

British wrote the script for 'Wifewatergate'

by Edward Spannaus

Just as the British press demanded last winter, Whitewatergate has now become "Wifewatergate," with First Lady Hillary Clinton becoming the principal target at which the British and their American snipers are aiming, in an attempt to bring down the U.S. President.

Last January, as the Republicans were in retreat for their ill-fated efforts to shut down the U.S. government, and Al D'Amato's (R-N.Y.) Senate Whitewater investigation was running out of steam and money, British Intelligence's Hollinger Corporation suggested a better way to accomplish their objectives: Go after First Lady Hillary Clinton. "It would cause a constitutional crisis if the First Lady were charged," Ambrose Evans-Pritchard wrote in the Jan. 14 London *Sunday Telegraph*, "paralyzing the U.S. government, and probably setting off a crash in the stock and bond markets." Pritchard's two articles on Mrs. Clinton were advertised on the *Sunday Telegraph's* front page, with this kicker: "The Fall of Hillary, by Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, the Man Who Unmasked Her."

Now that the Senate Whitewater Committee Republicans have released their final report, after spending almost \$2 million in a futile attempt to frame up President Clinton, they have followed the British script precisely, by aiming their "venom," as one Democratic member of the committee called it, straight at the First Lady. In fact, to attain maximum impact, the Republicans on the committee provided advance copies of the report to the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* for publication in their Sunday editions on June 16. "Report Takes Aim at Mrs. Clinton," said the *New York Times* front page, while the *Post* front page read: "GOP Report Implicates First Lady: Probe of Foster Death Found to Be Impeded."

Thus, the June 18 press conference at which D'Amato and Co. officially released their report was somewhat anti-

climactic. But, Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) got right to the point: "Most roads lead from the First Lady and back to her," Shelby declared. "You can see the parallel. You can see it yourself. Things come from her, and then they come back, make no mistake about it."

Sen. Rod Grams (R-Minn.) charged: "I just wanted to comment that there's been one central figure that has been a major player in all three phases of this investigation, from the Vince Foster hours after his death, to the Washington investigation, to the events in Arkansas, and that one person has been Hillary Rodham Clinton."

At a separate press conference, Sen. Paul Sarbanes (Md.), the ranking Democrat on the Senate Whitewater Committee, told reporters that there was no evidence that William Clinton had misused the powers of the Presidency, or even that, prior to his election as President, he had used his official position in the state of Arkansas to improperly provide favored treatment to business associates and others. But, Sarbanes, continued, "Having failed to tarnish the President . . . the majority [Republicans] turned its attention to Mrs. Clinton's private law practice in Arkansas, of more than 10 years ago. The majority launched a massive hunt for some way in which to contradict statements made by Mrs. Clinton over the last four years. Again, no credible evidence has been put forward to show that Mrs. Clinton engaged in any improper, much less illegal, conduct." Sarbanes also remarked that "the venom with which the majority focuses its attack on Hillary Rodham Clinton is surprising and disturbing, even in the context of the investigation."

Now, let's return to the London *Sunday Telegraph* of last January. Evans-Pritchard's article began: "Every day, the noose tightens." After reviewing a laundry-list of charges and allegations against Hillary Clinton, Pritchard concluded:

"The Republicans would not have dared to launch a full-scale attack against a traditional First Lady, given the protective sentiments of the American people. But Hillary has made herself fair game by acting as de facto chief-of-staff and head of domestic policy in the first year of the Clinton administration. She tried to exercise cabinet powers without constitutional accountability. It could not be tolerated, and it was not."

The same weekend as the *Sunday Telegraph* ran its call to arms against Hillary, the London *Economist* ran a piece simply entitled "Wifewater," which suggested that Republicans in the United States could use attacks on Mrs. Clinton to take the President down a few pegs.

'Filegate'

The release of the Senate report came just as the Clinton Presidency was being assaulted on several other fronts by the same crowd. This included the opening of the second trial in Little Rock, Arkansas brought by Whitewater special prosecutor Kenneth Starr, and the emergence of the controversy over the White House review of hundreds of FBI files of former House personnel.

The so-called "Filegate" affair erupted after it was disclosed that the White House had obtained over 400 FBI files pertaining mostly to previous White House staffers in the Reagan and Bush administrations. The White House proffered the explanation that this was an innocent mistake, derived from the use of an outdated Secret Service list—something which the Secret Service itself denied. Nevertheless, Republicans and columnists immediately began making the inapt comparison to the Nixon White House "enemies list"—although no one bothered to explain why an enemies list would only run from the letters "A" through "G."

Meanwhile, special prosecutor Starr immediately took jurisdiction over the investigation, on the pretext that the business had first come to light over the FBI files of fired White House Travel Office director Billy Dale. But then, on June 18, Starr notified Reno that he had decided that his office lacked jurisdiction over the matter, and Reno assigned it to the FBI. Less than two days later, under pressure from Republican and editorial critics, Reno did another about-face, and announced that she had asked the federal appeals court to expand Starr's mandate so as to include the FBI files matter. Reno reportedly made the decision without any consultation with the White House.

Her request goes to the special three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington. This is the same panel, headed by Judge David Sentelle of North Carolina, which dumped the first Whitewater special prosecutor and replaced him with Starr in summer 1994. Sentelle led that move after lunching with North Carolina Republican Senators Jesse Helms and Lauch Faircloth.

Shortly after Reno's announcement, which was reported at Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on the FBI files, Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) said that he was concerned about Re-

no's decision. "I believe the Office of Inspector General at the Department of Justice would be the better choice for that investigation," Leahy said. "I think turning it over to Special Prosecutor Starr is not the best way. . . . Mr. Starr has been extremely partisan in his efforts. . . . He's been partisan in his press relations. He has turned a blind eye to numerous obvious conflicts of interest in his own law practice."

The Reno problem

This points up one of President Clinton's biggest problems—that of his Attorney General. As *EIR* has shown, Reno has the authority to fire Starr, and she certainly has ample grounds to do so, including Starr's multiple conflicts of interest, and his gross prosecutorial abuses in the course of running the Whitewater investigation.

But instead of getting rid of Starr, Reno has continually sought to *expand* Starr's jurisdiction. In March of this year, Reno made a request to the three-judge panel to enlarge Starr's mandate to include the Travel Office affair. In her application at that time, Reno told the court that Starr had told her that he was already looking into the Travel Office firings in the course of his investigation into the suicide of former White House lawyer Vincent Foster. Reno therefore argued that it would be appropriate for Starr to expand his investigation to include the whole Travelgate matter. The court agreed.

Reno has played a similar role with respect to a parallel investigation, that involving former Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy, which is being conducted by independent counsel Donald Smaltz. Smaltz is also active in Arkansas, working in parallel to Starr, and following a trail marked out by Evans-Pritchard in the *Sunday Telegraph* (see *EIR*, Feb. 17, 1995).

In January 1996, Smaltz made an application to the same three-judge panel for authorization to expand his investigation into a "related matter." The Justice Department originally opposed Smaltz's application on procedural grounds, arguing that he should have also gone to the Attorney General for approval. On April 1, Sentelle's panel rejected the department's arguments.

This was the first time, since the Independent Counsel law went into effect in 1978, that the court had held that a special prosecutor could go directly to the court to expand his investigation, without having to seek Justice Department approval. It thus marked a significant expansion of the power of special prosecutors.

Despite this, Reno is *not* appealing the ruling. Saying that she wanted to "comply with the independent-counsel statute to do it the right way," Reno said that she would not ask the U.S. Supreme Court to review this decision, which strips the Justice Department of a substantial amount of the little authority it has over special prosecutors.

Meanwhile, Smaltz issued his third set of indictments on June 13. Both Smaltz and Starr can be confident that they will not run into any opposition to their rampages from Reno and the Justice Department.