

ANDROPOV'S MANDATE

by Bayard Rustin

On November 2nd tens of millions of American voters freely exercised their electoral franchise and voted in democratic elections. The results of that election — substantial gains for the Democratic Party — were interpreted as a repudiation of Reaganomics and a shift away from the Administration.



Bayard Rustin

Some 10 days later a second election occurred in the USSR. This one was not a nationwide referendum. In fact, that election, al-

touted by some as a closet liberal. Others more correctly cited his years of ruthlessness as director of the world's most feared security apparatus.

Few commentators, however, focused on the larger picture — the role of interest groups in the totalitarian state. Interest groups do indeed exist in Soviet society. However, these groups are different from the interest groups in our own country. All are devoted to a rigid party line. Only those groups which preserve the Soviet dictatorship are permitted to partake in the shaping of public policy. Independent interest groups, representing the desires of workers, national minorities and religious groups, are not permitted to make their voices heard in the debate over official policy.

Thus anyone who emerges to replace a fallen leader cannot be

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though its repercussions are worldwide, involved a more limited number of voters — an even dozen in fact. No voter registration campaigns were conducted in that election.

Hundreds of thousands of volunteers did not man phones to assure that voters went to the polls. No issues were openly debated among contending candidates vying for public favor. Instead, a dozen elderly men decided the direction of a world superpower in the shrouded secrecy of a Kremlin meeting room.

When Yuri Andropov emerged as the victor, he did so without the benefit of a broad national consensus. He was the instrument of the far narrower consensus of the totalitarian Soviet state.

In our own country much press speculation focused on what policy changes the shift in leadership might augur. Andropov, for 15 years the head of a brutal Soviet Secret police, was curiously

expected to embark upon a fundamentally different course. The power interests — the army, the secret police, the party bureaucracy — would not countenance such change.

In this regard the selection (actually, something akin to a coronation) of Comrade Yuri Andropov, is not like the political

Rev. Sam Roberson

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choices that you and I are entitled to make every Election Day.

Andropov's mandate is far more narrow. In the final analysis, under the Soviet dictatorship the Andropov

mandate can only be the mandate of his predecessors — to brutally repress dissent and preserve the power of an entrenched dictatorial elite; to keep the Soviet powderkeg from exploding.

A Letter To The Editor

Dear Member Choirs:

Great Moments In Gospel is doing something exciting this year and we're sure that you will want to participate in this new conception and movement regarding gospel music. Feeling there's a real need to keep gospel music alive and influential in our country, Great Moments In Gospel has organized an *Academy of Arts and Science Committee* on gospel music. This committee will travel throughout our city and state and listen to and observe various choirs perform gospel music. This is one way of taking notes and preserving an art that has been identified with our black heritage. If we let it die, we are indeed letting a part of ourselves die. One of the things that the black people have contributed to the world of art is their music, particularly, gospel music. Stars stray from this music and sing secular songs but almost always return to the root of their beginning, which most times is gospel music. We want to keep that alive. You can help us by participating in this observation survey. We believe that no one knows everything about any particular art, and it is important that we learn to participate and share with others what we know about the arts so that our younger generation might be inspired to learn from us.

Rev. Sam Roberson

22 Shopping Days 'Til Christmas



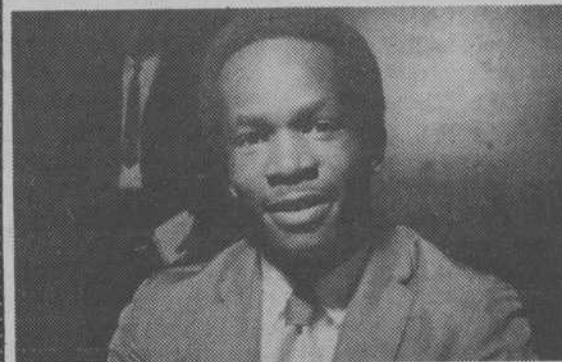
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