

Thoughts on Crying Babies, Dying Babies and Media Deception

The technique is proven and effective. Put a moving, highly effective, propagandistic photo on the front page (or cover) of your story. Cause a moral outrage in the public. Then, several days (or even weeks) later, print a retraction somewhere in the middle of your publication where few will find it: "We regret publishing a picture with a misleading caption." It works like a charm!

Over 25 years ago, I documented instances of this technique when it came to reports on Israel. The media would feature the tragic picture of a Palestinian baby, almost torn apart, the alleged victim of an Israel airstrike. Those monstrous Israelis! Those murderous fiends! Public opinion would be turned sharply against this tiny nation fighting for its life in the midst of hostile enemies.

Some time later, buried, say, on p. 14a of *The New York Times* (which originally featured the picture), you'd find a short statement. And, of course, there would be no picture to capture your attention. Just a short note saying something like, "Our previous report was not accurate. The baby was killed in Palestinian crossfire and was not the victim of Israeli fire."

In one instance, there was a story about a suicide bomber who lost his life trying to slaughter Israelis. The newspaper in question showed the weeping mother of the bomber, rather than the wounded victims or their weeping families, mourning his death. Talk about trying to put sympathies in the wrong place.

Now, this week, we have two glaring incidents of what appears to be media deception. (Or, at the least, glaring examples of

the media wrongly presenting unvetted, grossly misleading information.)

The first came to light Thursday, when it was reported that, " Hamas Paid Family To Say IDF Killed 8-Month-Old Baby With Tear Gas. According to the testimony, the baby died of a blood disease."

We had been hearing reports about this over the last few weeks, with many questioning the accuracy of the claim that a Gazan baby was killed by Israel's wanton use of teargas against "peaceful" Palestinian protesters.

Of course, the protesters were anything but peaceful. And even if the tragic report was true, the question is: Why would a mother bring a baby to the front lines of a dangerous protest? If Israeli forces are so cavalier in their use of force, why bring your child there?

It turns out that Hamas paid the family to lie about the death of their child.

According to *The Jerusalem Post*, " Hamas Chief Yahya Sinwar payed the al-Ghandour family to say that their 8-months-old baby Leila died of gas inhalation from tear gas used by the IDF during the recent violent protests along the Gaza border, the testimony in an indictment document of their relative Mahmoud Omar revealed on Thursday."

I should also point out that Sinwar is the same Hamas leader who cried out during these protests, "We will take down Israel's border and tear out Israeli hearts from their bodies."

Unfortunately, despite Israeli news outlets reporting the truth behind this baby's death, what the world will remember for years to come is this: Israelis killed a Palestinian baby in cold blood during the peaceful Gazan protests. That's the way it works.

Also this week, "*Time* magazine featured a picture of a crying illegal immigrant child on its cover. The child was supposedly separated from her parents; over her looms Donald Trump, smugly staring down at her." And the cover caption reads, "Welcome to America."

What a brute he is! What a heartless monster! What an evil man!

But, as Ben Shapiro notes, "There's only one problem: The cover is total bull. It's not just total bull because Trump hasn't implemented a newly-developed policy of separating children from parents—that's an operation of law under the Flores settlement as modified by a 2016 Ninth Circuit court ruling. It's bull because this particular child wasn't separated from her mother, her mother wasn't fleeing persecution but did falsely claim asylum, her mother did put the child in danger, and Trump was targeted by the media for treating this mother and child exactly the same way the Obama administration would have."

As reported by Reuters, "The Honduran toddler pictured sobbing in a pink jacket before U.S. President Donald Trump on an upcoming cover of *Time* magazine was not separated from her mother at the U.S. border, according to a man who says he is the girl's father... ' My daughter has become a symbol of the ... separation of children at the U.S. border. She may have even touched President Trump's heart,' Denis Valera told Reuters in a telephone interview. Valera said the little girl and her mother, Sandra Sanchez, have been detained together in the Texas border town of McAllen, where Sanchez has applied for asylum, and they were not separated after being detained near the border. Honduran deputy foreign minister Nelly Jerez confirmed Valera's version of events."

What do you know!

As a friend of mine wrote to me, "This stuff is completely

maddening. I'm sure there are plenty of separated families, but the way you can just show some random photo and the entire world jumps on the bandwagon and gets in an uproar with zero explanation or proof of what you're actually looking at is stunning. Talk about being herded like sheep."

Earlier this week, my wife, Nancy, asked me to watch some CNN reporting on the separated families. During one audio clip, you heard children crying, "Mommy! Daddy!" But what was the clearly documented context? There was none. For all we know, these kids could have been at a nice restaurant in Texas crying because their parents refused to get them ice cream.

It was the same with some of the still photos. The kids could have been crying for any reason. But who cares about facts and background and verification? Public opinion is manipulated, and these powerful images stay lodged in our minds long after the facts have come out. And rather than deal with the real problems, whatever they may be, we end up fighting partisan political battles enflamed by the irresponsible media.

The bad news is that this kind of deception (or, at the least, irresponsible reporting) is sure to continue.

The good news is that we don't need to wait for *The New York Times* or *Time* to publish a retraction weeks later, buried on page 21. Instead, today, there are many competing news outlets, not to mention the whole of the internet, ready to pounce and expose.

May the lies be brought to light. May truth triumph. We've been played long enough.