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New York Newsday - April 18, 1994

## Mayoralty 101: A School of Hard Knocks

One of the first lessons every elected leader learns is to respect the limits of his or her power. The Bay of Pigs debacle taught John Kennedy not to rely on the CIA. Richard Nixon was forced to appoint Harry Blackmun after Congress deemed Clement Haynesworth and Harold Carswell unacceptable for the U.S. Supreme Court. Jimmy Carter discovered that a president can't govern without the cooperation of the Speaker of the House. The Beirut bombing that killed 278 Marines convinced Ronald Reagan that the American military is no match for a Middle East terrorist. And Bill Clinton has learned that the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Sen. Sam Nunn, not just the president, make policy about gays in the military.

Even mayors of New York - sooner or later - learn to respect their adversaries. Fiorello LaGuardia had to accept Robert Moses' sway over bridges, housing and highways; John Lindsay made peace with transit union chief Mike Quill after a strike stopped the city on his first day in office; and Ed Koch came to recognize that Felix Rohatyn helped save the city from bankruptcy long before Ed Koch was elected mayor.

And, even though he eventually got the headcount cuts he wanted, Rudy Giuliani's conflict with Ramon Cortines was not simply a skirmish over the number of pencil-pushers at 110 Livingston Street or a new fiscal monitor. Since Cortines kept the power to name his own staff and reached a compromise on who will watch fiscal watchdog Herman Badillo, the donnybrook was Giuliani's first rough-and-tumble public encounter with the limits of mayoral power.

Until the Cortines Affair, the new mayor had enjoyed a remarkable winning streak. The unions accepted a severance package reluctantly financed by the Municipal Assistance Corporation; the City Council had come to appreciate the benefit of letting a Republican rather than Democrats impose painful budget cuts. Furthermore, the tensions between Latinos and African Americans - as well as the geographic split between Brooklyn and Manhattan blacks - has weakened any leverage the fading Rainbow Coalition once had.

The question now for Mayor Giuliani is simple: What will the Cortines Affair mean for his future dealings with other officials who have independent sources of power, such as the MTA, the Port Authority and the state legislature? It's one thing for the Mayor of New York to ridicule borough presidents and dismiss the City Council, but it's something else to snub officials - such as the President of the United States - whose help he will ultimately need in order to improve life in this city.

For a Mayor of New York to govern, a dual strategy for political combat is essential: Within City Hall, anything short of physical abuse is acceptable, and occasionally even to be

applauded, but when you are dealing with politicians who operate north of the Tappan Zee Bridge, south of Staten Island or outside the formal boundaries of municipal government, it's better to be a mensch than a bully. After 100 days in office, the mayor has neutralized almost all of his local opponents, but the same tactics will not work - as the Cortines Affair proved - when he tries to play in someone else's ballpark.

The lesson of the Cortines Affair is that Mayor Giuliani must be protected from himself; the only serious threat he faces is his own tendency to personalize disputes and treat his critics as fools, lawbreakers or both. As the debate on the city budget crystalizes in the weeks ahead, the mayor will need help from legislators in Albany, bureaucrats in Washington and even Democrats in Congress. Most of these people will be in office long after the mayor moves on. To get their help, he must learn that putting a gun to someone's head works best with criminals, not politicians.

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