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 WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

FIRING LINE

GUEST: ERIK VON KUEHNELT-LEDDIHN

SUBJECT: "THE NEW EUROPE AND THE USES
OF MONARCHY"

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FIRING LINE



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MODERATOR: MICHAEL KINSLEY
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FIRING LINE is produced and directed by WARREN STEIBEL

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MR. KINSLEY: Welcome to **Firing Line**. I'm Michael Kinsley of **The New Republic** magazine.

It's a new dawn in Eastern Europe, but dawn of what is not so clear. With economic turmoil throughout the former Soviet empire and outright civil war in Yugoslavia, it's evident that the death of communism does not mean the quick and easy establishment of democracy and capitalism. An unexpected group of people stands ready to help if their help is wanted. In exile throughout the world are deposed monarchs and other pretenders to the thrones of various communist countries, former communist countries. King Michael of Romania lives near Geneva; King Simeon of Bulgaria sits in Madrid; Otto von Habsburg, a German member of Parliament, of the European Parliament; King Laik of Albania finds himself in Johannesburg, South Africa; and there is even a Romanov awaiting the call in Paris. Their model is King Juan Carlos of Spain. After the death of the dictator Franco in 1975, Juan Carlos played a key role in guiding Spain back to democracy. In 1981 he almost single-handedly thwarted a right-wing military coup. Is the age of kings over or is there a legitimate role for constitutional monarchy in the revival of Eastern Europe?

Mr. Buckley's guest to discuss this is Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, lecturer and author of many books and regular contributor to Mr. Buckley's **National Review**. Mr. Leddihn's latest book is called **Leftism Revisited**. He is an Austrian and I gather a believer that monarchy is underrated as a system of government.

Mr. Buckley, judging from a piece you once wrote about Mr. Leddihn, he doesn't merely believe in some fairly toothless version of monarchy--sort of "ademocracy," as arguably in England and in Spain--but in actual monarchy as being a superior form of government to democracy. Now I can't believe you even go that far.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, Dr. Leddihn believes in everything just this side of Ivan the Terrible, is that right? [laughter]

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: In his fascinating book, **Leftism Revisited**, he surveys government doctrines and comes down very heavily against democracy. So I thought it would be interesting, Dr. Leddihn, to touch both on the usefulness of the monarchs in Europe at this present juncture, along the lines that Michael Kinsley spoke of, but then also to move into your theoretical brief against democracy itself. Let's start with the latter. In which country would you judge it likeliest that restoration might come in Europe?

DR. LEDDIHN: I think this is an extremely difficult question. I'm almost speaking facetiously, but I would say, curiously enough, maybe in Russia. I wrote an article and said I wager \$50 that monarchy will not be restored in Russia by the end of the century, but not more than \$50. Because you watch the demonstrations in Red Square, what sort of flags do you see? And then of course, that has another importance: You see only a very few red flags, you see the Russian nationalist flag, which

is white, blue, red; you see the monarchist flag, which is black, yellow, white; and you see the anarchist flag, which is black, red. And we had on our television a very interesting interview with a man who runs a monarchist television station in the former Leningrad--now again St. Petersburg--to give it the classic Russian pronunciation--and the man is of course, let us say, moderately optimistic. And I'm not--

MR. BUCKLEY: Well--

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes?

MR. BUCKLEY: You say moderately optimistic on the grounds that there is a yearning for Vladimir--for the restoration, or that the situation is so chaotic that they need a kind of governing rubric?

DR. LEDDIHN: You see, I do not see a return of the monarchy on the strength of monarchism, if that exists at all, but rather on the decay of democracy. And you see very clearly if you are intelligent, the hypocritical traits on the face of democracy. You see it not only, of course, in Eastern Europe; you see it all over the map, all over the Western map--of mounting disgust with parties, party politics and with politicians.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, they haven't had much experience with democracy in the Soviet Union or in Russia.

DR. LEDDIHN: No, of course not. No. No.

MR. BUCKLEY: So why would they have a mounting disgust with it?

DR. LEDDIHN: No, that is-- Of course, there we see there a little bit of hangover, far more so in Central--and not only in Central, but even in Western Europe--except, I would say, except England and except Switzerland, of course. But you see, what I am afraid is the situation which reminds me of the Middle Ages, when the general view of the clergy was that the clergy is rotten, the clergy is vile, the clergy is corrupt, the clergy is immoral, unlearned, ignorant, and people at the same time were very pious and produced many saints. And if you asked them about the clergy, they'd shrug their shoulders and say, "Well, we're used to that. That's how it is." Until one nice day an Augustinian friar with the name of Dr. Martin Luther rises up, bangs the table, and half the church collapses in Europe. And I am afraid about democracy, something coming similar. The disgust with it, as you found the mounting disgust with communism and then suddenly the kairos comes--a Greek word for the right moment, the right time--and then suddenly the thing collapses. That might happen.

MR. BUCKLEY: Then what you're talking about is less the advent of monarchy in the newly liberated East European states as you are in Western Europe.

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: Which of those would you say is most fragile right now? Italy, with its 478th postwar government or whatever it is?

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes. In Italy, of course, let us say, that disgust is perfect, but you find it everywhere. You find it also in Austria, you find it in France. It's a mounting thing. The word "politician" is a dirty word by now. And then of course, with the decay of one thing, you can only say now in favor of monarchy that in the retrospective to all people, the monarchical age that is roughly, let us say before 1918, you see, roughly now, generalizing, that is a golden age. And I will never forget, last December, December the eighth, in Prague, in a meeting of the PanEurope movement of about 600-700 people, the best speaker--and really he was the best speaker--was our last crown prince, this is Otto, Otto of Austria, Otto of Habsburg-Lorraine. A standing ovation. Think about Prague, the hotbed of anti-Austrianism and anti-Habsburgism. And the people rose to thundering applause. If you write now a book against the monarchy, everybody would say you must be crazy. But that doesn't mean on the other hand that there is a real push towards it, because people, after all--I mean, most people--are historically ignorant. They say, "Oh, democracy, that's modern," you know. It's something you took out of the mothballs of antiquity, where it failed in Greece already in the--

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, it's an aphorism of the anti-democratic theorists--I think of Albert Jay Nock, for instance--that the chances of having one good monarch are much better than the chances of having one good people, i.e., that a virtuous people, which is held by Alexander Hamilton to be a requirement of successful self-rule, is simply statistically unlikely--I'm quoting these theorists--whereas every now and then you can have a good monarch. Now this raises the question, you picked the year 1918, during which there was a very considerable attrition in monarchical authority that lasted over 100 years, for instance, the Reform Acts in Great Britain. Is this an attrition which you welcome in your model society or which you resist? What should be the role of the modern king?

DR. LEDDIHN: You see, in the Portland Declaration, which you also found in my *Leftism Revisited*, I have studied and have studied it in Taiwan also, is the Mandarin system. In other words, the monarch as the head of--it's a dreadful word--of a bureaucracy of the civil service, a civil service which is truly elitist, because you see, my ideal is that minimal state of the highest quality. But what we do get is the maximal state of the lowest quality. And of course, of this, the monarch as the chief of the army, the chief, so to say, of the civil service, with a popular representation which is a mere partner in the dialogue and which is a real honest lobby where the man rises and says, "I represent the teachers in South Dakota and we are opposed to this measure now of the local ministry of education," or something, you know. And I always think about two parents and they have four children, and the children are between the ages, let us say, of 13 and 19 or 14 and 21. And these parents would be idiots if they would say, "We produced you, we put you into this world, we paid for your education, we paid for your upbringing, so you keep your traps shut and obey." And they would be even greater idiots if

they would say, "We believe in real democracy and you are four kids and we are counting the noses. The majority decides." See, in other words, a dialogue partner but where real interest and desire and knowledge and experience are working together and not, let us say, the physical beauty of candidates, because that in the age of television to what extent a candidate is really appealing to the ladies is of an immense importance.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, but don't you run into the problem here that it's not only difficult, it's impossible, to measure the level at which virtue or wisdom--

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: --arrive? The notion that the more education you have, the wiser ruler you are is easily punctured--

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: --by the fact that the majority of American intellectuals vote for the Democratic Party, though the majority of college graduates do not.

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: Put it this way, the majority of PhDs vote Democratic, the majority of BAs vote Republican.

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: Now, what do you decoct from that fact?

DR. LEDDIHN: Because I know very well, and always remember-- as a matter of fact, I think I even mention it in my book without naming you--your saying that you rather prefer America being run by the first 400 people in the Manhattan telephone book--

MR. BUCKLEY: Boston, yes.

DR. LEDDIHN: --than by the faculty of--

MR. BUCKLEY: Harvard.

DR. LEDDIHN: --a certain university--let us say a certain university. And of course, my reply is that I do believe--and don't forget, this is the problem of politics, the problem, for instance, of Christianity also--that in totally uneducated people there are intuitive forces which sometimes can be absolutely right, you know? I respect that, and the scientific handling of intuition, we don't know. I only remember my mother, who knew nothing at all about medicine and physics, and warned my father intuitively against his radium and x-ray research, it would kill him. And it did kill him. And he laughed at my mother and her really intuitive forces. Now the unlearned, the terrible thing are the half-educated, and then comes only a microscopic group which are highly--and are not what they call in German--there is no English word for it--Fachidioten. That means highly specialized idiots, which you do get almost in universities.

MR. BUCKLEY: Idiot savants.

DR. LEDDIHN: What?

MR. BUCKLEY: Idiot savants.

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes, yes, idiot savants. Which you do get. But you need to round it up. And I would say wisdom comes from two things: from knowledge and experience--because knowledge alone is not sufficient--and experience. Out of this--doesn't automatically--but can come, wisdom.

MR. BUCKLEY: What are the uses of the monarchy, given what you just told us? There is no presumption, is there, that the firstborn male is going to have these particular qualities. But is it simply your notion that to vest certain powers in him rather than in the population at large is a safer historical bet?

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes, and I'll tell you-- I give you here two answers. The one is a saying, I think it's Rivarol, where he says, "A monarch can be a Nero or a Marcus Aurelius. And the people collectively can be a Nero, but never ever a Marcus Aurelius." Professor F.A. Woods of Harvard has written two books on the intelligence of royal families. Both these books were published just before World War I, in which he speaks about the superior-- Of course it's a very special, don't forget, international breed. Monarchy is an international, it's not a national, institution. There are only two national families. But then of course here comes the question, you see, of knowledge. A monarch can be very mediocre, he can be very inferior, but do not forget here one thing: It wouldn't be your worthwhile to pay a nickel to see Europe if it weren't for monarchy, the church and the patricians. Nature is far greater here in America and no American [unintelligible].

MR. BUCKLEY: But Professor, America is not really old enough to have given us a Chartres Cathedral or a Westminster Abbey or much of what it is in Europe that we go there to ogle at.

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes, but think about now--a very interesting question--what about Spanish colonialism? How much did the Spanish monarchy leave in Central and South America? Not quite Chartres, not quite Chartres, but grandiose buildings. You see, the American tourist goes down there; the Peruvian tourist doesn't go to South Dakota. But you see another thing--

MR. BUCKLEY: This is kind of a statist argument, and you as a libertarian would hardly want to leave that impression, would you?

DR. LEDDIHN: Well--

MR. BUCKLEY: Because-- Well, of course, even Adam Smith says that it is the proper role of government to build statues and commemorative buildings.

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: But are you suggesting that the private sector is organically incompetent to make monuments or are you simply saying that as a matter of fact, they can't be funded by the private sector?

DR. LEDDIHN: Oh, they were funded by the private sector, because only imagine that all great painters after the French Revolution were all recognized and honored and successful, and only after, with the democratization of the Europeans, you get a man like Van Gogh, whom I consider a very, very great painter, who succeeded in selling only one picture and only because his brother was an arts dealer. And how many great writers and great poets lived out miserable lives in garrets and so on. And Schopenhauer, one of the great German thinkers, says of course the great man has an infinitely better chance in the monarchy because he can find again and again--not always, of course not always--but again and again an intelligent monarch who takes him up and favors him and lifts him up and fosters him than in a democratic age.

MR. BUCKLEY: Why would that-- Now explain to me why. Let's take the current situation in America--

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: --where there is an outfit, Guns and somebody else--Guns and Pigs? Guns and Roses--who sell one-and-a-half million copies of a record with people lining the streets to buy it--

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: --and then they go back to press the next day with one-and-a-half million more. By contrast, sales of that magnitude are inconceivable in more interesting works. But why would that change under a royal rubric, or should we have more national endowments for the arts?

DR. LEDDIHN: No, I don't think it would change the-- In an elitist atmosphere--and I am certainly an elitist; I am not a populist in any way--I do think that quality really has the better chance than the purely, the mass appeal. But to return to the monarch--

MR. BUCKLEY: But why in the 18th century Germany was Bach when he died listed in most of his obituaries as a great organist without any reference to the fact that he composed anything?

DR. LEDDIHN: That he composed, yes. Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: Or was that just an anomaly?

DR. LEDDIHN: Well, you see, music really came into its own really rather slowly. I would say really it comes into its own really by the 18th century. You see, Bach is a little bit too early.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, he died in 1750.

DR. LEDDIHN: What? He died in 1750. But it is really the end-- You have Mozart and you have already being born at that time, you see, Beethoven. I mean, these are all products of-- It comes in very late. It is the evolution of music. For the Chinese, music is the greatest art and then followed by cooking, by the cuisine, and of course, above the level of painting in the Chinese concept.

MR. BUCKLEY: In the hierarchy.

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes. But you see, the monarch--I always say about the good and the bad monarch--the monarch, of course, has the advantage not only of heredity to a certain extent, and that is a little bit speculative. But on the other hand, he is from childhood trained on for that job. He's not a haberdasher.

MR. BUCKLEY: Like the Duke of Windsor?

DR. LEDDIHN: What?

MR. BUCKLEY: Like the Duke of Windsor.

DR. LEDDIHN: Of course that is one of the most despicable creatures, because the man wanted to be happy, and a monarch has no right to be happy. He has to bear a cross. Oh no, that's a frightful-- As a matter of fact, Otto von Habsburg was asked publicly, and I saw it in print, "Whom do you despise most as a contemporary figure?" and he said, "The Duke of Windsor that has abdicated." Rightly so. A monarch has no right--a Christian monarch has no right to try to be happy. I mean, to marry the woman he loves--he has to marry the woman that state interest demands. [laughter] See, in other words, it is not an easy proposition, but he is trained for it. And now if you ask somebody whether a costume or a suit he would order from a miserable tailor or from a brilliant surgeon, well, the miserable tailor still produces a miserable suit, but the brilliant surgeon, nothing like a suit at all. And not being, as I just started to say, a haberdasher who sells underpants and neckties and then throws out A-bombs like confetti, you know? I know you heard me talking about after Japan has desperately tried, through the Vatican first, and then through Moscow in April '45 and in July '45 to get peace conditions and the answer was, "unconditional surrender." And how many Americans died due to this idiotic formula, which always-- And I think five times in Vietnam we've seen a Vietnam war.

MR. BUCKLEY: But that was a regal affirmation by our unbeatable president, who was the nearest thing to a dynast we ever had. It wasn't the people who were calling for unconditional surrender. This was simply--

DR. LEDDIHN: No, of course not.

MR. BUCKLEY: --an obiter dictum of FDR at Casablanca, wasn't it?

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes. Yes, Casablanca, yes. But Churchill did not really oppose it either. He didn't oppose it either, not the great Churchill either.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, from which we conclude what in respect of training for leadership, of which Churchill was probably almost unique in this century?

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes. With little character, being a conservative, then become a liberal, then become a conservative again. you know. Wendell Willkie warned him, a rat can only desert once the sinking ship. But I mean, at the same time--

MR. BUCKLEY: Of course, that raises an interesting question: Why shouldn't rats desert a sinking ship?

DR. LEDDIHN: What?

MR. BUCKLEY: Why shouldn't rats desert a sinking ship?

DR. LEDDIHN: Oh, no, no, no--

MR. BUCKLEY: Why should they opt to drown?

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes, yes. Well, of course, that is a question, you see, of character and loyalty and honor. I mean, all sorts of concepts which don't figure in democracy.

MR. KINSLEY: I have to cut you off at that point. This ship is sinking time-wise. Mr. Buckley, I am sure you are familiar with the aphorism, "Good government is no substitute for self-government," or as Senator Warren Rudman put it slightly differently, the same point, at the Iran-Contra hearings, "The people have the right to be wrong." Now even if you could prove that monarchy produced on average better government than democracy, that wouldn't really prove the case that monarchy is a better system of government, would it?

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, it depends on the criteria that you consult. If the criteria are the satisfaction of the people, as I happen to think they ought to be, then you have to say, "Okay, we prefer to live in a society in which tailfins prevail than in a society in which people are frustrated because they can't buy tailfins." This is a--

MR. KINSLEY: Well, I do prefer that, don't you?

MR. BUCKLEY: --quarrel, interestingly enough, with John Kenneth Galbraith, who is himself a cultural elitist and yet subscribes to democratic manners because he more or less has no alternative. You were going to say, Dr. Leddihn?

DR. LEDDIHN: Well, in my book I deal with this Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, a British liberal prime minister, who said that, that self-government is better than good government. That means if you are really ill, do you correct it with self-medication instead of going to a really good doctor, to a clinic? Which is better really? The thing is totally--

MR. KINSLEY: But if you live under a monarchy, you don't have your choice of a doctor. You're assigned a doctor, who may or may not be better than your self-medication.

MR. BUCKLEY: Not necessarily.

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes, but you are always individually, existentially, assigned to a system. And you personally, of course, cannot in any way change it. If you make a black line as tall as the Empire State Building and call this the American electorate, how much is one vote? I can tell you exactly. One vote would be four mu and the mu is the thousand part of a millimeter. In other words you are a helpless microbe, and then of course you speak about self-government. You see, I--

MR. BUCKLEY: By the way, I think it's wrong to suppose that a monarchy has to be dirigiste.

DR. LEDDIHN: What? Dirigiste, of course.

MR. BUCKLEY: It does not have to be.

DR. LEDDIHN: Yes.

MR. KINSLEY: But you would have no control over whether it was or not. Of course that's the point.

MR. BUCKLEY: Thank you, Michael Kinsley; thank you, Dr. Kuehnelt-Leddihn, author of *Leftism Revisited*; thank you, ladies and gentlemen.