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El Salvador votes

El Salvador's presidential election, although flawed by bureaucratic difficulties and guerrilla disruptions, was an impressive event nonetheless. Whatever their lingering doubts, critics must face up to the evidence: those pictures of Salvadoran residents in their hundreds waiting patiently to vote.

For if the revolution is really of the people, what were the people doing out in such numbers? Intimidation by the government won't do as a reason. Before the world's press and a corps of international observers, widespread pressure of that sort would have been obvious.

In fact, charges of fraud and abuse have been relatively isolated. The fouls-ups that did occur Sunday — and which deprived many people of their right to vote — seemed more a function of inexperienced government officials attempting too much. With the aim of preventing the long lines of the 1982 Constituent Assembly election, an electoral registry based on a national identity card system was used. That would be an ambitious goal at the best of times — and El Salvador, in the midst of a bloody civil war, is experiencing the worst.

The final count is proceeding very slowly, but preliminary estimates by U.S. officials suggest that about 70 percent of those eligible voted. However, the turnout was lower than that in 1982 — not only as a result of the partial breakdown of the system but also because guerrillas stopped people from voting in some areas and cut power in others. But,

all things considered, the fact that at the very least more than a million people voted is an accomplishment that President Reagan is justified in praising.

The president was not the only one to draw favorable conclusions. Some Democrats inclined to skepticism visited El Salvador for the election and they, too, came away impressed by those lines of voters. The prospects for positive congressional action on the expensive proposals of the Kissinger commission now seem more enhanced.

Of course, doubts are not completely dispelled by an election or two, no matter how impressive. Democracy also depends among other things on an honest and independent judicial system, a scrupulous and free press, an economic system that allows every citizen a fair chance, and a general social climate that respects human rights. And on those things doubts about El Salvador will linger.

Nevertheless, the trend of the voting itself gives hope that the other pieces may eventually fall into place. Leading in the initial returns was a centrist, Jose Napoleon Duarte, who will undoubtedly face Major Roberto d'Aubuisson, a rabid right-winger who has been linked to the death squads. The run-off election, to take place within 30 days after these results are confirmed officially, will be another occasion for finger-crossing in the United States.

But so far so good. Hope of a better future gained a little on Sunday.

Fitting honor for Reddy

The French lived up to their reputation for making exactly the fitting and gracious gesture during the appearance at Carnegie-Mellon University of France's President Francois Mitterrand.

That moment came when President Mitterrand presented the coveted Legion of Honor award to Dr. Raj Reddy, head of the Robotics Institute at CMU, in recognition of his auxiliary work as chief scientist with the World Center for Personal Computation and Human Resource in Paris and as "a tireless builder of the networks of knowledge."

The World Center is involved not only in establishing computer networks to tackle France's problems — training unemployed French young people to use microcomputers is one example — but also to extend this resource to the Third World.

So it was singularly appropriate that President Mitterrand and the French government selected for France's highest honor the son of Madras peasants in faraway India who immigrated to the United States and by his brains, ability and hard work has become an acknowledged leader in the field of robotics.

President Mitterrand in his CMU speech had cited the Marshall Plan's success in reviving war-torn Europe after World War II in calling for a similar effort to extend to the Third World "a universal chain for the transfer of knowledge," one that would "step by step touch

all the populations of the planet."

A heart-warming aspect of the entire ceremony came during the actual presentation. Dr. Reddy started to move forward, but President Mitterrand motioned him back. Then the president walked toward Dr. Reddy to pin the medal on him, signifying that for that moment his was the place of highest honor — a beautifully French touch.

In his acceptance remarks Dr. Reddy said he had been impressed that Mr. Mitterrand, in discussing the World Center's projects, didn't ask how they could help the economy, but how they could help people. And the kindly, unpretentious scientist was quick to share credit with others at CMU, such as Dr. Allan Newell and President Richard Cyert.

Dr. Newell, professor of computer science, is one of the great pathfinders in the field of computer science and, in particular, in the developing field of artificial-intelligence devices. Dr. Cyert, as president of CMU, has capitalized upon the work of such as Dr. Newell and Dr. Reddy and Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon to move CMU into the forefront of American universities.

The ceremony and the French president's speech thus highlighted the international dimensions of what is going on at CMU and thus the potential for an increasing Pittsburgh role in the lives of people in developed and developing lands.



Letters to the editor

The bond between Paris and CMU

Your March 24 editorial, "Pittsburgh Meets Paris," is challenging. Indeed, we are on the threshold of a new era for this community and, as you kindly stated the French happen to be part of it. Where will this connection lead both Pittsburgh and France?

You are warning Pittsburgh when you write: "Let's watch the flow of results to be sure that it is not all in Paris' direction at the expense of the United States."

When at work in Paris, at the World Center, I hear every day the opposite warning from French Cabinet ministers, industry executives and academic leaders: "Let's watch that this center, so largely staffed with Pittsburghers, does not become a disseminator of American computers and American software."

The answer to both of these legitimate fears is the same. Our unprecedented adventure of total and equal partnership, has one purpose: disseminating, with a sense of real urgency, computer culture in our countries, and then all others. If Paris or Pittsburgh were to capture the benefits of our efforts, we will have failed, and what they would gain would be of little value.

We are simply aiming at the internationalization of knowledge long after all modern industries have discovered for themselves that they could survive and prosper only by becoming international.

The learning establishment can grow, prosper and aim at excellence in the worldwide competition only by becoming more and more international.

Technology today — telecommunications, computer networks, data banks — can make CMU, while physically remaining on its relatively small campus in Oakland, a distributed university reaching a growing number of cities and countries. This is the real future.

IBM's hardware is a major asset in more than 100 countries; why not the same for CMU's software, in the fields of science and humanities? Let us think about this, and think about how to make it happen.

You wrote in your editorial that, indeed, it could bring

"Pittsburgh prominently into the world's high-tech vanguard." Indeed it can, but we are aiming at much more: establishing distributed knowledge, at its best, around the world as the only durable basis for employment and peace, as the one antidote to the arms race, when all others have failed.

So the stakes are high. But this very global ambition is the real bond between Pittsburgh and Paris. Nothing less, and nothing else.

J. J. SERVAN-SCHREIBER
Paris

Editor's note: Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber is chairman of the World Center for Personal Computation and Human Resources in Paris.

A simple choice

After reading the March 8 article, "Phone Wiring Rate Confusion," I am dumbfounded. I always thought anybody who is the consumer advocate for Pennsylvania would be of above-average intelligence and have a reasonable amount of common sense.

David Barasch, our present consumer advocate, states in the article that the "bulk of the public" does not understand the Bell Telephone Wire Maintenance Plan, which may be true. He goes on to say, "I did not know from my own bill that I had a choice to make."

I now quote from the page that accompanied my telephone bill:

"The Public Utility Commission has approved options for maintenance of the inside telephone wiring on your premises... if you do not wish to participate in the monthly wire maintenance plan after March 27, please sign the top of this page and return this page with your bill payment. If you do not return this page, you are indicating that you wish to participate in the... plan."

If this doesn't indicate a choice of options, I don't know what does.

Clearly, this says some things about Mr. Barasch. Either he doesn't read his bill or he doesn't understand what he reads or he has it in for the phone company, or all of the above. Based on his past record and now this, I would

say the latter is the clear choice.

Now let's clear up the confusion. Before Jan. 1, 1984, because Bell of Pennsylvania was a monopoly, it owned all the wiring in your home and Bell was solely responsible for its maintenance. After Jan. 1, because of divestiture and related action, the customer now owns all the wiring in his home and he is responsible for repairing it.

Since Bell has a trained and experienced fleet of workers, it is simply offering its customers what could be a cost-containing option for maintenance of inside wiring. If you don't want the option, sign the form and mail it with your payment. It's as simple as that. Any questions, Mr. Barasch? Read your bill insert. That's why it's there.

BLAYNE E. BEELER
Service Representative
Bell of Pennsylvania
McKeesport

Obscene amounts

In President Reagan's Feb. 22 press conference he fielded a question about the defense budget this way: "You don't decide to spend a certain amount of money on defense. You look at what you believe is necessary to do in order to ensure national security and then you add up how much it is going to cost."

I think herein lies one of the basic problems with the Reagan administration, with our defense budget, and with our economy. "What you believe is necessary to do in order to ensure national security" is really what Caspar Weinberger wants rather than what we really need.

In my opinion, continuing the nuclear-arms race is certainly not the best way to provide national security. Finding a way to

end the nuclear-arms race would be far better. Certainly, spending \$6 billion of taxpayers' money every week is not what we need to do to provide the citizens of the United States with an adequate national defense. It seems to me that our defense budget is out of control.

In spite of the obscene amounts spent by the United States for defense, our military is, nevertheless, inefficient and ineffective (maybe partly because of the obscene amounts we spend.)

AARON P. LEVINSON
Pittsburgh

Rich Mondale

I urge anyone who anticipates voting for Walter Mondale to take a few minutes to read "Bad News for the Doomsayers" by Hugh Sidey in the March 26 issue of Time magazine.

Mondale constantly accuses the president of being insensitive to the needs of the poor and caring only for the rich, but according to the article, Mondale is himself a rich man.

Does anyone honestly believe Mondale got rich by dedicating his life to the poor? Not hardly! That position does not pay very well. Just ask Mother Teresa, or Jessy Jackson for that matter.

Perhaps if the media were to conduct an exit poll as Mondale departs the voting booth on Election Day, we might just find out that he voted for Reagan in his own self-interest.

J. C. MUTCHLER
Ford City, Pa.

Today's thought

Principles have no real force except when one is well fed.

— Mark Twain

small society



Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover

Political classic in New York

NEW YORK — The Democratic primary campaign here is a political classic — an unalloyed test of the true strength of both Walter F. Mondale and Gary Hart.

Fritz Mondale, the ultimate insider preaching the gospel of traditional liberalism, is basing his campaign on the premise that New York Democrats still adhere to that view of the world. And he is being supported unstintingly by those who clearly do, most notably Gov. Mario Cuomo.

By contrast, Gary Hart's campaign rests just as clearly on the assumption that there is a new majority of Democrats who want to turn the page to a new generation of leaders and ideas.

And both candidates are being given the kind of high-intensity attention from the "free media" — that is, television news and newspapers — that should mean the nature of the choice will be obvious to the million or so Democrats who will vote next Tuesday.

The issue is by no means settled. Although public-opinion polls show Mondale with a lead of 7 or 8 percentage points, professionals in both camps believe that margin probably exaggerates the lead the former vice president holds. They seem to agree the race is still to be won or lost in the final days.

By most estimates, the outcome is likely to be settled by which candidate seizes and holds the offensive in those last days.

On paper, Mondale enjoys enormous advantages. Cuomo, who was elected by the traditional Democratic coalition two years ago, is not only supporting Mondale but actually directing the campaign on a daily basis. Mondale also has the backing of such other party leaders as Mayor Ed Koch and Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan, plus the full array of labor organizations and liberal party

clubs. His media consultant is the long-reigning guru here, David Garth.

By contrast, Hart's campaign is being run by Jim Monaghan, a young operative from Colorado, and relies on a small army of volunteers and a lavishly financed television and newspaper advertising campaign. The real contest is being waged, however, on the evening news programs on television, both local and network, as the two candidates race around the state slashing at one another.

Mondale is attacking Hart on essentially the same line he used so successfully in Illinois — the suggestion that Hart is "inconsistent" and not "surefooted" enough to be president.

But in the last few days Hart has set Mondale back on his heels with his accusation that Mondale's refusal to promise withdrawal of American troops from Central America is, in effect, the Ronald Reagan policy and threatens the nation with another Vietnam.

Hart is also planning to zero in on several policies of the Carter administration Mondale publicly supported as vice president but now claims he privately opposed. And Hart has a particularly salient case in point here — Mondale's lobbying in 1978 for the sale of F15 fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia, a decision he now tells Jewish voters here he never supported.

But the optimism creeping into the Hart campaign seems to rest most on the candidate's own improved performance in the last few days. As Monaghan wryly observes, "It turns around when you go two days now without shooting yourself in the foot."

Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover are syndicated columnists who specialize in national politics.



Russell Baker

Watching the candidates run

NEW YORK — It's late at night, but maybe not so late as it seems. Maybe it seems late because Walter Mondale is bowling. The spectacle of a man running for president by bowling can leave you disoriented.

But maybe it really is late, for the mouse is out. I don't know how long the mouse has been staring at me, because I have been too busy staring at Walter Mondale bowling. I think he's bowling in Queens.

"He wouldn't bowl in Manhattan, would he?" I ask the mouse. "I mean, if a man's running for president, he would bowl in Queens, visit a synagogue in Brooklyn and drink a Perrier with lime in Manhattan."

The mouse has grown comfortable with me, but he never converses. He likes my companionship, and I like his. I didn't know how I'd get through the 1984 campaign until the mouse came along.

The mouse sneers as Walter Mondale's bowling ball rumbles down the alley and knocks down seven pins.

I have to explain politics to the mouse:

"What he's doing, you see, is he's showing them he can't bowl any better than they can so they won't have to worry about having a president who'll invite them to the White House bowling alley and humiliate them by rolling a perfect 300."

Walter Mondale is replaced by a man with a ruined auto transmission, which is repaired perfectly in 30 seconds.

"That man will never be president," I tell the mouse. "Too many voters feel inferior to people who can get their cars repaired without six trips back to the shop."

Sen. Gary Hart appears. He is saying he will move the American embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The mouse gives me a puzzled look,

which I interpret to mean, "Is Hart making a play for the moving men's vote?" A shrewd question, too, for moving men are a big part of the New York population. But the mouse is missing the main point. He does not remember Estes Kefauver.

"Hart's promise to move that embassy reminds me of Estes Kefauver," I say. "Running for president, Estes drifted into a northern Minnesota town, dead tired in the dead of night — this was back in '56 — and was led into a packed hall, and his advance man said, 'This crowd is full of Indians,' and Estes said, 'What's their problem?' and the advance man looked at him the way you'd look at a halfwit and said, 'Damn it, Estes, they're Indians!'"

The mouse didn't get it. "Look," I tell him, "you've got this Colorado, cowboy-boots Hart, groggy with fatigue, and they haul him into New York and tell him there's a big Jewish vote here, and he says, 'What's their problem?' so somebody tells him, 'They're miserable because our embassy isn't located in Jerusalem.' It's like Estes going after the Indian vote."

Hours pass. Possibly days. You lose track of everything when men are running for president in the parlor. When, for example, did the mouse get up on the kitchen counter and put his nose right up to the screen? He has spotted a huge cheese.

Yes, Walter Mondale is running for president in a West Side delicatessen. The mouse is trying to get at the cheese, but Walter Mondale is in the way.

Gary Hart is in an Irish bar. "What's their problem?" he must have asked, for he is telling the customers how he will unite Northern Ireland to the Republic. Uninterested in beer, the mouse has dozed off.

Russell Baker is a syndicated columnist for The New York Times.