

leaves no doubt: it is Sam Ervin's own book, un-gussied up by editors or ghost writers. The senator's own breath rustles every page. Ervin writes less for the purpose of describing his life than of expounding his ideas. Eleven pages take care of his boyhood in rural, turn-of-the-century North Carolina (among "courageous, compassionate, God-fearing, law-abiding, hard-working, debt-paying, self-reliant, and truthful men and women, who . . . followed sound economic practices, [did] their own thinking, and accepted the King James Bible as their guide in matters of faith").

Fourteen pages more get the future senator through the University of North Carolina and the first World War. He is in the Senate by page sixty-three. Then follow his reflections on "Judicial Ver-bicide," "Civil Rights," "The Constitution and Religion," "The Equal Rights Amendment," and so on. On page 333 the senator retires. On page 345 he recounts, touchingly, his half-century marriage to Margaret Bruce Bell. Then a postscript, followed by five appendices. Not, as I say, your conventional autobiography. Something more, actually: an encounter with a vital personality and mind for which the mold—alackaday—has been broken.

Ervin was the old-school Southern senator at his finest: long of wind but firm of principle; much given to florid oratory, cornball humor, and poetic quotations, and also to razor-sharp disquisitions on whatever legislative matter was at hand. Ervin's argumentation, laid out with precision and ample citations, may not always persuade, but it impresses. No staff aide, no public relations consultant, did the senator's thinking for him.

Senator Sam was both more and less complicated than he seemed. Deeply conservative, a foe of civil rights bills and of the Equal Rights Amendment, he nevertheless opposed Senator Joseph McCarthy, the school prayer amendment, and various "crime fighting" bills advanced by the Nixon administration. The Senate Water-gate hearings, which made him a folk hero, caused him to be lumped in many minds with inveterate Nixon haters and run-of-

the-mill Democratic partisans.

The thread connecting Ervin's various stances was his horror of arbitrary power, arbitrarily wielded. Such power was forbidden under the Constitution that he wanted to preserve from the crafts and assaults of the ill- and well-intentioned alike. It was the latter perhaps who stirred him up the most. He wrote:

The most serious threat to good government and freedom in America is not posed by evil-minded men and women. It is posed by legislative and judicial activists and other sincere persons of the best intentions, who are bent on remaking America in the image of their own thinking. They lack faith in the capacity of people to be the masters of their own fates, and the captains of their own souls, and insist that government assume the task of controlling their thoughts and managing their lives. They forget that freedom is political power divided into small fragments, and insist that a highly centralized federal government in Washington perform this task.

It is quite needless to wish that this exalted wisdom might be inscribed in every law court and school. Just such sentiments are inscribed already, in the seven articles and twenty-seven amendments that are the U.S. Constitution. The trick for moderns is reading the words with Sam Ervin's incomparable vision, loving them with a love as great as his own.

—Reviewed by William Murchison

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## On the Second-Generation Right

A TRUE GULF exists between the glowing potential and the current straits of the Old Right. In a review of Sidney Blumenthal's *Rise of the Counter-Establishment* in the December 29 *New Republic*, Marxist historian Eugene Genovese criticizes Blumenthal for blurring the essential distinction between neoconservatives and the Old Right. The waning of neoconservative influence which Blumenthal predicts need

not produce, says Genovese, a politically more powerful liberal Left. It may in fact "bring forward a much harder and more radical right, with serious political prospects." Genovese bases his prediction on the perception of the Old Right as a genuine social movement. He attributes to it a political base, mostly in the South, "of indeterminate but clearly not trivial proportions." He recognizes that the war being waged against the modern managerial state on behalf of traditional cultural values amounts to a far-reaching social cause. Lastly, he identifies the Old Right with an "impressive array of educators, many of whom are scholars and teachers of a high order."

What Genovese overlooks is that the Old Right lacks at least one essential precondition for power. It is underfunded and not at the point of dramatically reversing this situation. One telling proof of this underfunding is the difference in financial position between leading neoconservative and Old Right foundations and intellectuals: a subject best avoided in order not to ruffle feelings on all sides. This disparity in resources may be related to a fundamental problem of the Old Right as it attempts to mobilize its forces. Corporate managers and the directors of funding foundations want no part of a conservative social movement that attacks the welfare state, women's liberation (except for particularly ludicrous excesses), and modern lifestyles. Conservatives who are out to please big business should stress centrist politics and pay tribute to social progress. They seem to imitate one *Wall Street Journal* columnist who, after listing the themes addressed by expanding neoconservative think tanks, hastens to assure the readers: "[The list of concerns] does not reek of general resentment against a ruling liberal establishment. It is the kind of list produced by people who directly or at one remove know something of governing—people who have in a sense arrived."

Because the Old Right will not likely celebrate the social and cultural status quo, it may long remain beyond the pale of funding respectability. But the Old Right

will survive, however meagerly, because of the intellectual energy of its second generation. By "second-generation" what is meant are unmistakably conservative scholars in their thirties, forties, and fifties who write for *Modern Age*, *Chronicles of Culture*, *Salisbury Review*, *Continuity*, *The World & I* and, occasionally, *National Review* and *Policy Review*. The representatives of this school of thought are also published, sometimes in translation, in *Razón Española*, *Criticon*, *Nouvelle Ecole*, *La Nottola*, and other European journals identified with the intellectual Right. Affirming this new conservative internationalism, the latter-day Southern Agrarian, M. E. Bradford, is writing the introduction for the English edition of *La Envidia Igualitaria*. The author of this renowned study on egalitarian envy, Fernández Gonsalvo de la Mora, is a Spanish aristocrat, former government minister, longtime professor of philosophy at the University of Madrid, and an admirer of Bradford's. In the last few years de la Mora and Bradford have discovered each other with enthusiasm.

A distinguishing mark of the second generation Old Right is its obvious affinity with the European intellectual Right. Here too, however, a distinction must be made between this Right and European counterparts of the *Commentary* set, particularly the editorial boards of *Encounter* and *Le Figaro*, which celebrate democratic capitalism and global democracy. The European Right here being designated has dealt critically with the mystique of equality and has underlined the centrality of hierarchy and the sacred in any soundly ordered society. Georges Dumézil, Arnold Gehlen, and Mircea Eliade are all honored names on this intellectual Right, while Karl Schmitt, the interwar writer on power politics, his disciple Julien Freund, and the Nobel laureate Konrad Lorenz are invoked as critics of the ideal of world government. The European Right emphasizes the integrity of historic nations and communities, while insisting on the dignity of all peoples.

There is in fact no easy fit among all the

parts of the European intellectual Right. Unbridgeable conflicts, for example, exist between religious traditionalists and exponents of biological imperatives. On the French New Right, the distaste for American society is so deep that imprudent spokesmen defend the Soviet Union and Third World dictatorships while decrying "American materialism." Yet, having made this criticism, it should be stressed that serious thinkers on the European Right and the American Old Right belong to a common Western movement that upholds the customary and historically given in the face of what Bradford calls "thundering abstractions."

The historian Lee Congdon, another member of the second-generation Old Right, believes that society "can recover from the sixties only once it has stopped lying." The lying condemned by Congdon consists of pretending "that men and women, indeed all people, are the same" and that human differences are all reducible to easily negotiated social obstacles. To say otherwise is to risk being called a sexist, racist, and cultural elitist. Congdon argues in favor of restoring honesty to discourse, but cautions that we must enter the fray armed with facts rather than mere opinions. It is not enough to say that sex roles and social subordination are good things that conservatives should accept. We must also be able to prove that traditional institutions are necessary for the human condition. In the spirit of these remarks, Thomas Fleming has said that "far from being mere precepts, the Ten Commandments, or something like them, had to exist for societies to survive." Conservative scholars must try to show that "the permanent things" in fact correspond to our basic social and biological needs.

The Old Right is no longer distinguished by its disdain for social research. Following Robert Nisbet, who demonstrated that nineteenth-century sociology came predominantly from counter-revolutionaries fighting political rationalism, the second-generation Old Right has now eagerly embraced the social and natural sciences. In recent months I was pleasantly surprised

to note the thematic and conceptual overlap between two manuscripts (now both in press) by decidedly Old Right scholars, Thomas C. Fleming in the United States and David J. Levy in England. Both Fleming and Levy cite anthropology, biology, and social history, as well as classical philosophy, in attacking what Paul Ricoeur has styled "the hermeneutics of suspicion," the interpretive perspective of those who consider customary values and institutions a mere front for unjust and repressive situations. Fleming has asked rhetorically why "the burden of proof" has now been put on the upholders of custom, not on those who seek to disturb the way people have lived for millennia. He and Levy have both acclaimed the work of Stephen Goldberg who, in *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*, explains the biochemical basis of traditional sexual roles. Significantly, Goldberg, who has published for four years on the social danger of the feminist movement, insists he is a scientist, not an ideologue. Edward O. Wilson, the most influential contemporary sociobiologist, has made the same distinction for himself. At Harvard, however, Wilson has incurred the unyielding wrath of "Marxist scientists," despite his attempt to avoid explicitly political issues.

Within the fields of history and political thought, the second-generation Old Right has been particularly active. Challenging abstract definitions of "liberty" and right and demythifying the god-term equality, it has helped to sanitize, at least minimally, the discussion of political values on the American Right. The most conspicuous sanitizers have been Forrest McDonald, M. E. Bradford, and George Carey, who have never failed to point out historic and cultural contexts when engaged in debate with their critics. The question, these conservatives like to remind us, is not what modern welfare-state democrats believe about the Constitution but what eighteenth-century English planters and merchants, raised on the Bible and other ancient texts, understood about their own creation. Though none of these scholars would deny that the Constitution was in-

tended to be amended, all of them recognize the difference between discontinuity and development. McDonald, in a recent interview with *The Washington Post*, wondered how any of the Founding Fathers could have recognized their work in the bureaucratic monstrosity American government has become in the second half of the twentieth century.

Second-generation Old Rightists have also focused on the non-egalitarian side of America's original constitutional system. Claes G. Ryn has explored the paradox that American democracy as understood by the Founders required for its proper functioning the creation of a political elite imbued with aristocratic values. Prudence, self-restraint, and deliberateness were the values needed so that constitutional checks on the popular will would work; and the desired qualities were those that gifted minorities, not large masses of people, could reasonably be expected to exercise. In the rightist twist on the leftist hermeneutics of suspicion, Samuel T. Francis has not only reaffirmed the inevitability of political elites, but also has tried to unmask the class interests of those who promote egalitarian politics. Francis, in numerous articles and in a still unpublished manuscript, has tried to continue the work of his *maitre à penser*, James Burnham, in tracing the consolidation of power by the managerial class. Indifferent to the ideological labels that may be applied to him, Francis has drawn on leftist radicals and conservative thinkers to show which priv-

ileged groups the welfare state benefits most. Nor has Francis ever minced words by praising the advocates while damning the results of the politics of compassion. Unlike Charles Murray, for example, he treats greed and lust for power as generative forces in the building of the modern welfare state.

Francis has tried to relate the material weakness of the Old Right to the discomfort it creates among the business managerial elite, a group with demonstrable ties to the American welfare state. Though he may be on to something, Francis nonetheless overstates the weakness of those who move against the grain, armed only with ideas. Contrary to Machiavelli's aphorism, unarmed prophets have triumphed; and contrary to another received assumption, pitifully underfunded theorists can exercise profound influence for better or worse. The second generation of the Old Right has indeed grown up on scant resources. *Modern Age*, which publishes their contributions, still operates on a less than modest budget. But the ancient Rabbis taught "the more fat, the more food we give to the worms." Perhaps something similar holds true for heavily funded movements. In any case the Old Right will never experience such surfeit. It will survive as a lean ascetic movement without leaving a fortune to be devoured by worms or anything else. Our fate could be better, but also a lot worse.

—Paul Gottfried

### *Notes on Contributors*

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