

Nelson Mandela refuses to pander to Western politics

November 14, 1997 Publication: The Washington Times Page: A22 Word Count: 178

Instead of vilifying South African President Nelson Mandela's visit to Libya as a "misuse of hard-earned moral power," Todd Pitock should have listened to the message Mr. Mandela was sending ("Nelson Mandela's 'dear brother leader,' " Op-Ed, Nov. 4).

Perhaps there is something amiss with the United States' policy toward Libya if one of the world's most renowned proponents of human rights is promoting Libya's leader.

After all, it is not that Col. Moammar Gadhafi is refusing to hand over the two Lockerbie bombing suspects for trial in a neutral country, only that he does not want them tried in the United States or Great Britain. Is that unreasonable? Imagine if a U.S. citizen were to be tried in Libya. No doubt, that would be unacceptable to us here at home.

Also, I hardly think it is fair of Mr. Pitock to decry Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat as a "20th century villain." A man who has devoted his life to the rescue of a people from occupying forces, no matter what your view on the issue, is not villainous.

SABRI BEN-ACHOUR

Great Falls

