

Loser Bob Shrum: Kerry's Rasputin?

by L. Wolfe

In the late Fall of 2003, after fascist Beastman Arnold Schwarzenegger had won the California Governor's race, Jason Kinney, a speechwriter for ousted Democrat Gray Davis, fired off a letter to fellow Democrat Sen. John F. Kerry (D-Mass), demanding that Kerry fire his political guru—the man reputed to be the campaign's chief strategist, the political consultant Robert Shrum. How could Kerry listen to the advice of the man who had steered Arnie's campaign, defeating Kerry supporter and fellow Democrat Gray Davis? Shrum had betrayed Davis, betrayed the Democratic Party.

Kerry did not fire Shrum. In fact, on his triumphal return from sticking the knife into Davis's back, Shrum helped run a coup in the Kerry campaign that gave him even more power. Nor did the Democratic national leadership see anything wrong with one of the party's leading, highest-paid consultants working to defeat an embattled Democrat on behalf of Arnie the Fascist.

What Presidential campaign and what party would hitch its fortunes to a Bob Shrum? Answer: One that is headed for defeat, as has been the case for every one of Shrum's Democratic Presidential clients for more than 30 years.

The Puppet-Master

Shrum attended Georgetown University, where he won an award as the nation's top collegiate debater. Debaters are well schooled in sophistry, arguing with equal passion and logic for either side, without concern for the truth. A skilled sophist is the ideal political hired gun. As a profile on e-vote.com notes, in cases where there are several consultants (as in the original Kerry campaign), Shrum has shown a knack for ruthless infighting, so he becomes the only puppet-master.

After serving as a speechwriter for the bankers' favorite Mayor of New York City, John Lindsay, Shrum made a name for himself working on the 1972 Presidential campaign of Edmund Muskie, where he wrote the first of a long string of Presidential candidate concession speeches. Later, he shifted over to frontrunner Sen. George McGovern (D-SD), for whom he drafted another concession speech. Then there's the role he played in helping draft the infamous "McGovern Reforms," which eviscerated the old FDR Coalition, reapportioning delegates by quota to the various New Age constituencies Shrum championed. For example, the so-called gay-lesbian Victory Fund has named its annual award for Shrum and his wife, and calls him the "Prince of Gay Rights."

After walking out of the Carter campaign in 1976, Shrum affixed himself to Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass). He became, and remains, a close confidant of the Senator. He served as strategist and press secretary for Kennedy's abortive 1980 primary campaign against Carter. It was here that Shrum played one of his nastiest tricks on Kennedy and the party, by convincing Kennedy—who had even less support than Carter—not to support the drive for an open convention. The LaRouche-led movement for an open convention had been close to gaining sufficient support to overturn the rules that bound delegates to their candidates, opening the way for a third candidate, which would have been the only way to avoid a sure loss with Carter. Shrum, expressing visceral rage at LaRouche organizers, instead drafted a speech for the Senator for the convention's closing night—the swan song of the Kennedy dynasty. Carter was crushed in November.

Shrum served as Kennedy's speechwriter and press secretary through 1984, reportedly coining the term "Star Wars" to deride the LaRouche-conceived Strategic Defense Initiative proffered by President Reagan in March 1983. Thereafter, Shrum went into private consultancy, steering a string of Presidential wannabes and losers: Walter Mondale in 1984; Mario Cuomo and Dick Gephardt in the 1988 primaries; and Michael Dukakis in the "big one" that year. In 1992, he directed Bob Kerrey. Along the way, he accumulated more concession speeches.

Shrum tried to work his way into the Bill Clinton campaign, but was never trusted by the candidate or key staff.

Shrum wound up as a major figure in the Gore campaign in 2000, insisting on two things: 1) not to make use of Clinton, and 2) to refrain from attacking Bush' competence to be President. For this, Shrum was criticized by other advisors. According to the *LA Weekly*, Gore overruled them in favor of Shrum.

Shrum was also reportedly responsible for two key memos that defined the Democrats' effective surrender to the Cheney-Bush war drive. According to a GOP website, Shrum drafted a memo Nov. 13, 2001, telling Democrats to avoid attacking Bush on the war on terrorism; they should limit attacks to economic, budget, and tax issues. A 2002 memo drafted by Shrum and issued by Democracy Corps, called for the Democratic Congressional delegation to back the authorization for the Iraq war; if you want to win your election and the national election in 2004, the memo said, you must back this war.

Shrum didn't start the 2004 campaign with Kerry, but with John Edwards. But Shrum is now at the top of the Kerry heap. The *New Republic* reported that all is not well with the Kerry campaign. It quoted a source inside the campaign as pointing out in early July, "Bush has had the worst three weeks of any President since Nixon, and we are still losing to him. If these ads don't start to move the numbers, expect wholesale retooling of the campaign." As Shrum's record should prove, this political "god" clearly has feet of clay.