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Rudy's Tough Love for New York

Last week, Rudy Giuliani met with a group of academics, policy experts and journalists to discuss the city's strategic policy for the years ahead. The mayor spoke for almost 90 minutes without prepared remarks, charts, notes from deputy mayors or cues from media advisers. It was a remarkable performance by a mayor who, in less than a year, has proven that the city is not ungovernable, that one person can still get a grasp on the machinery of city government, even if it is sometimes a chokehold.

Rudy Giuliani's leadership style is arousing concern among politicians who are accustomed to being treated with deference and by editorial writers who expect their unsolicited advice to be taken seriously. But the mayor's in-your-face style may be just what it takes to deal with the serious fiscal problems facing a city without friends in Albany or Washington. The conventional wisdom holds that governing a city as large and diverse as New York depends on giving concessions to public unions, making deals with other elected officials, and bargaining with advocacy groups in order to expand one's governing coalition.

But the Giuliani leadership style is based on confrontation, not compromise. No one who challenges this mayor comes away unscarred. Unlike Ed Koch, who expanded the municipal payroll as soon as the fiscal crisis ended and revenues climbed, and unlike David Dinkins who raised taxes to pay for crime-prevention programs and a bigger police force while avoiding the massive cutbacks he often proposed, Giuliani takes the dire - but realistic - forecasts of the State Financial Control Board as an opportunity to do God's work. He is reducing the municipal payroll, forcing unions to modify their work rules, and rejecting outright the priorities of the City Council, including those that warrant serious consideration.

Liberals who worried that Giuliani would be especially harsh on minorities must be especially shocked at the way he's taken on Republican politicians when he supported the president's crime bill, campaigned for Mario Cuomo's reelection, and ridiculed the senatorial candidacy of Bernadette Castro. Not even supporters of David Dinkins are as angry with Giuliani as are the Molinaris of Staten Island!

Sure, Rudy's made mistakes, and he'll undoubtedly make more. He has yet to recognize the benefits of having an independent Transit Police force. In the aftermath of last week's subway bombing, New Yorkers got to see the resourcefulness of the Transit Police and their chief, Michael O'Connor, a leader who mobilizes his officers - not television cameras - to solve crimes. And though Rudy's criticism of Ramon Cortines did produce long-overdue cutbacks at 110 Livingston Street, it also generated public support for Cortines reappointment as schools

chancellor.

Rudy's biggest error occurred last spring, when he didn't go far enough in pruning government before the City Council had learned how to show its teeth. And, he is still too gentle with the uniformed services. But he was prescient in preparing New Yorkers for the hard times that lie ahead and for sticking to his belief that government spending must be cut, no matter how much pain it causes. The city's revenues are not strong enough to support further budgetary growth and its debt service expenses are climbing rapidly.

Moreover, with Republicans in control of the Congress and the state capital, the era of wishful thinking is over. Although the mayor correctly argues that the City of New York sends \$8 billion more to Washington than it gets back and \$2 billion more to Albany than it receives, New Yorkers are about to learn that the federal and state government can be a source of trauma, not relief, for the municipal budget.

What makes Giuliani so effective is that his leadership style is congruent with his policies. It stakes a tough guy to lead the city through tough times.

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