

Another Carter...



America's image and position abroad is on the same downward spiral as during the Carter years, when the United States was feared by none, respected by few and ignored by many

In the unmaking!

LITTLE IS HAPPENING HERE IS Washington these days that doesn't have Bill Clinton targeted for Jimmy Carter's fate.

From health care reform, where the president's plan is under savage assault, to foreign policy, where the Clinton White House remains extremely vulnerable, the sector of 1996 looms larger with each passing day.

Hard as it may be to believe, just two years from now the presidential primary season will be at hand. One more the presidential aspirants will be trudging through the snows of New Hampshire and lining up for the TV talk shows.

Two years from now might seem like a very longtime to many. But in actuality — especially with Bill Clinton in the White House, a president perceived to be extremely vulnerable for a great variety of reasons — presidential politics is already dominating nearly every gesture being made these days by Clinton himself as well as the growing ensemble of likely challengers.

First of all there's Clinton's personal life itself. So far he's managed to weather the ever-recurring bimbo stories, including the devastating in-depth reports that emerged during January in *The National Spectator* and *The Los Angeles Times*. For the moment this issue has once again receded ... but it will return.

Then there is Whitewater.

Having succumbed to Justice Department appointed equivalent of a special prosecutor, it's evident now that this matter is not going to go away either. It's not likely Clinton is going to be found guilty of criminal conduct and it's not likely under any foreseeable scenario that

From



Washington

the special prosecutor is going to find anything impeachable, but it is quite likely there are going to be a variety of financial improprieties brought forward and that Hillary Clinton's role at the Rose Law firm will be found to have put her into situations of unethical conflicts of interest. Potentially most damaging of all, though, it now seems likely that as governor of Arkansas some of Clinton's steps vis-a-vis Madison Savings and Loan are going to look very suspicious when all the facts are brought out.

Beyond these very personal issues that seem destined to arraign Bill Clinton throughout his presidency there are basic foreign policy issues — economic, political, and military — which are also likely to cause considerable difficulties for this president when he seeks reelection.

True enough, many of these issues are not resolvable and would plague and American president of either party. But Bill Clinton has a particular problem. He is perceived to be inexperienced when it comes to foreign affairs. And for that reason alone he is being pushed into doing things he neither feels comfortable with

nor knows a great deal about. And in the end, every American failure, whether it could have been prevented or not, will be perceived to have resulted from there being an inexperienced man at the helm in the Oval Office.

A few months ago a longtime friend visiting Washington from the Mid-east reminded me that way back when George Bush was riding higher than ever in the polls, right after the conclusion of the Coalition War in 1991, I had written a column predicting his upcoming defeat.

Well, Bill Clinton is higher than he's ever been in the polls — though nowhere near where Bush was back in 1991. And the reality is that Clinton is already running hard for 1996, the year I suspect he is likely to go the way of the last Democratic president after his one-term that ended in 1980.

With North Korea Clinton faces a potential showdown full of immense danger and uncertainty.

The situation in Bosnia is not likely to be resolved easily and the threat of serious and ongoing American intervention — other than some relatively cheap and easy air strikes — is not very real.

In Somalia the Americans are pulling out, as quietly as they can. The situation there will then revert pretty much to what it was before the American-UN intervention began.

In the Mid-east, the ongoing attempts to keep patching the leaking political dike will continue from Algeria in the west to Pakistan in the east. But the possibility of a crisis is always present. And whereas the situation between Israel and the Palestinians looks positive to many at the moment, it is an extremely uneasy relationship that is not likely to evolve as



President William Clinton
Abdicating leadership at UN and Nato

the politicians are saying it will.

"When Ronald Reagan and George Bush were around people slept pretty well at night because from a foreign policy standpoint we had real leaders in the White House," insists Republican presidential contender Senator Bob Dole. "The bottom line is that America, under the Clinton administration, is abdicating American leadership at the United Nations, at Nato and around the globe... Unfortunately our image and position abroad is on the same downward spiral as during the Carter years, when the United States was feared by none, respected by few and ignored by many."

In short, it's not very likely that President Bill Clinton is going to have much to his credit in the foreign policy arena as he campaigns in 1996. And with the Republicans and the well-financed business community gunning for Clinton on his main domestic initiative — sweeping health care reform — it's likely he will have that to crow about either next time around.

These thoughts are being written on the day Americans celebrate as Valentine's day — a neat little combination of sentimentality and commercialism. And the politically pointed Valentine card is actually one that came in the mail.

Later on, some thoughts about those who are already running hard to retire Bill Clinton back to Arkansas.