

Subject:  
Date: 5/22/99 3:13 PM  
To: barton biggs, TwoB88@aol.com

Dear Barton,

There's a few things you should know that may temper your venom. When the story came up about the hospital my first reaction was "Oh shit, a lot of people are going to think that this was my idea to go after Bernie." This is totally wrong. The story was not my idea, I did not encourage it, and I told my staff to avoid any deliberate attacks on Bernie. I told them to just stick to the problems at the hospital. The story was a valid one, Sarah approached the hospital administrators with the accusations and they were given the right to respond--responses which we printed. As far as Bernie's letter sent to us before we had even written anything, Peter Sainsbury said he might include some of Bernie's comments in the article, even though, frankly speaking, they would have only served to embarrass Bernie. Around three weeks after we received Bernie's letter when the story was being written, Peter had lost the letter. I leaned on people to dig it up. They couldn't find it. Why Sarah didn't contact Bernie? I don't know. I wasn't involved in the story process and only saw a printed copy on the day it went to the printer. But the point here is that the thrust of the story was "forcing Jesus on sick and dying" and those allegations were presented to the hospital director directly.

There was no attempt "to get Bernie", to try and "discredit him" or anything of the kind. The story was dying to be told, especially after we had been swamped with information from a hospital staffer who came to the Post and almost begged us to write about it.

As far as Bernie's letter to the Post, if I'm going to allow the Publisher of the Cambodia Daily to blatantly demean the entire reputation of the Post on my pages then you can rest assured that it is my duty to respond. Bernie's letter was insulting to me personally and to my staff, and it didn't even address the main thrust of the article. My reference to Daily reporters was not some attack on the Daily's independence. It was simply to point out that if Bernie wanted to ask his own staff about the problems at the hospital he had ready resources available. one assumes that they are ones he could trust. he obviously wouldn't trust my staff.

In response to Bernie's attack on the Post's credibility I could have been nasty, Barton. I could have pointed out that Amnesty International doesn't cite the Daily in their human rights reports on Cambodia because the Daily prints to many mistakes. I could have told Bernie that he'd do better to clean up his own paper rather than try to discredit mine. I didn't say that because I didn't want to get into some shouting match with Daily staff, who I know work hard and do their best. I wanted to avoid any Post-Daily pissing match, but you can't expect me to sit back and just let Bernie demean my reputation without responding.

As far as the larger issues and my gripe with Bernie I don't really give a shit if Bernie is "pushy, pigheaded and impolite". I don't have to work for the guy. What bothers me is outright lies, ones used to engender support for a paper that competes directly with my business.

Note for example, Barton, Bernie's latest letter to the Far Eastern Economic Review (April 1, 1999). Bernie writes "We have never solicited, received nor accepted cash from anyone." I'm sorry Barton, but this is an outright lie. I'm sure even you can recall the mess with the National Endowment for Democracy. Bernie has "solicited" donations all over the planet. Why the deceit, Barton? Is this the kind of behaviour you condone? Can you explain it? I wouldn't be so pissed off if there wasn't such duplicity.

Bernie's letter goes on to say "...we have not refused occasional gifts of old computers, printers and software.." as if these somehow fall from the sky, as if Bernie's new \$300,000 printing press donated from Heidelberg just showed up unannounced (a press I might add that was donated, I'm told but have not confirmed, to be used for other NGOs in town too, but Bernie is now aggressively pushing to take on for-profit projects so that more cash can go to the Daily).

Barton, if you spent seven years worrying about money every day to keep a paper open, to pay staff, you might understand this. I don't think you do. The bottom line is that I have had to put my paper up for sale