

More about Moammar

Both of the *Sun* columnists whom I read most often made some interesting points recently about my pieces on Libya. Here are my thoughts in reply to them.

To George Jonas: Yes, George, you were absolutely right when you wrote last week that Moammar Khadafy's claims that he did not indulge in terrorism rang hollow. In my interview with Khadafy he denied backing any terrorist groups, yet then went on to admit he did support the infamous Abu Nidal.

Vigilant George picked up on this contradiction and I'm glad he did. I had meant to expand on the point but ran out of space. George's questions reminded me to enlarge on this subject.

When Khadafy admitted backing Abu Nidal, I asked him: "How can you support a group that attacks innocent civilians and stages horrible airport attacks?"

Khadafy waffled back that he opposed any attacks on civilians and encouraged anti-Israel groups to make attacks only on military targets. But, I reminded him, Abu Nidal staged attacks only on civilians. "That is not our policy — that is his affair," replied Khadafy.

Khadafy went on that since Israel had "internationalized" its war with Palestinians by attacking them "everywhere in the world," Palestinians also had the right to attack Israel anywhere. Other Arab states also supported Nidal, Khadafy claimed. If they do, it's certainly not openly.

Frankly, I don't understand Khadafy's position. He claims Nidal is a legitimate Palestinian resistance fighter while the Palestinians themselves reject him as a killer and terrorist. Nidal has killed more PLO members than Israelis. So many, in

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fact, that some Arabs even suggest bitterly that Nidal actually works for the Israelis.

Jonas is thus correct when he observes that Khadafy cannot say he supports Abu Nidal without also giving backing to Nidal's terror attacks — since that's all the Nidal gang seems to do. Well, Khadafy explained, some or most of those outrages were not really staged by Nidal but by young, crazed Palestinians fresh out of the madhouse of Lebanon.

I'm sorry I didn't have more time to pin Khadafy down on this one. Saying he supports Abu Nidal but not his tactics is like saying that you back Hitler but not his methods.

For further Mideast confusion, consider the following. Nidal has been trying long and hard to kill PLO chief Yasser Arafat because the Palestinian leader advocates negotiations with Israel. Khadafy backs Nidal — the only Arab leader to admit doing so. Now, it seems, Arafat and Khadafy have just reconciled. How do you reconcile with someone who is funding someone else trying to murder you? Or, does this mean that Abu Nidal is closing down shop? I don't know and doubt that many other people can figure out this enigma.

To Bill Stevenson, who sometimes uses me for target practice: In a recent column, Stevenson brought up the following question. The *New York Times* and *Times* of London had a joint interview with Khadafy a week after my own exclusive interview. The stories were substantially the same — with one or two important differences. Yet, as Stevenson noted, the CBC completely failed to make any mention of the *Sun's* interview with Khadafy and cited only the *New York Times* report.

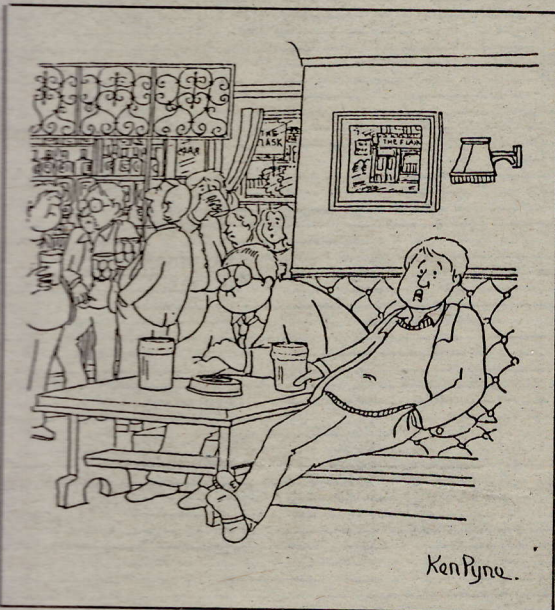
Why, Stevenson asked, did the CBC not refer to a Canadian source? Why indeed, I would like to add, since the CBC was made well aware that the *Sun* had scooped the rest of the world press. The answer, as Stevenson suggested, has to do with the CBC's refusal to take any Canadian source but itself seriously.

I think sour grapes was also a factor. The CBC had a camera team in Libya for two weeks, and at great expense, trying to get an interview with Khadafy — with no luck. *The Journal's* Barbara Frum also tried, again with no luck. It's worth noting that the *Washington Post's* Bob Woodward and Mike Wallace of *60 Minutes* also tried and failed to interview the enigmatic Libyan leader.

The response of state-sponsored journalism to a colleague's interview with the grand panjandrum of state-sponsored terrorism was not, to say the least, wildly enthusiastic. As Stevenson said, the CBC simply ignored its colleagues at the *Sun*, those mere commercial journalists and taxpayers.

Thanks, Bill. Now you can go back to strafing and bombing me!

Punch



Ken Ryne

"What I can't understand is if Bob Geldof is such a great humanitarian, how come he named his daughter Fifi Trixiebelle?"