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Is Pataki Keeping Rudy Up at Night?

Dear Diary:

I couldn't sleep last night just thinking about yesterday's Republican primary. Not even the East River's gentle breeze wafting into Gracie Mansion can ease my fears about the prospect of having a Republican-Conservative governor in Albany. All my victories - over the City Council, the liberal press corps and the municipal unions - will be for naught if George Pataki gets elected.

As governor, Pataki could do to me what Messinger, Ferrer and Green haven't been able to do - make me bleed. Last January, who would have predicted that I could neutralize Al Sharpton, apply a wrestler's "sleeper hold" to the City Council, make peace with Mario Cuomo and save Bill Clinton's crime bill? In fact, Clinton and Cuomo have been my salvation, rescuing my budget with new federal and state aid. Despite the remarkable successes I've had - reaching out to Arabs and Jews while we solved the Brooklyn Bridge drive-by shooting, converting the Ranger victory into an excuse for Staten Islanders to party in Manhattan, seducing the Financial Control Board and merging the housing and city police departments - I cannot sleep through the night.

Pataki's proposed tax cuts would undoubtedly hurt New York City the most. Suburban Republicans would fight to protect their local school aid, while Democratic state legislators would enjoy watching me suffer at the hands of a Republican-Conservative governor. And the city budget, more fragile than anyone realizes, would unravel. Just as John Lindsay had to kiss Nelson Rockefeller's ring, I would be forced to beg George Pataki for help.

Would a governor from Putnam County understand that New York City is vital to the state's economic well-being? Would Pataki try to create suburban jobs by building a new stadium for the Yankees in Westchester County - and then take credit for keeping the team in "New York"? A Republican-Conservative governor would certainly make life tougher for my constituents, and me as well, by raising subway fares and increasing CUNY tuition.

Although it has been calm all summer - the first one in years that New York hasn't had an incident like Howard Beach, a killing like Yusuf Hawkins' in Bensonhurst, or a riot like Crown Heights - I'm full of angst. The face of George Pataki keeps popping up in my nightmares. I sense that Pataki will overshadow me while I'm busy chasing snipers and closing pom shops. And a Pataki victory rules out any hope of "moving up," since both he and D'Amato will be running for re-election in 1998.

As I listen to Curtis Sliwa's late-night talk program on WABC, I wonder if I will ever get a good night's sleep again. If I praise Cuomo while endorsing Pataki, the Republicans will resent me, especially if I compare Pataki to polenta, one of my favorite dishes. If I support Cuomo, my "good friend" Guy Molinari will banish me from the Republican Party and make his daughter the 1997 Republican candidate for mayor. Perhaps my MTV buddies will invite me to host gubernatorial debates, so I can be an impartial announcer, though I won't share the mike with that vee-jay "Kennedy" again.

If only we had a World Series and the Yankees were in it, then Mario and I could campaign together as we cheered for the home team. New Yorkers would be proud and feel better having a heavy-hitter in Albany, and I wouldn't be awake in the middle of the night in a cold sweat.

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