

Mr. Ben Bradlee, editor  
The Washington Post  
1150 15 St., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20071

6/24/90

Dear Ben,

--You may recall that not long ago I wrote suggesting that you have what Arafat really said when the administration and all the others wanting his smoke blown in their eyes proclaimed that he had recognized the right of the State of Israel to live in peace within secure borders. Post reporters also had been writing that he had recognized the State's right to exist. I then told you that I have watched and listened to Arafat carefully, that he had not used the word "state" and instead had said "people", and that he had little choice because his own side would not let him recognize the state and survive.

I'm sorry that from today's Post you apparently did not take my suggestion because Richard Murphy's oped piece repeats and is based on the same error, which it repeats in several different forms.

It also goes farther and says that as an organization the PLO also had recognized the right of the state to exist. In fact it had met in North Africa, not long before Arafat was finally forced to blow this smoke after making unacceptable statements that were evasions before doing so, and it refused to take that action or make that decision. No Arab leader has survived even being suspected of recognizing Israel.

There is, I think, a separate question: if Arafat had really said what the Bush administration and all of the major media said he did, would it mean anything at all when his organization did not make it, when its unchanged charter says the exact opposite, when all its dissident factions would not be bound by it, as Nidal wasn't, and when not a single Arab state has terminated its state of war with Israel.

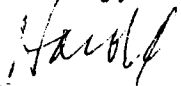
I do believe that there can be the most terrible consequences flowing from this misrepresentation, which is why I write you again about it. If I am correct, as I believe I am, then questions of integrity exist that I believe, as far as the Post is concerned, you would want to eliminate. Again I hope you will have this checked.

Murphy also blows smoke in his representation that Arafat condemned terrorism. He was quite specific in saying he did not include terrorist acts against Israel within his concept of terrorism. That terrorism, he would have us believe, is not terrorism but normal warfare. Thus the Nidal aborted terrorism is not to Arafat terrorism. Moreover, he would have the most serious problems, including of personal survival, should he take a different position.

I do not, of course, have the Post's sources, but I have followed that situation with care. I have been wrong and I can again be wrong, but I think I am not and I think, too, that these are matters of such great potential consequences that the Post should want to be careful and accurate and not to mislead its readers so many of whom are in important political and policy positions.

The checking I suggest does not require much time or effort. I hope you have regard for the Post's integrity and will have the checking done for you.

Sincerely,

  
Harold Weisberg