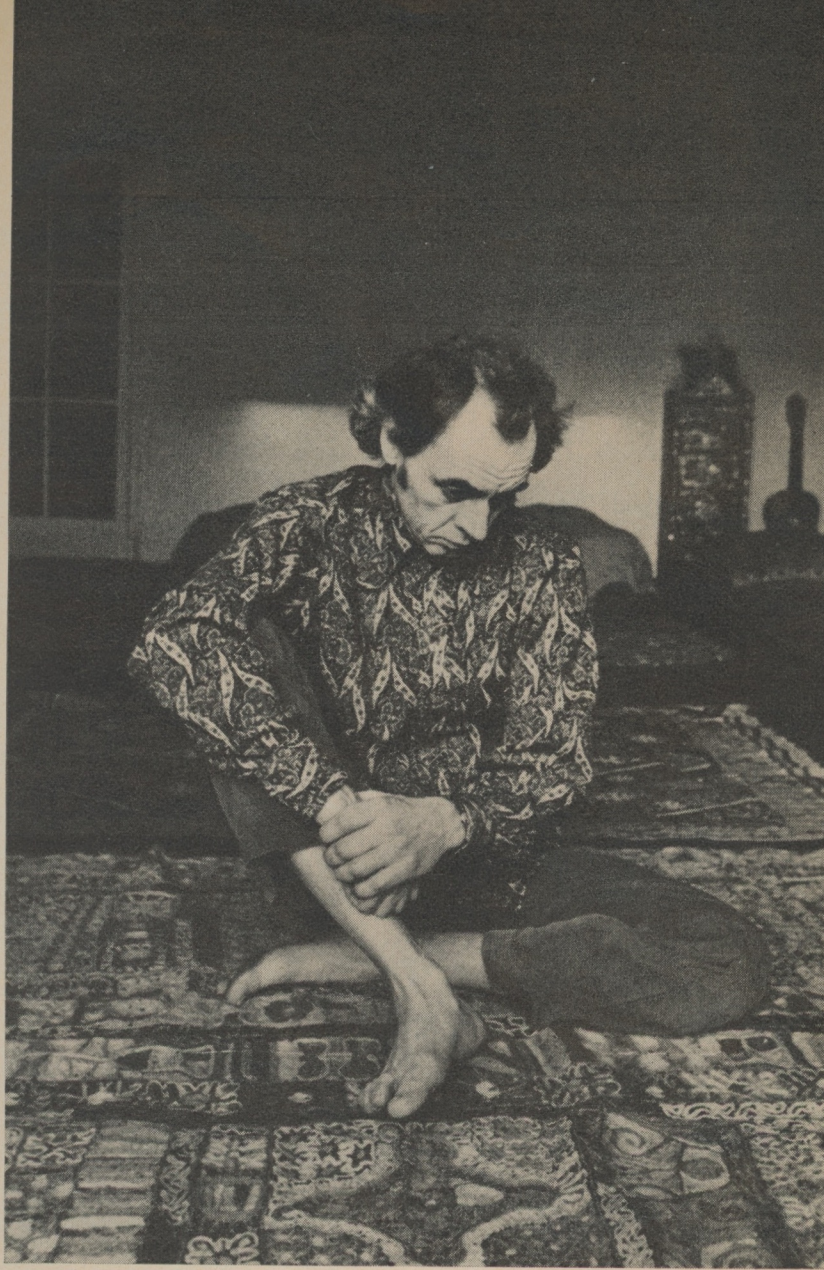
Combining academic poise with poetry and



Laing is the father of seven children, two by current wife, Jutta (above). The nature of the family and its potential for doing harm is one of Laing's themes. "In a sense, my parents were my first patients," he recalls. "I had to figure out what was going on and who was doing what to whom and where I was."

outrage

Laing meditates in a sparsely furnished room. His taste for Oriental philosophy is matched by an interest in such phenomena as macrobiotic foods and mind-expanding drugs. Laing is one of a handful of doctors permitted to employ LSD in his work.



Laing strolls through a winter-blasted forest on Hampstead Heath, a large London park. His mission as an interpreter of madness has brought charges that Laing himself is mad, but he argues that such distinctions are deceptive. In his own work, he attempts to unite the poise of a scholar with the visions of a mystic poet and the outrage of a committed revolutionary.





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Laing crouches in a tree on Hampstead Heath. Despite his fame and the number of followers he has collected, he keeps very much to himself and lives quietly, impressing friends like photographer Haynes with "his great personal discipline and gentleness."