

1990 that Mexico was a "perfect dictatorship," having all the characteristics of a dictatorship except the appearance of one, his phrase was widely repeated inside Mexico. Yet this very fact, Reding points out, "is itself a clear sign that the 'perfect dictatorship' is no longer so perfect."

A new political culture, stressing respect for democracy and human rights, has emerged in Mexico. The catalyst for it, Reding says, was the July 1988 presidential elections, in which there were allegations of massive vote fraud. When early returns on election night showed opposition leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in the lead, the U.S.-style computerized vote tabulation system that was providing returns over national television suddenly went dead. The votes instead were counted "the old-fashioned way." After a week's delay, the official results were released, showing an old-fashioned result: Carlos Salinas de Gortari of the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was the winner.

Cárdenas, however, would not follow "the old rules, whereby he might have recognized a Salinas presidency in exchange for more favorable treatment of his coalition in the Senate and at the state and local levels." The next year, he founded a new party, whose very name—the Party of the

Democratic Revolution (PRD)—underscored his challenge. "The PRD's call for a revolutionary change in the way Mexico is governed," Reding observes, "has, in effect, transformed every election in which it participates into a referendum on authoritarian rule."

Today, Reding says, "the culture of *presidencialismo* appears more naked than at any time since the ill-fated reign of Porfirio Díaz [the dictator overthrown in 1911]. The emerging democratic culture rejects the absolutist presidency outright, insisting on a true separation of powers, independent electoral authorities, a genuine multi-party system, and strict enforcement of internationally recognized standards of human rights." While these ideas are not new, Reding points out, their incorporation into a political movement is.

Although the Salinas administration has overhauled the nation's electoral system, Reding says, the vaunted reforms still reflect "a pervasive distrust of democracy, a continuing obsession with the trauma of 1988, and a determination to reconstruct the damaged foundations of *presidencialismo*." Salinas may continue to hold power, Reding concludes, "but nothing short of genuine democracy can now restore respect for the presidency."

Moxie In Moscow

"Are Russians Lazy?" by S. Frederick Starr, in *World Monitor* (June 1991), 1 Norway St., Boston, Mass. 02115.

Many Western observers, and not a few Russian ones, have expressed skepticism about the prospects for democratic change in the Soviet Union. Democracy and free enterprise, they say, require a capacity for independent initiative that, after centuries of czars and decades of commissars, most Russians don't have. Not so, says historian Starr, president of Oberlin College.

"There is much evidence that the stereotype of passive Russians who lack civic initiative is dead wrong," he declares. "Take the economy, for instance. If Russians are so lacking in initiative, how did a huge private (if illegal) sector arise even during the repressive Brezhnev years?" This "second

economy," according to U.S. researchers, produced half of all personal income. Private entrepreneurs, by Soviet estimates in 1986, accounted for 20 percent of all retail trade, 30 percent of the service sector, and 40 percent of businesses in areas from auto repairs to tailoring.

Although Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev "has stated repeatedly that the public is hostile to private enterprise," the All Union Center for the Study of Public Opinion in Moscow found that a third of Russians would open their own businesses if they could do so legally; a quarter of the rest are put off from doing so only by a lack of access to credit or by fear that the

state would seize whatever they earned.

"If Russians are too passive to assert their will against the entrenched political establishment, one would scarcely expect them to form independent groups to press their demands," Starr notes. Yet that is just what has happened in recent years, as thousands of lobbying clubs and associations of all types have been set up. Labor has established independent unions, many patterned on Poland's Solidarity. Lawyers, journalists, and other professionals also have organized their own groups. Independent political parties have already come to power in most non-Russian republics, and organization is proceeding rapidly in the far-flung territory of the Russian Republic.

Despite "the stereotypical images advanced by those in Russia and the West who are eager to justify the Kremlin's new authoritarianism as a necessary evil," Starr says, there is "ample evidence that Rus-



Unlike these supposed Soviet heroes of production in Natalia Levitina's "The 'Vanguard' of Perestroika," many Russians have ample capacity for independent initiative, says historian Starr.

sians, freed from fear, possess as much initiative and capacity for independent action as do members of other developed societies in Europe, Asia, and the Americas." The West, he says, should accept "at face value" the democratic movement in the Soviet Union, not "belittle it simply because it has not, in a mere five years, triumphed completely over the old system."

Premature Reunification

German reunification, finally accomplished in 1990, might have come about almost four decades earlier. Heilbrunn, a writer and former assistant editor at the *National Interest*, says that it was probably a good thing that it did not.

On March 10, 1952, Soviet leader Josef Stalin sent a note to the U.S., British, and French governments, in which he proposed creation of a unified, neutral Germany. Could this proposal, asks Heilbrunn, have been an opportunity to unify Germany on minimally acceptable terms, one that, had it been seized, might have spared East Germans nearly four decades of totalitarian rule?

"Germany and the Cold War: An Inquest" by Jacob E. Heilbrunn, in *Global Affairs* (Summer 1991), International Security Council, 1155 15th St. N.W., Ste. 502, Washington, D.C. 20005.

The allies at the time looked upon Stalin's note with great suspicion, seeing in it a tactical move to block formation of the European Defense Community. Yet the U.S. State Department and Britain's Whitehall took the dictator's proposal seriously. When Stalin later in the month advanced a revised version, the State Department Policy Planning Staff commented that "It would be unwise to assume that the note is only a propaganda move."

Kurt Schumacher, leader of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), enthusiastically agreed. He wanted to see "an independent, unified Germany—and unified precisely *because* it was independent,"