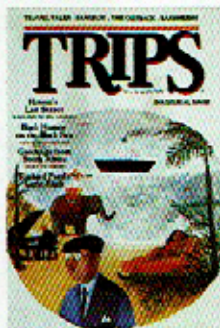


Traveling salesmen

Banana Republic coup

JOHN SEABROOK investigates the rise and fall of Mel Ziegler, entrepreneur and philosopher of travel



THE AMERICAN APPE-
tite for travel and travel
writing would appear to be
extremely healthy at the
moment, to judge from the
number of new travel im-
prints and publications,
including the one you
have in your hands. This
spring a magazine called *Banana Re-
public Trips* joined the field. It was a
magazine about "the act of travel and
all the unexpected ways it changes us,"
in the words of Mel Ziegler, the found-
ing editor and the man who, along with
his wife, Patricia, had founded Banana
Republic, the "travel and safari cloth-
ing" company. The first issue of *Trips*
was excellent, if uneven, but scarcely a
month after it appeared the magazine
folded and the Zieglers resigned from
Banana Republic, citing "creative and
cultural differences" with Banana Re-
public's corporate parent,
The Gap.

What had happened?

The story of *Trips* is, of
course, a business story, but
it is a travel story, too. "I
think of myself as a traveler
in the same way other peo-
ple think of themselves as
Democrats or Republicans
or vegetarians," Ziegler
once said, meaning, pre-
sumably, that he is a man
who makes a principle of en-
tertaining all principles, a
camera with its shutter open,
a chameleon. One must know
this about Ziegler to under-
stand the peculiar and brief
transit of his magazine.

OUTSIDE THE BUILDING
at 535 Pacific Avenue, the

sun shone hard on the sidewalks that
sloped down to San Francisco Bay. In-
side, about two dozen people were
gathered in a spacious, beige-colored
room, some sitting at a large square
made of cafeteria tables, others reclin-
ing on the carpeted ledges at the base
of each window, warming themselves
in the sun. The purpose of this gather-
ing, which occurred in June 1987, was
to bring together the newly hired staff
of *Trips*, to give them a chance to meet
one another and air their ideas about
what kind of magazine *Trips* should
be. Among the participants were Roger
Black, who would design the maga-
zine; Mark Jacobson, Lewis Gross-
berger, and Cynthia Gorney, who
would write for it; and Carolyn White,
Ziegler's head editor. According to a
number of those present, the meeting
went like this:

"We're kind of a hip *National*

Geographic," someone said.

"Sort of a cross between *Rolling
Stone* and *National Geographic*."

"But the old *Rolling Stone*."

"Right. What rock and roll was to
the sixties, travel is to the eighties."

Roaming about the room, urging ev-
eryone to discard their preconceptions
about what travel magazines are and to
imagine instead what a truly great trav-
el magazine could be, was Mel
Ziegler, a shortish man, slight to the
point of skinniness, with a pinched
face, bushy black eyebrows, and a re-
lentlessly upbeat manner. "What
we're all about here," he said, "is
honesty. Be honest with me. What
kind of magazine do you really want
Trips to be?"

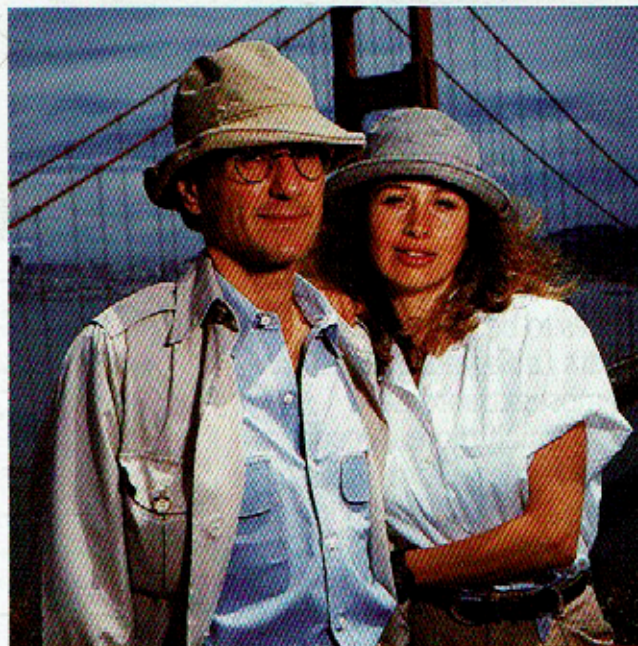
"I see us as a magazine with an an-
thropological conscience," said Kathy
Goetz. She was an associate editor,
and she had postponed her master's de-
gree in anthropology to
come to work for *Trips*.

"We're a literary maga-
zine," said Jennifer Farbar,
another associate editor, who
had come from *Esquire*.

"What we're going to do
here," said Carolyn White,
"is invent a whole new
genre of magazine." White
was fresh from a frustrating
job at *Lear's* magazine, and
before that had an unhappy
stint at *Rolling Stone*.
"We're a magazine about
the world."

Someone asked about ser-
vice pieces, the where-to-
stay and what-to-see articles
that travel-related advertis-
ers like.

"F--- service!" Cal
Fussman, one of the writ-



The Zieglers: "An artist and a writer with an itch to travel"

Traveling salesmen

ers, yelled out. Everyone cheered.

The method of these proceedings—to create an atmosphere more commonly found in encounter sessions than in business conferences—was a method characteristic of Mel Ziegler, and one he had practiced successfully in his decade as leader of Banana Republic. Along with this Zieglerian rhetoric, a gestalt of words like “creative,” “original,” “individual,” “innovative,” and “honesty,” “integrity,” “openness,” which Ziegler used tirelessly, in a vaguely incantatory way, to describe the Banana Republic philosophy. It was a philosophy not often found in profit-making enterprises; in fact, “to break all the rules about business” was part of the Republic’s creed. The Republic was a kind of noncorporate corporation, “a very sixties thing,” in Ziegler’s words, founded by “two dreamers,” “an artist and a writer with an itch to travel.”

Instead of stores the Republic built “theaters,” in the form of Amazonian Tropical Rain Forest stores and African Hunting Lodge stores designed by Patricia. Instead of catalogs the Republic produced “literary events.” Creativity was the rock upon which the Republic was built, and no less essential than creativity was honesty. The clothes were honest. In explaining how this could be, Ziegler, as he circulated among his new staff, occasionally plucked at his sleeve or touched his slacks, for on this day, as on all days, he was wearing Banana Republic. He pointed out that they were “authentic” clothes, meaning they were descended from traditional, classic designs, and that they were made exclusively of “honest, natural fabrics.” The company, Ziegler said, had been founded to reform the mass-market casual clothes of the late seventies, when polyester was ubiquitous and form was the master of function—when “fashion had replaced clothing itself.”

Most of the people in the conference room were not wearing Banana Republic; many of them, especially those who had come from New York, were wearing black. They received Ziegler’s discourse on the Republic with a certain skepticism, although no one doubted that he meant what he said. The Zieglerian terminology struck some as a little eccentric, maybe even



Instead of catalogs, the Republic produced “literary events”

pretentious; then again, as one of them says, “Mel was a real sixties person,” whereas much of his audience were children of the eighties. So there was something of a generational gulf. There was a cultural barrier too: Nearly everyone on the staff had come from the East Coast and was new to northern California, whereas Mel was at home there, and his idiom—“Marin-speak,” one staff member called it—reflected that.

Nonetheless, Ziegler’s sincerity and the assurance with which he spoke were persuasive. No one thought it absurd or illogical when he segued from clothes to travel journalism without changing his vocabulary. *Trips*, he said, would publish “honest travel journalism.” It would not “glorify the destination, sanitize the story, and crop the pictures.” It would “break all the rules about travel magazines” and in the process “have the integrity to stand up to the travel industry.” Its readers would be “very individualistic people” who “wherever they go seek out the authentic, indigenous culture.”

By the end of the conference it had been agreed that *Trips* would be a magazine of high social purpose, of moral seriousness, of fine writing and perceptive reporting, a magazine that was politically aware but unbiased—a magazine, as Ziegler put it, “that will dare to show the world as it truly is.” Everyone was terrifically inspired by

the project. “We were all like converts,” Kathy Goetz says, “and Mel was our messiah.”

The only false note in the general harmony of the occasion came when Ziegler said that, in upholding its lofty values, *Trips* would also help the Republic sell clothes, because the clothes were about those values, too. Whereupon, in a quiet, agreeable way, just to make sure, Cynthia Gorney brought up the matter of editorial independence. It is a familiar problem at magazines, the unhappy marriage of culture and commerce: Sometimes the editors and writers create things that the investors and advertisers don’t like.

“We’re not going to have church versus state problems here, are we?” Gorney asked. And Ziegler, in an equally quiet, equally agreeable way, said: “No, Cynthia, we’re not. Because, you see, I am the church and I am the state.”

ZIEGLER IS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE of his own maxim that travel is a spiritual as well as a temporal experience, that “the man who departs is never the man who returns.” There have been several Mel Zieglers.

The first was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania, in 1945. He attended Penn State, then went to journalism school at Columbia, where he received a master’s degree. He was there in 1968 when the student rebellion took place, and although he was not political, he imbibed the idealism and iconoclasm of the age. After a year with the *Miami Herald* he returned to New York, where he wrote a couple of “as told to” biographies, including *Bella! Ms. Abzug Goes to Washington*. One day in 1973, feeling “at the nadir of my New York existence,” Ziegler packed the car with his belongings and drove west, with no particular destination in mind.

In the process a second Mel Ziegler was born, a transitional Mel who hung around Denver for a while, repacked the car, and eventually stumbled upon Mill Valley, California, a quaint, leafy town not far from the northern apron of the Golden Gate Bridge. Later, describing the effect of travel in general on his unusually malleable identity, Ziegler wrote, “It’s the way a place gets under my skin and makes me

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move to a new rhythm, the way my eyes learn to see from new sockets, the way my mind soars to new insights, the way I touch and taste and smell things anew." Such was the effect of Mill Valley. "There is something different about the air," he once said. "Out here you have a deep sensitivity to the quality of your life, to the whole picture, not just to material things. It's a wonderful union of body and mind."

Writing under the name Mel Valley, he produced the novelization of the second Dirty Harry movie, *Magnum Force*. He got a job with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, where he worked a beat he called Our Man in Nirvana. Among his most memorable stories was an exposé of Werner Erhard's est seminars. Posing as one of Erhard's pilgrims, Ziegler sat through a sixty-hour weekend session and wrote a three-part series about the experience.

At the *Chronicle* Ziegler met Patricia Gwilliam, who worked as a courtroom illustrator, and out of their romance and marriage a new Mel Ziegler was born. Patricia was a native of California, an

ex-flower child. She persuaded Mel to quit smoking. She encouraged him to jog and eat natural foods. She also taught him to dress. "Mel was a fashion victim of the seventies," an acquaintance recalled. "All the awful shirts with the wide collars—Mel wore them." Now Mel began to favor cotton and wool, natural fabrics. Patricia took him shopping in flea markets; she had an eye for treasure amid the dross.

Mel soon developed an eye of his own, and when he was in Australia on a magazine assignment, he bought three antique British Burma jackets at an army-navy store. Patricia fashioned the three into one authentic British Burma Jacket, and then made it even more authentic by adding suede patches, horn buttons, and a wooden buckle. Everywhere Mel went he received compliments on the jacket. Everyone wanted an authentic British Burma Jacket of their own.

SO THE ZIEGLERS HAD AN IDEA. Using his journalistic skills, Mel searched archives, museums, and government inventories, looking for

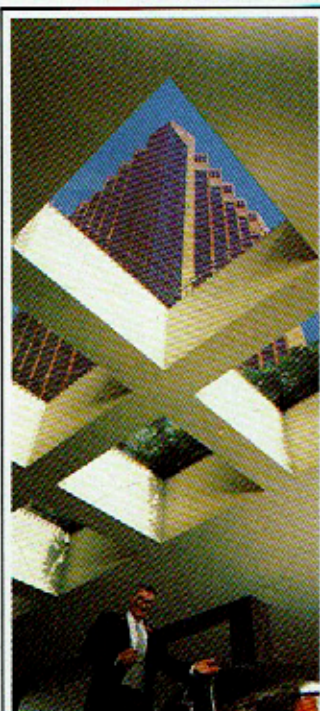
clues to the whereabouts of hordes of old surplus. Using her newfound design skills, Patricia embellished the clothes that Mel discovered. They traveled to England, to Sweden, to Italy; they discovered a network of surplus wholesalers, men who bought military paraphernalia by the crate at government auctions and hawked it to clearinghouses around the world. At first the Zieglers sold their goods at a Marin County flea market; then, in 1978, they opened a small store in Mill Valley. Mel christened the enterprise Banana Republic, and because the words "military surplus" had unpalatable connotations, he called the apparel "travel and safari clothing."

The Republic began to spread through Marin County, and to spread it still farther the Zieglers decided to publish a catalog. Patricia sketched the dry goods; Mel named them—British Drill Shorts, Italian Camouflage Jackets, Spanish Paratrooper Shirts. When the last item arrived from Madrid and the Zieglers discovered the sleeves were too short, Mel wrote, "All sleeves fall an inch or two short of normal, the result of Franco's maniacal refusal to permit long-armed Spaniards into the officer's corps." The shirts sold out.

What had begun as a whimsical pastime was rapidly becoming an institution, and like any institution it not only required lawyers, accountants, and receipt books to sustain it, it required an ideology. This was a trip of a different kind for the Zieglers, who had always fancied themselves freethinkers in a community of conformists. Playfully dubbing himself Minister of Propaganda, Mel began defining that ideology in the company's catalogs, its promotional material, and its in-house newsletter, "Communiqué."

The Republic, he declared, was a "magnet for creative, individualistic people," a place where "values and ideas come first." Although the company was becoming very successful, it was not, in fact, concerned with success in the commercial sense, because "that as an end in itself could never be enough." And although people sometimes supposed the company to be in the fashion business, the Republic actually was not about fashion at all. "In our thinking, fashion is irrelevant, trivial. What counts is style. Fashion is mass expression. Style is individual expres-

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sion." Looks, trends, fashion itself—these were the instruments with which mass-market retailers imposed their corporate will upon the people, and these were the instruments the Republic set out to destroy.

But the Republic was a relatively minor entity in the retailing world. Its existence was contingent upon the supply of surplus, and by 1983 caches of authentic military clothing were becoming harder to find. The Zieglers realized they had a choice: They could enjoy two, maybe three more good years as

surplus distributors and then, when the supply was exhausted, dissolve the Republic; or, with Patricia as designer, they could begin producing their own clothes and, perhaps, become a major power. They preferred the second option. The difficulty was that they lacked the capital and the access to manufacturing facilities that would make such an operation possible. While the Zieglers were struggling with this problem, they received, in early 1983, a call from a man named Don Fisher, who offered them a tidy and swift solution to their

problem. Fisher was the chief executive of The Gap.

The Gap is one of the largest retailing chains in the country, with hundreds of stores nationwide and annual sales of over \$1 billion. It represents just the sort of corporate, mass-marketing operation that the Zieglers and their Republic despised. Therefore it took "a whole lot of soul-searching," as Mel put it, to figure out what to do about Fisher's offer, which was to buy the Republic for a rumored \$1 million and an undisclosed amount of The Gap's stock.

Finally, the Zieglers' souls counseled them to sell out. They did not feel they had sold out in the pejorative sense, however, because The Gap promised them complete creative control of the Republic. Since creativity was the essence of the Republic, this was tantamount to selling their company and not selling it at the same time. All that The Gap would control was the money.

DON FISHER, THE FOUNDER AND chief executive of The Gap, always had a soft spot for Mel Ziegler. When Ziegler began campaigning in 1985 for the funds to launch *Trips*, Fisher, though skeptical about the project, listened sympathetically.

Ziegler spoke of a vision, of "a total travel resource center, not travel as we know it but travel for individualistic, intelligent, resourceful, adventurous, irreverent people." The clothes were only a part of this vision. There would also be Banana Republic Travel Books, Banana Republic Tours, a Banana Republic Traveler's Information Service, maybe even Banana Republic Travel Agencies. But the centerpiece of the vision, the "standard-bearer of the whole enterprise," was *Banana Republic Trips*.

The magazine would succeed for the same reasons the clothes had succeeded, for Ziegler "perceived there to be just as big a gap in the travel-magazine market as there was in the fashion markets of the late seventies, when there just was not honest, natural-fabric clothing to be had. There was no honest travel writing to be had either." *Trips* would be a lifeline between the company and its customers, or "followers," as Ziegler sometimes referred to them. There would be no need for test mailings or focus groups to target the audience; the people who put Banana Re-



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public in their closets would want Banana Republic on their coffee tables. Ziegler had a travel story to illustrate this fact. He and Patricia had once trekked through the Peruvian jungle to get to Machu Picchu. "When we got into the city," he says, "there were maybe six other people who had done what we did. Four of the six were wearing our clothes."

Still, Don Fisher was not quick to apprehend the wisdom of a clothing company going into the magazine-publishing business, and for nearly two years he was able to resist Ziegler's persuasive talents. All the while Ziegler was working out his idea more and more thoroughly in his spare time, which had greatly increased in the years that followed the coming of The Gap. The day-to-day affairs of the company were not his responsibility anymore, and it was Patricia, not Mel, who had the job of running the design department. There was no more sleuthing for caches of military surplus as in the old days. Now when the Zieglers traveled, it was usually to "wear test" their creations in exotic locales. The truth was, Mel felt a little unhappy in the new dispensation.

He wasn't overjoyed with the speed and the style with which the Republic was annexing new territory. The Gap had driven the Republic's revenues from an estimated \$1.5 million in 1983 to about \$230 million in 1987. It had increased the number of Banana Republic stores from two to ninety-two. Some of the stores were in very establishment neighborhoods. One was just across the street from Bloomingdale's in Manhattan ("See," says Ziegler, "that's too visible for me. I would have opened a store at Fifth Avenue and Twelfth Street"). Cultural sages were beginning to lump the growth of the Republic in with the general yuppie phenomenon. "I hated it when they called us a yuppie store," Ziegler says. "That wasn't what Banana Republic was about at all. We were about individuality. We were about protest."

Ziegler did not, in asking Fisher to fund *Trips*, say that the magazine would be a way of purifying the Republic of the materialism that had infected it. He kept that notion to himself. He asked only that Fisher invest a portion of the Republic's earnings, between \$2 million and \$4 million, in his project.

Fisher had at his right hand a man

By the end of the year open discord had broken out in the sunny offices of *Trips*

named Mickey Drexler, the president of The Gap, a man celebrated in the retailing industry for his brilliance and widely known for his brusque, sometimes caustic, style of doing business. Drexler's counsel on Ziegler's *Trips* proposal was, according to Dan Levy, who eventually became the magazine's publisher, "What the hell do we want to get into these other businesses for, the travel business, the magazine business? Our business is selling clothes." But, Levy says, "Don Fisher just couldn't say no to Mel." The Gap agreed to pay for one year of start-up costs and two years of operation. The two men shook hands in February 1987, and four months later came the memorable development conference.

CAROLYN WHITE NEVER SUPPOSED, during the early months of her job at *Trips*, that Mel Ziegler's vision of "the world as it truly is" might be in some fundamental way incompatible with hers. She was an experienced journalist, and she saw the world as a journalist does, as a place full of stories and issues. Because Ziegler himself had been, during one phase of his life, a journalist too, she supposed he shared her point of view. White had never worked at a travel publication before, nor did she have exactly the same metaphysical appreciation of travel that Ziegler possessed: She preferred a gritty edge to the pieces. But neither she nor, at first, Ziegler felt this would inhibit her in doing her job.

It is an occupational hazard for travel-magazine editors that they have to rely on writers, who are inclined to be sedentary people, to do their bidding for them, and although many publications sidestep the problem by hiring specialized travel writers, *Trips* would not be one of them. Ziegler had observed that most journeyman travel writers are often better at traveling than at writing, and that even talented writers tend to

view travel assignments more as a free vacation than as an occasion for their best work.

"There was this certain travel writer's voice that was so saccharine and boring, yet everybody used it," Ziegler says. "Even great writers used it. It was sort of amazing. There was no respect for the genre." White, with Ziegler's approval, hired writers with little or no experience in the genre and dispatched them to places where travel writers don't usually go. She sent Mark Jacobson to South Africa, Lewis Grossberger to Bulgaria, and Marguerite Del Giudice to an island in Hawaii where non-natives were forbidden.

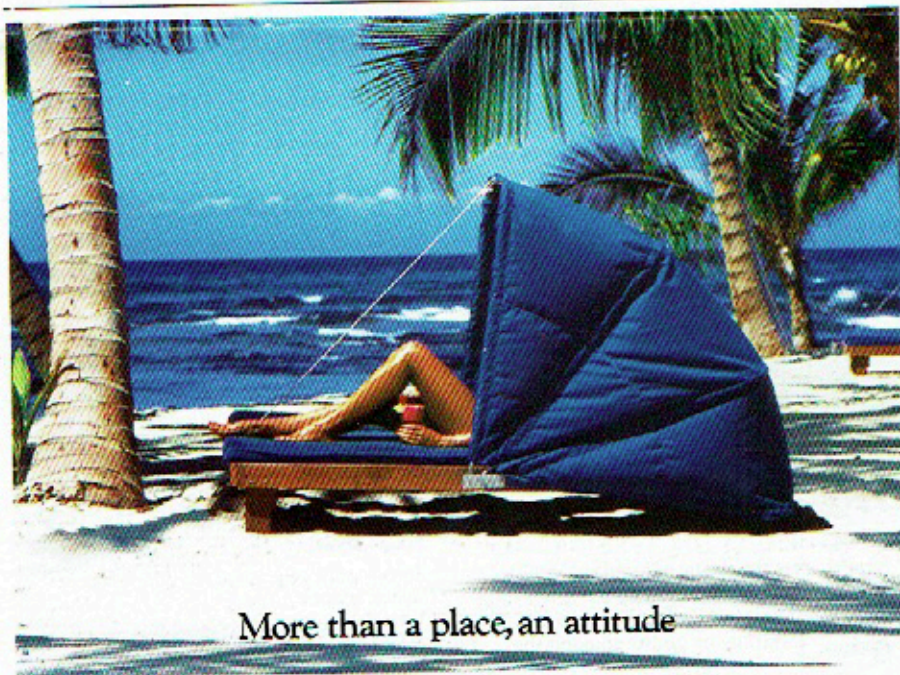
From those first giddy days in June, through the summer and into the fall, the sunny rooms on Pacific Avenue were awash with enthusiasm. A day at the office often lasted until well after midnight, for, as is always the case with magazine start-ups, there was a terrific amount of work to be done. But no one complained, and the hard times bound everyone together. "We supported each other, cared for each other; we were like a family, just like Mel wanted us to be," Kathy Goetz recalls. Ziegler himself took a supervisory role, coming by the office several times a week to quicken everyone's zeal. "It was like a moral crusade for all of us," Goetz says. "We were going to bring truth into the world."

No one wondered, whose truth? or whose world? until mid-November, when the manuscripts and photographs began filtering in. Larry Gallagher, a young writer and an associate editor who had been sent to Bangkok, came back with a story about his relationship with a Thai prostitute, a relationship that began with friendship but deepened into something between intense sympathy and love. The woman had a child, a squalid life, and only one hope: to get to America. Gallagher wrote about how guilty the relationship made him feel, not only because he could leave and she couldn't, but also because he could never entirely believe her declarations of love; she might, he thought, just be playing him for a fool, for a way out. White thought it was a powerful piece, and though other staff members thought it was not executed as artfully as it might have been, she wanted it in the inaugural issue. Ziegler didn't like the story, and rejected it. White tried to de-



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fend it, arguing that it was both an authentic account of the world and an honest portrait of one traveler's psyche, but Ziegler was curt with her. Some staff members wondered if Ziegler, in killing the piece, was protecting the retailing side of the company, which, despite his protestations about truth, might not profit by a gritty article like Gallagher's.

Gallagher's story and Ziegler's reception of it became kind of a paradigm in the querulous months ahead. Ziegler and White continued to get into bitter arguments about the magazine's content. There were some big battles: Ziegler vetoed a double-page photograph, taken in Peshawar, Pakistan, that showed a fifteen-year-old Afghan boy holding a gun. "I said to Carolyn, 'You don't need to use that. We have other great photographs from Peshawar. It's pandering to highlight that one.' " White thought it was a terrifying photograph and believed Ziegler had rejected it for that reason. There were some minor skirmishes: Ziegler replaced the word "fart" with "bodily noise" in the first paragraph of Marguerite Del Giudice's piece, and the staff responded by substituting NO FARTS signs for the NO SMOKING signs that were prominently posted around the office.

Gradually White and her editors came to feel that Ziegler had misled them, that his interest in truth was conditional upon the commercial interest of Banana Republic, that the real world and his world were not, after all, so compatible. Ziegler, for his part, began to feel that he had made a mistake in hiring so many New Yorkers. He thought that the staff were so imprisoned in their East Coast journalistic worldview that they were blind to the world as it really was.

"The attitude was, 'Let's make this thing as nasty and as dirty and as negative as we can, and that way everyone will know we're God-honest journalists,'" Ziegler says. "That is a very sour, Lower East Side point of view. I understand that point of view. I am a former New Yorker. I know a lot of things in the world are negative. But I don't wake up in the morning with a negative attitude about things, and I don't want to put out a travel magazine that's all about negativity. I want truthfulness—and the truth is, a lot of people see the world in a very pleasant and uplifting way."

By the end of 1987 open discord had

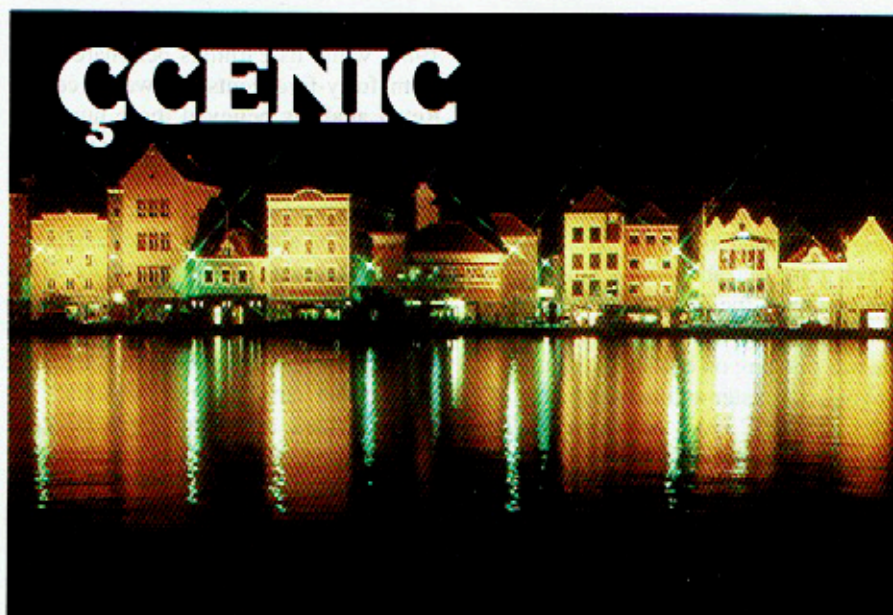
broken out in the *Trips* offices. To Goetz it began to seem that "all Mel's talk about his door always being open was not true. His door was never open, literally—he worked with it closed. He ruled with absolute power."

Hoping to settle the doctrinal disputes, Ziegler issued a memo to the staff titled "The Magazine's Voice/Vision," in which he detailed "some of the attributes I look for in approving *Trips* assignments." The memo introduced a new phrase to the Zieglerian lexicon: "If I had to use one term to sum up what distinguishes our approach to travel journalism," he wrote, "I'd select 'Romantic Realism.' We take an uncompromising look at things as they really are, but by our selection of detail and incident we express openness, warmth, passion, and a positive attitude. Cynicism or hardness have no place in this magazine. We prefer charm."

Unfortunately, Romantic Realism did not catch on as easily as earlier Zieglerianisms had. Cynicism and hardness had taken hold of the staff. Moreover, in January certain sinister, even heretical, rumors began going around the office. It was said that the Republic's revenues had dropped precipitously in recent months. It was supposed that fashion, which had always been the slave of the Republic, was threatening its master. In short, it was rumored that the safari look was over. But no one could substantiate these rumors, and Ziegler insisted that everything was fine.

The first issue of *Trips* was published on schedule in March. The quality of the writing was well above standard magazine prose, and the presentation, homey but not amateurish, made a nice change from the glossy, lollipop style of most magazines. In addition to the pieces by Jacobson, Grossberger, and Del Giudice, the issue contained a reminiscence by Richard Ford about growing up in Little Rock and an article by Charlie Haas about riding bicycles with the King of Tonga. It also contained seventeen pages of Banana Republic advertising, which were very hard to distinguish from the magazine's editorial content. Larry Gallagher's journey to Thailand had been reworked into a service piece.

Carolyn White quit the day the inaugural issue appeared. In an attempt at damage control, Mel went around saying, "Good riddance" and "We got rid of the bad apple," thereby provoking

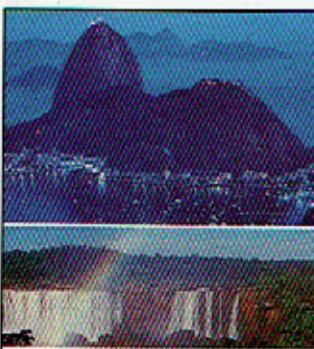


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the photo editor, two of the three associate editors, and an assistant editor to quit too, in a gesture of solidarity. Having solicited everyone's highest principles in the beginning, Ziegler had to suffer their moral outrage at the end, though some were more extreme in their judgments than others. "Mel was always going on about how sinister and manipulative the fashion industry is, or the publishing industry, implying that he was put here on earth to right it all. If anyone is sinister and manipulative, it's Mel Ziegler," says one former *Trips* staffer. But another says, "There's nothing really bad about Mel. His problem is he doesn't think very deeply about what he says, and he has no sense of the impression he's making on other people. He's really naive about people, and it made things much worse that we were really naive about him."

Staff dissension was, in fact, only one of Ziegler's problems. In September 1987 there had been a general crash of retailing stocks. The Gap's stock had fallen from 77 to 16 over the following six months, and its profitability for the first quarter of 1988 dropped almost 73

percent relative to the same quarter in 1987, while its earnings per share sank from forty-five cents to twelve cents. Retail analysts believed these numbers reflected, in part, a sudden, catastrophic slump in Banana Republic's sales, and although none of them knew exactly how bad the slump was (The Gap does not break out the numbers of its divisions), estimates pegged the decline at about 30 percent.

The Gap scaled back its plans to open twenty-five new Banana Republics in 1988. It took away the Zieglers' creative license, and Mickey Drexler was put in charge of the Republic. Drexler hired one of Ralph Lauren's designers to revamp the clothes and made plans to eliminate the travel and safari paraphernalia from the stores.

The Zieglers lingered on awhile after these changes, disenfranchised, under a sort of house arrest, "studying whether there was anything we could salvage." On April 20 they officially departed the Republic, and The Gap simultaneously folded *Trips*. The company gave no public explanation of its decision to kill the magazine. It issued a memo to em-

ployees informing them that discussing the subject with those outside the company was a violation of their confidentiality agreements and would result in immediate termination.

GREENS IS A RESTAURANT IN SAN Francisco where one can eat healthy food and watch the sailboats zip about in the bay. Beyond the water one can see the forested slopes that cradle Mill Valley. Ziegler pointed to them one day last May, saying, "We live on that mountain over there." The Zieglers have a new house that Patricia designed and decorated in what used to be the style of Banana Republic, with lots of redwood and forest green, a kind of memorial to their lost world. Mel, doing his bit to keep the flame burning, was wearing on this day an olive drab Banana Republic Italian Waiter's Jacket ("the jacket itself recedes into the quiet realm of practical good taste, making the wearer's individuality foremost," says the catalog) over an ivory Banana Republic Safari Shirt ("cool, tough, and luxurious in camp or conference"). He ordered a lentil soup without the *crème fraîche*, a brochette without butter, and a Perrier. He said he wanted to talk about *Trips*, though not about "negative things" that had been bruited about by the former staff.

"Some of the editorial people had been burned so often, in so many situations," he said, "that they came in with enormous bags of paranoia, and I was somewhat victimized by that paranoia. But really all that stuff is insignificant. The important thing is what *Trips* set out to do. I wanted to break open the nature of what travel is. Travel can happen anywhere. It can happen in your backyard. It can happen in your imagination. To me, the world has kind of a Zen quality. It's the sum total of all the senses of a human being, a person who is totally aware, totally present. I think human beings tend to walk around in little bubbles of thought and emotion. Travel forces us out of those bubbles. It makes us smell or see or feel something we haven't felt before. Sometimes I go for a walk on the hill behind the house, and I'll come back and realize that I haven't smelled a single flower, or listened to a single bird. That's when I feel the need to travel again. Then I can come back here and see the world as though it were strange." □



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