

By Michael Powell

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THE MARGIN WAS THIN, THE RESULT HISTORIC. A black Marine veteran and Harlem lawyer, David Dinkins, is the next mayor of this city. The scene is now strikingly familiar, a sea of supporters offering its cheers, chants and tears to a major city's first black mayor. But amid the jubilation last week at the Sheraton Centre, some acknowledged a sobering reality: the soft-spoken candidate had drawn much worse than expected in white communities, depriving him of a mandate for governing a racially and fiscally troubled city. Jewish and Catholic Democrats turned out in record numbers; more than 60 percent of them deserted their party to vote for the Republican prosecutor Rudolph Giuliani.

Only the black and Hispanic communities spoke with a single, strong voice: Dinkins.

Racism, not surprisingly, was a factor in the poorer-than-expected showing. Giuliani ran a mean-spirited campaign that played

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adroitly on the edge of the white subconscious—in a final debate he promised that, if elected, he would prosecute Dinkins for being a tax cheat. Post-election analysis suggests that many white voters simply lied in the exit polls.

That said, Dinkins ran a problematic and substantively elusive campaign. A son of the Harlem Democratic machine of Adam Clayton Powell and Rep. Charlie Rangel, he offered a mix of real and rhetorical strengths and weaknesses that alternately exhilarated and confounded his supporters. His strength often lay, Reaganlike, with his ability to attract both the old guard and the activist. So it was that Dinkins pulled dozens of community activists and left-liberals onto his borough presidency's staff and, occasionally, adopted their issues. His advocacy for child care, education and the homeless was strong.

"He was one of the few establishment blacks to support Jackson in both 1984 and 1988," notes Jitu Weusi, a longtime community activist.

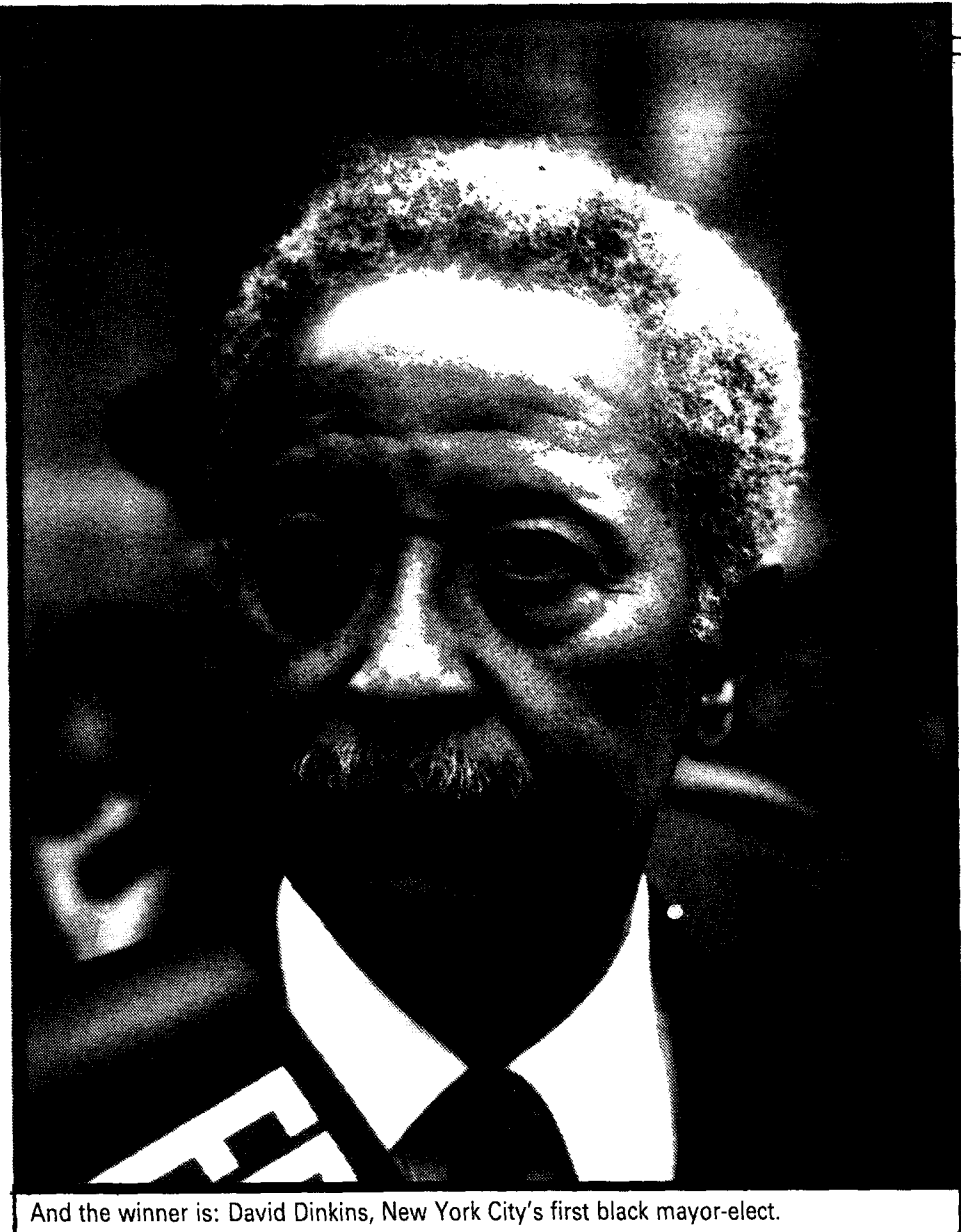
Center moves: But since his primary victory over Mayor Ed Koch in September, Dinkins' tendency toward fuzzy platitudes and his embrace of the Democratic machine has expanded geometrically. Some activists find themselves moving further from the center of power, shouldered aside by those who would "moderate" Dinkins.

For instance, Dinkins' aides wrote up an economic development program for the campaign that stressed commercial rent control and linked subsidies for business to their record of hiring city residents. But Dinkins is hardly married to these often un-specific proposals. As the president of New York's Real Estate Board told the *Wall Street Journal*, "When it comes down to it, Dinkins can be reasonable."

"He's surrounded himself with an awful lot of hacks," notes Angelo Falcon of the Institute for Puerto Rican Policy. "He's comfortable with advocates, but it's going to be a real juggling act."

Another longtime activist and scholar is more caustic. He points to Dinkins' newfound reliance on such power brokers as former Koch Deputy Mayor Nat Leventhal and financier Felix Rohatyn. "He's wrapping himself in the cloak of the regular organization."

Still, supporters reassure themselves, this



And the winner is: David Dinkins, New York City's first black mayor-elect.

Treacherous footing ahead as Dinkins takes New York

unassuming man was often underrated during a tortuous mayoral campaign. It took root a year and a half ago, when Jesse Jackson lost the state's Democratic primary to Gov. Michael Dukakis but swept the city. The victory served notice on Mayor Koch, who had insisted that "Jews and other supporters of

Dinkins now faces a city where nets are cast beneath facades to catch crumbling mortar.

Israel have got to be crazy" to vote for Jackson. It showed that a new movement was afoot, one that might sweep him from office.

It was not clear at the time who would benefit from Koch's newly exposed weakness. Although Dinkins stood by Jackson's side that night in April after the primary, few assumed that the mantle of leadership would automatically fall onto his shoulders.

Nor was anything inevitable about a black candidate's victory. Together the city's black and Latino residents comprise just 50 percent of the population, and they are split into dozens of often fractious offshoots. A stronger-willed candidate might have risked re-enacting the disastrous 1985 experience, when an erstwhile coalition collapsed into a dozen squabbling ethnic and ideological factions.

Dinkins labored for much of the spring and summer in the shadow of Giuliani. The prosecutor's entry into the race prompted *New York Newsday's* generally liberal columnist, Jimmy Breslin, to proclaim: "Rudy Giu-

liani is the next mayor of New York. He will win easily."

A bestselling book by liberal *Village Voice* writers Jack Newfield and Wayne Barrett—*City for Sale*—featured Giuliani as its white knight. He seemed the perfect candidate for a post-Koch age.

Not acknowledged in these paeans from liberal journalists were several facts. Giuliani was a Reagan Republican, responsible for sticking thousands of Haitian refugees in Florida concentration camps, whitewashing the Duvalier regime, and using federal racketeering statutes to cudgel and intimidate, making little distinction between mobsters, trade unionists and stockbrokers. Giuliani was that rare man whose actions could evoke sympathy even for that subspecies of the Reagan age, the junk-bond stockbroker.

He was also an amateur and, like so many of that intense breed, he took the political game very seriously. He labeled Ron Lauder, the multimillionaire cosmetics prince and his Republican primary opponent, "an idiot," Koch "an embarrassment," Dinkins "a crook." The rhetoric grew tiresome.

"He started to look like Darth Vader chopping off limbs out there," says Jay Severin, a Republican media analyst. "He was squandering an incredible advantage."

Giuliani would go on to weather a costly battle with Lauder, in which the perfume heir lacerated the once-fresh-faced prosecutor. By primary day, poles were reversed: the election appeared Dinkins' to lose.

The thorn in his side: And he almost did. After weeks of avoiding anything remotely suggestive of an issue, Dinkins' rose-garden strategy fell into the thorn bushes in mid-October.

It started with Sonny Carson: a tough-talking black nationalist and convicted kidnapper who had long operated on the extreme fringe of black Brooklyn politics. First, the Dinkins campaign was found to have paid him to work as a vote puller. A minor brouhaha. But in an exit as disastrous as any devised by Richard Nixon, Carson called a press conference to dismiss parochial notions that he was anti-Semitic. "I'm anti-white," he assured reporters. "Don't limit my anti-ing to one little group of people."

For a candidate who has denounced extreme black nationalism in the past, it was an embarrassing moment. And ironic—by campaign's end, Dinkins was so fixated on courting the city's Jewish vote that his position on Israel hewed slavishly to the Likud line. Irony, too, was that he sought and gained the endorsement of the militant anti-Zionist group, the Satmar Hasidim of Williamsburg, whose bearded, fur-hatted members frequently picket in front of the Israeli U.N. mission.

More substantively, Dinkins ran into a furor over ownership of stocks in Inner City Broadcasting, a company owned by a virtual who's who of the Harlem elite. Controversy over the proper valuation of Dinkins' stock, its transfer to his son and Dinkins' votes as a borough president on cable issues before the Board of Estimate sent a mighty shudder through the campaign.

"Any devoted supporter would admit to being worried," recalls Mark Green, director of the Democracy Project and a Dinkins supporter. "You always worry that a bad story could mushroom into Watergate."

Explanations vary as to how Dinkins survived with his poll-standing intact. Some attribute it to his well-established image as a calm healer, a nice man. "Dinkins has a history, an image that's already set in people's minds," says Peter Williams, an analyst at the Center for Law and Social Justice of Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn.

There is another, more prosaic, explanation: the San Francisco earthquake. The moving of tectonic plates, combined with a bouncing upper deck in San Francisco's Candlestick Park and a delayed World Series, knocked Dinkins' "hell week" off the front page every day.

To the victor: In any case, he survived and triumphed. But a quick look at the city he must now govern might prompt anyone else to seek an exit through a back door. Dinkins now faces a city where nets are cast beneath facades and arches to catch crumbling mortar and cement that might otherwise crush cars and pedestrians, a city where AIDS is epidemic in black and Hispanic communities, where the minority high-school dropout rate exceeds 50 percent and the budget deficit tops \$2 billion. In fact, Dinkins' more nervous supporters in the financial community console themselves that he faces few choices other than draconian cuts.

In preparation for such battles, activists and progressive intellectuals are already preparing position papers on cutting the budget, raising revenue, negotiating with the unions. "It's hard because most of them have never experienced power before," says Falcon. "It's been a long dry spell."

To which Weusi adds that he has "his fears and his hopes."

"We're not looking for a revolution; we're patient," he says. "We're patient and understanding. It might take four years but we just want hope." □

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By David Moberg

CARBO, VA.

DRESSED IN CAMOUFLAGE AND BRIGHT orange vests, their hands above their heads to show they were unarmed, 94 striking coal miners, four union staff members and a Methodist minister walked briskly through the gates of The Pittston Co.'s giant coal-processing plant in southwest Virginia on a Sunday afternoon in September.

The company's well-armed special sec-

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urity force, Vance Security's "Asset Protection Team," was caught off guard. Moving ahead of the strikers, United Mine Workers (UMW) Regional Director Eddie Burke shouted repeatedly through his bullhorn, "We are an unarmed group of stockholders. I repeat; we are unarmed. No person or property will be harmed. We are going in to inspect the property."

Within minutes the worker-stockholders—divided into red, white and blue teams—had secured the fifth-floor control room of the massive Moss No. 3 coal-preparation plant. At the same time, miners from three states converged on the road leading to the plant to take up positions outside the main gate. More than 1,700 had gathered by nightfall. By Wednesday night the crowd grew to as many as 5,000 miners, their family members and friends. The demonstrators outside vowed they would all have to be arrested before the hundreds of assembled state police could reach the occupying shareholders.

Faced with a federal injunction and potential fines of \$600,000 a day, union leaders decided that they had made their point: that their strike against the Connecticut-based company that began last April was as strong as ever. Also, they did not want to risk violence erupting at the end of the successful non-violent mass protest. Four days after the protest began the occupiers quietly withdrew into the concealing crowd.

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The Moss No. 3 occupation on September 17 was the most dramatic action the UMW has taken in its seven-month strike against the Pittston Coal Group. But it is only one of dozens of imaginative moves made in an exemplary strike by a union that is, despite its weaknesses, from top to bottom probably the best in the U.S. today.

The strikers are up against the implacably anti-union Pittston management, whose victory would trigger demands by other coal companies and unravel the elaborate 35-year-old system of pension and health-care



Striking miners on the way to take over Pittston's Moss No. 3 coal-processing plant on September 17.

Gritty strikers chip away at Pittston intransigence

benefits and virtually destroy the union. But what has made the strike so difficult and so long is not just the company's intransigence but the overwhelming force of the state and federal governments, as well as the courts and police, against the strikers on behalf of the company.

Virginia's Democratic Gov. Gerald Baliles deployed a huge state police force to arrest and harass strikers and their supporters and to escort Pittston coal trucks and strike-breakers on the highways. Police have made more than 3,000 arrests, more than 90 percent of them for non-violent civil disobedience. Most of the remaining cases concern relatively minor charges of throwing rocks or twisted nail "jackrocks" at coal trucks. Each arrest usually entails multiple charges—an underlying offense, such as blocking traffic, plus two counts of contempt for violating the highly restrictive federal and state injunctions.

Throughout the strike, the UMW has been ordered to pay huge fines for incidents in which the union is not clearly implicated.

By now, state Circuit Court Judge John McGlothlin—whose cousin is an owner of a big non-union coal company—has imposed an unprecedented \$32 million in fines, with more pending, and federal Judge Glen Williams has added nearly another \$1 million.

The strike has been effective in large part because union leaders have modeled it on the '60s civil-rights movement in the South.

By contrast, when Pittston was negligent in the 1983 mine deaths of seven workers, its total fines were \$47,500.

Bad company: Pittston, which also owns Brink's and Burlington Air Freight, broke away in 1987 from the industry negotiating front, the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA), claiming its greater reliance on overseas sales of coal justified a different contract. In recent years the company has begun shifting coal reserves from its union operations to new non-union subsidiaries. When its contract with the union expired, Pittston cut off the health-care benefits of its retirees.

Though Pittston demanded many concessions, it admitted it could easily afford what the union asked. Most importantly, the company wanted to withdraw from industrywide pension and health plans, jeopardizing not only its own employees and retirees but a system that supports 130,000 former miners and their families. It wanted an unlimited right to subcontract work and to schedule mandatory overtime, including Sundays. It also refused to promise laid-off union miners first chance to apply for jobs at Pittston's non-union mines.

The UMW has used nearly every tactic in the union book and then some to fight back, starting with its rock-solid strike of 1,700 Pittston workers. They include:

- an in-plant campaign that slowed work for 14 months while the union worked without a contract;
- non-violent resistance with sit-ins at plant gates and on highways to slow traffic;
- stockholder pressure and a campaign to force banks to break ties with Pittston—which in one case forced a Boston-based Shawmut Bank officer on Pittston's board out of his job;
- mobilization of wives and families, including an early occupation of Pittston coalfield offices by the women's strike-support group the "Daughters of Mother Jones," as well as spontaneous protest walkouts in high schools;
- widespread sympathy strikes throughout the industry last June, followed by more targeted recent strikes to stop other mines from shipping coal to Pittston;
- visits of more than 40,000 miners and other sympathizers to Camp Solidarity, a tent camp set up by union members as a symbol of the striking workers' unity;
- recruitment of massive support from other unions, culminating in the UMW's decision to rejoin the AFL-CIO;
- mobilizing international pressure, including influential visits by Western European and Polish labor leaders and a UMW visit to Pittston's important Japanese coal customers;
- attracting support of more than 300 religious leaders, including many local ministers and clergy from Pittston's Greenwich headquarters;
- launching a successful write-in political campaign by local union President Jackie Stump for Virginia's House of Delegates against Judge McGlothlin's father;
- promoting federal legislation that would prohibit Pittston's withdrawal from the pension and health funds, successfully turning the BCOA coal operators against Pittston and for the bill. With the help of the police and courts, Pittston has used its bloated force of supervisors and some 350 strikebreakers to continue operations. Nonetheless, Pittston coal sales dropped one-third for the third quarter, and overall corporate profits dropped by 79 percent from last year.

After resisting any high-level mediation or

Union official upsets politician in 'strike referendum'

Three weeks before the Virginia House of Delegates election, District 28 United Mine Workers (UMW) President Jackie Stump announced an independent write-in campaign against Democrat Donald McGlothlin Sr., a 10-term incumbent whose son just happened to be the state judge who had fined the UMW \$32 million.

The seemingly quixotic gesture turned into a 2-to-1 upset victory for Stump last week, and in many ways—in the words of UMW spokesman Gene Carroll—"a referendum about how people feel about the strike and politicians who don't stand up for the union." Although he'd been endorsed by the UMW before, McGlothlin had said virtually nothing about the seven-month Pittston strike.

And while Stump campaigned as a candidate for the whole region and minimized how his candidacy was retaliation against Judge McGlothlin or an extension of the strike, voters clearly were influenced by how they viewed the union and its strike against Pittston. The UMW was able to turn its strikers and their families into a potent volunteer force, but it also bought TV and radio ads.

UMW Vice President Cecil Roberts had rallied strikers before the strike to replace the rich people in control of the government and courts with working-class officials who could then "treat the rich just as fairly as they've been treating us." In his victory speech, Stump said, "If I'm now a politician, I'm a workers' politician." —D.M.