

DAILY NEWS

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New York still takes stock of world

It took a 1,500-point drop in the Dow Jones industrial average to remind the world that New York City is still the center of the action.

Thus, the floor of the New York Stock Exchange has replaced a highway tunnel in Paris and a federal courthouse in Washington as the focal point of the global media.

If there is one lesson that has emerged from this volatile stock market, it's that money always trumps sex. That's why New York will always eclipse a third-rate city like Washington.

Not even the Oval Office can compete with the energy and creativity that drives the trading floors of New York's Financial powerhouses.

Ironically, the expansion of capitalism around the world has reinforced New York's position as the best place to keep your money. Where else are there rules to restrain greed and penalties for rigged markets?

The roller-coaster economies of Asia and the explosive growth of Latin America have not lost their lure, but suddenly "emerging markets" sound more like an illness than a chance to strike it rich.

And Russia, having overdosed on capitalism, is hankering for a return to the good old days - perhaps Stalinism without Stalin.

In what other city is there so much information about financial instruments and so many purveyors of Financial services? New York is more than banks and securities firms. It is also the epicenter of the thriving Financial news industry: The Bond Buyer, CNBC, CNNfn and The Wall Street Journal. And more than 90% of the radio markets in the United States carry Bloomberg Radio, the financial news service that is based in midtown Manhattan and available in nine languages around the world.

One of the most striking aspects of the stock market swings of the past few days is the ease with which New York has handled the flow of money in and out of major markets.

More than 1 billion shares were traded on Tuesday, yet the phone lines and computers that processed those transactions functioned without a glitch.

On Monday, Bell Atlantic smoothly handled more than 75 million phone calls in New York City, a 7% increase over a normal day's telephone traffic. During the past year, the New York Stock Exchange has threatened to move out of town if the Giuliani administration refuses to provide sufficient space and financial incentives to accommodate a new headquarters.

Does NYSE President Dick Grasso - who has shrewdly made the stock exchange floor into a

television stage set - really believe anyone will follow him if he moves across the Hudson River? The NYSE would be just another computer-filled room if it moved to New Jersey a building that would have to compete with the Toms River Little League champions for media attention.

It is ironic, but the stock market's roller-coaster ride of the last few days could conceivably save New Yorkers millions by reminding both the city and the stock exchange's members that there's no place else in this uncertain world that rivals New York for making money.

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