



# The Spot: The Rise of Political Advertising on Television

*Edwin Diamond, Stephen Bates*

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Political advertising on television represents a form of persuasion scarcely thirty years old. Already, however, the short thirty-to-sixty-second political commercial, or polispot, has developed both distinct rhetorical modes and distinct visual styles. The polispot has also grown to dominate political campaigns in this country, especially in the large states and in national presidential elections. For example, of the \$29 million in federally allotted campaign funds spent by Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter in 1980, fully half went into political advertising, mainly on television.

*The Spot* is a rich, provocative examination of the polispot form. It begins with the first spot use of television in the Eisenhower-Stevenson campaign of 1952 and carries through to the Reagan advertising and marketing campaign of 1980 (and, prospectively, of 1984). It discusses such famous—and infamous—examples of political television advertising as Richard Nixon's "Checkers," Lyndon Johnson's "Daisy" spot, and Gerald Ford's "Feelin' Good About America" series.

The book contains interviews of the chief media practitioners and political marketers and analyzes the effects of their handiwork on the outcome of campaigns. Scores of storyboards and illustrations from key campaigns are also analyzed, each according to the authors' pioneering typology of the five polispot rhetorical modes.

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