



Happy Days Were Here Again

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Herbert Hoover called William F. Buckley, Jr., “a valiant and self-sacrificing worker in the garden of common sense.” Indeed, it is a common sense that Buckley most often appeals in this collection of writings. Many of the pieces refer to the major political events of the period from the end of the Reagan era (the “happy days” of the title) through the Bush Administration. Among the subjects treated are the demise of the Soviet Union, the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, the Persian Gulf War, and political correctness on college campuses.

Underlying the arguments in this collection is a consistent belief not only in the goodness and value of Western culture but also in its rarity and fragility. Besides opposing Communism, which he regards as the chief danger to the Western tradition, Buckley defends Western traditions from left-leaning politicians and academics who seek to denigrate it. As his subtitle makes clear, Buckley firmly believes in individual liberty. His thought, however, is also premised on religious principles. Thus he supports, for example, the entrepreneurial right of explorers to retrieve objects from the Titanic but firmly opposes funding of obscene or sacrilegious art exhibits.

Ultimately, Buckley regards the state as the ever-present, primary danger to individual freedom. In America, the increasing numbers of demoralized inner city dwellers result from a liberal government’s welfare system. In the larger world, responsibility for the millions who died in the world wars and revolutions of the twentieth century lies with governments created and supported by ideologies.

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