

Clinton's attacks on Starr rile 'elites' and 'New Dems'

by Edward Spannaus

The story was recently related, that a few weeks before his first inauguration as President, Bill Clinton found himself at the Georgetown home of Katharine Graham, the “black widow” of the *Washington Post* and the Washington social set. Graham had invited the usual crowd, the so-called opinion-makers, the power brokers, the policymakers, and the trend-setters, and at a certain point she toasted the incoming President, and invited him to offer his own toast in response.

Clinton's response came down to: Thanks for dinner, I'm looking forward to being your President—and (smiling) I'm warning you: You're not going to like me.

This account was recently presented in the *Washington Post's* “Style” section, which noted the accuracy of Clinton's prophecy as regards the “Washington Establishment.”

Nowhere is this clearer, than in the reaction to the President's Aug. 17 televised address to the nation. The American population was in general satisfied with the President's explanation, tired of the whole thing, and most wanted to hear nothing more about it—in fact, many said they already knew more than they wanted to, about the President and Monica Lewinsky.

The American public wants to let the President be the President, to deal with the pressing issues of the day. This is particularly urgent, because the Presidency is under attack at the point where we are facing an onrushing global economic and financial collapse, and the responsibilities of the office of the Presidency are perhaps greater than at any time since the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The Gore factor

To make matters worse, the situation within the administration is reported to be intensely factionalized—and not only around the Lewinsky matter.

Several highly placed sources in Washington have informed *EIR* that, over the weekend of Aug. 22-23, Vice President Al Gore, from his vacation site in Hawaii, placed a series of phone calls to Russian leaders and to President Clinton, in the following sequence. First, the Vice President called Russian Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko. Next, he called Viktor Chernomyrdin; then, President Yeltsin; then Chernomyrdin again. And, only at that point did the Vice President contact President Clinton. These sources hypothesize that Gore neglected to tell President Clinton that the first call in the sequence was actually to his “friend” Chernomyrdin.

The net effect of Gore's intervention into the Russia crisis—before consulting with the President and before President Clinton had even formulated a U.S. position on how to deal with the worsening Russia collapse—was to amplify the international crisis. It was in effect an attempt to damage Clinton administration policy.

Furthermore, Gore's actions came in the context of public attacks against President Clinton on the part of the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, former Sen. Sam Nunn (Ga.), current House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (Mo.), and others, around the Monica Lewinsky affair. This kind of behavior can destroy the world. In this moment of global financial meltdown, everything depends on what action is taken by the President of the United States.

'Elites' enraged at Clinton

After his Aug. 17 speech, Clinton was savaged by the editorial writers and the talking heads of television for not crawling and grovelling, and for not being sufficiently “contrite” and apologetic. But what enraged the media and “inside the Beltway” crowd the most, were the President's attacks on Kenneth Starr.

What Clinton had done, was relatively mild, when compared with what Starr actually deserves. (See, e.g., “Kenneth Starr’s Hidden Conflict of Interest,” *EIR*, Aug. 28.) But the next day, the *Washington Post* complained that “this was no *mea culpa* speech,” and criticized the President for being “as defiant as he was contrite.”

The *Post* was not alone; almost uniformly, the editorial writers fired away at the President, singling out his attacks on the independent counsel. The infamous “fourth branch” of the government worked itself into a frenzy over the fact that the overwhelming majority of the American people were not following its lead in calling for the overthrow of the U.S. President.

By the end of the week after the President’s speech, the *Washington Post* filled its Aug. 21 editorial commentary page with no fewer than five attacks on the President. Leading the pack was neo-conservative Charles Krauthammer, who growled that Clinton “actually had the insolence to put the blame for the ‘spectacle of the past seven months’ on Ken Starr”—as if Starr would have packed up and gone home in January, had Clinton acknowledged a relationship with Monica Lewinsky back then.

Most revealing was a surprisingly frank analysis in the same day’s *New York Times*. “Inside Washington, pundits and editorial writers excoriated a destroyed Presidency,” said the *Times*. “Outside Washington, most people tell pollsters that they are tired of hearing about Monica S. Lewinsky. They want to the country to move on.”

The *Times* bemoaned the “schism between the real world and the self-styled political elites” on which, it said, the White House is banking. But, not giving up yet, the *Times* laid out its strategy, which is premised on the hope that “days of scathing commentary from Washington insiders—and snippets on television of Mr. Clinton lying about his relationship with Ms. Lewinsky—will finally penetrate the public’s hitherto intense resistance to examine the tawdry details and cause Americans to rebel against the President and his party.”

Sooner or later, one side or another—the elites, or the people—will prevail, said the *Times*, and it quoted Thomas Mann of the Brookings Institution: “Either elites will shape public opinion over the next several months and bring the public to the view that the President must go, or the elites will discover the wisdom of the public’s continued support of the President.”

The blood-thirsty mood of the media was even striking to Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, the former Washington correspondent of the London *Sunday Telegraph*, who did so much in the early years of the Clinton administration to create and orchestrate the scandals against the President—particularly the Paula Jones case which Pritchard boasted that he personally instigated.

“There has been a tectonic change in the political landscape,” Evans-Pritchard wrote in the Aug. 25 *Daily Telegraph*. “Having just returned to the U.S. after a year in Britain,

I am dumbfounded by the insurgent mood of the Washington media,” the admitted British intelligence stringer admitted. “Indeed, it is downright putschist. Former cheerleaders for the Clinton White House are on the television every night fulminating against the President, cursing him with the fury of the betrayed.”

The traitorous ‘New Democrats’

By the first weekend after the President’s address, the unrelenting news media assault was having its effect—not on the population, but on much of the leadership of the Democratic Party and even on the President’s own circle of advisers. The Congressional Democratic leadership was openly critical, and on Aug. 25, House Minority Leader Gephardt said the President’s conduct was “reprehensible,” and openly discussed the possibility of impeachment. Two days earlier, former Sen. Sam Nunn, one of the party’s elder statesmen, took to the pages of (where else?) the *Washington Post*, to call upon the President to resign, falsely blaming Clinton for “dragging this nation through seven months of preoccupation with the Monica Lewinsky story.”

Almost no one was to be found among Congressional Democrats who would step forward and demand that the President be allowed to be the President, to deal with pressing matters of state, such as the financial collapse, without the distractions being thrown at him by Kenneth Starr and the news media. Where were the Democrats who would tell the truth about Starr: that he was conducting an illegal and unconstitutional crusade against a President who was elected and re-elected by the American people? The “New Democrats” were more interested in “triangulating” among the news media and the commentators, than in defending the Presidency from such a unconstitutional and treasonous attack.

Exemplary are the comments of Rep. James Moran (Va.), the co-chair of the “New Democratic Coalition,” who is telling New Democratic candidates to “disavow” the President, saying that his admissions about Lewinsky will especially hurt right-of-center candidates in suburban swing districts.

The *Washington Post* did what it could to stoke the internal dissension within the administration, with its lead story on Aug. 27 claiming that “President Clinton’s political advisers have reached virtually unanimous agreement that he must say more about his relationship with Monica S. Lewinsky”—but, the *Post* sadly noted, the First Family does not agree.

The *Post* cited anonymous “White House aides” as saying that the dilemma is that, although polls show that a large majority of the public is weary of the scandal and accepts the President’s acknowledgment that his behavior was wrong, “many elected officials and editorial commentators feel that Clinton’s attack on Starr showed that he was not genuinely taking responsibility.”

“The public was fine, the elites were not,” an unnamed adviser is quoted as saying. “You’ve got to let the elites win one.”