

PART V
JFK- MEDIA IMAGE AND LEGACY

Chapter 20

Kennedy's Loyal Opposition: *National Review* and the Development of a Conservative Alternative, January-August 1961

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The March 25, 1961, *National Review* related the contents of a recent subscriber letter in a back-cover subscription appeal. This man, “usually understood to be a liberal” and well-placed in New York Democratic circles, wrote the magazine and explained:

Of course I am not in agreement with most of your criticism of President Kennedy; nor do I believe you will get far in your obvious editorial support of Senator Barry Goldwater, but renew my subscription, for I can no longer get along without *National Review*.

I find that *National Review* is a whiskey I must sample once a week. From every other journalist I get a sensation of either soda pop (and who does not finally gag on effervescent, treacly sugar water), or from the intellectual journals of my own persuasion I now get no more than strained vegetable juices unfermented. So I am now a tippler. Eight dollars enclosed.

The advertisement's writer went on to speculate that perhaps *National Review's* rarified appeal stemmed from its very lack of broadmindedness; rather, “it is a magazine of fact and opinion, of discourse and criticism, on the central questions of our age,” questions identified as dealing with how to meet the Communist challenge, “resuscitate the spirit in an age of horror,” guard one's mind against uniformity in the age of mass appeal, and resist collectivism, preserve freedom and teach love of country, respect for past wisdom and responsibility to the future.

Conservatism circa 1961 was a movement on the rise. Organizational gains during the 1960 election would prove decisive in catapulting Barry Goldwater into the Republican presidential nomination in 1964. While that election's disastrous outcome has been well documented,¹ Richard Nixon won the 1968 campaign on the strength of far

¹ For the story of 1964, see Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001) and Jonathan Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

more conservative appeals than those he had espoused in 1960. Not since 1960 have liberal Republicans held a position of dominance within the party.²

Within this rising movement, *National Review* (*NR*) was a foundational publication. Founded in 1955 and edited by conservative boy wonder William F. Buckley, Jr., *NR* was the first publication—or, indeed, resource of any kind—to consolidate the various strains of post-war conservatism, combining traditionalist, libertarian and anti-Communist elements to forge what contributing editor Frank Meyer termed “fusionism.” Historian George H. Nash argued that if *NR*, or something like it, had not entered into American life, “there would probably have been no cohesive intellectual force on the Right in the 1960s and 1970s.”³ *NR* was the only publication challenging the liberal consensus in an organized, mass-distributed format. Unabashedly intellectual and everlastingly cutting, it provided information and opinion, and it also gave conservatives a forum for discussion and a means of belonging. *NR* brought the conservative masses—to borrow a “leftist” term—together.⁴

Careful perusal of *NR*’s pages offers perhaps our best insight into the American conservative movement’s response to the Kennedy administration. Buckley and the rest of the magazine’s editorial staff were deeply cognizant of *NR*’s role in articulating and consolidating a coherent conservative intellectual position. Jeffrey Hart, a longtime editor at the publication, has spoken of the magazine’s mission as “the quest for a politically viable and thoughtful American conservatism.” As such, it did not merely take “ephemeral” positions on the issues of the day, but rather, conducted a search for “the underlying basis upon which such positions ought to be derived: which is to say, abiding principles.”⁵ That said, its weekly publication schedule meant that the fortnightly *NR* and its abbreviated sibling, *National Review Bulletin*, kept a careful eye upon the day-to-day workings of American politics.⁶ This hybrid purpose meant that the magazine’s editorial staff remained concerned with placing the events of the day in a longer view, even as they scrutinized the complex workings of American foreign and domestic policy. Week after week, the pages of *NR* and *National Review Bulletin* provide a detailed source for studying the “New Frontier” through the eyes of the opposition. This paper takes us

² See Laura Gifford, *The Center Cannot Hold: The 1960 Presidential Election and the Rise of Modern Conservatism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009). Mary C. Brennan makes a similar case for the significance of 1960 in *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

³ George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 153.

⁴ Gifford, *The Center Cannot Hold*.

⁵ Jeffrey Hart, *The Making of the Conservative Mind National Review and its Times* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2005), xi.

⁶ During the early 1960s, *NR* maintained a fortnightly publication schedule; *National Review Bulletin*, an eight-page collection of briefs and columns, published in the intervening weeks.

from the beginning of 1961 through the end of August and the construction of the Berlin Wall—eight months of anxiety and, from *NR*'s point of view, declension.

The majority of the articles excerpted and examined come from the publication's unsigned "Briefs" and editorial columns and were thus intended as "a corporate *National Review* statement."⁷ Senior editors who might be responsible for these "corporate" statements, however, also articulated their own discrete opinions in columns including James Burnham's "The Third World," analyzing foreign policy, and Buckley's "From the Ivory Tower," which was in many ways a continuation of the critique of American higher education he began with 1951's *God and Man at Yale*. When such columns or other signed articles grant special insight into the developing conservative position vis-à-vis Kennedy they are excerpted as well, identified by author. In some cases, the opinions of a columnist or the writer of a signed article could differ with those expressed in the magazine's editorial pages. Such variation in coverage granted *NR* vitality not often found in the pages of a newsmagazine. Within the context of this diversity, however, consistent themes emerged—themes that helped *NR* develop the "politically viable and thoughtful" conservatism of which Hart spoke.

Analysis of the magazine during this period reveals three important themes. First, the Kennedy administration's actions in the foreign policy arena revealed a disturbing lack of government resolve in fighting the Cold War on our own terms. From Cuba to Laos, nuclear test ban treaty negotiations to the strange case of General Edwin A. Walker, Kennedy and his lieutenants failed to understand the dangers of the Communist menace—and as a result, they routinely subordinated American interests in a misguided attempt to win "friends" among opponents who operated under a fundamentally different moral order.

Second, while politics at home offered numerous causes for concern, the domestic political agenda remained subordinate to international affairs. After all, it was neither here nor there who funded the schools if they were all teaching Marxist principles in Russian. Despite this hierarchy, however, *NR*'s commentary on domestic policy issues offers insight into conservatives' struggle to mediate between principle and strategy as they moved beyond the fringes and onto the political stage.

Finally, *NR* carefully followed, and in many cases encouraged, a new development that offered a way out of the declensionary narrative painted by the distressing actions of the Kennedy administration from week to week. A storm was brewing on college campuses and in youth organizations across the country. The new rebel of the 1960s was a conservative—and most of these rebels recognized *NR* editor Bill Buckley as their big brother and guiding influence. There is a certain irony in the rise of conservative youth activism at the very inception of the young, glamorous "Camelot," and *NR* gleefully marveled at this reality. The magazine's excitement was palpable, and while the 1960s would soon see the rise of the left-wing radicalism that has remained more notable in the public memory of this decade, the course of American

⁷ Hart, *The Making of the Conservative Mind*, 103.

political history since then demonstrates that in many respects, young conservatives carried the day.⁸

From January onward *NR* expressed considerable concern over Kennedy's intentions toward Fidel Castro, even as its writers advocated a strong response to this Communist presence just 90 miles offshore. The columnist "Quincy" noted that Kennedy was furious with former president Eisenhower for breaking off relations with the Cuban dictator.⁹ Eisenhower's action "closed the door to a planned policy of appeasement in the Caribbean which State Department experts, working with onetime diplomat A. A. Berle, were sugar-coating for the American public."¹⁰ Even so, foreign policy expert James Burnham urged the administration to make Cuba the litmus of America's resolution to stand firm despite what he termed the "bureaucratic inertia" of the State Department.¹¹ It seemed, as of the April 22 edition of Burnham's "The Third World War" column, that the anti-Castro revolt did have Kennedy's support, but that support must be all-out, and it must be carried out "with overwhelming power, maximum speed, and total success. Failure would be a catastrophe beyond calculation."¹²

Unfortunately, fail it did. In the early days of the Bay of Pigs invasion, the *Bulletin* pointed out that by all objective analysis, the advantage in Cuba was with Kennedy rather than Khrushchev. "Cuba is just 90 short miles off *our* coast," the editors pointed out, "in a sea under our absolute strategic domination." Three days into the invasion, however, the Soviets' will was proving stronger—strong enough to outweigh Communists' strategic disadvantage. The battle could still be won, but it required an act of will "by the one man whose single act, in this momentous chapter, controls the outcome."¹³

By the beginning of May it was clear that this act of will would not be performed. *NR* descended into satire, commenting, "Perhaps Harvard will even add to the graduate curriculum a course or two on Invasions, Amphibious, to fill in the little lacunae in the expertise of future Harvard Administrations." It would be interesting to know what

⁸ See John A. Andrew III, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997) and Gregory L. Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

⁹ "Quincy" appears to be a pseudonym; for whom, it is unclear.

¹⁰ *NR Bulletin* (January 21, 1961), 4.

¹¹ Burnham was a Trotskyite in the 1930s and a philosophy professor at New York University. Never pleased with Stalin, he broke with Marxism altogether over the course of the early 1940s. He was best known for his 1941 book *The Managerial Revolution: What is Happening to the World*, which posited that power was passing from the old elites to a new, managerial class in society (Hart, *The Making of the Conservative Mind*, 19, 21-23).

¹² *NR* (April 22, 1961), 248.

¹³ *NR Bulletin* (April 29, 1961), 1.

exactly went wrong, the editors concluded, but ultimately it was the president's lack of will that caused the catastrophe. The editors did offer a way out for the future. Eisenhower had not, they observed, been a particularly reflective man. Kennedy, on the other hand, was more disposed to analyze and learn from his mistakes. Using his comeback against Hubert Humphrey in the West Virginia primary as an example, *NR* hoped that he might face Cuba with the same determination, courage and resolution—and, in the end, win.¹⁴

Since the fight against Communism was viewed by *NR* as all encompassing, actions within the United States—or within U.S. military and diplomatic circles—were deemed just as important to American foreign policy as those directly involving foreign governments. Accordingly, the magazine carefully followed cases ranging from the fight to abolish the House Committee on Un-American Activities to the case of Major General Edwin A. Walker. Walker was an Army general serving in Germany in early 1961 when he was removed from his command of the 24th Infantry Division and accused of advocating the beliefs of the John Birch Society among his troops.¹⁵ On June 12, he was officially “admonished” by General Bruce C. Clarke, the commander in chief of the U.S. Army in Europe. Walker resigned his commission in protest, becoming a spokesman about the dangers of Communist insurgency and an additional symbol for conservatives of Kennedy administration policies gone dangerously awry.¹⁶

The accusations against Walker rested upon the reporting of a notoriously scandalous private tabloid called the *Overseas Weekly* and were seriously flawed. Walker had likely overstepped his bounds in using the Americans for Constitutional Action voter index to advise his troops in how to cast their votes. He might well have accused public figures including Harry Truman and Eleanor Roosevelt of being “definitely pink” in a speech to U.S. troops and their wives, although the only newspaper to report on such a speech was the *Overseas Weekly*. And he did include John Birch Society Founder Robert Welch's book *The Life of John Birch* on a list of recommended reading, leading to accusations of links between Walker's anti-Communist education programs and Welch's conspiratorial views. Even so, historians have concluded that Walker was unfairly demonized for his actions¹⁷—and *NR* leapt upon the charges with righteous indignation.

The magazine flayed the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* for what they “managed not to discover in their investigation of the case.” First, *The Life of John Birch* was published years before the founding of the John Birch Society, and told the story of a young American army captain murdered by Chinese Communists at the end of World

¹⁴ *NR* (May 6, 1961), pp. 269-270.

¹⁵ The John Birch Society was an anti-Communist organization founded in 1958 by Massachusetts candy magnate Robert Welch that organized itself along Communist lines—i.e., in small, secretive cells—and engaged in letter-writing campaigns and other advocacy.

¹⁶ Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing*, 100, 106.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 105.

War II—a pertinent subject for troops stationed to fight against Communists themselves. It was only one of a number of relevant publications Walker recommended. Second, *Overseas Weekly* alleged that Walker had titled an anti-Communist training program “pro-Blue” because of a connection to the John Birch Society’s guide book—*The Blue Book*—when in fact, “pro-Blue” referred to nothing more scandalous than the reality that on tactical military maps, red represented the enemy force and blue the friendly one. Finally, Walker denied he had made derogatory comments about Truman and Mrs. Roosevelt, pitting a decorated veteran of World War II and Korea against a notoriously scurrilous newspaper.¹⁸ On June 24, *NR* reported that the West German government had taken on General Walker’s case against *Overseas Weekly*—a bit of information seeming to corroborate Walker’s position that most American media did not care to report.¹⁹

Walker’s case was part of a larger problem within the military—a problem of lack of resolution that mirrored the lack of will *NR* saw in Kennedy’s conduct of the Bay of Pigs invasion. In early August, as the Walker case progressed, *NR* opined “General Walker was carved up just for practice, just to get the knives well sharpened.” Week after week, the Kennedy administration and its supporters took measures *NR* deemed questionable at best and self-defeating at worst: removing the anti-Communist film *Operation Abolition* from the list of films approved for viewing by soldiers; removing anti-Communist literature from base libraries; fulminating against high-ranking officers who engaged in or sponsored educational programs deemed to “‘veer into Right Wing radicalism.’” Not only were these measures dangerous, they were based upon inaccurate information. Arkansas Senator J. William Fulbright equated John Birch Society-style conspiracy theories with the very non-conspiracy oriented Foreign Policy Research Institute, the Institute for American Strategy and the Richardson Foundation. Perhaps Senator Fulbright would care to share exactly what he *did* believe soldiers should be taught, *NR* concluded—“Yalta was an act of brilliant statesmanship? Better Red than Dead?”²⁰

Meanwhile, the magazine directed a continual stream of ridicule toward policies authors derided as unfocused and offering something for nothing—a nice idea that would never hold true in reality. January 28, *NR*’s “This Week” section sardonically included a list of the agencies proposed during the first week of the new Congressional session:

...National Peace Agency; Peace Corps; Youth Conservation Corps; Department of Urban Affairs; Joint Committee on Foreign Intelligence; Joint Committee on Intelligence Matters; Federal Advisory Council on the Arts; National Academy of Culture; Bureau of Senior Citizens; U.S. Office of Aging; Commission on the U.S. Science Academy; Department of Urbiculture; Department of Transportation and Communications; Federal Agency for the Handicapped; Commission on Federal Taxation; Commission on Educational Standards; Committee on Independent Unions; Center for Cultural and Technical Interchange Between East and West; Federal

¹⁸ *NR* (June 3, 1961), 342.

¹⁹ *NR* (June 24, 1961), 2.

²⁰ *NR Bulletin* (August 5, 1961), 3-4.

Recreation Service; Office of International Travel' Join Committee on a National Fuels Study; Commission on Noxious and Obscene Matter and Materials; American Joint Commission to Assist in the Unification of Ireland.²¹

Beyond the bemusement, however, *NR* was sincerely concerned. At the beginning of March, a *Bulletin* observed that the staff was still waiting to hear of the sacrifices that Kennedy's inaugural speech said Americans must make "in facing the stern challenge of our grim era." These sacrifices, it seemed, were not to come from Social Security—those stipends were scheduled to increase. The poor and those living in depressed areas would not be called upon; Washington was sending new funds, food, grants and loans their way. Soldiers would be kept in homelike comfort, and new millions were scheduled for education. "And yet, for all the appearances," the editorialist wrote, "there will surely be sacrifices too before it is over. The government that is to dispense so generously, producing nothing of itself, can give with its one hand only what it takes with the other: less, indeed, for there is a charge for the transfer." In the end, the same citizens would both receive and pay, from elderly citizens finding that even larger Social Security checks would not keep up with inflation, to teachers whose pay raises would be swallowed, and then some, by increases in insurance rates and drops in the purchasing power of their pensions. In the end, all Americans would pay, and not just in financial terms: "by so much as our day-by-day affairs are further absorbed into the tentacles of Leviathan, by that much has the range of our free choice been narrowed."²²

At the same time, *NR* and its readership remained divided regarding what positive program conservatives should promote in place of this dangerous federal growth. A post-election interview with Arizona senator and conservative icon Barry Goldwater pinpointed an almost universal concern: "one of the weaknesses of the conservative performance," Goldwater told senior editor L. Brent Bozell, "has been too much verbal criticism and too little conservative action or proposals for action."²³ The devil in the detail, however, was what *sort* of action. Senior editor Willmore Kendall, reporting on Goldwater's newly-published *Statement of Proposed Republican Principles, Programs and Objectives*, argued that by focusing on "strategy" rather than the fundamental "principles" that comprised Goldwater's paradigmatic book *Conscience of a Conservative*, Goldwater ran a serious risk of treating symptoms rather than problems, accepting the foundations of the welfare state in a rush to move into positions of greater political influence.²⁴ Letters to the editor reveal that while Kendall's ideas held water with some, others questioned his insistence on brooking no compromise. Monroe Jensen

²¹ *NR* (January 28, 1961), 36-38.

²² *NR Bulletin* (March 4, 1961), 1.

²³ *NR* (January 14, 1961), 13.

²⁴ *NR* (February 25, 1961), 107-108. Kendall was a political theorist and a professor of Buckley and Bozell while at Yale. A constitutional scholar and profound admirer of the British political philosopher Edmund Burke, he for several years contributed a column critiquing the prevailing political establishment titled "The Liberal Line" (Hart, *The Making of the Conservative Mind*, 29-31).

of Savannah, Georgia, for example, argued that while conservatives needed sound principles, as provided by institutions like *NR* and the political action group Young Americans for Freedom, elected office was different from the university circles in which Kendall trod; “Conservatives have a great deal of political organizational work to do before they can rightfully expect the *Statement* to read like the *Conscience*.”²⁵ Principle versus pragmatism was a recurring theme throughout the period under consideration, and as of August 1961 *NR* reached no firm conclusion.

In the midst of the Leviathan, however, a new force was beginning to grow. *NR* devoted considerable space to chronicling the development of a burgeoning conservative youth movement in the United States. This was a development the editorial staff viewed with almost parental pride, and well it might—editor William F. Buckley, Jr., himself a young man of 35, was a founder or key organizer of myriad youth organizations springing up in the 1950s and 1960s, from the educationally-focused Intercollegiate Society of Individualists (1953) to the more politically activist Young Americans for Freedom (1960). Accordingly, Buckley himself penned a signed column on one of the more lofty displays of conservative youth prowess in early 1961—the first annual awards ceremony of the Young Americans for Freedom, held March 3, 1961 in Manhattan Center before an overflow crowd from which over 5,000 were turned away. Eleven awards were granted in areas ranging from education (Prof. Russell Kirk) to international affairs (the Republic of China, represented by U.N. ambassador George K. C. Yeh).²⁶ Arizona senator Barry Goldwater delivered the keynote address, telling a roaring crowd that the country was being caught up in a wave of conservatism that could easily become “the political phenomenon of our time.”

Buckley told of a friend’s curious reaction to the festivities—he burst into peals of laughter at the “sheer *impudence* of it all!”—and he reflected with considerable mirth that this did indeed represent an amusing turn of events:

Here we are, well into the last half of the century, the overwhelming majority of our professors Stakhanovites in the cause of Liberalism-- three decades of intensive indoctrination in state welfarism, anti-anti-Communism, moral libertinage, skepticism, anti-Americanism. And here was foregathered, at the Manhattan Center in New York City, possibly the largest student assembly of the year, certainly the most enthusiastic, to pay tribute, one after the other, to the most conspicuous symbols of everything they have studiously been taught by the intelligentsia to look down upon with contempt. It was as though the

²⁵ *NR* (March 11, 1961), 160.

²⁶ The full list of awardees is as follows: Education, Prof. Russell Kirk; International Affairs, The Republic of China; Youth Leadership, James Abstinence, State Chairman, Indiana College Young Republicans; Writing, Miss Taylor Caldwell; Government, House Committee on Un-American Activities; Publishing, Eugene C. Pulliam, Publisher, Pulliam Newspapers; Public Affairs, McGraw-Edison Co.; Science, Hon. Lewis L. Strauss; Journalism, George E. Sokolsky; Business, Herbert V. Kohler, President, The Kohler Co.; National Affairs, *National Review* magazine (*NR* [March 25, 1961], 187).

student body of the Lenin Institute took time off in the middle of the semester to pay tribute to the memory of the czar.

As Buckley lauded the students for their efforts, however, he also noted the guiding role of experienced conservative activist Marvin Liebman in organizing the logistics of the evening.²⁷ Liebman's presence reveals something significant about the conservative youth movement; here were young people working cooperatively with their elders to forge an integrated, multigenerational movement for change. This would differ markedly from some of the activity on the left yet to come in the course of the 1960s, and might well demonstrate just why the conservative movement has enjoyed such lasting success.

While college-aged conservatives rallied, *NR* cheered on a new crop of Republican House members elected in 1960. On balance, the magazine reported, the new Congress was actually more conservative than the last, even with the triumph of a Democrat in the executive office. As an advertisement for a *NR* Forum reported: "There are exciting new faces on the Washington scene—brilliant young freshmen Congressmen from many parts of the country, determined to stop America's drift toward bankruptcy and appeasement." Perhaps their numbers might even include future senators—or a president?²⁸ While time has dashed the latter hope, the magazine kept readers well informed of the activities of freshmen ranging from Donald Bruce (R-IN) and John Ashbrook (R-OH) to a young senatorial hopeful from Texas named John Tower, and several of the freshmen of 1960-61 went on to long and productive careers.

As well as reporting on the activities and triumphs of conservative youth organization, *NR* served as a clearinghouse to notify interested young readers of programs in which they could participate. May 20, for example, the magazine's "This Week" column—a regular feature of the magazine, and not an advertisement—told of two-week intensive courses in politics, economics and history that would be taught at three different campuses that summer. All had been organized by the Tuller Foundation for the Advancement of Economic Understanding, and would be taught by anti-Communists and libertarians. Interested parties could contact the Tuller Foundation, Tuller Building, Red Bank, New Jersey.²⁹ On June 17, "This Week" directed college students considering a campus conservative club to obtain a copy of "The ISI Leadership Guide," a manual available free from the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists that included advice on handling the logistics of organizing a club, planning events and raising money as well as providing a short list of conservative books and periodicals, a sample announcement letter and constitution and the Sharon Statement of the Young Americans for Freedom. Again, *NR* provided mailing information.³⁰

²⁷ *NR* (March 25, 1961), p. 187. Liebman organized anti-Khrushchev demonstrations in 1959, banquets for *NR* and other organizations, and served as the executive secretary of the Committee of One Million Against the Recognition of Red China.

²⁸ *NR* (March 11, 1961), 132.

²⁹ *NR* (May 20, 1961), 302.

³⁰ *NR* (June 17, 1961), 370.

The period under discussion in this paper closes with the construction of the Berlin Wall—and a sense of weariness on the part of a staff fatigued from eight months of sounding the alarm against Communist expansionism. Of the wall itself, the editors wrote, “As so often with Khrushchev’s words and conduct, it exhibited a kind of peasant fantasy raised to an *n*th totalitarian power: if your cattle are slipping over to your hated neighbor’s field, just build a long ugly wall to contain them.” No matter how ridiculous, however, the wall represented a serious action—and by doing nothing, the West “accepted the political meaning as well as the physical consequences” of this action. With the wall, and the West’s refusal to physically oppose its construction, the significance of Berlin was over; “It has been the direct confrontation of East and West at and through Berlin that gave the city its transcendent importance. This gone, Khrushchev can let Berlin wither on the enfeebled Western vine.” Things still could be done to counter the Soviets’ actions—Senator Thomas Dodd had called, among other ideas, for a “Truth Airlift” of journalists from all over the world to Berlin, for embargos and for resumption of nuclear tests. But “There is no reason, on the record, to suppose that any of them will be done.”³¹

In sum, then, the first months of the Kennedy administration were a time of darkness and frustration for conservatives like those of *NR*—but there was cause not to despair. If the United States could survive long enough to bring them to maturity, a new generation of conservative youth might just save us from oblivion. *NR* functioned as informant and clearinghouse, voice of warning and encourager to the conservative movement of the early 1960s. Its editors and writers, and even those who contributed to the letters columns, debated the future of a conservative movement in the United States even as they critiqued the day-to-day actions of the Kennedy administration.

In several cases over the course of the 1960s, senior staff would even move beyond the realm of journalism and into active political engagement. Publisher William Rusher, for example, was a founding member of the Goldwater-for-President movement that began in July 1961, and Brent Bozell had been the ghostwriter behind *Conscience* and an advocate for the Arizona senator as early as the 1960 campaign.³² Buckley himself conducted a quixotic campaign for New York City mayor in 1965 to highlight an alternative vision to that of liberal Republican incumbent John V. Lindsay. It was as opinion-makers and arbiters of conservative opinion, however, that the leadership of *National Review* made its largest impact upon the American public. The magazine offered a national voice, and it maintained a self-conscious focus upon developing a coherent movement that would transcend specific events and issues. It took an active role in supporting manifestations of conservative strength wherever they appeared—most notably in the growing youth movement of the 1960s. Upon these foundations would grow a movement that, while controversial, has been undeniably successful over the course of the past almost five decades.

³¹ *NR Bulletin* (September 2, 1961), 2.

³² J. William Middendorf II, *A Glorious Disaster: Barry Goldwater’s Presidential Campaign and the Origins of the Conservative Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 12-13.