PREFACE

Political Parties in an Era of Change

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A decade ago, toward the end of the 1980s, a group photograph of the leaders of the nations described in this book would feature Ronald Reagan, president of the United States; Margaret Thatcher, prime minister of Great Britain; François Mitterrand, president of France; Bettino Craxi, prime minister of Italy; Brian Mulroney, prime minister of Canada; Robert Hawke, prime minister of Australia; Miguel de la Madrid, president of Mexico; Yitzhak Shamir, prime minister of Israel; Helmut Kohl, chancellor of West Germany; P.W. Botha, president of South Africa; and Mikhail Gorbachev, president of the Soviet Union. A current photograph would show Bill Clinton representing the United States; Tony Blair, Great Britain; Jacques Chirac, France; Romano Prodi, Italy; Jean Chretien, Canada; John Howard, Australia; Ernesto Zedillo, Mexico; Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel; Nelson Mandela, South Africa; Boris Yeltsin, Russia; and Helmut Kohl, Germany. Only the bulky Kohl remains a fixed presence, even though he leads a recently unified Germany.

The new photograph signifies much more than the transfiguration of an old negative. In some cases, the actual names of the countries have changed—most notably the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has become the Commonwealth of Independent States. Altering a country's formal name is something once thought reserved for the former colonial nations of Africa, as was recently the case when the name Zaire gave way to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or when communists seized power and proclaimed the new nations to be instruments of

democracy (as in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea—i.e., North Korea). A senior cartographer at the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency lamented the altered maps and names changes, saying: "Suddenly, everything we had produced was out of date—hundreds, thousands of maps, all out of date."[1]

In other cases, the leaders in the 1997 photograph hail from countries that have retained their formal names, but represent different political parties than their predecessors. Even so, the change has been dramatic. Some parties that held substantial legislative majorities in 1987 have seen their standing so severely decimated that they have been left to wander in obscurity. The most prominent examples of such political upheavals are in Canada where the Progressive Conservatives went into the 1993 elections with a 154-seat majority in the Canadian parliament and managed to hold onto just two seats afterward. A similar experience recently transpired in Great Britain where the Conservative Party yielded power to New Labour led by Tony Blair. The Conservative defeat was so large that the party was left with just 164 seats in Parliament to the Labor Party's 419 seats. The Labor majority actually *exceeds* the total number of Tory seats. Most stunningly, apartheid in South Africa was ended as whites ceded power in a new constitutional arrangement following the election of that country's first black president, Nelson Mandela, who had spent twenty-eight years in a South African prison.

In nearly every instance, the new leaders can attribute their positions to the end of the Cold War. Without the communist threat, it is unlikely that Bill Clinton would have seized power in the United States. Certainly, the collapse of communism made Boris Yeltsin the man of the hour in Russia. Some of the other nations covered in this book played important roles in the bitter struggle between East and West. Israel was an important beachhead for U.S. interests in the Middle East, as the Soviet Union struggled for a geographic foothold first in Egypt and then in other Mideast nations that remained obdurately opposed to the existence of the Jewish state. Keeping South Africa stable, given its vital natural resources and strategic location, was also deemed vital to American interests. Australia remained an important ally in the Pacific, and that country even sent troops in support of the failed U.S. effort during the Vietnam War. The United States also desired stability in neighboring Canada and Mexico and got it—not only there, but in Western Europe, where communists were kept from seizing power in France and Italy. Of course, keeping Germany from becoming a military threat remained an important objective for both superpowers.

Since the end of the Cold War, a "new world order," once proclaimed by President George Bush following the Persian Gulf War, has

finally come to pass. While the shape and dimensions of that new world order have yet to coalesce, several features are evident. One is that postindustrialization continues apace on a global scale. Another involves the creation of the World Wide Web and the instant communication the Internet makes possible among individuals without regard for national boundaries or government intervention (such as opening the mails), thereby obviating the need for intermediaries. A third, and most disturbing, feature is an increase in ethnic, religious, and regional tensions as evidenced in the near breakup of Canada and the battle between the Russians and the dissatisfied citizens of Chechnya. President Clinton acknowledged that victory in the Cold War had brought its own set of new difficulties: "The disintegration of the former Soviet Union eliminated the preeminent threat but exposed many others: an increasingly tangled and dangerous web of international terrorism, crime, and drug trafficking; the aggression of rogue states and vicious ethnic and religious conflicts; the spread of dangerous weapons, including nuclear, biological, and chemical ones; and transnational threats like disease, overpopulation, and environmental degradation."[2]

While the defining characteristics of the post–Cold War era still remain clouded, political leaders are reeling from the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the relegation of Soviet-style communism to the ash bin of history two years later. Shortly before his death in 1994, Richard Nixon wrote, "We live in a new world—a world we helped create."[3] But in this "new world" much that was once familiar has disappeared: the old arrangements; the old way of doing things; indeed, the old order itself has collapsed. In Moscow, for example, guardians of Lenin's tomb no longer rely on the Communist Party to pay the bills and have instead turned to a department store located across from Lenin's remains to defray the rent.[4] Meanwhile, in 1995 three hundred Russian troops marched on the plains of Kansas—not as invaders but in a joint training exercise with U.S. soldiers for a peacekeeping mission in strive-torn Bosnia. While the former enemies posed for souvenir snapshots in front of a nattily dressed Russian color guard, Colonel Gennadi M. Averyanov declared: "In the past, we could never imagine that we would one day conduct combined operations on American soil. Every day brings something new."[5]

The fact that nearly every day during the 1990s has brought forth not just something new, but something *extraordinary*, is the primary motivation behind this collection of essays. Specifically, we are interested in knowing more about the altered state of the political parties and their place in polities that are undergoing substantial change in the selected Western and non-Western nations covered in this volume. In each case, the contributors ask an important question: "What does

change look like?" Inevitably, the answers vary. In some places, change resembles a shift in the conceptual structure of the Cold War–era parties that are changing in form, if not in name. France, Great Britain, and the United States are interesting examples where the major parties are altering their ideas and their plans for implementing them. In other cases, the collapse of the old institutional orders and their trappings is readily apparent. Russia, South Africa, and Canada fall into this category. Mexico is an instance where the once impregnable Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party or PRI) seems on the verge of losing its grasp on the reigns of power. In nearly all of the countries examined, the electoral maps have been redrawn, party structures have been rebuilt, or the mechanisms of the state once controlled by the parties have been replaced. Thus, change continues to be the order of the day. It remains for us not only to pose the question, "What does change look like?" but to attempt to provide an answer.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Thomas L. Friedman, "Cold War without End," *New York Times Magazine*, August 22, 1993, p. 30.

2. Bill Clinton, *Between Hope and History: Meeting America's Challenges for the 21st Century* (New York: Times Books, 1996), p. 143.

3. Richard Nixon, *Beyond Peace* (New York: Random House, 1994), p. 4.

4. See David Remnick, "America: Love It or Loathe It," *New York Times Magazine*, June 6, 1995.

5. Quoted in James Brooke, "Russians Have Landed in Kansas! But They've Come to Make Peace," *New York Times*, October 27, 1995, p. A-14.