

## "READING DWIGHT EISENHOWER OUT OF THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT"

Of all the presidents Buckley observed and assessed during his lifetime, he was most strident in his criticism of Dwight D. Eisenhower. He regarded the ex-General turned President as the opposite of the kind of conservative leader he wanted in the White House during the Cold War and in the aftermath of twenty years of Democratic activism on the domestic scene. Buckley hoped for a leader who would work to reverse inroads Communist forces had made in Europe and Asia in the aftermath of World War II and who would reduce the size and the reach of the federal government, whose powers had expanded exponentially since the 1930s. Throughout Eisenhower's time in office, Buckley gave the administration no quarter, whether the matter at hand was summitry with the USSR, economic policy, national defense, infrastructure, or civil rights. He considered Eisenhower's handling of patronage and intraparty affairs a Republican version of the clubhouse shenanigans that had characterized the Truman White House.

As Eisenhower's time in office wore on, Buckley continued in his role as activist, strategist, and tactician for a budding conservative movement. Causes that engulfed him in the 1950s included a spirited defense of Senator Joseph McCarthy's crusade against security risks in the U.S. government, protests against Nikita Khrushchev's visit to the United States in 1959, and founding the Young Americans for Freedom in 1960. Each of these actions placed Buckley in opposition to an administration that considered itself "conservative" and was thought of as such by much of the country, including American liberals. During the Eisenhower years, Buckley built up *National Review* and consolidated his hold over the nascent conservative movement.

Prior to Eisenhower's election as President, Buckley had two casual encounters with him, both friendly. In his letter thanking Ike, then President of Columbia University, for attending the *Yale Daily News* banquet in 1950, Buckley recalled his meeting with the General during his time in the U.S. Army: "I have long been a personal admirer of yours, from the day I met you as a young Second Lieutenant at Fort Sam Houston and you grabbed my hand before I had time to complete the traditional salute! I am, of course, deeply appreciative of your remarks to me after the dinner and shall always remember them in context of a person for whom I have such admiration."<sup>1</sup>

Three years after writing these words, Buckley had come to regard Eisenhower as the principal obstacle to the conservative cause. Eisenhower, with the help of multiple political operatives, had wrested the 1952 Republican presidential nomination away from Ohio Senator Robert A. Taft, Buckley's model of a conservative statesman. Buckley never forgave Eisenhower for that, even though Ike's support for NATO, which Taft had opposed, and other defense measures were more in tune with Buckley's views than were some of Taft's. Buckley disparaged the methods by which Eisenhower gained the nomination. "A good book needs to be done on the political assassination of Senator Robert A. Taft—by Republicans," Buckley declared four years into Ike's administration.<sup>2</sup> He declared the political machinations Ike's handlers had used to secure their man the presidential nomination worthy of Boss Hague or Harry Truman, two machine politicians he scorned.<sup>3</sup> Were this not enough, Eisenhower, once in office, worked to undermine another Buckley hero, Joseph McCarthy—a mortal sin in Buckley's book.

To Buckley's chagrin, as President, Eisenhower appeared in no hurry to reverse domestic policies he had criticized during his campaign. Commentators and GOP operatives saw the election of a Republican President a sufficient achievement in itself, considering that the party had been shut out of the White House for a generation. Eisenhower showed himself willing to continue New Deal and Fair Deal programs in exchange for a free hand from Congress in foreign affairs and defense policy. To intimates, Eisenhower confided that the record he established on domestic matters resulted neither from negligence, nor through inertia or lack of will, but from intent: "Should any political party attempt to abolish social security and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history," he wrote his brother Edgar in 1954.<sup>4</sup>

The President suggested that those who argued otherwise were part of a "splinter group," which included H. L. Hunt and a few other Texas oil millionaires, politicians, and businessmen. He considered conservatives of their ilk

numerically "negligible" and "politically stupid."<sup>5</sup> While Buckley hardly qualified as "politically stupid," he and his cohorts were certainly numerically "negligible." As commentator Michael Barone noted years later, what ran on the pages of *National Review* in the mid- to late 1950s carried little weight among policy makers and opinion leaders.<sup>6</sup> Conservative journalist Ralph de Toledano wrote Whittaker Chambers in January 1956 that conservative opinions carried about as far as Buckley's voice.<sup>7</sup> Nor did Buckley's movement command great intellectual respect. Liberal journalist Dwight Macdonald, who had lowered his opinion of Buckley in the years that had passed since the publication of *God and Man at Yale*, wrote that Buckley's new journal appealed to the "half-educated, half-successful provincials . . . who responded to Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and Senator McCarthy."<sup>8</sup>

Buckley and his fellow dissenters from the prevailing bipartisan liberal consensus took aim not only at Ike, but also at much of "big business," which considered itself both "conservative" and a natural ally of the administration. Buckley regarded the leadership and a good many members of the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce stodgy and motivated primarily by self-interest. (As had his father, he opposed what later went by the name of "crony capitalism.") He and his fellow editors believed that during Eisenhower's first two years, when Republicans were in charge of both the executive and legislative branches of the federal government, Republicans had squandered an opportunity to reverse the centralization of power that had come to characterize domestic affairs. They were disappointed that Ike had settled for an armistice on the Korean peninsula rather than press ahead, as General Douglas MacArthur advised, for a united non-Communist Korea. To their dismay, Eisenhower and his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles appeared less eager to "roll back" Communist advances in Europe and Asia than Eisenhower indicated he would do in the course of his campaign.

In its premier issue, *National Review* noted the coincidence of its going to press on the very day Eisenhower left the hospital, where he had been recuperating from a major heart attack. Its very first editorial promised that, while the magazine would be "critical" of the administration, sometimes sharply so, no amount of disagreement would lessen its wish for the personal well-being and happiness of the man who was elected "head of our country and its government."<sup>9</sup>

In the same issue *National Review* also ran a piece by Senate Republican leader and presidential aspirant William F. Knowland, who voiced skepticism about summitry. His principal argument was that with pressures on both sides to make concessions at these meetings, the results would work to the West's

disadvantage.<sup>10</sup> (Eisenhower hoped that summits with his Soviet counterparts would reduce world tensions.) When the Soviets rejected Eisenhower's proposal at a Geneva summit that the two nations agree to mutual inspections of their nuclear stockpiles ("open skies"), Buckley declared that American statesmen were "gluttons" for punishment. "One wink from a Soviet diplomat," he wrote, "and they are ready to rush halfway across the world to get kicked in the teeth."<sup>11</sup> With the mainstream press praising Ike for having tried to reach an agreement, *National Review* expressed the wish that Eisenhower had learned his lesson.

Buckley saw Eisenhower's attempt to portray himself as a "man above party" as ill-disguised "Caesarism."<sup>12</sup> He declared the Eisenhower program "undirected by principle, unchained to any coherent idea as to the nature of man and society, and uncommitted to any estimate of the nature or potential of the enemy."<sup>13</sup> He pronounced the President "a good man" who saw himself neither as an "adventurer," nor as a "redeemer cocksure of his afflatus."<sup>14</sup> By Buckley's lights, Ike's major fault was his "failure to treat the armed services as though they might some day come in handy."<sup>15</sup> He and his colleagues saw the administration's conciliatory rhetoric as evidence of appeasement.

Subsequent historical reevaluations of the Eisenhower presidency suggest that Buckley and his colleagues not only were wrong in their assessment of Eisenhower's strategy and intentions, but made the mistake of taking the thirty-fourth President at face value. Having invested heavily in nuclear deterrence (a policy Buckley firmly advocated after hearing Churchill expound on this topic in 1949) and having undertaken extensive surveillance of Soviet intelligence and military maneuvers, which conservatives also favored, Ike could well afford to don the robes of peacemaker.<sup>16</sup> He intervened in the internal affairs of other nations only when he felt U.S. interests were at stake, another approach Buckley favored. Eisenhower used this very rationale for justifying U.S.-sanctioned coups in Iran, Guatemala, and Congo, for sending U.S. forces to Lebanon to forestall a Soviet occupation, and for pledging to defend islands off the Chinese coast in the event of attacks by the People's Republic of China. (*National Review* supported all of these measures.) Unlike Will Buckley's nemesis Woodrow Wilson, Ike did not use American military power to further abstract goals.

In one respect, some of the criticisms Buckley levied against Eisenhower ran parallel to those some of his liberal counterparts raised at the time. Both camps regarded Eisenhower as a leader of limited intellect and vision. Both saw him as a "do-nothing" President, under whose watch the nation drifted into complacency. Liberals voiced disappointment that Ike proved less of an activist than Roosevelt and Truman. It took them decades to appreciate the positive impact, economic and otherwise, that the interstate highway system, the National

Defense Education Act, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) had on the nation's future. *National Review* paid little attention to DARPA and considered the other two undertakings "boondoggles."

American liberals, while they came to champion Eisenhower's warning in his farewell address about the dangers of the "military-industrial complex" and would cite it in their opposition to U.S. intervention in Vietnam, Iraq, and elsewhere, largely ignored Ike's warning at the time he delivered it. Conservatives, while they castigated Eisenhower for not pressing to repeal programs he inherited, were slow to comprehend the President's conservative impulses on spending or the respect he showed federalism, providing "states' rights" were not evoked as pretexts to defy federal court orders mandating desegregation. The Hungarian uprising against Soviet domination in 1956 and the U.S. response to it occasioned *National Review's* most bitter condemnation of the administration as well as an ideological split among some of its editors. In part, the internal debate over what policy the United States should adopt with regard to Eastern Europe was a continuation of an ongoing discussion in foreign policy circles over whether Khrushchev's 1956 denunciation of the "Stalinist terror" signaled an actual shift in Soviet intentions and behavior.<sup>17</sup> Burnham, the most "realpolitik" of the group, believed that it did. Buckley, Meyer, and Schlamm were skeptical.

With regard to Hungary, Buckley believed that the United States, through its propaganda broadcasts abroad, had given dissidents cause to think that the West would come to their assistance if they rose up against the USSR. He was embittered that once they had risen up, the United States stood idly by. *National Review* coupled its attacks upon the administration's passive response to the events in Hungary with its condemnation of two NATO allies (the United Kingdom and France) for taking military action together with Israel after Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser seized control of the Suez Canal and closed it to world shipping. Buckley found the very prospect of an American President instructing the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations to work with his Soviet counterpart in drafting a resolution that condemned the United Kingdom, France, and Israel appalling.

As he assessed how events had played out in Hungary, Burnham recommended that the United States support the neutralization of Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe in exchange for the USSR withdrawing its troops from the region. He envisioned an eventual breakup of the Soviet empire and thought that when this happened, the future former "satellites" would be able to sustain themselves after a period of time of having been allowed a greater say over their internal affairs. Burnham set forth his views in a piece for the magazine entitled

"Containment or Liberation."<sup>18</sup> His colleagues Buckley, Schlamm, La Follette, Meyer, and Bozell disagreed with this approach. All continued to favor liberation, presumably by military means.

Schlamm threatened to resign if Buckley published Burnham's piece. While Buckley disagreed with Burnham's principal recommendation (he would never completely embrace his colleague's realpolitik worldview), his respect for Burnham's way of thinking, which entailed the weighing of evidence, consideration of policy alternatives, and proportional responses to acts of aggression, was growing. Burnham was moving in a direction in which Buckley's intellectual mentor Whittaker Chambers was also traveling. In 1959, Chambers put to Buckley a simple proposition he urged him to take to heart: that if *National Review* favored the United States going to war against the USSR (whether as a preventive action or to liberate Eastern European nations), it should say so in print and allow the American people to consider its recommendation.<sup>19</sup>

Much as he disagreed with the administration's policies and questioned its competence, Buckley gave the President the benefit of one doubt. Eisenhower's team, he wrote, "may be drugged, immobilized, enchanted, but they would not willingly exchange freedom-and-war for subjugation and peace."<sup>20</sup> The danger, he said, lay in the administration's "invincible ignorance as to the intentions and resources of the enemy and a dangerous underestimation of the extrinsic value of the West for the freedom of other peoples."<sup>21</sup>

Buckley's decision to publish Burnham's recommendations with regard to the future of Eastern Europe intensified the ongoing conflict within *National Review*. After repeated quarrels with his colleagues, Schlamm took on a diminished role at the magazine and eventually departed. Although he had sided more with Schlamm than with Burnham in foreign policy matters at this juncture, Buckley concluded that Schlamm's open hostility toward Burnham exceeded the bounds of professionalism. He also came to trust Burnham personally and professionally more than he did Schlamm. Although Schlamm had initially suggested that Buckley take on the role of editor of the magazine the two had founded, Schlamm came to look upon the younger man more as a protégé than as his employer. Buckley's sisters Priscilla and Maureen, who functioned as their brother's eyes and ears when he was away—and often while he was present—may have helped persuade Buckley that Schlamm had become a disruptive force at the magazine.<sup>22</sup>

Schlamm's exit, combined with increased demands on Buckley's time, led Buckley to establish the new position of publisher. William Rusher, a former investigator with the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee and a seasoned New York State political operative, served in this role for the next two decades.



While not as libertarian as Schlamm, Rusher functioned as a philosophical counterweight to Burnham. He came to his post harboring an intense dislike of Vice President Richard Nixon, which stemmed from actions Nixon had taken, at Eisenhower's behest, to undermine Senator Joseph McCarthy among Republican conservatives.<sup>23</sup> Rusher would oppose a *National Review* endorsement of Nixon every time he ran for President.

As the election of 1956 approached, *National Review* was in no mood to endorse Eisenhower's reelection. In April of that year, Buckley lent his support to an attempt by former isolationist and Sears Chairman General Robert E. Wood and H. L. Hunt protégé Dan Smoot to mount a third-party challenge to Eisenhower's reelection. They hoped that, should the attempt gain traction, enough electoral votes might be drained away from Eisenhower to cost the President reelection.<sup>24</sup>

In October, Buckley published an exchange in *National Review* between Burnham and Schlamm (who would soon leave the magazine) under the heading "Should Conservatives Vote for Eisenhower-Nixon?" Burnham, arguing the affirmative, proclaimed Ike "marginally better" than the more liberal Democratic alternative, ex-Illinois Governor and 1952 Democratic presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson. Schlamm, taking the negative, declared that Eisenhower was the first Republican candidate to be elected a Democratic President.<sup>25</sup> In his own statement, entitled "Reflections on Election Eve," Buckley, like Burnham, conceded that Eisenhower, by conservative lights, was marginally better than his opponent, but not sufficiently so to merit the magazine's endorsement. His likened the situation facing voters to a choice between two masters: one would enslave the citizenry for ninety days, and the other for eighty-nine. He recommended that conservatives substitute "I Prefer Ike" for the slogan "I Like Ike."<sup>26</sup> *National Review* made no endorsement for President, and Buckley confided to friends that he had not voted for Eisenhower.<sup>27</sup>

On the domestic front, Buckley objected strenuously to the federal government's intruding into state and local affairs to protect the civil rights of African Americans. He and his colleagues opposed the Supreme Court's unanimous decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* on the grounds that it violated both states' rights and federalism. They failed to consider whether a state or local government, in denying millions of citizens, based on their race, the right to participate in the political process was itself a violation of the spirit of "home rule" or both the letter and the spirit of the U.S. Constitution. On top of their purported constitutional objections to the decision and subsequent efforts of presidents to enforce it, they rendered considerable harm to their own movement outside of the South and among opinion leaders of all persuasions when

they opined that as the more "advanced" race, whites were entitled to govern.<sup>28</sup> (As will be shown in subsequent chapters, in time Buckley came to regret the stand he took in these editorials and changed his views, prompted in part by the increased violence unleashed by local citizens, often incited by race-baiting politicians he termed "welfare populists.")

At the outset of his second term, Eisenhower began to award civil rights a high priority. He instructed his Attorney General, Herbert Brownell Jr., to draw up legislation to safeguard them, placing an emphasis on voting rights. In opposition to the administration's proposals, Buckley family friend Senator Strom Thurmond (D-SC), a committed segregationist, mounted what became the longest filibuster in the history of the U.S. Senate. He spoke continuously for twenty-four hours and eighteen minutes in opposition to the 1957 civil rights bill.

Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson, his eye cast toward the 1960 Democratic presidential nomination, in order to satisfy disparate factions within his party inserted an amendment allowing for jury trials for registrars charged with violating the act's provisions. (With jury rolls coming from lists of registered voters and with African Americans largely disenfranchised, the amendment all but assured that all-white juries would sit in judgment of those who violated federal law. Few expected such panels to convict offenders.)<sup>29</sup> The bill's passage, with Johnson's amendment affixed to it, enabled Johnson to assert to northern liberals that he had steered to passage the first civil rights bill in eighty years, while simultaneously reassuring southerners that the bill would have minimal impact. The measure passed the Senate 72-18 and the House 285-126.

Four days before Thurmond began his record-setting filibuster and a week before the Senate approved Johnson's jury amendment, *National Review* published an editorial Buckley wrote, entitled "Why the South Must Prevail." The piece put the magazine on record in favor of both legal segregation where it existed (in accordance with the "states' rights" principle) and the right of southern whites to discriminate against southern blacks, on the basis of their race. The editorial defended the right of whites to govern exclusively, even where they did not constitute a majority of the population in certain political jurisdictions. *National Review* justified its position on the grounds that whites were "the more advanced race," and as such were "entitled to rule."<sup>30</sup> Buckley, the author of the editorial, made no mention of the role southern whites had played, through the social and legal systems they had put into place, in keeping southern blacks from rising to the point where he—or their white neighbors—would consider them "advanced" and therefore eligible to participate in the region's governance. He went so far as to condone violence whites committed in order to perpetuate prevailing practices. "Sometimes the minority cannot

prevail except by violence." Buckley wrote. Should a white community go this route, he urged that it first determine "whether the prevalence of its will is worth the terrible price."<sup>31</sup> (A decade later, after southern whites, often incited by political leaders, increasingly resorted to violence to repress African American aspirations, Buckley began to moderate his opinions and eventually changed them.)

In another editorial, Buckley concluded that as long as African Americans remained "backward" in education and in economic progress, southern whites had a right to "impose superior mores for whatever period it takes to affect a genuine cultural equality between the races." In defense of his position that whites, for the time being, remained the "more advanced race," Buckley pointed to the name a major civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, had adopted for itself as evidence that its founders considered its constituents "less advanced." Buckley advised southerners against using the "fact of Negro backwardness" as a pretext "to preserve the Negro as a servile class."<sup>32</sup> He offered no guidance as to how blacks might attain what he called "cultural equality," save for by the sufferance of the white population.

*National Review's* opposition to federal civil rights legislation put it at odds not only with self-proclaimed "modern Republicans" such as Eisenhower and Nixon (who termed Johnson's jury amendment "a vote against the right to vote"), but also with conservative Republicans whom the magazine supported editorially, such as Senate Minority Leader William Knowland, the bill's primary sponsor.<sup>33</sup> Barry Goldwater, who would replace Knowland (who lost his bid for reelection in 1958) as the conservatives' favorite in future Republican presidential nominations, also supported the 1957 bill, as he would another measure Eisenhower proposed in 1960. So did Everett Dirksen, who succeeded Knowland as Senate Republican Leader in 1959. In the Senate, forty-three of the forty-seven Republicans supported the final version of what became the Civil Rights Act of 1957. No Republican voted against it. In the House, Republicans supported it 167-19. (*National Review* remained opposed to it with and without Johnson's jury amendment, but voiced relief when the Texan's compromise won approval.)

The stand *National Review* took on the bill was an odd one for the leading journal of a movement that professed to believe in individual rights and personal liberty. Buckley and his colleagues did not question the appropriateness of government (in this case, state governments) depriving citizens of rights the U.S. Constitution afforded them (especially in the First, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments). The magazine's editors awarded a higher priority to

the prerogatives of state governments selected by only some of a state's eligible voters than they did to the civil liberties of people whose rights these local authorities had violated. Nor were they concerned that these bodies had excluded people from the political process on the basis of race. They also put their opposition to extending the powers of the federal government ahead of whatever concerns they had for individuals whose rights other layers of government were denying them.

Bozell recognized some of the contradictions in the magazine's expressed views. He thought it unwise for a conservative "journal of fact and opinion," which so often made the case for respect for institutions (including the courts) and respect for law, to give the impression that it sanctioned law breaking. He wrote in a dissenting essay that his colleagues had presumed that African Americans, if granted the vote, would necessarily use it to accelerate desegregation. (He was not persuaded that all African Americans opposed the prevailing social structures or would necessarily vote in a bloc to change them.) Bozell also thought it odd that conservatives, who advocated a "strict constructionist" interpretation of the Constitution, would sanction the willful disregard of the Fifteenth Amendment.<sup>34</sup>

Bozell also maintained that if a governing body decided to disenfranchise a large number of voters, it had to write the law in such a way that it applied to whites as well as blacks. In an editorial in the same issue as that in which Bozell's dissent appeared, Buckley, taking the southern point of view, asserted that many in the region considered the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments "inorganic accretions" to the original Constitution in that citizens of states that had seceded had agreed to them under coercion in exchange for the restoration of their rights to citizenship and their states attaining readmission to the Union.<sup>35</sup>

While he allowed his brother-in-law to press his case up to a point, Buckley's views continued to run parallel to those of his father. Months before Buckley's editorial "Why the South Must Prevail" ran in the magazine, Will Buckley wrote Thurmond that Bill "is for segregation and backs it in every issue."<sup>36</sup> In his editorial of "clarification," Buckley revealed that the suspicions he already harbored about the merits of democracy in general played a role in his decision to oppose the expansion of voting rights. He proposed as an alternative to disenfranchising all African Americans on account of their race that all the states disenfranchise the uneducated of all races. He saw no reason to confine such practices to the South. In Buckley's view, too many ignorant people were being allowed to vote elsewhere.<sup>37</sup>

As he contemplated whether and how to extend or restrict voting rights and to whom, Buckley restated views he had advanced while a student at Millbrook.

He had then lamented that "the ballot of an unintelligent, uneducated, thoughtless voter" was allowed to counteract the vote of an intelligent, educated person who could carefully distinguish among the different candidates. "The red-neck vote, dominated by primitive and earthy passions; and the big city vote, dominated by special interest manipulations, are hardly contributions to faith in the democratic system," he now argued. Buckley feared that the exponential expansion of African American voters in the South would lead to a situation in which an embittered and long-suppressed population would use the ballot "as an instrument of vengeance" and that whites would react to the transformation of southern life with violence.<sup>38</sup> (He would later rejoice in print and in speeches that his fears had not come to pass.)

In the fall of 1957, Governor Orval Faubus, in defiance of a court order to integrate Little Rock Central High School, ordered the Arkansas National Guard to block nine African American students from entering the school. In response, Eisenhower nationalized the state's guard and sent one thousand paratroopers with the 101st Airborne Division to assure the students' admission in the face of an angry mob. *National Review* was more critical of Eisenhower's actions than it was of the Governor's. While it conceded the President's right to enforce the law and did not question the courts' right to compel compliance with court orders, it accused the President of adopting a course calculated to inflame passions to the maximum so as to create the very "mob rule" that necessitated the "imposition of bayonets." Eisenhower, "the darling of the moderates," it concluded, had "delivered himself into the hands of the extremists."<sup>39</sup>

While it opposed federal intervention to dismantle segregation, *National Review* supported the right of local residents to withhold their patronage from public or private concerns that discriminated against them. During the Montgomery bus boycott, it urged the city to accommodate African American riders either by integrating its transit system or by allowing African Americans to operate a separate bus line. "It is one thing to take the position that the government has not the power to compel integration; it is another to take the position that Negroes be compelled to support a legally constructed monopoly," Buckley wrote.<sup>40</sup>

As the year 1957 progressed, Buckley upped his criticisms of Eisenhower, who, he maintained, lacked the most basic of communications skills and vision that were inherent requirements of the position he held. He took Ike at his word when the President said he would be "hard pressed" to refute a Soviet official's assertion that Communism was an economic system rooted in idealism whereas capitalism thrived on greed.<sup>41</sup> He did not allow for the possibility that Ike intended through this remark to encourage his countrymen and women to be

less conspicuous in their consumption and to challenge his own administration to do a better job in making America's case to the rest of the world.

Buckley surmised that behind the image of amateurism and affability Ike presented to the world resided an insatiable ambition. He shared his friend Murray Kempton's view that Eisenhower's "indifference to practical matters was one of the most successful dissimulations in political history."<sup>42</sup> This realization caused Buckley to resent Eisenhower all the more because, as President, Ike had not employed his political skills to advance even the most elementary conservative principles or invest any of his personal popularity to persuade the public of their value. "There never was," he wrote after Ike had left office, "in all American history, a more successfully self-serving politician." He added, "Eisenhower did nothing whatever for the Republican Party; nothing to develop a Republican philosophy of government; nothing to catalyze a meaty American conservatism. But he was unswervingly successful himself. He never went after anything involving himself that he did not get."<sup>43</sup>

Had Eisenhower been willing to make the conservatives' case, Buckley would still have found him wanting because of the President's (intentional or otherwise) rhetorical deficiencies. Buckley wrote that Eisenhower had the capacity to turn virtually any subject into a "syntactical jungle in which every ray of light, every breath of air" was "choked out."<sup>44</sup> Looking across the political divide, Buckley took stylistic inspiration from Adlai Stevenson, Eisenhower's Democratic opponent in 1952 and 1956. He admired Stevenson's ability to "verbalize an innate intelligence, idealism, and wit" in ways that brought credit to him and his country. Stevenson, Buckley declared, was "the genuine article."<sup>45</sup>

Buckley was particularly taken with Stevenson's capacity to draw to his side the best talent available in the rising generation of American liberals. "They all ghosted for him at one time or another," he observed.<sup>46</sup> In contrast, Buckley reflected that Eisenhower surrounded himself with a "battery of sycophantic (and opportunistic) big businessmen with whom he loved to while away the hours."<sup>47</sup> Buckley envisioned a time when a leading conservative statesman could reach out to a network of articulate and idealistic conservatives every bit as bright as Stevenson's liberals. He spent two decades building a fraternity of such individuals, upon whom Ronald Reagan would eventually draw.

In 1964, Buckley used the passing of General Douglas MacArthur, whom he called "the last of the great Americans," as the occasion to lament his country's forsaking a leader as colorful, eloquent, and bold as MacArthur in favor of a "mediocrity" such as Eisenhower. This he attributed to the unimaginative and "conservative nature" of the American people. In this sense, Buckley used the



word *conservative* to convey excessive prudence, caution, and commitment to the status quo. "Temperamentally, I am not of that breed," he told *Time* magazine, referring to the "conservatism" so often associated not only with Eisenhower but also with the traditional heads of big business.<sup>48</sup>

Buckley saw Tammany-style politics at play in the manner in which the Eisenhower Justice Department handled its investigation, of Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell (D-NY) on corruption charges. After investigating Powell for months, the government terminated its probe five days before Powell crossed party lines and endorsed Eisenhower for reelection. Acting on a tip from an assistant U.S. Attorney, who had been ordered off the case, that the Justice Department was not going to prosecute Powell, Buckley ran an exposé of Powell's misdeeds and of the administration's reluctance to take action against him.<sup>49</sup>

A grand juror read the piece, requested a meeting with Buckley, and asked that the article be shared with his fellow jurists. The juror informed Buckley that he and his colleagues intended to instruct U.S. Attorney Paul W. Williams that, if he did not prosecute Powell based on evidence his office had compiled, they would pursue the matter on their own. After subpoenaing Buckley to ascertain why he had contacted jurors, Williams declined to charge Buckley with jury tampering. Powell was indicted on May 8, 1958. (The Powell case would drag on for years.)

As he simultaneously took on both the liberal intellectuals and a Republican administration, Buckley paid close attention to changing currents within the conservative movement. In the 1950s, militant "individualist" Ayn Rand was emerging as a competitor to Buckley in the affection of young conservative activists and intellectuals. Buckley's match in intellect and wit, Rand advanced a vision of the conservative movement that was substantially different from his. Born in Russia in 1905, Rand left her native land for the United States in 1926. She gravitated to Hollywood and performed a variety of jobs at its studios, ranging from playing as an extra to screenwriting to directing and working the costume departments.

A committed anti-Communist, Rand dabbled in Republican and conservative politics. Her third novel, *The Fountainhead*, published in 1943, sold more than four hundred thousand copies in its first year in print. She wrote the screenplay for the 1948 movie of *The Fountainhead*, which starred Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal. Not long afterward, Rand moved to New York and gathered about her a committed band of acolytes who called themselves "the Collective." Rand and Buckley met in 1954. He developed an instant aversion to her when—in what Buckley's friend Wilfred Sheed called "the perfect icebreaker"—Rand

told Buckley that he was too intelligent to believe in God.<sup>50</sup> Taking umbrage at the remark, Buckley took to sending her postcards bearing Latin inscriptions, many with religious messages.

The permanent rupture between them occurred three years later after Buckley ran a review of Rand's 1957 novel *Atlas Shrugged*. He had commissioned Whittaker Chambers to write the piece, entitled "Big Sister Is Watching." Chambers tore into Rand's philosophy: its unabashed atheism, its espousal of naked self-interest as the highest possible virtue, and its embrace of the acquisition of wealth for its own sake. "Randian man like Marxian man is made the center of a godless world," Chambers wrote. If the Communists sought to replace constitutional checks and balances and other institutional checks in order to ram through their materialistic, collectivist program, followers of Rand, he suggested, would do the same, while allowing nothing but self-interest to determine societal actions.<sup>51</sup>

Chambers saw the struggle Rand presented between the Children of Light (the rich and successful) and the Children of Darkness ("looters") and the subordination of the latter to the former as the reinstatement of the very fascism the Allies had defeated in 1945. Having disposed of Rand's ideology as narcissistic, materialist, and hedonistic, Chambers turned to her writing style: "Over a lifetime of reading, I can recall no other book in which a tone of overriding arrogance was so implacably sustained. Its shrillness is without reprieve. Its dogmatism is without appeal."<sup>52</sup>

Rand's response was succinct and personal. "What would you expect from an ex-communist writing in Buckley's Catholic magazine?" she inquired.<sup>53</sup> She never talked to Buckley again and made it a point to absent herself from receptions and events she suspected he might attend. Upon Rand's death in 1981, Buckley paid tribute to her eloquence and anti-statist views. "If only she had left it at that," he added, but "no. . . . She had to declare that God did not exist, that altruism was despicable, that only self-interest is good and noble. She risked, in fact, giving to capitalism that bad name its enemies have done so well in giving it; and that is a pity."<sup>54</sup> After he received more than one hundred letters in response, most of them hostile, Buckley recorded that Rand's followers "cannot stand it that some people should be as stern with Miss Rand as Miss Rand was stern with them."<sup>55</sup> In Buckley's novel *Getting It Right* (2003), a memoir of the conservative movement in its youth, when its youthful followers flocked to competing organizations, Rand appears as a character.

Also in the 1950s, Buckley, perhaps unintentionally, fired the opening salvo in what would become a major battle between him and Robert Welch, founder of the John Birch Society. Buckley had been considerably moved by Boris

Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago*—especially at the vivid and depressing glimpse it provided into Communist society in the aftermath of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. He was also impressed by how CIA operatives, after the book had been published in the West, with help from a member of the Italian Communist Party, managed to print the novel in its original language, smuggle it back into the USSR, and disseminate it throughout the country.<sup>56</sup> Buckley considered this action among the CIA's major ideological victories during the Cold War.

The Soviet government all but assured Pasternak a wide following when it exerted strong pressure on him not to accept the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1958 he had been awarded. None of this impressed Welch, who considered the book a fraud. In the February 1959 edition of *American Opinion*, the primary publication of the John Birch Society, Welch argued in an unsigned piece that the Soviets wanted the West to think the novel the work of a dissident, whereas it was really an anti-capitalist book the Soviets wanted to foist upon the West.<sup>57</sup> Buckley, having already run a review of the book by John Chamberlain the previous September, subsequently published a review essay of it by Eugene Lyons, a former Communist who had spent years studying the Soviet system.<sup>58</sup> Buckley advised Welch in advance that he would be running Lyons's piece and suggested that "a little friendly controversy" among conservatives would not be a bad thing.<sup>59</sup> Welch professed not to mind.

However, after Lyons's piece ran, Welch let Buckley know, through others, that the head of the JBS did not view kindly *National Review's* taking issue with his opinion of the book. Writer and editor Medford Evans, who appeared on *National Review's* masthead and belonged to the John Birch Society, advised Buckley not to criticize what ran in other conservative periodicals except when its authors made grievous errors.<sup>60</sup> In the May 1959 issue of *American Opinion*, Welch, in a signed letter to his readers, complained of the ingratitude a conservative to whom he had extended generosity had shown him.<sup>61</sup> (Welch was clearly referring to Buckley. The JBS founder had made two \$1,000 contributions to *National Review*, one in 1955 and one in 1957.) Welch wrote Buckley, criticizing him for having recommended that Harvard academician Henry A. Kissinger be named to a panel to assess the effectiveness of Radio Free Europe. He informed Buckley that he considered Kissinger a committed Communist and part of an establishment that had "sold the United States out."<sup>62</sup>

When Eisenhower announced that Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev would pay an official visit to the United States in September 1959, Buckley organized a national protest. Khrushchev, he noted, would be arriving on

American shores less than three years after the Kremlin had suppressed the Hungarian uprising. Eisenhower's hospitality to the man to whom Buckley referred as the "Butcher of Budapest," he argued, would bestow undeserved "legitimacy" on the Soviet regime. Bumper stickers proclaiming "Khrushchev not welcome here," offered for sale by *National Review*, began appearing all across the country.<sup>63</sup> At a press conference, Buckley pledged to dye the Hudson River red the day Khrushchev arrived in commemoration of the blood shed by Communism's victims. He announced the formation of the Committee Against Summit Entanglements to coordinate nationwide demonstrations. Under the direction of Rusher and public relations guru Marvin Liebman, the group held a protest rally at New York City's Carnegie Hall.

Before an audience of twenty-five hundred, Buckley said that American public support for the visit, if it existed, signaled the nation's declining morale. He lambasted New York City's Mayor Robert F. Wagner Jr. for welcoming Khrushchev to the city, an honor he had denied King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia when he had visited New York. On that prior occasion, Wagner had cited the Saudi government's discrimination against Jews as his reason for the snub. Khrushchev, Buckley said, "not only discriminates against Jews, he kills them."<sup>64</sup> (This was a reference to Soviet mistreatment of Jews who sought to practice their religion openly or emigrate.) He noted that the Soviet leader, who headed an atheistic state, also persecuted Catholics and Protestants, as he did all dissidents irrespective of religion. Turning his attention to Eisenhower, Buckley voiced outrage that the very administration that had banned Senator McCarthy from official functions would hold a state dinner for the Soviet leader.

Whittaker Chambers, who joined the masthead of *National Review* in 1957, disapproved of how Buckley was responding to Khrushchev's visit. He warned that through their bellicose rhetoric, Buckley and his colleagues had lowered their prospects of being taken seriously by both the public and opinion leaders. "Russia go home," he complained, did not constitute a coherent policy.<sup>65</sup> In late September 1959, Chambers resigned from *National Review*.

His differences of opinion with Buckley and his deteriorating health were certainly factors that contributed to this decision. He was also taking into account something else. Chambers surmised that Buckley and his cohorts would seek to frustrate Richard Nixon's hopes of succeeding Eisenhower as President in 1960. While a freshman Congressman on the House Un-American Activities Committee, Nixon had stood by Chambers after he had accused State Department official Alger Hiss of having been a Communist spy. Most of the political establishment of both parties had rallied behind Hiss. But for Nixon's



support, Chambers concluded, he would have been ruined. He would not be part of any enterprise that sought to frustrate the political advancement of his primary defender.<sup>66</sup>

Throughout the 1950s, as Buckley's friendship with Chambers blossomed, Chambers remained in frequent touch with Nixon, often acting as a mentor to the Vice President. John Chamberlain wrote that Nixon referred to Chambers as "Uncle Whit."<sup>67</sup> Hopeful that Buckley might at least keep an open mind about Nixon, Chambers and Ralph de Toledano, a journalist on good terms with Nixon and a friend of Buckley's, arranged for a meeting between Nixon and Buckley in 1957. Nixon was certainly aware of *National Review's* criticisms of the administration. His files contain a marked-up copy of a scathing piece Buckley wrote entitled "The Tranquil World of Dwight D. Eisenhower," in which he accused the President of not understanding the nature of the Communist threat and called on Republicans and conservatives to repudiate Eisenhower and his legacy.<sup>68</sup>

In their hour together, Nixon and Buckley discussed Cold War strategy, national politics, and the controversy surrounding the lifting of security clearances to Los Alamos scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer, purportedly because of his leftist political affiliations and leanings. "Before seeing you," Buckley wrote Nixon afterward, "I told Whittaker Chambers it was not likely that I would fail to be impressed by someone who had impressed him; and the unlikely did not happen."<sup>69</sup> He made reference to Nixon's remark at the end of their meeting that those in the center and those on the right needed to band together. Buckley said that, while he agreed, he thought that a "little tension between the tablet-keepers and the governors is good for both."<sup>70</sup> Buckley was never one to gloss over differences with acquaintances, least of all with a prospective President of the United States.

As he had already advised Nixon, Chambers counseled Buckley to adopt what he called the "Beaconsfield position" in domestic and international affairs. The doctrine took its name from British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli (later the Earl of Beaconsfield), who had repositioned the Conservative Party from the champion of the aristocracy to a voice for the aspirations of British workers. (Historians refer to this phenomenon as "Tory Democracy.") Disraeli, after extending the franchise (traditionally a Liberal Party position), persuaded newly enfranchised voters to back the Conservatives and their imperialist ventures. Chambers urged Buckley and his colleagues to make their peace with the New Deal (as Eisenhower had done) so that they might forge a majority coalition behind policies to check Soviet ambitions. "To live is to maneuver," Chambers instructed Buckley.<sup>71</sup>

Buckley took Chambers's resignation especially hard. Chambers, he later observed, had been the only person to quit the editorial board of *National Review* because he could no longer live within its ideological compass.<sup>72</sup> Unprepared to follow Chambers's strategic advice when he first received it, Buckley showed signs of having embraced much of what Chambers had pressed upon him by the time he published his next book.

In *Up from Liberalism* (1959), Buckley followed up on an idea he had wanted to pursue since his days at the *American Mercury*. He took as his theme how liberal intellectuals established and maintained a monopoly over so much of intellectual opinion and political commentary in the United States. Buckley's choice of title had been inspired by Booker T. Washington's autobiography, *Up from Slavery*. Buckley began by identifying leading "pillars" of the liberal establishment: Eleanor Roosevelt, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., United Auto Workers President Walter Reuther, journalists James Wechsler, Richard Rovere, and Edward R. Murrow, current and past elected officials such as Chester Bowles, Hubert Humphrey, Adlai Stevenson, and W. Averell Harriman, and the communication arteries through which they and their supporters disseminated their message—the *New Republic*, the *Washington Post*, the *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch*, the *Minneapolis Tribune*, and "most of the *New York Times* and all of the *New York Post*."<sup>73</sup>

Those in this establishment, Buckley said, shared common premises and attitudes, displayed common reactions, enthusiasms, and aversions, and demonstrated an "empirical solidarity." They tended to believe that human beings were perfectible, social progress predictable, truths transitory and empirically determined; that governments could be put at the service of scientific principles; and that equality in condition was both desirable and attainable through state power. In pursuing their ends, Buckley wrote, they were prone to justify their positions through emotion rather than reason. Following Eleanor Roosevelt "in search of irrationality," he observed, was like "following a burning fuse in search of an explosive; one never has to wait long." Liberals, Buckley wrote, were "obsessed" with procedure and placed unwarranted faith in the power of democracy to determine "truths" around which societies should be organized. Buckley made clear that he did not regard democracy as either an absolute or an end in itself. "Democracy of universal suffrage," he declared, "is not a bad form of government; it simply is not a good form of government."<sup>74</sup>

Late in the book, Buckley offered reasons why conservatives had had little success at persuading a majority of the public to go along with their ideas. He offered two possible explanations: (1) that repeated conservative prophecies that

economic catastrophes would follow the enactment of liberal agendas had not come to pass, and (2) that conservatives had failed to accommodate themselves to the expectations and values of the masses.<sup>75</sup> While he continued to criticize New Deal programs, for the first time Buckley seemed prepared to accept them until the public showed itself ready to consider alternatives. In defense of this position, which Chambers had urged upon him, Buckley referenced British commentator Peregrine Worsthorne's observation that the welfare state had advanced at least one conservative value: reducing by some degree grievances and class warfare that Communists had traditionally exploited. (Buckley had come to concede part of an argument that "vital centrists" such as Schlesinger and Viereck had been making for some time and for which he had previously shown little use.)

Buckley's willingness to distinguish between immediate objectives and long-range ones signified a major change in his thinking and approach. In their campaigns, neither Buckley nor his brother James argued for an immediate repeal of New Deal entitlements. Had they done so, they would have blunted their appeal to working-class New Yorkers (uniformed personnel, socially conservative union members) and others who supported their broader message with regard to anti-Communism and social and tax policy. Ronald Reagan followed this same approach. Eleven months into Reagan's governorship, Buckley proclaimed him the very sort of conservative statesman Chambers had envisioned.<sup>76</sup>

Buckley's liberal critics discerned a change in his tactics. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., in his review of *Up from Liberalism*, suggested that Buckley cease reading liberal writings lest they rub off.<sup>77</sup> Although Buckley came around to Chambers's way of thinking with regard to suborning his anti-New Deal impulses to his more immediate goal of curbing the spread of Communism, he failed to warm to Chambers's other pupil, Richard Nixon, who was doing likewise. Other factors were at work that precluded such a coalescing, at least during the 1960 election.

In the run-up to the 1960 Republican National Convention, Chambers confided to Buckley that he had met with Nixon and come away pessimistic about his prospects. Chambers did not sense he had been in the company of "a vital man" bursting with energy and ideas. He revealed that he and Nixon had little to say to each other. Chambers confessed feeling "dismay," even "pity," as he watched Nixon contemplate the "awful burden" he sought to take on. He prophetically speculated about the impact defeat might have on the Vice President.<sup>78</sup> Buckley, for his part, was not about to make Nixon's path to the presidency any easier.

As he worked to shore up his nomination, Nixon met with little opposition from his right flank. He had, however, grown increasingly concerned about a possible challenge to his nomination from his left, in the person of Nelson Rockefeller. On the eve of the Republican National Convention, Nixon flew to New York to resolve differences he and Rockefeller had over the party platform. Rockefeller demanded a stronger civil rights plank and increased defense and other spending. Rockefeller had been using his alleged disappointment with the platform as a pretext for a possible quest for the nomination. Finding language on defense that both sides could live with proved especially challenging for Nixon, given that the Democratic Party's presidential nominee, John F. Kennedy, had already charged that, under Eisenhower, a "missile gap" had developed between the United States and the Soviet Union, and in the latter's favor. Nevertheless, Nixon, Rockefeller, and Eisenhower came to terms.

Angered that Nixon had taken them for granted, conservatives failed to note, or even notice, that on defense, Rockefeller was pushing Nixon in the same direction they had been, and well to the right of Eisenhower. In his best-selling book, *The Conscience of a Conservative* (1960), which Bozell ghosted, Barry Goldwater called for keeping the nation's "defensive and offensive military forces superior to the attacking power of any potential aggressor or aggressors, regardless of the costs in dollars and manpower."<sup>79</sup> Yet when Goldwater learned of the Nixon-Rockefeller accord, he denounced it as the "American Munich."<sup>80</sup> In the statement Rockefeller released to the press after his meeting with Nixon, he said that the platform now called for massive arms buildups, technological upgrades of weapon systems, and a powerful "second-strike capacity" (a nuclear retaliatory power capable of surviving surprise attack and inflicting devastating punishment on an aggressor).<sup>81</sup> (Years later, Buckley would point to these recommendations in support of his recommendation of Rockefeller for a high national security or defense post.)

Nixon antagonized party conservatives a second time when he chose as his vice presidential running mate United Nations Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge—a key architect of the strategy Eisenhower used to defeat Taft for the presidential nomination, a critic of Joseph McCarthy, and, most recently, Khrushchev's official escort as he toured the United States. In 1952, McGeorge Bundy, mindful of Lodge's acceptability in liberal circles, discouraged Congressman John F. Kennedy from opposing the incumbent Senator in the 1952 Massachusetts senatorial election.<sup>82</sup> In the course of that campaign Buckley witnessed the formation of a tacit alliance between McCarthy and the Kennedy forces at Lodge's expense.

In Buckley's presence, McCarthy, while a houseguest of Buckley's, received a telephone call from national Republican operatives beseeching him to campaign for Lodge in Boston. McCarthy said he would comply if Lodge personally and publicly made the request. He confided to Buckley that Lodge, fearful of losing the "Harvard vote," would not do as McCarthy asked.<sup>83</sup> He proved correct. McCarthy wanted to stay away. Joseph P. Kennedy was a personal friend and generous donor of his, as was Will Buckley. McCarthy had befriended JFK when both men served in the Solomon Islands during World War II, and the two resumed their friendship after both began serving in Congress. McCarthy had dated two of Kennedy's sisters. As McCarthy launched his investigations, he retained Kennedy's brother Robert as Assistant Counsel to the U.S. Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.

Both McCarthy and Buckley believed that a McCarthy appearance on Lodge's behalf might improve the incumbent Senator's showing among staunchly anti-Communist Irish Catholic voters, most of whom were Democrats. In his reelection campaign, Lodge met resistance from some conservative Republicans angry over the role he had played months earlier in ending Taft's presidential prospects. To assure that those wounds would not heal, Joseph P. Kennedy recruited a former Taft campaign staffer to direct the Independents for Kennedy Committee. The *New Bedford Standard Times*, whose publisher had been a strident Taft supporter, endorsed Kennedy.<sup>84</sup> As the Kennedy-Nixon contest unfolded, Buckley kept in the back of his mind the appeal Kennedy had had to some McCarthy and Taft enthusiasts and the hostility some of them held toward Nixon, who, as part of Eisenhower's camp, had worked against both of these conservative icons.

In the final tally, JFK defeated Lodge in 1952 by 70,000 votes, while Eisenhower defeated Stevenson in Massachusetts by 109,800 votes. Once in the Senate, Kennedy took care to distance himself from the more liberal elements of his party. In the hospital when the Senate voted to censure McCarthy, Kennedy never declared how he would have voted had he been present. That he selected Robert A. Taft as one of the eight Senators profiled in his 1956 Pulitzer Prize-winning book did not escape the conservatives' notice.<sup>85</sup> With Nixon having antagonized some conservatives and Kennedy presenting himself as less ideologically offensive to them than other Democrats, conservatives like Buckley, a consistent critic of the outgoing Eisenhower administration, reasoned that they had nothing to lose by keeping their distance from Nixon in 1960.

Unenthusiastic about the Nixon-Lodge ticket, Buckley found an outlet for his political talents in 1960 outside the presidential campaign. On September

11, 1960, weeks after the Republican National Convention had adjourned, Buckley hosted at his family homestead in Sharon a gathering of ninety conservative college students and recent graduates. Most were unenthusiastic about Nixon because of the accommodations he had made to party moderates and liberals and unimpressed at the tone of his campaign, in which he seemed to blur rather than accentuate his policy differences with Kennedy. Douglas Caddy of Georgetown University and David Francke of George Washington University helped organize the event, with a heavy assist from publicist Marvin Liebman.

The group that gathered at Sharon became the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). Attendees signed and released a declaration of principles that became known as the Sharon Statement. Written by the twenty-six-year-old journalist M. Stanton Evans and edited by Buckley, the statement echoed ideas Buckley had been proclaiming for almost a decade, first in *God and Man at Yale* and again in *McCarthy and His Enemies* and *Up from Liberalism*, in the pages of *National Review*, and in multiple public forums. Its signers acknowledged the salience of the Judeo-Christian tradition and its impact upon the American founding and pledged to work actively against Communism. Buckley nostalgically recaptured the Sharon assemblage in his novel *Getting It Right* (2003).

In its first year of operation, YAF boasted a membership of nearly three thousand, spread across one hundred campuses.<sup>86</sup> Liebman attributed its influence not to its numbers but to public and media perceptions of its strength.<sup>87</sup> Buckley enthusiastically announced YAF's founding in *National Review*: "A new organization was born last week and just possibly it will influence the political future of this country, as why should it not, considering that its membership is young, intelligent, articulate and determined, its principles enduring, its aim to translate these principles into political action in a world which has lost its moorings, and is looking about for them desperately?"<sup>88</sup> He predicted a steady rise in conservative sentiment on college campuses.

*National Review* declined to endorse a presidential candidate in 1960. Conservatives, Buckley wrote, had a "higher political mission than merely electing Republican candidates."<sup>89</sup> He and Meyer believed that the principal function conservatives had come to play in national elections was to determine which of two liberals prevailed at the polls.<sup>90</sup> "Illusions of liberalism" Buckley advised readers, "dominate Mr. Kennedy and influence Mr. Nixon."<sup>91</sup> He saw Nixon as less the leader of the GOP than as the "amalgamator" of all the forces that composed it. A Nixon defeat, he suggested, would provide conservatives with the hope of developing "in the next four years a true and effective opposition to the Left-Democratic President."<sup>92</sup>



He saw an inspiring precedent in the manner in which Taft had positioned himself as opposition leader to Truman after the Republicans took control of Congress in 1946. For a time, Taft rallied conservatives in both parties to block some of Truman's more liberal proposals and, on occasion, was able to pass Republican initiatives over Truman's veto. Such a coalescing of conservatives, Buckley insisted, could occur only once Eisenhower, whom many still regarded as "conservative," had left office. "We actually increase our leverage," Buckley told a friend, "by refusing to join the parade."<sup>93</sup>

Not all of Buckley's colleagues at *National Review* agreed with this assessment. Burnham, who had argued for endorsing Nixon, was less worried about a possible Nixon loss than he was about the kind of administration Kennedy would assemble. Supporting Kennedy, Burnham wrote Buckley, "are virtually all the forces, groups, tendencies and individuals that *National Review* is not merely against, but recognizes as its primary targets."<sup>94</sup> (He was, of course, thinking of the Americans for Democratic Action, organized labor, and intellectuals like Bundy, Schlesinger, and Galbraith.)

Burnham considered the difference in the composition of the entourages that surrounded the two candidates ample reason for conservatives to rally behind Nixon. In 1956, he pointed out, conservatives had had the luxury of not having to state a preference, because all knew that Eisenhower would win. With the 1960 election expected to be exceedingly close, he thought that conservatives would be able to exercise leverage on a freshly elected Nixon administration. They might even have sway over the new administration, pulling it in a more rightward direction than it might have followed had they withheld their support. Their sitting out the election could indeed determine the result, he warned, but not in a way that would ultimately work in their favor.

Buckley continued his attacks on the retiring President. Ike, he said, was a "good man, but in the wrong job." He could not resist adding, "And yet it must be said, what a miserable President he was."<sup>95</sup> He suggested that if St. Francis of Assisi had been made President of the Chase Manhattan Bank, he too would have done a terrible job. A decade later, after Lyndon Johnson had massively increased the federal government's footprint through a multitude of new federal programs and left the nation divided over a costly, ill-defined, and poorly executed war in Vietnam, Buckley was anything but nostalgic for the President of a decade earlier, who had held the line on federal spending, relied on overwhelming military superiority to preserve the peace, and prided himself, as he said in his farewell address, that on his watch, not a single American soldier had fallen in combat anywhere in the world. All of these factors led historians and

others to show an increased appreciation for how Eisenhower had comported himself as President.<sup>96</sup>

Buckley was not among them. To these revisionists, Buckley wrote, Ike appeared the "Raggedy Ann of yesteryear, the warm puppy of the cuddly past when the White House was occupied by competent bridge-playing businessmen, rather than ideological scribes," who stayed up late "writing new laws for us to obey."<sup>97</sup> Days before Kennedy took office, *National Review* contemptuously dismissed Nixon as "the mechanical reincarnation of Mr. Eisenhower's Progressive Moderation."<sup>98</sup>