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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON


November 5, 1975

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR:

ROBERT T. HARTMANN

FROM:

JAMES E. CONNOR 

The attached was returned in the President's outbox with the following notation:

"Excellent"

cc: Dick Cheney

Attachment:

Letter from Aram Bakshian, Jr.
to Robert T. Hartmann dated 10/14/75
attaching article from BOSTON GLOBE
"What Ails the Nations' Conservatives?"

DR HAS SEEN

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

RTH: This is really a good article,
don't you think so?

nm



THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

14 October 1975

INSTITUTE OF POLITICS
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Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138
617-495-5792

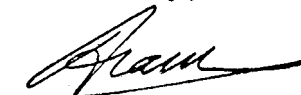
Dear Bob --

I enclose a Xerox copy of an op-ed piece I did last Thursday for the Boston Globe. It seemed to me that it was time someone with conservative credentials issued a call to reason to the right and tried to talk down the desirability of the Reagan movement. Anyway, I took a crack at stating the case (from a conservative view) for the President and against the Reaganites. This will probably earn me some dirty looks from old friends, but it was in a good cause.

Harvard, so far at least, is great fun and the perfect change of air after $3\frac{1}{2}$ years at the White House. Will be back in touch toward the end of the semester, before I return to Washington.

Best regards.

Sincerely,



Aram Bakshian, Jr.

What ails the nation's conservatives?

ARAM BAKSHIAN JR.

For years my favorite blood sport was watching quarrelsome factions on the Left—especially within the Democratic Party—slash away at each other in public. Nothing, it seemed, was quite so stark, savage and unreasoned as the wrath of a liberal scorned. Now, alas, substantial elements on the American Right seem to have acquired a similar passion for unseemly public wrangling. And, with an inspired sense of poor timing, they have done so just when a number of basic conservative tenets have begun to appeal to the non-ideological majority of average citizens.

What ails my fellow conservatives? Why, at a time when even liberal Democrats like Govs. Brown and Dukakis are making enormous political mileage out of conservative policies as fundamental as fiscal responsibility and balanced budgets, are the original purveyors of common sense conservatism fighting among themselves and, worse, sometimes fighting over trifles?

More than one, sympathetic observer, viewing the kamikaze attacks of the more feverish Reaganites against Gerald Ford—the most conservative man to occupy the White House since the New Deal—has concluded that a large, or at least a vocal chunk of the American Right has a virulent suicidal streak.

Purists, seeking an ever purer movement, they seem

to thrive on dreams of purges and cabals. Most of them are nice enough people when off their hobby horses. But when a fellow like, say, Bill Rusher mounts his ideological steed, inflamed with the vision of a new conservative majority party (to be torn from the entrails of a sacrificial Republican elephant and mingled with the hot blood and all too frenzied resentments of blue collar Wallacites) he is playing an essentially negative role in the political process, and splitting the real conservative movement, at least half of which is bedrock Republican, right down the middle.

One reason Ronald Reagan himself has so long hesitated to raise the banner of rebellion within the GOP may well be his inner realization that while a spirited candidacy might make real inroads into Ford support — might even stand a remote chance of snatching the nomination from him — it would leave the Republican Party so crippled and divided as to render the nomination worthless.

I believe Reagan shudders at this prospect; I also believe that some of the activists around him are delighted by it. One can't help suspecting that many of them see Reagan, not as a graying White Knight, but as an old but powerful piece of wrecking machin-

ery good for one big demolition job before it rusts out. They want to use Reagan to attain one of two objectives which he himself probably does not share:

1— Seizure and "purification" of a Republican Party which is already pathetically small and would, under their violent ministrations, end up even smaller and more exclusive, or;

2 — Barring possession of a purged GOP, the destruction of it via the third party route. This would split the fragile moderate/conservative electoral majority that could reelect President Ford and, in a two-way race, might also make substantial inroads into the lopsided liberal majorities in the Senate and House.

The second of these courses is fed by pipe-dreams of a Reagan-Wallace merger which, in reality, is as unlikely as it is undesirable. Anyone who really believes that George Wallace would be willing to play Robin to Ronald Reagan's Batman has a few screws loose. And any genuine conservative willing to embrace the record, policies and principles — or lack of same — of George Wallace, as a stepping stone to the Presidency, deserves the failure his efforts are doomed to meet.

Does Ronald Reagan realize this? Is he dawdling in the wings because, at heart,

he knows that his more militant supporters want him to play a wrecker's role which he instinctively abhors? I suspect so, though he may well yield to their urgings in the end. But far more important to the future of conservatism is the attitude of the majority of rank and file conservatives. It will be their reaction at the polls — and the degree of unity with which it is rendered — that will help the Republican Party (the only nationally based party responding to a large part of the conservative catchism) to either founder or flourish.

Gerald Ford, with a 1976 mandate and a more conservative Congress behind him, can guide America to the right; a dismembered GOP, whether mutilated from without or within, would leave the liberal-dominated Democratic Party more in control of the nation's destiny than ever.

Aram Bakshian, Jr., currently a fellow at Harvard's Institute of Politics, has served as a speechwriter to Presidents Ford and Nixon and is a regular contributor to National Review.