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Soros Resolves to Bring Bush Down

Posted Dec. 1, 2003
By J. Michael Waller

The United States is a great danger to the planet, and defeating President George W. Bush rather than the terrorists "is a matter of life and death." That's what billionaire financial speculator and philanthropist George Soros claims, and he's so alarmed at how Bush has waged the war on terrorism that he's pledged more than \$15 million to try to keep the president from being re-elected.



FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP

While Soros is a bitter critic of the way the Bush administration has handled the war on terrorism, he has offered no plan of his own.

That's chump change for Soros, who spent an equal amount not long ago just to start a grant-giving organization to promote another life-and-death cause dear to his heart: physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia. Indeed, Soros has hinted that he might spend his entire fortune just to bring down Bush. While Soros is

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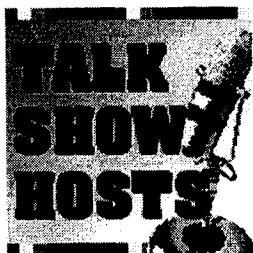
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getting few fellow billionaires to join him, his brain trust for the effort includes Morton Halperin, the left-wing mastermind who after Watergate and the Vietnam War designed the successful political and legal campaign to strip the FBI and CIA of many of their surveillance, intelligence-collection and covert-operations capabilities.

With the bipartisan consensus on the war against terrorism under severe political strains, mainstreamers are concerned that Soros is trashing civil debate with shrill and extremist rhetoric and providing political cover for other influential figures to do the same. "America, under Bush, is a danger to the world," he said in a recent interview with the Washington Post. Soros likened Bush's most senior terrorism fighters, Vice President Dick Cheney, Attorney General John Ashcroft and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, to Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) founder Yasser Arafat. And recently, Soros has been comparing Bush to the Nazis.

Under ordinary circumstances one might ignore Soros as a fringe crank such as Ramsey Clark or Lyndon LaRouche, say political professionals. But with a fortune estimated at \$7 billion and a willingness, in his words, to "put my money where my mouth is," they say Soros is stoking the fires against the wartime president and shifting political discourse from loyal opposition to something that, in simpler times, might have been considered lending aid and comfort to the enemy. Still, a high-level administration official tells Insight that the Bush political team isn't fighting back.

Over the summer, Soros enlisted Halperin, most recently a senior Clinton foreign-policy official, to develop a strategy with Democratic political warriors John Podesta and others, Democratic insiders say. Halperin's involvement alarms counterterrorism practitioners. They recall his years as director of the Washington office of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) at the Stuart Mott House on Capitol Hill, where he founded the ACLU National Security Litigation Project to hog-tie the FBI and CIA during the anti-intelligence hysteria of the 1970s.

President Bill Clinton appointed Halperin as an assistant secretary of defense in 1993, but the Senate regarded him as a radical and wouldn't confirm him. Clinton withdrew Halperin's nomination to the Pentagon post but appointed him to other senior positions in the State Department and National Security Council that did not require Senate confirmation. Just as loyalists of Saddam Hussein are relying on Bush's political foes in Washington to undermine his staying power in Iraq, some of those same political opponents are relying on the guerrillas to increase their attacks on U.S. troops. "The Soros initiative should gain support as the situation in Iraq worsens," observes Ohio State University law professor John Quigley, "and as the public becomes more aware that President Bush took us to war based on false information about Iraq's weaponry and about its connection to terrorist groups."

White House political strategists may be playing into the left-wing billionaire's hands by not responding to the escalating nastiness. "We can't go on a political offensive until our guys stop getting killed in Iraq," a senior administration official tells Insight. But that's a lethal and very visible signal to the Islamist and Ba'athist terrorist groups that are killing U.S. military personnel in Iraq. "The political operatives around the president are so young or inexperienced at White House-level politics that they panic," the official says. "They fail to defend the policy, they fail to attack the attackers and they fail aggressively to work with their own grass-roots base. That is a fatal mistake."

Soros has been stewing about the war on terrorism almost from the start. "I find the foreign policy of the Bush administration exceedingly dangerous," he told a University of Pennsylvania audience in April 2002, when the United States was mopping up the Taliban in Afghanistan. "Although the terrorist threat is real and must be defended against, they are going about it in the wrong way."

Soros didn't offer a plan to do it the right way. He simply declared the administration's efforts a diplomatic failure. "If we assess the foreign-policy accomplishments of the Bush administration since Sept. 11, the scorecard is quite dismal," Soros said at the event, according to the text from a university paper. "There are some people in the Bush administration who have the same mentality as [Palestinian terrorist leader] Arafat or [Israeli Prime Minister Ariel] Sharon. I can name names, like Ashcroft, Cheney and Rumsfeld, although that is considered impolite."

Over the next year-and-a-half, Soros continued to seethe. He began to compare the Bush administration to the Nazis: "When I hear Bush say, 'You're either with us or against us,' it reminds me of the Germans," he told the Washington Post. "My experiences [in Hungary] under Nazi and Soviet rule have sensitized me." Indeed, declared Soros: "Bush feels that on Sept. 11 he was anointed by God. He's leading the U.S. and the world toward a vicious circle of escalating violence." This from a self-proclaimed atheist.

On top of \$10 million reportedly promised or spent on anti-Bush advertising campaigns, Soros pledged up to \$5 million to mobilize anti-Bush activists and voters online. He and other wealthy donors are financing the Internet political-mobilization project MoveOn.org, founded by a California millionaire in 1998 to defend President Clinton from impeachment. More recently, MoveOn.org has organized opposition to the U.S.-led overthrow of Saddam Hussein. It claims an "international network" of 2 million online activists. According to its home page, initiatives of MoveOn.org include: "Fire Rumsfeld and change course" and "Investigate the White House."

Rachel Ehrenfeld, author of the important new book *Funding Evil*, has watched Soros and his operations for years. "Soros uses his philanthropy to change - or, more accurately, deconstruct - the moral values and attitudes of the Western world, and particularly of the American people," she said. In the 1990s, he gave millions to legalize illegal drugs. He provided \$15 million in start-up money - the same amount he's pledged so far to defeat Bush - for Project Death in America, a grant-making organization to promote euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.

In a 1995 interview with the *New Yorker*, Soros said he was disappointed that his terminally ill father wouldn't die quickly enough. His father "unfortunately wanted to live," Soros said. "I was kind of disappointed in him. ... I wrote him off."

Ehrenfeld's research shows Soros' multimillion-dollar campaigns to legalize drugs in the United States follows his logic, in Soros' own words, that "the war on drugs is doing more harm to our society than drug abuse itself," and that since "substance abuse is endemic in most societies ... the war on drugs cannot be won."

That also seems to be the tycoon's approach to fighting terrorism. "How can we escape from the trap that the terrorists have set us?" he asked his University of Pennsylvania audience in early 2002. "Only by recognizing that the war on terrorism cannot be won by waging war." Full stop. His solution: "Correct the grievances on which terrorism feeds." Which is just what fellow travelers said about communism before Ronald Reagan led the United States to victory in the Cold War, say Soros critics.

This effort by Soros and other big-rich lefties takes place in the context of a pull-out-all-stops attempt by top Democrats in Congress to use any means necessary to defeat the president in 2004, according to GOP professionals. A multiplier for Soros and his allies, frustrated administration officials say, is the expert way in which congressional Democrats have been waging powerful political-warfare operations by exploiting and abusing the national-security oversight process.

In the Halperin style, Soros watchers say, the once collegial and bipartisan Senate Select Committee on Intelligence has been turned into a dysfunctional and bitterly partisan battleground. Indeed, that \$15 million pledge by Soros came just as it was revealed by commentator Sean Hannity that Sen. Jay Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.), vice chairman of the committee, had directed staff to prepare options for abusing the Intelligence Committee's investigative powers to discredit the Bush administration and undermine the war in Iraq [see "[Democrats Target Pentagon Planning](#)"]. Hannity then produced the memo.


"This strategy memo lays bare what we've started to see for some time: an orchestrated effort by Democrats at a time of war to improperly use an intelligence investigation as a weapon against

President Bush," said Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.). "The memo completely shreds Democrats' claims of bipartisanship in this investigation and falsely attributes ugly motives to the president, members of his administration and fellow members of Congress. It has reached conclusions about this investigation before it's even been concluded."

Committee Chairman Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) said on the Fox News program Hannity & Colmes, "I had a conversation with Sen. Rockefeller. He's indicated in his statement that he instructed his staff to prepare the report. I'm not going to go any further than that."

Referring to the memo, Sen. Zell Miller (D-Ga.) declared: "If this is not treason, it's the first cousin of treason." So far, no Republican leader has matched the Georgia Democrat's toughness.

*J. Michael Waller is a senior writer for **Insight** magazine.*

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