

Lori Cox Han. *Advising Nixon: The White House Memos of Patrick J. Buchanan.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2019. 400 pp. \$39.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7006-2829-2.

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Born in 1938 and with degrees from Georgetown University and Columbia University School of Journalism, Patrick Buchanan worked for the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* until 1966, when he joined Richard Nixon's presidential campaign and followed him into the White House as a speechwriter and political strategist until the president's resignation in August 1974. In this volume, political scientist and presidential scholar Lori Cox Han has collected 135 of the hundreds of memos Buchanan wrote during his tenure. The memos provide valuable insights into political strategists' work, the ways the press covered the Nixon administration, and the views and actions of a variety of conservatives.

Most importantly, the book examines Buchanan's contributions to the reshaping of conservatism and the Republican Party. He recommended that the president concentrate on wooing Catholics, ethnic groups, and working-class voters and abjure any efforts to court African Americans and Jews (though in the 1972 reelection campaign he displayed flexibility in a memo outlining how Nixon could appeal to Jewish voters). Buchanan urged Nixon to downplay economic issues and focus on such inflammatory topics as abortion, pornography, aid to parochial schools, crime, school busing, and attacks on the "the establishment." He closely monitored conservatives, seek-

ing to keep them faithful as Nixon pursued what Buchanan felt were ill-advised efforts, such as the family assistance plan, environmental reforms, and the opening to China.

These memos also illuminate how political operatives did their jobs. Buchanan meticulously reported on individual reporters and their platforms, suggesting ways to feed supportive media and discredit critics. He scrutinized the words and records of potential challengers to Nixon's reelection and suggested how to upend them. While there is no indication that Buchanan was connected to any of the events surrounding Watergate, he recommended a variety of measures to cripple a centrist Democratic candidate, including offering millions of dollars from Nixon's media budget to sow disunity among Democrats.

This book will appeal to readers interested in Nixon as a politician, in the rise and remaking of conservatism, and in Buchanan himself, who continues to be a voice of the right long after his tenure in the White House. The more general reader would have benefited from more substantial annotation, since there are many references to people or events unfamiliar to non-Nixon specialists. Nor do readers have access to the outcomes of these memos. Which ones were heeded and which were not? In a plug for a more expansive position just after the 1972 reelection, Buchanan himself

complained about his distance from decision-making. While several memos outline strategies to deal with the Watergate crisis, the very last one was written in May 1974, months before Nixon resigned. In that memo, Buchanan insisted that the president must not resign, leaving the reader to wonder what the political strategist was telling Nixon in July and the early days of August.

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