

**STEVEN HATFILL**, if indeed he is responsible for the anthrax campaign in the United States last year, is a villainous criminal of the deepest dye, who deserves the harshest punishment the courts can impose. Yet even if his guilt should be established by some future trial, the way in which the case has been investigated—and especially the role of the media—should still be seen as a deeply sinister abuse of official power. If Hatfill, however, is innocent, then the official campaign of vilification against him over the past few months must be counted among the most horrendous legal scandals in modern American history. The only reason we are not speaking in terms of “McCarthyism” and “witch-hunt” is that the worst media culprits are located firmly on the liberal end of the spectrum, and, as we all know, only conservatives can be guilty of hysterical yellow journalism.

Following the anthrax attacks in the fall of 2001, suspicion immediately fell upon Middle Eastern enemies, above all Iraq, a linkage that made a U.S. attack upon that country almost certain. Soon, however, federal agencies began publicizing their belief that the anthrax originated within the United States, probably from a “lone wolf” scientist with ultraright views. Since this theory immediately took the heat off Iraq, it was wonderful news for administration doves, especially in the State Department.

Over the past year, federal law-enforcement agencies leaked a series of stories aimed directly at establishing the guilt of Steven Hatfill, who had the misfortune to head their list of suspects. Of course, any story that actually named Hatfill would have been libelous, so the *New York Times* used a pseudonym, “Mr. Z.” (Apparently, the name “Josef K” had already been taken.) On July 2, *Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof published what amounted to a brief for the prosecution. The story not only argued strongly for the guilt of “Z” in the 2001 attacks but implied his involvement in earlier acts that can only be termed “genocidal.” Kristof publicly asked the FBI, “Have you examined whether Mr. Z has connections to the biggest anthrax outbreak among humans ever recorded, the one that sickened more than 10,000 black farmers in Zimbabwe in 1978-80?” Of course, even if

Hatfill were arrested, such a claim would never surface in a trial; it would, however, float in the background of leftist conspiracy theory, polluting the minds of any conceivable jury, convincing them that they were dealing not just with a Hatfill but with a Mengele *redux*. Have you stopped exterminating your minorities?

By August, the federal law-enforcement/media complex was ready to strike, and the FBI undertook a massively publicized search of Hatfill’s apartment. Meanwhile, the news media—the Justice Department’s entertainment division—were full of stories more or less proclaiming that *we have our man*. Had he not even written an unpublished novel strikingly prophetic of the actual anthrax attacks? An arrest and trial must be imminent: The lone wolf was caged.

And then things started to fall apart. No worthwhile evidence against Hatfill came to light, and many of the associations of time and place that seemed to connect him to the crimes proved false or misleading. Even the much-vaunted novel that foretold the attacks proved to be irrelevant, except to the extent that, like a hundred other thrillers from the 1990’s, it dealt with the general theme of biological warfare against the United States. Hatfill repeatedly offered to take medical tests that would measure his exposure to anthrax, and he basically did everything he reasonably could do to prove he had nothing to do with the attacks. That’s right: Hatfill had to *prove his innocence*, to establish that he had not committed the crimes, actual and rumored, that were surfacing almost randomly in the media. In the process, any concept of “innocent until proven guilty” was ignored.

Perhaps the lowest point in the whole outrageous story occurred in Nicholas Kristof’s column immediately following the Justice Department’s open naming of Hatfill as a lead suspect. Recalling his earlier stories about “Mr. Z,” “the overwhelming focus of the investigation,” Kristof noted smugly that “I didn’t name him. But over the weekend, Mr. Z named himself: He is Steven J. Hatfill.” Note the suggestion that Hatfill’s name came to light not because of systematic leaks from the FBI or the Justice Department but because he decided—presumably on a whim—to place himself at the center of

this horrible story.

Seeing how slavishly media outlets like the *New York Times* reproduce official statements, I sometimes refer to that newspaper half-seriously by the name of *American Pravda*. Following this latest affair, I would like to apologize to *Pravda*.

—Philip Jenkins

**JEAN CHRÉTIEN**, the prime minister of Canada, is perhaps the best embodiment of Coolidge’s statement that, when it comes to success, persistence is better than talent, intelligence, connections, or money.

Chrétien was literally the man who wouldn’t leave. Since beginning his political career in 1964 as a Liberal MP from Quebec, he has been around Ottawa continuously, whether in the House of Commons or as a cabinet minister in the Pearson, Trudeau, and Turner governments. His ubiquity makes me wonder whether Canadian voters picked him and the Liberals to lead their country back in 1993 because they generally supported the Liberals or because they felt sorry for Chrétien, since he had been around for so long but never got to live on Sussex Drive.

At the end of summer, however, Canadians finally had enough. Actually, most Canadians had had enough of Chrétien before then, but it took the Grits a while to realize that the numerous scandals, gaffes, and the general cynicism of his government had lowered the prime minister’s poll numbers into dangerous territory. Finance Minister Paul Martin had spent the past few years undermining Chrétien’s control of the Liberal Party to such an extent that, by the time he met with his fellow party members in a caucus at Saugernay, the numbers were telling. Chrétien could not win the leadership review at the upcoming February party meeting. Canadians were finally tossing him out.

None of the movers and shakers on Bay Street (or in the rest of the country, for that matter) bought Chrétien’s claim that he had told his wife two years ago that he was going to step down. In fact, many have been surprised that the old gut-fighter didn’t duke it out with his bitter rival, despite being behind in the polls. That is what Chrétien has been

good at: political fighting, tactical planning, general scheming—the kinds of things that separate the career politician from the true public servant.

“I win, therefore, I am,” was how Chrétien’s biographer summed him up. While Chrétien allowed his Cabinet ministers wide latitude and independence to formulate policy, he pursued his favorite pastimes: political strategizing, vendettas, and wire-pulling. This led to such master strokes as pushing through the Clarity Act of 1996 (which all but prevents another secession referendum in Quebec), to convincing Jean Charest to abandon the leadership of the Progressive Conservatives to head up the Liberals in Quebec, to delaying his departure date to February 2004—just long enough to frustrate the aging Martin’s ambitions and to encourage others to jump into the leadership race.

Arguably, Chrétien’s legitimate successes as prime minister were largely the work of others—Martin’s financial plan got rid of deficits left behind by the spendthrift Brian Mulroney and the PCs, while Charest did much of the leg work to keep Quebec in Canada during the 1995 referendum. Chrétien benefited from these, as well as from the implosion and descent into idiocy of the conservative opposition.

But the revenge of the man who wouldn’t leave may yet play out in an Ottawa movie house—or on Parliament Hill. Chrétien says that he will spend his remaining time as lame duck in a Clintonian search for his “legacy.” Who is to say, if he’s not successful, that he will not feel energized to run again, especially if his approval ratings go up? Moreover, a crisis in the War on Terrorism or another Persian Gulf War might make him feel duty-bound, as FDR did, to run for another term in the name of national security.

After all, his mandate doesn’t run out until 2005—plenty of time to heal his image. He has kept his Cabinet members from running leadership campaigns, and Martin, while controlling the party machinery, has no choice but to submit to Chrétien’s wishes, lest he open up an even deeper wound in the Liberal Party, for which many Grits would not forgive him. A sizable minority of Liberals began to sympathize with the prime minister when Martin’s attacks on him during the summer-festival and burger-flipping, picnic-party circuit turned personal and nasty. The Liberals don’t normally stage mutinies against their leaders (unlike the

Conservatives), especially against sitting prime ministers who have won three straight elections, and Martin didn’t provide much of a rationale for them to dump Chrétien other than “*It’s my turn, and my father never got elected prime minister.*”

Drop out of the leadership race, and, in two to three years, come back to the wide acclaim of party members and win a fourth term as prime minister. Far-fetched? Not for a political animal like Chrétien.

—Sean Scallon

**BRAZIL** is about to receive another IMF bailout, funded chiefly by American taxpayers. While the main beneficiaries will be a few private banks whose loans are at risk, there is practically no public debate about the deal.

This is the second Brazilian bailout in only four years. In the summer of 1998, the IMF put together a \$41.5-billion rescue package to help Brazil avert a financial crisis. On September 29 of that year, the *Financial Times* warned that “Washington [is] on red alert over Brazil . . . damage to Latin America’s largest economy would bring crisis right to U.S. front door.” Earlier in 1998, according to the Federal Reserve, U.S. bank exposure to Brazil had exceeded \$27 billion; by contrast, these same banks only had a \$6.8-billion exposure in Russia. “If Brazil goes,” debt strategists at Merrill Lynch warned, “there will be no way of shielding the U.S. economy” from the crisis. In the end, Brazil did not “go,” because public money was used to rescue private investors who had placed capital into risky but lucrative ventures. The absence of private-creditor involvement was a striking aspect of the bailout program. The message to creditors was clear: Be calm; stay put; you will be fully paid.

It is, therefore, not surprising that, over the past four years, private banks have continued lending money to Brazil at double-digit rates of interest: They trusted the United States to bail them out again in case of trouble, and they were right. It did not have to be that way. When Mr. Bush took office, the Treasury Department implemented a new strategy: not granting direct aid (such as that given to Mexico in 1994) and refusing to support the IMF rescue packages. When Argentina started collapsing late last year, Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill assured the American people that the days of mega-

billion-dollar bailouts of failed economies south of the border were over. Recently, he said that “wasting taxpayers’ money in a country plunged in political uncertainty like Brazil didn’t seem like a very good idea.” Such statements did not make him popular south of the border, but they made economic and political sense.

Mr. O’Neill, however, did not keep his promise. When he returned from a four-day whirlwind tour of South American capitals earlier this month, his promise of a \$1.5-billion U.S. loan for Uruguay was soon overshadowed by the announcement of the latest IMF bailout package for Brazil, amounting to \$30 billion. For the second time in four years, we were told that the United States “had to act” to prevent South America’s largest economy from defaulting on its public debt, which is close to \$300 billion. That debt will never be repaid, but, on Wall Street, it is necessary to pretend otherwise—and Uncle Sam is footing the bill to maintain the illusion. This is yet another example of corporate welfare: Most of the IMF largesse will be funneled to Citigroup, FleetBoston, and J.P. Morgan Chase, who will be the first in line to be covered against default. They have made billions through risky, high-interest investments in Brazil, and they may rest assured that their wager will remain covered.

There is no incentive for the Brazilian government to change its profligate ways if the IMF comes to its rescue every time it is unable to cope with the burden of debt. As a result, Brazil and other Latin American countries are flirting with radically populist, antimarket, and antitrade futures, which is the exact opposite of the intended effect of the rescue package.

Secretary O’Neill said Washington supported the deal because Brazil had shown that it had “the right economic policies in place to maintain stability so that the economy can continue to grow.” His assurances were echoed by IMF chief Horst Kohler, who declared that “Brazil is on a solid long-term policy trend which strongly deserves the support of the international community.”

That is wishful thinking, however. The next Brazilian presidential election will be won by one of two leftist demagogues, neither of whom intends to follow the fiscal austerity dictated by Washington. The Workers’ Party (PT) candidate, Luiz Inacio (Lula) da Silva, and leftist ex-finance minister Ciro Gomes both have big leads in the polls over Washington’s favorite, the government-

backed Jose Serra. The market-friendly policies that seemed to offer the hope of stability and prosperity in the early 1990's are growing more and more unpopular. That the new government will not mend its ways is obvious from an op-ed by PT congressman Aloizio Mercadante in the *Folha de Sao Paulo* on August 13: "The new IMF loan will not solve the crisis by itself. . . Without the re-establishment of external lines of credit, a new deal will only postpone the inevitable and make the nation further indebted. . ."

New loans to "defend production" and "create jobs" will perpetuate the underlying weaknesses of Brazil's economic and political system, leading to another bailout three or four years from now. Until then, however, Wall Street bankers will continue their business as usual in Rio. Fresh loans and rollovers will be seen as an unceasing source of secure profits, underwritten by the U.S. government. This is unpardonable. In domestic financial markets, bankruptcy proceedings and other regulations ensure that, when debtors cannot repay their loans, both the creditor and the debtor share the burden. Similar arrangements are urgently needed in international debt arrangements, ensuring more immediate private-sector participation and burden-sharing so that public-sector funds are not used simply to repay private creditors. Creditors must be made to think more carefully about those to whom they lend their money.

—Srdja Trifkovic

**SPENCER ABRAHAM**'s August trip to Moscow may have solved one of the chief puzzles of Russian politics as well as underscored Washington's intent to cultivate Moscow as a possible alternative to OPEC as an energy supplier. Energy Secretary Abraham promised his Russian counterpart, Igor Yusufov, that the United States would help fund Russian geological research in East Siberia and the Arctic Shelf and offered Moscow technical assistance in creating a strategic oil reserve, both of which have a direct bearing on the fortunes of Russia's current "Oligarch Number One," Roman Abramovich.

Abramovich, the super-rich (and young—he's in his mid-30's) boss of one of Russia's largest oil companies, Sibneft ("Siberian Oil"), and a partner with fellow oligarch Oleg Deripaska in "Russian Aluminum," the second-largest producer of aluminum products in the world (after Alcoa), was elected governor of what is ar-

guably Russia's most remote and benighted region, Chukotka, in December 2000. Abramovich immediately sought to cultivate ties to Alaska, Chukotka's neighbor across the Bering Strait.

At the time, Russian media reports were filled with puzzled speculation on why the oligarch, already one of the richest and most politically influential men in Russia, would want to become governor of an Arctic wasteland that has lost half its population in recent years as residents have fled its harsh climate and grinding poverty. Time and again, Russian media observers pointed out that, despite its potential mineral wealth, the prohibitive costs of extracting and transporting Chukotka's permafrost-bound oil, gas, gold, and other resources made any economic-development plans a big loser, with or without Alaskan help. So far, Alaska's main export to Chukotka has been humanitarian aid for its unfortunate residents. (There are only about 70,000 left in the vast territory.) Most analysts concluded that, even with Alaskan aid in rebuilding the region's collapsing infrastructure, Chukotka would likely remain forbidding and unprofitable.

The reclusive Abramovich has repeatedly claimed that he views Chukotka as something of a hobby, an interesting project for a bored oligarch. Borrowing Lenin's slogan from the era of the Soviet New Economic Policy as his main campaign promise, Abramovich swore he was in Chukotka "seriously and for a long time." Abramovich was reportedly shocked by the poverty of the depressed region when he first visited it, and many Russians, especially those who have benefited from the magnate's largesse (e.g. paying off wage arrears to the region's workers and sending practically every child in Chukotka on summer vacations to the Black Sea and other resort areas) have come to see "Roma" as a philanthropist, perhaps influenced by his own difficult childhood. (Abramovich was orphaned at a young age.) Some pundits have even claimed that the shy oligarch hoped to use the governor's post as an opening into "big politics," perhaps seeing himself as a future prime minister or presidential candidate. His cross-border contacts would be good experience for a novice politician.

The answer to the puzzle of Abramovich's Chukotka "hobby" and his keen interest in Alaska, however, may lie in Russia's recent efforts to present itself as a potential alternative supplier of oil and gas to the West, especially since the September 11 attacks raised questions about

the reliability of Middle Eastern oil supplies. Abraham's meeting with Yusufov, an Abramovich "clan" ally, may help justify Abramovich's hopes for Chukotka, particularly in view of Abraham's promise to help fund geological research in the region, an area said to have a geological structure close to that of Alaska's North Slope. As many commentators have pointed out, exploration and exploitation of Chukotka's oil and gas fields is seriously hampered by Russia's lack of modern technology. But American technical aid and investment, especially from firms with experience in extracting oil under extreme conditions in Alaska, could make the Chukotka fields quite profitable. Moreover, as Russia's *Profil* magazine pointed out, "Roma" is the "only one" standing at the narrow Bering Strait "crossing" to Alaska and the lucrative North American market. Thus, U.S. firms may see Chukotka as a potential Russian Klondike, one that "Oligarch Number One" cannot effectively take advantage of without their help.

If U.S. firms do get seriously involved with "Roma," they had better watch their wallets and their backs: he is a master of sleight-of-hand Russian "business practices," making him a legend among the country's oligarch/gangster elite. More than one business partner has left a joint project with Abramovich with empty pockets—and those are the lucky ones who haven't wound up wearing a pair of cement overshoes. Then again, after the Enron and WorldCom scandals, maybe Abramovich could learn a thing or two from his American partners.

—Denis Petrov

**OBITER DICTA:** The Rockford Institute is planning an **International Convivium in Paris, France**, on the French Revolution and Jacobinism. Call **Christopher Check** for details at (815) 964-5811.

Our poet this month is **Ruth Moose**, whose work has appeared in the *Atlantic*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Yankee*, and *Southern Poetry Review*. She is a member of the creative faculty at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and has published two collections of short stories.

Our art this month is provided by **Earl Keleny** of Madison, Wisconsin, whose other clients have included *Barron's*, American Airlines, Simon & Schuster, the Franklin Library, *Newsweek*, and Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. An extensive portfolio of his work can be found at [www.earlkeleny.com](http://www.earlkeleny.com).

by Thomas Fleming

## Made in USA

September 11, 2001, has joined the short list of dates—December 7, 1941; November 22, 1963—that every American is supposed to remember what he was doing when he heard the news. I learned of the first plane crashing into the World Trade Center as I was sitting on my screened porch, listening to the newsless propaganda from NPR (I like Bob Edwards, because he is loyal to his hometown of Louisville) and staring out past my seven-foot-high hedges at the yellow school buses that were lining up at the corner.

A few weeks earlier, when the first buses, fresh with new paint, spelled the return of autumn, I had experienced a disturbing *aperçu*, a flashback, perhaps, to the 60's, and I saw the line of yellow buses as so many train cars carrying prisoners to a concentration camp, where they would be stripped of their humanity and told to bless the re-educators who destroyed their minds. Every morning, I had the same hallucination, in which the rowdy children were turned into hopeless and world-weary detainees, and every morning I thought to myself: *This is how it begins, and within a few years I will be ready to replace Mel Gibson in Conspiracy Theory.*

To preserve what is left of the sanity it is widely assumed I have never had, I started work on a novel in the form of a diary written by a man who has been cursed with the ability to see things as they really are—much as Aeneas, his mortal illusions stripped away by his divine mother, sees the gods at work destroying Troy. The running theme, I thought, would be NPR news, which, every morning and evening, sends out a constant stream of propaganda, teaching college-schooled Americans that everything in their life can be explained as a conspiracy of whites against blacks, reds, yellows, and browns; of straight men against women and homosexuals; of citizens against aliens; and of people who work and produce against the drones who must be compensated with reparations for centuries of exploitation.

The NPR answer to every problem is power to the government: Up with the state, and down with the people! To be

fair, it is the same answer given by the networks, the *Times* and the *Post* and the little chain papers—pellets of poison sent out daily by Knight-Ridder and Gannett, Inc.—and all the professionals who do the thinking for elected officials who have more important things to do with their time. Do rampaging homosexuals create a plague that costs millions of lives and trillions of dollars? The answer is more value-neutral but government-enforced sex education and more government-guaranteed bathhouse rights. Do Islamic militants bring off the biggest terrorist attack against America in the country's history? The solution is to increase the rights of Muslims and to crack down on ordinary Americans. Airport security guards cannot be bothered to check out Saudi terrorists—Saudis are not even on a watchlist with other Middle Easterners—they are too busy harassing little old ladies or ripping apart their granddaughters' teddy bears. It is enough to lead a prudent man to increase his martini ration from one (double) to three . . .

Sinnissippi Crossing is a middle-sized mob town in a Midwestern mob state. Every day, as I drive downtown, I shrink with fear at the site of a Sinnissippi County police car. Am I wearing a seat-belt? Are the tags current? Do I have license, registration, and proof of insurance in the car? Is the city sticker up to date? Other people do not have to worry so much. After all, in a mob town, the facts matter less than connections and money; I, however, have little money, and my reputation as a political troublemaker might earn me 20 years for a speeding ticket. I made the mistake of thinking that the Sinnissippi middle class might be willing to resist the *coup d'état* imposed on their school system by a federal judge. I was wrong and have been paying the price ever since for my naive faith in the good hearts of Middle Americans. Standing up for justice and equality and opposing racial quotas is now defined as racism by the powers-that-be, including our local daily, the *Sinnissippi Star*, a dead planet in the albatross galaxy of chain newspapers. The *Star* ran a top-to-bottom front-page picture of me next

to selected quotations from the Ku Klux Klan. This is what we call journalism in America.

I do not like to eat out, since I have been followed by a police car more than once as I came out of a restaurant. One evening, after a dinner at Finnegan's Wake Irish Pub, my wife and I were harassed for 30 minutes by a paranoid policewoman who asked me to say the alphabet backward and was not amused when I asked her *which* alphabet. When my wife began getting out of the car to go check on our daughter, whom we were picking up from a movie theater, Officer Denise virtually threatened to shoot her. To this day, I do not know whether Denise Scoubidù (obviously a Rumanian) was after me personally or simply doing her duty as a public intimidator.

Sinnissippi Crossing is only a little worse than other towns in this great state of Kahokia, where the governor is accused of taking bribes in return for the commercial drivers' licenses he handed out to illiterate and incompetent immigrants when he was secretary of state. It only became an issue when one of his licensees wiped out an entire family. But that is the way of the world, and nothing to complain about. The deeper problem with Kahokia is that even the so-called conservative Republicans in the legislature are always willing to pass any piece of busybody legislation, so long as it is deemed "in the public interest." A few years ago, they adopted the most insane child-protection law in the world, replacing concern for "keeping the family together" in the previous law with the phrase, "the best interests of the child." Parents in Kahokia dare not leave a 12-year-old unattended for fear they might face a visitation from the Child Protectors. And just last week, the state's Solons decided that anyone under the drinking age, in or out of an automobile, who is caught with alcohol will forfeit his driver's license. This will save lives, they explained. So would public execution or life imprisonment or a billion-dollar fine or mutilation or gang rape or exile or any of a thousand unjust and irrelevant punishments I can think of.

Homeschooling families, in particu-