

Mansbridge to reach her. But "when I tried to reach [NOW President Eleanor] Smeal, it took months." Mansbridge notes that Smeal was simply "much more inaccessible to the average member than Phyllis Schlafly was." Maybe there were reasons for that, but I always found inaccessibility to be an unattractive trait. So does Mansbridge, I suspect.

Unlike the ordinary run of feminists, Mansbridge insists that homemakers weren't merely fantasizing when they concluded that both the ERA and the women's movement were not out to aid them. The amendment, after all, was a product of the movement, and the movement "was profoundly opposed to traditional conceptions of how families should be organized," she says. Feminists, from the time the women's movement began twenty years ago, have opposed homemaking as a full-time career. Indeed, this created a "genuine conflict of interest" between feminists and homemakers, one that the ERA exacerbated. "The very existence of full-time homemakers was incompatible with many goals of the women's movement, like the equal sharing of political and economic power," Mansbridge writes. "Women can never hold half the economically and politically powerful positions in the country if a greater proportion of women than men withdraw from competition from these positions." I can't argue with that.

Because of the ERA's close tie to the women's movement, homemakers were automatically skeptical of it, the author says. Furthermore, they stood to suffer tangible loss. It would deprive them of "some traditional protections and benefits," Mansbridge says. "While feminists intended to raise new and presumably better protections in place of the old, these were not strictly mandated by the ERA." Finally, women who stayed home with the kids had begun to feel *declass e*. They had suffered, partly because of the women's movement, "status degradation." And the ERA would reinforce that. Small wonder homemakers haven't lined up behind Smeal to support it.

Berry raises the possibility that the insurance industry, worried about being barred from issuing policies that are actuarially sound but make gender distinctions, was the moving force behind the effort to kill the ERA. To her credit, Mansbridge knocks down this canard. State legislators voted against the ERA "not because of massive organized lobbying by the insurance industry or large corporate contributions to their campaigns but because the cumulative impact of many influences, including district-based

organizing by [Schlafly's] STOP ERA, had led them to believe that voting for the Amendment would cause them more trouble than it was worth." Mansbridge says she found "no evi-

dence of a conscious insurance industry conspiracy to stop the ERA." Imagine that: the ERA lost fair and square. You'll never hear Eleanor Smeal say that. □

CITIES ON A HILL: A JOURNEY THROUGH CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CULTURE

Frances FitzGerald/Simon and Schuster/\$19.95

William Schambra

Frances FitzGerald's *Cities on a Hill* is, in a sense, the mirror image of her earlier, Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Fire in the Lake*. The latter volume—a major contribution to the anti-Vietnam war literature—argued that the war could be understood only as part of a larger process: the destruction of traditional, backward-looking, communitarian Vietnamese society by the forcible introduction of Western capitalism and technology. *Cities on a Hill*, by contrast, examines the reconstruction of communitarian society within that great bastion of Western capitalism and technology, the United States. FitzGerald approaches her new subject through four illustrations of community-building drawn from the American experience of the sixties and seventies: the growth of the gay community in the Castro district of San Francisco; Jerry Falwell's construction of a fundamentalist Christian enclave in Lynchburg, Virginia; the development of a retirement community in Sun City, Florida; and the rise (and sudden fall) of the notorious Rajneesh commune in Oregon. Although seemingly radically disparate, the four experiences, she insists, reflect essentially the same, uniquely American belief; that communities may be built, not necessarily on tradition or by looking backward, as the Vietnamese would have it, but precisely by shattering tradition and by looking forward to a dramatically new self and society.

This argument is, unhappily, only implicit in most of the book; the case studies appeared originally in the *New Yorker*, and so the author is permitted to meander amiably through her accounts, occasionally brushing up against substantive points, but never pursuing them with an intensity that readers of the magazine would have found unseemly. Only in the concluding chapter, tacked on to the original essays, does she develop fully her thesis.

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American society, she argues, is peculiarly unsettled, fluid, and atomistic as a result of modern capitalism, and therefore is constantly challenging established cultural and communitarian norms. Sometimes this challenge is particularly acute—she points to the period preceding the Second Great Awakening in the 1820s and 1830s, when technological advances disrupted established family and community customs. At such times, she suggests, we are likely to see an efflorescence of community-building efforts, all of them rejecting the old and now-discredited cultural ways, all experimenting with dramatically different and often wildly eccentric alternative cultures, but all characterized by a desire for cultural and individual regeneration and by the effort to re-establish communitarian control over social chaos. This, according to FitzGerald, explains the explosion of religious and secular communal movements during the Second Great Awakening—and, she argues, it explains a similar explosion among the American middle class during the sixties and seventies, in the wake of that period's economic, social, and political upheavals.

FitzGerald's book is a welcome rejoinder to one argument heard frequently today, that modern technological developments have rendered forever obsolete the small community. That argument is, of course, the basis for the derision that usually greets President Reagan's call for a regeneration of family, neighborhood, and local community. Although I'm certain FitzGerald would not be pleased at this suggestion, nonetheless, she shows us why Reagan's theme is by no means absurd. Communities in America, she demonstrates, form not in spite of, but precisely because of, the social changes generated by capitalism and technology. This, of course, is nothing more than a reiteration of a point made considerably earlier by Alexis de Tocqueville, who, as it turns out, visited

America in the midst of the Second Great Awakening. He understood that the forces of modernity had doomed traditional, rooted communities, and he was deeply concerned about the consequences of this for mankind. The American capacity spontaneously to generate completely new but nonetheless genuine communities, without traditions or roots and out of virtual strangers, quieted his concern.

Because FitzGerald believes that all four of her case studies are equally legitimate manifestations of the American communal impulse, she struggles (and largely manages) to discuss objectively a range of cultural practices and beliefs that would have severely strained the tolerance of a lesser journalist. When she errs in this respect, the sophisticated New Yorker slips through. She clearly enjoys her work on the Castro, for instance, as she follows its fortunes through the rise and murder of Harvey Milk, and the onset of the AIDS epidemic. From her account, it seems that she tagged along happily with her pals Peter, Ken, and Armistead to virtually every gay bar, restaurant, festival, and demonstration in the district during this period.

Her treatment of the retirement village, by contrast, is stunted, detached, and relatively unenlightening. And from her description of the fundamentalist enclave in Lynchburg, one might suppose she had been transported back to the inscrutable culture of Saigon. "One family," she notes incredulously, "had not only a living room but a family room with a Naugahyde pouf, a twenty-four-inch television set, and a sliding glass door looking out over a stone-paved terrace." And, of course, it is always "Falwell"—never "Jerry."

The deeper problem with FitzGerald's approach, though, is not her failure to be objective, but her reluctance to discriminate—to make some hard, interesting judgments about the nature of community to which her own evidence points. Until recently, for instance, it was widely believed that a healthy community (no matter how otherwise new or different) necessarily emerges from, and retains an honored place for, the traditional family. Her case studies give us an opportunity to test this proposition, for two of her communities reflect this conventional understanding, and two were founded explicitly on the rejection thereof.

The gays in the Castro, for instance, renounced traditional family values in the name of a radically individualistic, and usually quite promiscuous, sexual freedom. Their community seemed to flourish on this basis—until the onset

of the AIDS epidemic. The only way to halt the spread of the virus, it was clear, was through sexual restraint—a value taught by, and central to, the much-despised family. But the Castro came close to self-destruction when its inhabitants refused to accept such moral strictures, preferring to cling to their bath houses, and the absolute freedom they represented. The community finally accommodated itself to the epidemic, but only after it had adopted a new life-style—one characterized, as FitzGerald notes, by committed, monogamous, long-term relationships, or, in other words, by relationships suspiciously resembling those against which gays had initially rebelled.

The Rajneesh community also rejected the traditional family, because, its Indian guru “Bhagwan” taught, man had “outgrown” it. He proposed to build a “new commune” in Oregon, which would itself be an all-encompassing “liquid family.” Men and women would stay together “only as long as they loved each other” and “children would belong to everyone.” Bhagwan became the “father” of this extended family, holding it in thrall with his idiosyncratic gumbo of traditional Oriental practices and New Age psychotherapeutic techniques. And Ma Anand Sheela—familiar to many from her contentious appearance on “Nightline” in July 1981—was the family’s “mother.”

Maintaining tight family bonds across several thousand people requires nothing short of despotism, however, as everyone has known since Plato’s *Republic*, and as the hapless Rajneeshi soon rediscovered. Presumably with the Bhagwan’s blessing, Sheela drugged, poisoned, and electronically eavesdropped upon her internal opposition; at the same time, she deliberately antagonized the commune’s neighbors, so that she could legitimately say that Rajneeshpuram was alone and friendless in Oregon, needing more than ever to stick together. Internal and external resistance to this tyranny eventually became so great, however, that the commune collapsed.

Expanding the family principle to the level of the community as a whole destroyed Rajneeshpuram. And rejecting that principle on behalf of a radical individual freedom almost destroyed the Castro. The fatal or near-fatal flaws of both experiments, in short, were to be found precisely in their points of departure from the principle of the traditional family. Meanwhile, it must be noted, the two communities that remained faithful to the nuclear family—normally the buffer between the broader community and the individual—prospered. Not enough evidence here for firm scientific conclusions, per-

haps, but enough for some interesting speculations—speculations that FitzGerald’s exaggerated tolerance prevents her from making.

The only time FitzGerald’s tolerance seems genuinely strained is when her subjects permit their purely communitarian purposes to be warped or distorted by the capitalist surroundings. The Castro almost lost its sense of community, she suggests, when it was overrun by trendy boutiques, restaurants, hotels, and other businesses catering to a world-wide clientele of gay tourists; Jerry Falwell clearly spends far too much time raising money for the “Old-Time Gospel Hour,” and preaching to his congregation about the importance of material success; and Rajneeshpuram seemed to be losing its communal bearings when it, too, began to build boutiques, hotels, and other tourist attractions, and Bhagwan became obsessed with collecting limousines (final count: ninety-three). One detects here the same skepticism about commerce and technology to be found in *Fire in the Lake* and its accounts of the misery visited by those forces upon Vietnam.

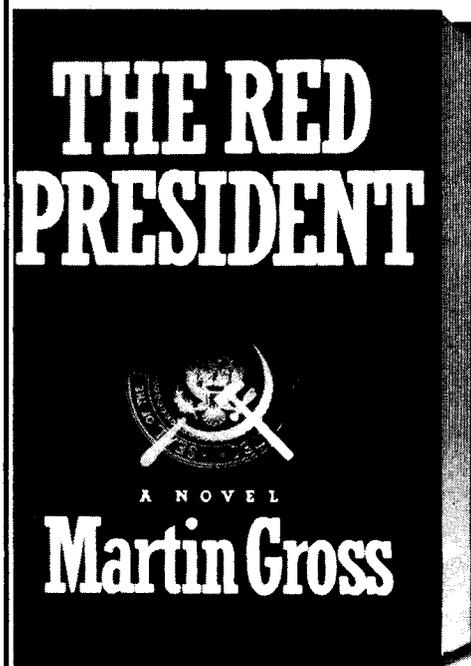
Whatever commerce and technology did to Vietnamese community, however, we may be profoundly grateful for what they do to American communities. Those forces keep community boundaries permeable; moderating influences necessarily seep in from the outside world, and the outside world is permitted to keep a watchful eye on the workings of the group. As FitzGerald herself notes, American communities therefore cannot achieve the sort of isolation that breeds fanaticism. And this, of course, is just as the Founding Fathers of the republic planned it. They feared above all the sorts of tyrannical majorities that form in small, insulated communities, and they counted on the commercial character of their new, extended republic to soften and moderate the zeal of such groups. That our Bhagwans collect limousines, rather than the heads of infidels, is silent testimony to their success, and their wisdom. But this lesson is lost on FitzGerald, who contemptuously dismisses as corruption precisely those aspects of her communities that the Founders would have considered evidence of moderation.

The final message of FitzGerald’s earlier book, *Fire in the Lake*, is a grim one: in the wake of the collapse of Vietnam’s traditional communitarian society before the onslaught of modern technology, the Vietnamese people, she insists, were understandably drawn to the sort of totalitarian com-

munity proffered by the National Liberation Front. The message of *Cities on a Hill* is a happier one: Americans, she tells us, have found a way to establish new communities in the very midst of modern technological society—without resorting to the totalitarian techniques of the NLF. The reason this is open to us is that our society sustains a complex balance be-

tween technology or commerce, and community. As FitzGerald notes, community softens the harshest and most disruptive features of commerce. But, as she fails to emphasize, commerce simultaneously softens the harshest and potentially most oppressive features of community. It is the American genius to establish communities that are both new, and safe. □

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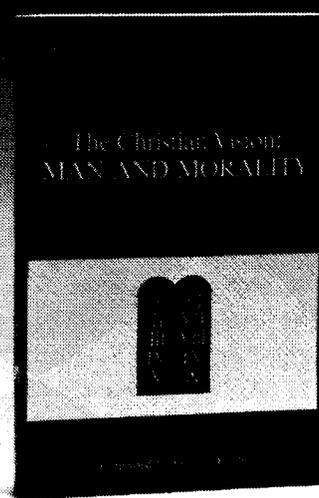
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HARD RIGHT: THE RISE OF JESSE HELMS

Ernest B. Furgurson/W. W. Norton/\$18.95

Gordon Jackson

Hard Right: The Rise of Jesse Helms is another fusillade fired in the ongoing battle between North Carolina's senior senator and the liberal press, two camps that practically define themselves in opposition to each other. These latest rounds have missed

Gordon Jackson, a graduate of Duke University, has written for the Wall Street Journal and the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, as well as The American Spectator.

their mark, however; Senator Helms emerges without a scratch from this unauthorized biography, an extraordinarily vapid and uninformed book.

Though author Ernest B. Furgurson is chief of the *Baltimore Sun's* Washington bureau, it is his conceit that he stands outside the fray between Helms and his media antagonists. He would have it that he is an unbiased observer, something of a scientist, as it were, who confesses that since boyhood, "politicians, especially demagogues, especial-

ly southern demagogues, have fascinated me . . ." As Furgurson pursues his curiosities he discovers to his horror that this species that has amused him so, embodied perfectly in Helms, threatens the nation's constitutional underpinnings.

Anyone naive enough to expect the book really to be an even-handed treatment, or contain even a straw of sympathy for Helms, should be disabused of the notion after twelve pages. By then Helms has been compared unfavorably with George Wallace ("a warmer, more understandable human being" than Helms's aloof polyester patrician) and Joe McCarthy (a red-baiting yahoo, but no ideologue with a blueprint for America's future like the Constitution-threatening Helms).

That's all fair enough. Furgurson's entitled to his opinion. Helms has staked out the right-most position in the U.S. Senate and those who disagree with him undoubtedly have cause for concern that he will prosper. Polemics disguised as biography, and like tactics, are to be expected in these circles.

But there's little point in producing a polemic that demonstrates no substantive knowledge whatever of the policy issues with which Helms deals. Furgurson appears to be utterly un-conversant with conservative arguments on any issue, and so he falls back on the old liberal conventional wisdom that conservatism is merely personality defect.

The policy questions are dealt with only obliquely. Where does Helms stand on civil rights legislation? He "has never supported a civil rights bill for those already born." In opposing sanctions against South Africa, he obviously supports "apartheid—a system devised to keep sassy black people in their place."

What of U.S.-Soviet relations? Furgurson opines that "Most international problems in our time demand a reasoned international strategy. But . . . that is hard to achieve as long as national leaders exaggerate foreign threats and thus feed popular fears." And that is that. Let's not have any inordinate fear of Communism.

The New Right social agenda—abortion, school prayer, pornography, and crime? Here Helms is found guilty of committing political philosophy. He postulates that certain values, such as the inherent worth of the individual, the primacy of strong family life and property rights, are properly seen as antecedent to civil liberties. Though this notion would be a commonplace to the Constitution's drafters, to Furgurson it reveals thinking that "will chill anyone who subscribes to the Bill of Rights and realizes that some day Helms could take part in a convention to amend the U.S. Constitution."

And what about tax policy, the argument over whether supply-side incentives to the private sector or government redistribution will elicit greater economic vitality? Furgurson doesn't seem to have heard of the debate. He casts Helms as a pawn in class warfare, a shill for big business, on whose behalf he "persuaded working people that their needs were the same as men whose economic desires were in fact wholly opposite." Let's have no nonsense about rising tides that lift all boats. (Furgurson reveals the economic illiteracy of most journalists in the remarkable sentence: ". . . Reagan, facing a sure economic recession, bowed to his advisers and reluctantly threw his weight behind . . . one of history's biggest tax increases." Someone should tell him that the recession was nearly over at the time the tax bill was passed in mid-1982, and that it would be a dizzying revelation for any economist to discover evidence that a tax increase combats recession.)

The "nobody here but us liberals" viewpoint is never put aside. Since Helms's positions are without merit on their face, there remains only the business of discovering what defects make this demagogue tick. It is part of Furgurson's purpose to do dime-store psychoanalysis on his subject, and his efforts here are quite beyond ludicrous.

Helms's animosity toward Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, can be traced, Furgurson speculates, to the time when Helms, as a Raleigh city councilman, warned city officials that King's appearance in the city might stir violence. King came and went without incident, and Helms was deeply embarrassed, the blame for which King apparently has been made to bear.

Then there was the matter of Helms's \$50 donation to a church collection plate. Furgurson probes deep into the Helms psyche, and discerns that the gift may have been motivated by the Senator's gratification at having his presence acknowledged and being asked to offer a benediction.

Silliest of all is Furgurson's explanation for why Helms isn't too keen on the media. It's because the young Helms, an aspiring journalist, did not finish college and take all the requisite journalism and liberal arts courses. Had he done so, "he would have been grounded in the ethics of the business, exposed to the historical and cultural traditions on which Americans make political judgments. He would have gotten used to the questioning of common assumptions and established authority that is the very fundament of higher education." Perhaps the Senator can enroll in a few night courses at George Washington University and



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