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War correspondent:
From an historical perspective to the
present role

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ABSTRACT

La Storia dell'uomo è stata costantemente caratterizzata dalla guerra. Si studiano scontri accaduti migliaia di anni fa, grazie a memorie e scritti di antichi storici pervenuti fino alla nostra epoca. La guerra ha, di fatto, impregnato pressoché qualsiasi vicenda umana. Nonostante la sua tragicità, è sempre stata raccontata; o perlomeno, n'è stato fatto un resoconto. Dagli antichi romani agli attuali "reporter" digitali, il diritto di cronaca non ha mai mancato il suo appuntamento con la Storia. Chi è colui che si cela dietro questi racconti? Cosa lo spinge a questa pericolosa professione? Da questa semplice domanda ho tratto spunto per la stesura di questo elaborato finale come prova d'esame conclusiva del mio percorso di studi magistrale in Relazioni Internazionali.

Si trovano quotidianamente sulle pagine dei giornali, di riviste, tramite programmi o notiziari televisivi, ma in maggior quantità nell'ultimo decennio attraverso la rete Internet, immagini e video dalle più disparate zone di guerra. Immagini crude che raccontano la tragedia di un conflitto, la disumanità di molte vicende umane. Ma ciò che viene trasmesso, spesso non si nota, è vissuto, analizzato ed elaborato da qualcuno appositamente

inviato, che vive e riporta gli eventi da un teatro attivo di guerra. I corrispondenti di guerra, anche detti “reporter” (usando il termine usato in lingua inglese), sono impegnati a seguire i conflitti in prima linea. Questo significa, nella totalità delle volte, convivere quotidianamente con la morte, la sofferenza; come ogni giornalista (ligio al proprio codice etico e deontologico) aspira a essere una fonte indipendente e oggettiva dei fatti, salvo poi lecitamente potere trarne una propria opinione, avvertendo il lettore di questa sua personale lettura. Quanto può essere indipendente un corrispondente di guerra? La sofferenza umana a cui è involontariamente sottoposto di continuo ogni giorno e la consapevolezza dell’insensatezza della guerra lo portano a condannare sempre la guerra e la violenza legittimata che la sostiene. Oriana Fallaci, nel mezzo della giungla Vietnamita, scrive: «Io sono qui per provare qualcosa a cui credo: che la guerra è inutile e sciocca, la più bestiale prova di idiozia della razza terrestre. [...]» (Mimmo Candito, 2000). Il “reporter” è testimone delle conseguenze di decisioni politiche prese a migliaia di chilometri di distanza. Il rischio è insito nella sua

professione. Ma non si limita ad un rischio prettamente fisico, riguardante l'incolumità del giornalista nella confusione e violenza della guerra. Il rischio può anche manifestarsi nel disturbo che un racconto veritiero (come si suppone deontologicamente debba essere uno scritto giornalistico) può recare al potere politico e alle conseguenze che non raramente vanno a colpire il singolo reporter, o l'editore che lo supporta. Può, quindi, il potere politico di una nazione influenzare la libertà di stampa? Storicamente è palese che la risposta non può che essere affermativa. Il potere politico ha sempre influenzato, censurato, punito e controllato gli organi di stampa. La domanda deve però essere più puntuale, per stimolare una più attenta analisi: la cronaca di guerra può essere considerata come un'arma vera a propria?

La cronaca diretta di eventi di guerra nell'epoca moderna cominciò durante la Guerra di Crimea nel 1854 con i resoconti di William Howard Russell, inviato britannico del "Times" di Londra. Il suo lavoro di corrispondenza è ancora ricordato come un ottimo esempio di dedito giornalismo. Non solo riuscì a descrivere con veridicità i vari eventi bellici del conflitto, ma descrisse con

distaccata analisi la disorganizzazione dell'esercito inglese. Questo turbò l'oligarchia al potere nel Regno Unito che dovette inviare in Crimea un fotografo ufficiale del Regno con il compito di confutare i racconti di Russell sulle pessime condizioni dell'esercito inglese. La politica comincia a esercitare la sua influenza sul lavoro dei corrispondenti di guerra. Dapprima con blande iniziative, come nel caso di Russell, per poi sfociare in veri e propri sistemi di censura e controllo della stampa (come si potrà analizzare nel corso dei due conflitti mondiali nel XX secolo) fino a giorni nostri, nei quali è consolidata l'arte del "News Management".

Coloro che hanno scritto pagine di cronaca che rimarranno nella Storia sono innumerevoli e difficilmente raggruppabili in un elaborato finale. L'analisi si sofferma su alcuni dei più celebri e, ognuno per peculiarità personali, importanti corrispondenti di guerra. Tra gli italiani si annovera Luigi Barzini, reporter spesso ricordato per la sua tempra. Seguì i combattimenti nella Manciuria, dove nessun altro reporter osò recarsi, vivendo con i soldati giapponesi per mesi in condizioni igieniche pessime, temperature polari e continui bombardamenti

russi. Indro Montanelli e Oriana Fallaci si aggiungono alla lista di corrispondenti italiani che sono ricordati come delle firme importanti del reportage: Montanelli per la guerra civile spagnola e il secondo conflitto mondiale, mentre Fallaci per il suo obiettivo e ricercato lavoro durante la guerra del Vietnam.

Il “reporter” di guerra non è solo giornalista: è anche fotografo. Il corrispondente di guerra diventa così un fotocronista. Robert Capa ne è sicuramente il primo e il più grande esponente finora esistito. Con il “photo-reportage” si riesce a comunicare in modo più immediato rispetto a una mera descrizione letterale degli eventi. La guerra del Vietnam si rivela il luogo della consacrazione della fotografia come mezzo giornalistico. Le immagini dei corpi di bambini donne e anziani trucidati dalla follia dei soldati vittime anch’essi di una spirale irrazionale di violenza umana sono una chiara prova di come un’immagine possa, in alcuni casi, trasmettere più di mille parole.

La libertà di stampa e di cronaca sembra, però, non sempre collimare agli stessi fini dell’azione dei governi. L’informazione può raggiungere sempre più utenti, dalla

diffusione di massa dei primi quotidiani all'enorme caotica proliferazione attuale di materiale digitale scambiato attraverso la rete Internet. L'opinione pubblica è una massa disomogenea di soggetti sottoposti quotidianamente a un flusso ingente d'informazioni. Controllare, o per lo meno veicolare, questo flusso può permettere di influenzare l'opinione pubblica. I governi di vari nazioni sembrano aver capito l'importanza e l'impatto che ha la stampa. Nei vari eventi epocali della Storia, come per esempio i due conflitti mondiali del XX secolo, il potere politico ha sistematicamente influenzato, controllato, censurato la produzione sia letteraria che cinematografica riguardante avvenimenti bellici. Questo dato di fatto potrebbe corroborare l'idea per la quale il giornalismo di guerra è esso stessa un'arma da guerra. Durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, sia i regimi totalitari dell'Asse, la Germania nazista e l'Italia fascista, sia gli Alleati, il governo britannico, quello americano e la Russia di Stalin, adottarono risolte strategie per veicolare la stampa a fini di renderla servizievole allo sforzo bellico. La popolazione tedesca, stremata dalla logorante guerra che portava con sé carestia e distruzione, non poteva

essere informata degli insuccessi dell'esercito e delle tenui ma crescenti vittorie Alleate; al contrario, la popolazione inglese era spronata a resistere ai continui bombardamenti tedeschi. La continua censura e selezione delle notizie permetteva ai governi di entrambi le parti di cercare una giustificazione allo sforzo bellico e ai sacrifici dei cittadini. Il controllo era capillare e organizzato in ogni singolo dettaglio, con la creazione di ministeri dedicati con migliaia di persone impiegate.

La Guerra del Vietnam segna un episodio unico e importante nella storia del giornalismo di guerra. Nel teatro bellico dell'Indocina, dove indirettamente si scontrano gli Stati Uniti d'America e l'Unione delle Repubbliche Socialiste Sovietiche in quelle che sarà poi nota come Guerra Fredda, i giornalisti americani e filo-occidentali godono inaspettatamente di una libertà pressoché assoluta di movimento ma soprattutto di diritto di cronaca. Questa dimenticanza da parte del governo americano, si voglia sia per il limbo politico in cui era collocata la guerra, mai ufficialmente dichiarata in quando gli Stati Uniti erano soltanto di supporto all'esercito del governo del Vietnam del Sud, sia per la probabile

convinzione da parte delle alte sfere militare di marginale copertura giornalistica del conflitto, è stata una delle cause principali della disfatta statunitense. In un contesto di cambiamenti socio-politici interni e movimenti culturali di protesta per i diritti civili, gli Stati Uniti d'America si trovano a dover fronteggiare da un lato dei sommovimenti interni che minavano la stabilità del dopoguerra mentre dall'altro una sanguinosa guerra aldilà dell'oceano Pacifico con numerose vittime (fu reintrodotta la coscrizione obbligatoria per sopire al grande numero di perdite). Il Vietnam è stato nella storia del giornalismo un caso unico: l'impatto che le immagini e i video delle stragi di civili o dei numerosi ragazzi americani periti nel conflitto ebbero sull'opinione pubblica statunitense fu devastante per il consenso interno.

L'errore commesso in Indocina non fu ripetuto. Nei conflitti successivi, il governo americano ritornò ad una capillare ma meno appariscente strategia di controllo: il "News Management". Questa nuova tattica di comunicazione, nata anche a fronte di una massiva digitalizzazione dell'informazione e di una maggiore copertura sempre più ampia, si base sul concetto di

evitare la censura diretta, optando per un controllo e gestione oculata delle fonti. Le notizie sgradevoli all'autorità governativa non sono direttamente eliminate e censurate ma contornate da numerose altre notizie create ad hoc per creare un flusso continuo d'informazioni nelle quali si rischia di non riuscire a discernere tra ciò che è provato e riportato correttamente e ciò che è artificialmente modificato per meglio influenzare il lettore. Il cosiddetto "mercato dell'informazione" attuale è sotto il controllo di grandi "corporations", le quali tendenzialmente hanno bisogno di un consistente aiuto politico per riuscire a sostenere gli enormi costi di gestione di un colosso dell'informazione. Tuttavia, l'avvento e l'affermazione della rete Internet, disponibile a basso costo quasi ovunque nel globo, hanno permesso di violare questo monopolio. La spropositata quantità di notizie e la moltitudine di nuove voci che si riversano quotidianamente sul World Wide Web sono oramai la fonte principale d'informazione di una parte sempre maggiore di cittadini. Il "News Management" però riesce comunque ad essere un ottimo strumento governativo di controllo anche

in tali condizioni: il colossale flusso di notizie sembra essere un ambiente perfetto per la sua applicazione.

Il lavoro dei reporter di guerra e dei giornalisti è stato, quindi, innumerevoli volte manipolato per ragioni governative, solitamente giustificate con il machiavellistico concetto di "ragion di Stato". Si può supporre in finale che la stampa in tempi di guerra sia usata e concepita come vera e propria arma contro il nemico, anche se utilizzata prevalentemente all'interno della nazione come catalizzatore di volontà e convinzioni governative di supremazia atta a risvegliare i più patriottici spiriti nei popoli con l'intento di giustificare lo sforzo bellico e l'ineluttabile derivante sofferenza umana.

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INTRODUCTION

This final essay is a humble attempt to mark out the general features and events in the history of war journalism. The selected point of view is the reporter's one: war correspondent, a dangerous job. Since early ages of mankind, man has always been fighting and wars have occurred. Brave men and women have tried to report what they have seen, felt and witnessed. Their efforts to report events from battlefields have sometimes been recognized as masterpieces of journalism. Nevertheless, governments have always tried and fairly succeeded in controlling and using press as a communication weapon at the expense of freedom of information.

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL OVERVIEW

1.1 War correspondent

Reporting has always been a delicate job to do. Reporting from war zones is even dangerous. War reporters are physically on the front line of History. They are the first people to witness facts that will soon be described in history books. But more important, they filter those facts into reports. Reports we cannot always verify. Therefore war correspondents are perhaps the last remaining example of first line journalism. In this era of digital communication, everyone can potentially be a reporter in a war zone: an Internet blogger in Syria, a student in Ukraine, a teacher in Yemen or even a soldier in Mogadishu.

The value added of good journalism is the best mediation possible between sources and readers. The word itself “correspondent” underlines the relation between the two. In fact, in the beginning of war reporting, news from the frontline were sent using letters, usually carried by hand by trusted intermediary and only when out of the warzone handed to post company. This might sound a little old-fashioned in our digital age of communication. But if we take in consideration the current situation in Syria or Iraq, where communication networks are voluntarily damaged and power outages are frequent, reporting could still depend on resumptive reports on pieces of paper or brief cellular phone videos. High-quality war journalism demands ability to investigate in hostile environment (both

on physical and cultural basis) and a strong will not to be biased by sources¹.

Then the job of war reporting is not just journalism shifted to a war zone: it is a careful job of information research, a continuous struggle to survival and sometimes a fine job of disguise.

1.2 Cultural and psychological profile

A war reporter must have specific psychological and personal characteristics in order to survive and to be effective on the job. The ability to speak or at least to communicate in different languages is fundamental. A deep knowledge of international issues and conflicts is also vital. All the details that characterize specific situation might be the keys to interpret and give a faithful report of what is occurring in determined zones.

An important skill to have is the adaptability in those situations that are common in warzones. Examples are bombings, shortage of water, food and medicines. Even communications could be a significant problem: electricity is not always available, as well as mobile phones coverage (except for communications via satellites, which are expensive and they need specific mobile phones). One of the most important skills of a reporter is the respect for people; the reporter must understand the dignity of others, share their difficulties². The reporter also must understand what the real problems are and he/she must be comprehensive with the suffering of the people he/she writing about: only with this attitude will help to be immune from the worst disease: indifference³.

¹ Mimmo CANDITO, *Professione: reporter di guerra, Storia di un*

² Ryszard KAPUŚCIŃSKI, *Lapidarium*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1995, p. 29

³ Ryszard KAPUŚCIŃSKI, *Lapidarium*, op. cit. , p. 15

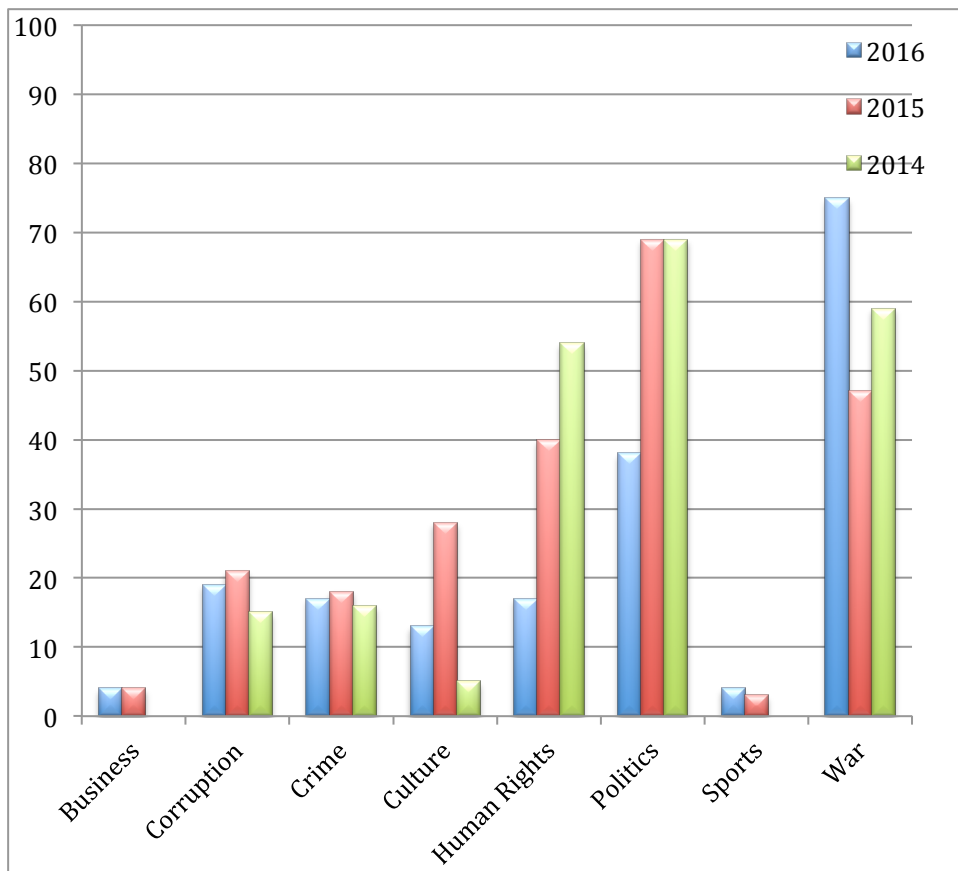
1.3 Dangers and risks

Since 1992 to present day⁴, 1228 journalists were killed. This is the death toll of a profession that during the last three decades has seen so much violence pouring on journalists and reporters. Truth can be embarrassing and disruptive: for this matter, people are ready to kill , or pay to get the source of information eliminated.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is an independent, nonprofit organization. It acts worldwide to promote press freedom. The CPJ defends the right of journalists to report news without fear of reprisal⁵. Its headquarters are in New York City, United States of America. Their strategy is based upon mutual help between journalists: if one is targeted in any way to limit press freedom, others will take action on behalf of those targeted. The CPJ since 1992 on annual base releases statistics on killings of journalists. It analyzes causes and fields of interests of those killed. The last report, referring to 2016, shows that 48 journalists were killed because of their job and investigations. It is a brutal toll but still smaller than the previous year. In 2015 the death toll was 72 homicides. Interesting statistics are those released on beats covered by victims.

⁴ As of January 18th, 2017 . Source: Committee to Protect Journalists, www.cpj.org

⁵ As declared on www.cpj.org



The above data are extracted from the CPG annual reports of 2016, 2015, 2014. All figures are rounded to the nearest full percentage point. The sum may add up to more the 100 percent because more than one category applies in some cases⁶. Human rights, politics and war have been historically the most dangerous fields of investigation for journalists. Indeed, war reporters work and live in this intertwining of interests. Usually politics cause wars; wars that inevitable cause human rights violations. It's no surprise that the deadliest countries are those with ongoing conflicts, such as Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, Ukraine and South Sudan. But even countries

⁶ As declared on www.cpj.org.

without conflicts are interested. Countries with internal social and economic problems, such as Mexico, Brazil and Turkey.

Assassination is not the only risk that journalists bear. Living and working in armed conflicts demands specific training. Hostile-environment and emergency-first-aid are prerequisites for safe reporting in situations involving armed engagements. Private European or American firms usually carry out trainings, but they usually benefit foreign and local journalists alike. These courses are generally expensive, but there are many funds to which professionals, especially freelancers, can apply. What probably sticks to the eye of the public more often is the gear used by press in battlefields. Usually is made up of body armor such as a bulletproof vest. Helmets are essential too. To stand out from military personnel, journalists put on vests and helmets the writing "PRESS". This should prevent shooting from belligerents: unfortunately sometimes just make reporters a better target.

1.4 Rules of War

One of the main trade-off a reporter faces is which side to take to observe a conflict. One may be a freelance that independently travels at own risk and costs in war zones or one may be embedded to a specific actor of the conflict. This leads to different possible points of view: travelling with a specific military usually provides a safe ride to the front line but even stricter regulations on where to go, what to do, who to talk with. Journalist traveling independently may have multiple options. According to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, a credentialed and embedded journalist of a military side of the conflict is legally part of that military: so he/she may be fired upon legally by the opponent, and detained as Prisoner Of War (POW).

This means that POW conditions will fully apply to them and sometimes it could be a benefit. POW have right to be fed, to be take away from hostilities, to send and receive mails. Journalists that decide to observe a conflict in an independent way may find themselves in difficult situations if caught by any of the side. They can be accused and charged with espionage or other enemy-related crimes and detained in unknown facilities where abuse is likely.

1.5 Women and reporting

History has often given women a principal role in describing and writing on conflicts and other important issues. From Oriana Fallaci's Vietnam to present day Syria, passing through Ilaria Alpi's work in Somalia, female war reporters had to face not only dangers and risks of the profession itself, but even discrimination over their gender. Francesca Borri, an Italian war reporter, states that in Syria another reporter told her "this isn't a place for women". She replied "This isn't a place for *anyone*"⁷. Army general William Westmoreland, during the Vietnam war, tried to prohibit women from staying overnight in battlefield⁸. He failed. Only after the first Gulf War and the wars in the Balkans in the early 1990s it is common to see women reporting from conflicts without making such a surprising effect. But overall, women are probably better to listen to the stories of women. In wartime, female population is always in somehow victim of the events. Rapes, violence, beating and slavery are common human rights violations in recent and past conflicts. Yet, they are the fulcrums of families.

⁷ Francesca BORRI, *Columbia Journalism Review*, www.cjr.org

⁸ Los Angeles Times, <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-clayton-female-war-correspondents-20151110-story.html>

1.6 Unusual reporters: Women reporters in Afghanistan

Events can create situations where roles are not so well defined and even the strangest person can turn into a reporter. This happened for example to Gino Strada, an Italian surgeon and founder of Emergency⁹. He decided to write memories of his long experience as war surgeon, as he defines himself. In his book *Pappagalli Verdi* while he describes with a simple accuracy facts taking place in warzones, he gives us a clear and independent point of view. War is described as an irrational state of mind of man. Some of his memories refer to the numerous wars that have been fought in the last twenty years.

In Afghanistan, after the US-led invasion in 2003, press has been surprisingly growing since war had started. More than two thousand women, among seven thousand men, are journalists in Afghanistan. This is an encouraging fact for a country that has never had peace in the last 40 years. In spite of these figures, still today few Afghan female reporters are working at foreign news outlets in Kabul. This fact might be a direct consequence of strict cultural mores, as most women in Afghanistan cannot speak to men. Men or foreign female reporters tell Afghan women stories. In this miserable situation, a unique program sticks out to help female reporters: *Sahar Speaks*. Developed in 2014 by British-American journalist Amie Ferris-Rottman and founded in 2015, this project aims to help Afghan women to gain *skills, networking and publishing opportunities*¹⁰ to

⁹ *Emergency* is an humanitarian non-governmental organization that provides medical treatment to civilian victims of war. It was founded by Gino Strada in Milan in 1994

¹⁰ <http://www.saharspeaks.org/project/>

help them attain international coverage and tell their stories that have been for too long told by others.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 The Napoleonic Battles

In the Napoleonic era battles were quite different than conflicts as we see today. Wars were more a collection of victories in battles, in a wider concept of war called campaigns. Empires and states had several armies, whom could independently fight in different part of the continent and of the world. An ordinary campaign would take a few months and thousand men, infantry and cavalry together. From sieges to big battles, a campaign could have different chances of warfare. Usually they ended with a fighting climax, resulting in a final decisive battle. This battle usually occurred in a wide plain terrain, with the two side opposing each other with infantry and cavalry deployed with order. Naval battles took place in a similar way: fleets fought according to specific rules of engagement of that time. News and reports of these battlefields were often written directly by generals and military officials. The figure of the reporter was far to be found in those times where press freedom was not a given situation. Press was under great control and influence by governments. Furthermore, that press was a privilege given only to that *elite* that made up those governments. Reports were used to hype up actions and battles to animate a strong nationalism: not exactly what nowadays we consider as independent journalism.

2.2 William Russell and the war in Crimea

During the war in Crimea in 1854, where the Russian Empire was fighting against and alliance of four (Ottoman Empire, United

Kingdom, France and Reign of Sardinia), we see for the first time an organized attempt to report from warzone and to describe the life of population in areas involved in the conflict.

The first reporter as we consider the profession today can be found in William Howard Russell. He is not only considered as the first reporter in History but as an example of independency with his factual and objective analysis of facts¹¹. His critical description of the English Army and its disorganization are considered as masterpieces of journalism: for the first time someone is reporting without any preconception or false perception of reality. His journal, the *Times* of London, was at that moment the symbol of the English establishment but it was considered as an important and influential embodiment of journalism¹². He was a critical mind but still a gentleman of the English Empire. His reports were full of details of how bad and disorganized English actions and military protocols were but he was never censured. The Crimea war took place in a limited area, where all facts were to be observed without long distances to travel. What he wrote to his journal took days to arrive, cause the lack of telegraphic networks. We must underline that what he wrote and all his chronicles were reserved to a small *elite* of people, the oligarchy governing Britain at that time, a public that could understand those critical reports and make them a useful tool to improve the English military society. Despite these facts, in 1855 the English government sent in Crimea an official photographer Roger Fenton¹³. His mission was clearly to reply with pictures to the evaluations brought to the public by Russell. He, indeed, sent back only selected pictures,

¹¹ Oliviero BERGAMINI, *Specchi di Guerra, Giornalismo e conflitti armati da Napoleone a oggi*, Roma, Edizioni Laterza, 2009, pp. 17 - 18

¹² Mimmo CANDITO, op. cit., p. 117

¹³ Oliviero BERGAMINI, op.cit., p. 22

showing the perfect organization of the military. No dead soldiers or other tough situations were depicted in his work.

2.3 Luigi Barzini

Sharp and objective, Barzini with his style of writing is considered the first Italian report. He travelled all around the world for his Journal "*Corriere delle Sera*", which was one of the influential journals of the first decades of 1900 in Europe. Hired by Luigi Albertini, with no experience at all, the young Luigi was initially sent to China, to report on a rebellion of the so called "boxers", an religious/political organization that was targeting European citizens¹⁴. This organization aimed at fighting the foreign colonialist influence in China. His chronicles from a country so far away outlined a clear and detailed style of narration, making him an important part of "*Corriere della Sera*". He was known for his sobriety in writing and at the same times a meticulous research of information and sources. The recognition as a model of journalism for him was reached when he was sent to Japan to witness the war between the Russian Empire and the Japanese Empire, for the control of Manchuria. Landed in Japan in 1904, he was one the few witnesses of the battles of that war, giving the "*Corriere della sera*" a higher reputation in the European press scenario. A plus of his work was the possibility to question Russian prisoners, thank to his knowledge of the Japanese military and his non-stop presence on the battlefields. Moreover, when hostilities moved to the peninsula now part of Russia, no one of his international colleagues decided to follow the war on the other side of the sea. He was the only one to follow the Japanese army in

¹⁴ Oliviero BERGAMINI, op.cit., p. 36

the Manchurian peninsula. Barzini was a tough man: to be a reporter in those conditions at that time was a hard job. Temperatures fell over minus thirty degrees, mud and bombings were frequent. Despite all, he delivered a unique report that showed his comprehension of the importance of that event: a new era of industrial armaments was arising.

2.4 World War I

At the beginning of the XX century new technologies are applied to warfare, new armaments with a wider destructive potential. This worldwide conflict involved 65 million soldiers on the battlefield. Nations were obliged to enroll mass quantity of male citizens as mass destruction weapons were eliminating the old structure of army. These untrained citizens were sent to battle without proper training and gear. Industries were converted to supply the increasing demand for armaments and ammunition. This is the first *total* war as armies and weapons are made to physically and mentally destroy enemies. The old-fashioned way of fighting wars, the Napoleonic view of battlefields and maneuvers had gone forever.

These four years of war were in the history of journalism a dishonorable period that had never been observed before¹⁵, as Arthur Ponsonby¹⁶ stated. The rising of national States is one the reasons why the press is controlled by government to seek the consent and approval from the masses of people that would

¹⁵ Oliviero BERGAMINI, op.cit., p. 56

¹⁶ Arthur Ponsonby, 1st Baron Ponsonby of Shulbrede, was a British politician, writer and social activist. Born in 1871, he died in 1946: he is often quoted as the author of the dictum "When war is declared, truth is always the first casualty"

legitimate interventions and war. This moral problem of democratic societies was indeed to justify to the public the choice of going to war and all subsequent sacrifices.

In Italy the “*Corriere della sera*”, which was the symbol of the industrial middle class, helped the interests of those who wanted Italy to enter the war, even if the population was unfavorable to an interventionist policy. The *Corriere* tried to link the intervention with historic event, such as the Italian Unification¹⁷. Even more resounding was the campaign of “*Popolo d’Italia*”, founded by a young Benito Mussolini who later will take into the tragedy of the Second World War. This journal received funds both from an elite of Italian industrial businessmen and, on the other side, from people bound to the French government, who was pushing for Italy to enter the conflict¹⁸.

However, the most efficient machine of press control was the British one. Started with a simple *Press Bureau*, it later evolved into a specific *War Propaganda Bureau*, eventually becoming the Ministry of Information. Collaborating with “*Times*” and “*Daily Mail*”, the government wanted and succeeded in getting the message «Great Britain is attacked and must defend itself» across. A winning communication strategy was found in demonizing the enemy and its actions: the Germans were depicted as evil. This propaganda helped to reinforce the feeling of national unity and intervention in the war. The case of Philip Gibbs is the proof of how far and pragmatically the Ministry of Information used to work. After some truthful reports from

¹⁷ Usually known as *Risorgimento*, the Italian Unification took place between 1815 and 1866. It was a social movement that consolidated different states of the Italian peninsula into the single state of the Kingdom of Italy

¹⁸ Oliviero BERGAMINI, *op.cit.*, p. 58

the Western Front, he was first denied permission to remain and later arrested. Whoever did not follow rules and guidelines of the Ministry was targeted and silenced.

A unique witness of World War I was for sure Emilio Lussu, and Italian soldier from Sardinia who fought and wrote about his experience, in the Asiago Plateau, where Italian troops lost thousand of men in trench warfare. In his masterpiece "A year on the High Plateau"¹⁹ with chilly rationalism, he showed the drama of man in that irrational situation that is war. He is a sharp observer and he describes conscientiously the life of soldiers into the trench.

The dimension of the conflict was huge in comparison with former wars of the past century (XIX). Perhaps, this could be a partial justification of the impotence of journalism to report the first worldwide conflict. The public opinion is a strategic weapon. Consensus building could be crucial to win or lose the war.

2.5 The Spanish Civil War

Between the two major conflicts of the twentieth century, the civil war that took place in Spain (1936-1939) was a major fight between two ideologies: totalitarianism and democracy. This terrible war was geographically located in just one nation, but the victims were extremely numerous. Support came to help both parties: Franco's militia, supported by Germany and Italy, the two European totalitarianisms; various volunteers from all over Europe supported the republicans.

A chance for good war reporting could arise from this conflict, after the negative outcome of the First World War. Radio

¹⁹ Emilio LUSSU, *Un anno sull'Altipiano*, Torino, Einaudi, 1945

transmissions were spreading and radio became so a new tool to broadcast news. Photography became an effective tool to journalism. A new conception of newspaper was born, the newsmagazine. The American “Times” and “Life” were leading the international scene.

A significant number of correspondents gathered in Spain to follow the events: among these, Ernest Hemingway and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. The majority of them sympathized with the republican cause. This brought no neutrality in the reports of journalists. The ideological meaning behind the war was too strong not to take sides. Emblematic was the example of “*The New York Times*” that published articles from both its correspondent on each side. On the Franco’s front, William Carney delivered a partisan description focused on violence against Catholic priests. The outcome of this intensive one-way comparison gave a softer view of Fascist’s violence against the republicans.

2.5.1. Indro Montanelli

An important figure of Italian war journalism was Indro Montanelli, born in Fucecchio (Italy) in 1909. He served as correspondent in the Spanish Civil War. His idiosyncratic and particularly undiplomatic style made him often unpopular among his colleagues. After reporting on the Abyssinia War, led by the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini in order to create the Italian Empire, as a conscript (he served as soldier while keeping on writing) he was sent to Spain as foreign correspondent for the daily newspaper “*Il messaggero*”. There he started to become one of the most known and reputed journalist as it was afterwards, especially in the second part of the twentieth century. His steady and composed write-up of the civil war made him look as not as triumphalist as all the other

Italian correspondents, who were backed by the fascist regime in Italy. In 1939, he was expelled²⁰ from the fascist union of journalists, a regime-controlled organization in charge of overseeing the former Italian board of journalists. His expulsion was caused by his anti-rhetorical reports on the Spanish civil war where he described the “battle of Santander” as it occurred: the Italian volunteers marched easily to conquer the city of Santander without resistance. The enemy, the leftist troops of volunteers and the Republicans, was retreating. This truthful and accurate version of facts distuned from the triumphalist reports of other Italian correspondents.

2.5.2. Ernest Hemingway

Already known as a distinguished novelist, Ernest Hemingway, born in Oak Park (United States of America) in 1899, arrived in Spain to report on the civil war in 1937. He was reporting for the North American Newspaper Alliance²¹. His writer nature, as novelist, helped him mixing the harsh coverage in warzones with his innate ability to describe situations, people and facts with adventurous touch. Above all, he was a novelist: indeed, he agreed to report as journalist, but his mastery in prose was a key factor of his success. Dialogues are often present in his reports: they deliver to the reader a real feeling of humanity and awareness of the events. Sometimes referring to his personal experience during World War I in Italy, Hemingway let show through his sympathy for the Republican cause. This preference led to direct his judgment of facts towards the leftist side of the war, sometimes forgetting some awful things on the Republican side. In 1940 he writes *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, where

²⁰ Oliviero BERGAMINI, op.cit., p. 77

²¹ Oliviero BERGAMINI, op.cit., p. 79

some of those unreported facts on the Spanish civil war would come unclosed.

2.5.3. Robert Capa and the photo-reportage



Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death, Cerro Muriano, September 5, 1936

The Spanish civil war was the starting point for photo reporting. In this particular event, the rise and optimization of new technological innovations, such as smaller cameras for photographic use, and the subsequent printing of photo magazines helped to develop a new job: the photo reporter. The visual element of journalism took off immediately: a picture can explain better than a thousand words. Magazines and also newspapers started to devote resources and people on this powerful tool of communication.

Robert Capa²², born in Budapest in 1913, has been one of the greatest war photo reporters in history. Born in Austria-Hungary, had to leave his country due to political issues when still young. He then lived and studied in Berlin but after the nazist party came to power he had to flee Germany due to racial laws. He eventually moved in Paris. The most famous photography for which he gained fame is known as “The Death of a Loyalist Militiaman”. If journalism is to report facts, photojournalism is to show facts.

2.6 World War II

From a journalistic point of view, World War II was something unpredictable and hard to narrate. A world-wide conflict spreading almost everywhere on the planet, new deadly weapons made by the most industrialized countries at that moment and almost fifty million casualties marked a point of no return in human history. The role of correspondent sometimes mixed with other roles: Italian partisans or Japanese soldiers could end up writing and reporting involuntary, turning themselves into reporters. This was caused by the hugeness of the conflict and the atrocities that took place. All these elements took a high number of reporters on the job. According to Michael Roth almost three thousand journalists were sent as correspondents²³: but this number is obviously referring to those sent by newspapers and magazine. There is no trace of those who found themselves on the battlefield and later on wrote about what they saw

²² Born Endre Ernő Friedmann to a Jewish family, he was an Hungarian war photographer . He left Austria-Hungary to study in Germany. He later fled Germany to reach Paris in order to escape persecution of the nazist regime

²³ Oliviero BERGAMINI, *op.cit.*, p. 91

and experienced. This unofficial way of telling war was probably the most incisive mean of reporting.

A bigger step forward on communication was possible with the spreading of the radio. News could reach live broadcast every place in the world, making possible a live commentary of events. This technological tool made also possible something that was impossible before: even illiterates could understand news and reports. The sound of battles and the shouting of soldiers coming from battlegrounds had a bigger communicative impact than any reporter could write about.

Governments tried to apply pressure on radios, as they did on newsmagazines and newspaper: the internal consensus to sustain war efforts, from an industrial and human point of view, was crucial to the conflict. The critical point of keeping the internal consensus high was to give citizens, by controlling press and radios, an ideological key of interpretation of the war. For Nazi Germany the propaganda outlined the war as a terrible but necessary effort to preserve and defend the so-called Arian race from its enemies; the United Kingdom and the United States of America focused on fighting totalitarianism of Germany and Japan with the principles of freedom and democracy; the Soviet Union based his propaganda on the defense of communism and its values. In any case, it is clear that the basic distinction between what it is supposed to be evil and what it is supposed to be good is at the bottom of the communication strategy of every nation who took part to the war. In Italy, the fascist regime already controlled the press before hostilities started. Mussolini was depicted as great statistician who was committed to peace by Italian newspapers.

2.6.1. Propaganda-Kompanien

A consistent part of information coming from battlefields was transmitted to the population by state-controlled bulletins²⁴ and diplomatic statements, not by journalists who could literally have had boots on the ground. This fact allowed governments to distort news and so doing manipulate information in order to tell the people what was necessary to strengthen public consensus to war: retreat became defensive strategy, the smallest breakthrough became a triumph.

In Germany the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda²⁵, directed by Joseph Goebbels, had the task to manipulate every newspaper, magazine, radio broadcasting and over all to create an effective visual propaganda. This was possible by shooting movies and newsreel especially designed to glorify and fire up the Nazi regime and the war they were carrying out, in spite of all the sufferance of the German people. He created a specialized body for it: the "Division for the Propaganda in the armed forces"²⁶. This entity was organized in mini units called "Propaganda-Kompanien". Journalists, cameramen, photographers and radio operators formed every unit, who were sent with troops at war, reporting a falsified version of facts to the public. In particular it was forbidden to show dead German soldiers on pictures²⁷; obviously if that had happened it would have been a huge impact on public opinion. Anyway, in the beginning of the war, Germany seemed quite large-handed with

²⁴ Mimmo CANDITO, op. cit., pp. 303-304

²⁵ From the German "Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda"

²⁶ Oliviero BERGAMINI, op.cit., p. 95

²⁷ *Ibidem*

foreign correspondents, especially American ones. A “Department for Foreign Press” was created under the guide of Karl Bonner²⁸. But the real duty of this structure was to control over letters and draw off those who were too critical with regard to the Nazi regime. Nevertheless, during the first phases of hostilities, American papers were pretty much full of information from Germany: this false press opening led in the first place to a softer military reaction from the Allies. Once the United State of American enters the war, collaboration with independent reporters is over. Radio and newsreel had a significant function with the hiding of the extermination of Jews, homosexuals, gypsies and political opponents. They broadcast falsities as the “redeployment” in Eastern Europe of those who were held prisoners in lager camps. This campaign helped the horror of the Shoah to be remain untold.

2.6.2. Minculpop

Meanwhile in Italy, the Ministry of Popular Culture²⁹, a fascist invention to control press, carried on censorship. Specifically, the most significant proof of this strategic operation was the creation and implementation of a system of “veline”, messages transmitted regularly to newspaper with guide lines to follow in writing reports and news: what to say, what not to say and how to write about certain facts. During the conflict, there were monthly meetings in Rome at the Ministry with the directors of all national newspaper. What the fascist government tried to pursuit was a strong faith in the fascist cause and the demonization of the enemy. Every resource had to be coordinated in order to be effective on the public opinion.

²⁸ *Ibidem*

²⁹ Abbreviated as Minculpop in Italian

In this particular context, press if considered as a weapon: Italian minister of Popular Culture, Alessandro Pavolini, referred to newspapers as “a professional weapon [...] to spread this faith [the fascism] among the Italian people”³⁰

The Italian army and state structure was not ready for what later became the World War II. Industries were not prepared to bear the burden of a continuous war with multiple battlefronts. The army did not have appropriate armaments to face the organized Allied and Allied-supplied forces. Additionally, the military chain of command of Navy and Army lacked in tactic and strategic direction. The press was totally fascist-controlled prior to the war. That helped to monopolized during the war the sources and outcomes of information in Italy. But the fate of the conflict was gaining shape day by day. The Italian forces suffered severe losses in Russia, in the Balkans and in the northern African desert. The Italian people were not longer so persuaded of the triumphalist tone of newspapers. The regime coped with this outspoken reality using tones of justification, which started to sound far rhetoric and sometimes ridiculous to the Italian reader who was no more convinced of news.

Few examples of some sufficient journalism in that period could be found in the works of Dino Buzzati, Indro Montanelli and Curzio Malaparte. In any case, none of these three journalists, who were accredited to the fascist party, will ever unveil the real problems, defeats and eventually the truth of facts on battlefields. What emerged from the reports of these journalists was a clear inhumane sense of what war is. But not more than this: they were in any case subjugated to the fascist regime. The Italian press lapsed

³⁰ Oliviero BERGAMINI, *op.cit.*, p. 97

as well into silence, especially omitting the fate of the Jews and all other innocent victims killed in concentration camps.

2.6.3. Strategy of Truth

While in the Soviet Union and Japan Empire press and journalists were fully subdued to the political power, in the United Kingdom and the United States of America the state of journalism during World War II had some distinctive features.

The indiscriminate governmental policy of controlling the press during World War I in Great Britain had critically damaged the reliability of the press. But, as necessity knows no law, the second world conflict has been itself characterized by different features compared to the first world conflict. In this particular world-wide war, the very need of United Kingdom was not, as it was at the beginning of the century, the manipulation of public consensus in order to sustain the cause of war: by contrast, Hitler and its allies were truly committed to conquer the world and to invade the Isle of Great Britain. Wherefore, the spirit of the British people was already highly patriotic, with no need to fire it up. The government needed and succeeded in building such strong relation with the people, in order to spread the common sense of duty to protect the homeland from the German menace. Indeed, this did to lead to a complete freedom of the press. But the controlling hand of the government became a little bit softer. A dedicated Ministry of Information was created in 1939, as Britain declared war. It was in charge of censorship and control of press and it decided which reporters could be accredited. War publicity was one of the main tasks that the Ministry had to carry on and it was perfectly consistent with governmental policy of sustain the inherent patriotic spirit already present in people's minds. Great

focus and weight was given to visual publicity, using motivational posters. One the most famous one was the “Keep Calm and Carry on”, although it was never used (but printed in 2,5 million copies).



“Keep Calm and Carry On” motivational poster, 1939, Ministry of Information of the United Kingdom

The German bombings of London helped increasing the hate for Germany and its will to conquer Europe. The British Broadcasting Company ³¹ chose deliberately to follow a mix strategy of communication, mixing governmental propaganda with (partially) truthful news and reports from warzones.

The United States of America (USA) did not enter war until 1941. For almost two years from the German invasion of Poland, American reporters and journalists could deliver good coverage of events, even from the German front. This was possible due to

³¹ The British Broadcasting Company, known as BBC

neutrality status of the USA. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941, things immediately changed. The government created and sustained a huge apparatus to control and censor press: the Office of War Information. It was a military-controlled civil office, under government direct control. Overseeing and influencing press is now seen and used as a weapon, as a specific tool to use against the enemy. But moreover, the Allies forces set up new radios and broadcasting services wherever they could gain terrain in battlefields. This was a brilliant piece of modern warfare and surely helped and galvanized the local Resistance to help the Allied forces. Generals eventually started an unofficial relationship with accredited journalists who often could report directly from battleships and frontlines³². This feeling of trust and duty among military commands and journalists, who decided to do their part in the battle against Nazism and totalitarianism, shaped a unique protocol of news reporting. Generals freely discussed their plans and shared preoccupations and failures while reporters were listening: they would eventually select and modify information to sustain a positive and confident tone with readers.

³² Oliviero BERGAMINI, *op.cit.*, p. 105 -107

2.7 The aftermath of World War Two

The destruction and the death toll of WWII led to a global awareness to stop the use of war as tool to deal with international controversies. The new charts of national states and international organizations, such as the United Nations, started to include this principle as fundamental to a world where peace could reign. Obviously wars did not stop. They just changed their nature: from worldwide two-side conflicts to regional multi-side conflicts. Even if almost every *ministry of war* turned into *ministry of defense*, national states kept pursuing national economic and political objectives. Many regional wars took place between the end of World War Two and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late eighties. The world was unofficially divided in two political blocks: the capitalistic West, led by the United States of America, and the communist East, led by the U.S.S.R. Due to the strict control of press by the Soviet, most journalists ended up to support the American version of facts, because the leftist press or so-called independent press was clearly bind to the communist parties of their national state.

The first forgotten war³³ of this cold war era was the Korean War, where almost three million people died. The United States of America succeeded to have the Security Council of the United Nations approve a resolution (the Soviet delegate was absent otherwise a veto would have been used) to authorize the intervention in Korea to stop the communist North Korea from conquering the South. This new protocol gave this war a formal legitimation by the newborn United Nations organization. The Korean War ended in 1953 with borders almost unchanged and the loss of three million

³³ Oliviero BERGAMINI, *op.cit.*, p. 135, as historian Marilyn Young stated

lives, including fifty-four thousand American soldiers. At the beginning of hostilities, reporters accredited to the United Nations had the chance to write about facts without limitation. American soldiers were young and partly untrained: episodes of troops running away from North Korean soldiers were not so uncommon³⁴. General Douglas MacArthur, to stop reporters to describe these scenes of disorganization and retreat, ordered them to censure themselves. This started a vibrant debate among journalists and army officials that ended with reporters being collocated under direct military authority. Clearly newspapers, through their correspondents, showed a pro-American version of facts. The Korean War seemed “right”, in order to fight the rampant Communism in Asia. However, the possibility of using the atomic bomb (the Western public opinion was not completely aware of the aftermath of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that ended World War Two), the consistent loss of American soldiers, the test of napalm bombs (later massively used in the Vietnam War) and the complete lack of information about civilian deaths in Korea started an internal debate among journalists: has the public opinion got the right to know and be informed on such secret and devastating matters? This rigid control and the “patriotic” tone that assumed these regional conflicts in a wider contraposition of pro-America West and pro-Soviet Union East³⁵ undermined the independency of reporters.

³⁴ Oliviero BERGAMINI, *op.cit.*, p. 136

³⁵ Mimmo CANDITO, *op. cit.*, p. 418

2.8 Vietnam

The Vietnam War is a milestone for war reporting. For the first time, courage and responsibility to truthfully reports by brave journalists influenced and stood against the political power. The brutality and inanity of war were unveiled to the public: this led to mass protests in the U.S.A. that eventually drove the country out of the conflict and let the communist forces of the North to win and reunite Vietnam. Photo reporting had a major role in telling what was going on in Indochina. Ronald Haeberle's reportage of My Lai massacre on March 16, 1968 shocked the American public. Published two months after the massacre by leading newsmagazine such as *Time*, *Life* and *Newsweek* shocked the American public opinion and led to massive protests and rising anti-war movements.

1st Photos of Viet Mass Slaying

WEATHER
Saw berries and
oatler today.
High in the upper 20s.
Details on Page 8-C.

THE PLAIN DEALER

FINAL
Stocks & Races
Dow-Jones off 5.21

128TH YEAR—NO. 324

OHIO'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER
CLEVELAND, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1969

96 PAGES 10 CENTS



A clump of bodies on a road in South Vietnam.

© 1969, Ronald L. Haeberle

Exclusive

This photograph will shock Americans as it shocked the editors and the staff of The Plain Dealer. It was taken by a young Cleveland area man while serving as a photographer with the U.S. Army in South Vietnam.

It was taken during the attack by American soldiers on the South Vietnamese village My Lai, an attack which has made world headlines in recent days with disclosures of mass killings allegedly at the hands of American soldiers.

This photograph and others on two special pages are the first to be published anywhere of the killings.

This particular picture shows a clump of bodies of South Vietnamese civilians which includes women and children. Why they were killed raises one of the most momentous questions of the war in Vietnam.

Cameraman Saw GIs Slay 100 Villagers

By JOSEPH ESTERHAK
(c) 1969, The Plain Dealer

Front page of the "Plain Dealer", on November 20, 1969, showing the bodies of the innocent victim of My Lai Massacre.

The freedom of movement of reporters and the absence of censorship were a unique occurrence in the history of war journalism. The unconventional fighting techniques of the conflict, the undeclared state of war, the chaotic changing of front lines (due to Vietcong fighting strategies) helped this freedom to report to spread throughout the entire duration of the War. Foreign journalists who could fly to Saigon with a presentation letter of any newspaper of the world were “immediately appointed Major of the United States Army in order to go, as journalist, in every sector of the frontline with high priority in military planes and helicopters”³⁶, refers Tiziano Terzani, an Italian journalist and writer.

Somehow, Vietnam was the war of photo reporting consecration and maybe the only one. Equipped with lighter and portable cameras, reporters were able to deliver real and tough information. Pieces of History are pictures as the execution of a prisoner by Saigon’s Police Chief, taken by photographer Edward Adams; or the notorious “napalm girl” by Nick Út, a Vietnamese reporter who won the Pulitzer Prize in 1973. Due to the unconventionality of the Vietnam War, a *new journalism* started to exist. The classic rigid structure of war reporting was being substituted by a pragmatic, simple and direct telling of facts. Reportages started to appear in unconventional newspaper and magazines, such as “Rolling Stone”³⁷.

2.8.2 Women reporters in Vietnam

War changed its features after WWII. Indeed, the world was entering the Cold War Era. But in this sequence of events, women

³⁶ Oliviero BERGAMINI, *op.cit.*, p. 162

³⁷ Oliviero BERGAMINI, *op.cit.*, p. 160

finally gained a central role in journalism. Almost seventy women were accredited as journalists in the Vietnam War. Dickey Chapelle was a central figure in this particular time. She died in Vietnam hit by a land mine on November 4, 1965. Her history of reporting starts during the WWII, when women were officially banned from battlefields. It took defiance like Chapelle's to open the doors to women covering war.³⁸

Among female war reporters, the name of Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci sticks out. Correspondent for "L'Europeo", she writes with a clear and direct style. War is not just what armies and soldiers are doing on daily basis. Above all, war is what and how people are affected by it. Oriana Fallaci tried and succeeded in delivering a wider perspective: from the old poor Vietnamese farmer to the highest army general. She describes the indiscriminate bombings of civilian targets and the chaotic situation of the American Army; but at the same time she reports on how the Vietcong exert violence and intimidation towards the population.

The Vietnam Conflict was a unique exception in war reporting. The nature of conflict, with a "underdeveloped" enemy winning over the most powerful nation on earth, the chaotic changing of battlefields, the unconventional tactics of war, all these factors gave reporters a chance to cover events as never was given before. The Vietnam War received the best journalistic coverage of all times. After this American failure, authorities learnt how a free press (or a well-controlled one) can be such a weapon and how it can influence radically the fate of the conflict. Hostile press can make nations lose a war.

³⁸ <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-clayton-female-war-correspondents-20151110-story.html>

2.9 The rise of *News Management*

After the Vietnam experience, nations worldwide learnt the lesson of uncontrolled press in time of war: the USA lost a conflict partly due to hostile (and almost entirely truthful) reports on the conduct of operations. The Vietnam War was a unique exception in war journalism. During the seventies, but more specifically during the eighties and nineties, when Soviet Union went to collapse, the USA and lots of other nations in the world had to cope with a new phase in modern warfare: the *Revolution in Military Affairs*³⁹. Technology had made big steps forward in electronics and consequently in telecommunication and satellite transmissions. Armaments and weapons became so sophisticated that soldiers on the ground looked so old-fashioned compared to missiles that could hit precisely a target from enormous distance with just a laser guide. At the same time, television transmission took over radios and photo reporting. War was brought live and in color to people's houses. Obviously, to reach a higher number of "consumers", as television networks main objective is to reach a large audience to make profits, the level of information and accurate examination of reports dropped to basic level of understanding. People are conceptually fed with little pieces of information that can be easily understood even with a low grade of education. Usually, these small information inputs are given in a *all-news* communication system, a television format first used in 1980 by the Cable News Network, worldwide known as CNN, recognized as the first totem of news, broadcasting twenty-four hours a day non-stop. The rise and affirmation of *all-news* networks helped governments in influencing once again press and the public opinion.

³⁹ Oliviero BERGAMINI, *op.cit.*, p. 188

Far from the rigid censorship seen during the two World Wars, authorities switched to a smarter strategy of control: *news management*. Press is given, up to saturation, news and bulletins on daily basis. Doing so, governments adopt a collaborative strategy with (or against) press. This cooperative will of authorities is a smart tactic to flood out the flux of news available to the public, manipulating and emphasizing what they really want to show to people. Thus, governments are not hiding “bad” news but they just making them look and resound so marginal.

2.9.1. The first Gulf War

The response of the USA and their allies to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait was the triumph and the affirmation of the *Revolution in Military Affairs*. Saddam Hussein’s army was literally annihilated by the American army, using mostly aerial raids and remote control missiles. The beginning of hostilities (or better, the beginning of the bombings) was broadcast worldwide by CNN, a first time in History. War enters houses at the same it is happening. War unfortunately starts to look familiar. The era of dry and severe reports by brave reporters in battlefields is over. Television brings war at home, selecting images to sell images. War is turning into entertainment. In this case the USA, the major force intervening in Kuwait, applied almost perfectly a *news management* control over press and journalists. The American government created a pool system to sustain the winking towards the reporters. They were offered to cover the war at government’s expenses, by following certain rules, called *ground rules*⁴⁰. These rules limited the freedom of reporting, of

⁴⁰ Oliviero BERGAMINI, op.cit., p. 219

movement and above they gave rigid limitation on the content of reports. It was all justified with the excuse of not giving the enemy some advantage in battle. In reality, the American military supremacy was undisputed. Journalists failed to give resonance to those facts that showed technological failure due to human error. Such as the bombing of Al Ameryah, a bomb shelter where more than five hundred people, mostly children and women, died. But the *news management* policy let this fact slip away as “collateral damage”.

2.9.2. The Balkans

Following the disaggregation of the Soviet Union, the Yugoslavian Federation fell apart and ended up in an ethnic civil war. The Western countries, especially the European ones, basically ignored the conflict. Massacres of civilian, genocide and war crimes were taking place without no foreign intervention, neither the United Nations. Instead, reporters were already on the scene. They spent months in Sarajevo or Belgrade. But they were at the mercy of Serbian authorities that discriminated and often used violence against journalists from specific countries, mainly American and British⁴¹. The intensity of fighting changed over time, making coverage of events sometimes repetitive. The television coverage that was possible during the Gulf War, with live direct of bombings and missiles raids, became impossible under censorship of belligerents and alternation of rough combat and temporary stops of fighting. The role of journalists took and humanitarian form: information was specifically directed to western political leaders, in order to obtain a quick intervention on what would later reveal as a

⁴¹ Mimmo CANDITO, op. cit., p. 50

atrocious massacre and genocide from every part that was taking part in the conflict.

The former Yugoslavian medias were totally used by Croatia and Serbia to fuel up hate between civilians⁴². In this case, a strange parallelism sticks out: the world media coverage of the war and the internal propaganda carried on with hatred by battling sides. The Balkan war theatre revealed itself as a complicated panorama in which the right of reporting got mixed up with responsibility to take sides in order to demand international intervention.

2.9.3. War on Terror: Afghanistan and Iraq

After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 when televisions show worldwide live the collapsing of the Twin Towers, the world entered a new phase of conceiving war. American president George W. Bush declared “war on terror”. But war is usually declared between two or more nations, state entities. This declaration opened up a new concept of war “everywhere, anywhere”. Thus, there are no territorial limits to action and no temporal deadline. The post-Soviet Union phase was turning into a “Christian West against Islamic East” phase of History. This is what have been conceived and pursued by some governments, the same who found justification for collateral wars in the two-block Cold War era. In this particular state of things, journalists found themselves in a very uneasy position. Large media corporations usually linked to political authority or under lobbies’ influence, enjoy huge communication power and easy diffusion. Under the (shadow) guide

⁴² Paolo RUMIZ, *Maschere per un massacro. Quello che non abbiamo voluto sapere della guerra in Jugoslavia*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 2013

of governmental news managers the new propaganda compromises the equability of reporters who find themselves at the bottom of these communication giants. Moreover, asymmetry is a distinctive feature of this new war condition. Sophisticated weapons are unable to neutralize simple and often unorganized groups. War becomes dilated in time, areas and mode. Therefore, where is the reporter supposed to operate?

2.9.4. Al Jazeera

In a global scenario where Western powers somehow monopolize the 24-hour news network market, a brilliant idea gave the Arab-world its leading source of information. The Middle East has been the theatre of countless conflicts that are still on today: the Arab-Israeli, the Syrian Civil War. Even if the starting staff of Al Jazeera was basically the whole personnel of former BBC “Arab Service”⁴³, Al Jazeera has grown attention in the Western world when in 2007 it started a new channel in English language (the official one is in standard Arabic). It has been offering a different point of view and gave the Arab world resonance in a Western-dominated information world, particularly during the so-called Arab Spring⁴⁴.

⁴³ Oliviero BERGAMINI, *op.cit.*, p. 262

⁴⁴ Between 2010 and 2012, a series of violent and non-violent demonstration, riots and often civil wars took place in almost every nation of the Arab world

CHAPTER 3

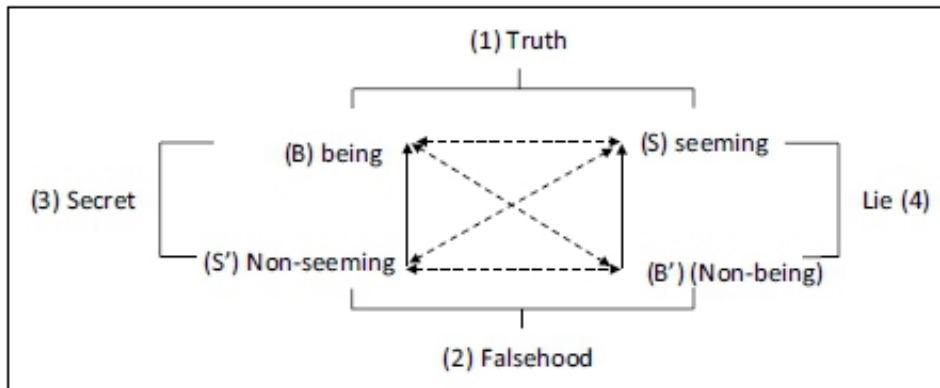
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

3.1 Tactics and objectives in *News Management*

Originated in the post-Vietnam phase in the United States of America, *News Management* is still evolving and consolidating. The old mode of censorship, imposed from Napoleonic Battles to WWII, was based on rigid and resolute will to eliminate certain news, making them disappear not to reach public opinion; on the contrary, *News Management* (from now on NM) is characterized by a constant flux of news, in order to saturate the “news market” and the offer given to people.

NM is made up by two key elements⁴⁵: first, the creation of events and news that are not urgently consistent with reality, giving them misleading nouns (example: “strategic retreat” instead of “defeat”); second, the controlled broadcasting and circulation of these inaccurate news. Taking inspiration by Greimas and Courtès semiotic quadrant used to explain relations between truth (being + seeming), false (not being + not seeming), illusory (not being + seeming) and secret (being + not seeming), Rossella Savarese adapts and creates a new quadrant where the two antonyms are not more “being “ and “seeming” but “informing” and “withholding”.

⁴⁵ Rossella SAVARESE, *Guerre intelligenti. Stampa, radio, tv, informatica: la comunicazione politica dalla Crimea al Golfo Persico*, Milano, Franco Angeli S.r.l., 1992, p. 15



Greimas and Courtès semiotic quadrant.

Source: www.scielo.org.za

It is clear how NM counts on the articulation of two specific activities: informing and withholding. To compensate the probability of having an unwelcome report to emerge, authorities flood the “news market” with made-up bulletins and news in order to sweep under the carpet what is not unacceptable from a governmental point of view. Moreover, as depicted above, the risk of censorship is to end up having a scoop. NW, instead, bears no risk because: first, disinformation is its goal (and so if achieved it sustains the cause of NM); second, it cannot be considered censorship (that could lead to scoop).

3.2 Technology and news broadcasting

As drafted in earlier chapters, communication between battlefields and editorial offices has massively influenced the time taken to transmit reports, helping reducing time gap between source

and reader. In spite of this technological advance, the quality of news transmitted has not always improved but often got worse.

The first upgrade of broadcasting from simple pen letters has been the use of the telegraph. Especially during the War in Crimea, the use of this device had become vital to send news from the battlefields directly to newspapers in central Europe and over the ocean. Letters could take months to be delivered; telegraphic communications take few minutes. The “demand” for news was so high that journalists at home often made up fake articles from short element of reports⁴⁶; readers had in any case no chance to check if events had been told truthfully. A similar pattern occurred during the American civil war⁴⁷ when European newspapers demanded continue news flow from oceanic telegraphic cables. The *New York Tribune* and the *London Daily News* agreed to create a unique synergy to transmit dispatches⁴⁸. Both newspapers could use reporters’ communications sent by the other newspaper. Although this collaboration was fruitful, it was merely achieved to fill up more pages, considering the wide spreading of daily paper journals partially due to an improvement in the access to basic schooling and so an increase in the number of people who could read.

3.3 From *yellow journalism* to *penny press*

During the second half of the nineteenth-century, a certain type of journalism based on eye-catching headlines and no control of

⁴⁶ Rossella SAVARESE, op.cit, p. 89

⁴⁷ The American Civil War took place between 1861 and 1865 with the resulting victory of the Union against the Confederation. This outcome led to the creation of the present day United States of America

⁴⁸ Rossella SAVARESE, op.cit, p. 91

sources overspread, especially in the USA. Writing and visual techniques such as exaggerations and scandal-based articles were deliberately used to sell more copies. It is commonly used to describe poor and low quality journalism. Paradoxically, one of the men who had strongly introduced and helped to spread this communication technique later created the most desired prize for high-quality journalism in the United States: the Pulitzer Prize. Established by Joseph Pulitzer in 1917, this prize is an award for excellence in newspaper journalism, literary achievements or musical compositions. Nevertheless, Pulitzer's main strategy focused on reaching poorly educated readers⁴⁹, using basic-English lexicon simplified by using eye-catching titles and clear fonts. Mainly devoted to internal scoops, *yellow journalism* was used to describe war as well. News given to the public were tragically modified if not completely invented. It helped, for example, to sustain and justify the American support to Cuban rebels in the ten-year war of 1868. An American ship was accidentally destroyed in the port of La Havana; the American newspaper made it sound as a deliberate act of retaliation for the US support to rebels⁵⁰.

Whereas *Penny press* is based on the tabloid-style newspapers that gave middle class citizens access to information at a relative cheap price. Mostly interested in police-related and crime-related articles, the growing middle class was given, when available, war reports because *war always sells*. This socio-economic assumption is sustained by the growing power and wealth of the working class in the second half of nineteenth-century. Increasing welfare leads to a higher (even if basic) grade of education that asks for a consistent demand for news. Gaining political weight as middle

⁴⁹ Rossella SAVARESE, *op.cit*, p. 175

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*

working class also leads to desire of understanding international news, to count as internal political stake of voting citizens. War becomes a “product” that newspaper has to “sell” in a lucrative way to gain profits by selling copies. Consequently, routine maneuvers and unshaking news do not fit in. Often editors pump up titles and facts, to achieve a higher eye-catching effect: ending up giving an untruthful report of war to people.

3.4 Radio Days

The appearance of the radio in History marked a strong step in telecommunications. It can reach everyone, including those who, due to illiteracy, could not read and consequently have no access to information; it is on live broadcasting; it can basically reach any outpost or locations. For this particular matters, it has been feared in its starting uses by governments, who had to find a way to control this massive tool for communication. A clear example of governmental intervention is to be found in the Italian fascist regime of Benito Mussolini. In a 1929 memorandum of the Ministry of External Affairs, it is clear that some Italian newspapers spread “deformed” and “biased” (according to the fascist government) information broadcast the previous evening via radio from Paris, Prague and Bern⁵¹. This urged Mussolini to set new parameters to radio and a strict control on transmissions. Furthermore, the regime understood the potential of this brand new tool and focused the propaganda broadcasting on radio networks. The effectiveness of it lies in its expressivity, the possibility of transmitting rumors and sounds. Besides, radio is able to combine two key dimensions: time

⁵¹ Rossella SAVARESE, *op.cit*, p. 101

and space. People can have a real feeling of being participants of the event at the very time it is happening.

During WWII this innovative item overcomes press on reporting sphere and affirms itself as a strategic communication instrument and more over as weapon. First, it was fundamental for political propaganda; second, it was one of the key elements that helped various Resistance groups to be in touch with each other's. Radio became a useful tool for various purposes: to signal and alert population of incoming air raids, *Radio Napoli* voluntarily silenced itself⁵².

Radio has so gained two fundamental functions: to broadcast information censored by government to sustain wartime efforts or by contrast being military strategy to implement and support Resistance and population affected by war.

3.5 Video killed the radio star

During WWII newsreels made up of footage from European and Pacific battlegrounds were edited in short productions bound for cinemas. In the war aftermath, the fast industrialization and technological advance, especially in the USA, delivered better visual equipment. In spite of this improvement, television was not yet able to supersede radio as principal mean of communication of news. It was very difficult to set up and maintain live transmissions.

But with the Vietnam War (once again a mile stone for war reporting) things changed. Cameras were smaller and easy to carry. The scandals over American actions in Vietnam demanded better reporting material on the facts. Radio and paper were not enough.

⁵² Rossella SAVARESE, op.cit, p. 104

The socio-political turmoil of the sixties in the USA (civil rights movements, anti-war protests) helped people to grow a higher sense of awareness towards world events and the terrible Vietnam conflict. Anyway, cameramen almost always shot from a soldier point of view. Images showed American troops under attack: this led to a biased result on public opinion. Even if scandals and massacres were (softly) documented, this special point of view gave the American forces some kind of *good boys* fame. Equipment and cameras are expensive items that only huge news corporation could afford. Corporations were indeed under political and economic influences. Then typical war reportage was made of public officials statements, followed by selected footage, in order to make the television report pleasing the governmental institutions that used to lobby big corporations⁵³.

Television's limitations were unveiled above all during the Falklands War. Footage could only be sent via ship mail or using satellite systems, such as INMARSTA or MARISAT. These services were both expensive and overstretch. Most of the filming had to send by ship, which could take over a week to reach mainland.

3.6 Internet and social medias

Since the 2003 Iraq Invasion, Internet has settled the actual standards of news communications. Moreover, everyone holding a cellphone or a small camera can "report" from warzone. In present day Syrian Conflict, daily sufferings and bombings are directly reported by those affected by them. So, what is the reporter doing nowadays?

⁵³ Rossella SAVARESE, op.cit, p. 128

This easy and massive access to Internet and the growing power as diffusion means of social medias such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and many others, is digitally flooding the “market for news” worldwide. Sources are not cited, those who film are not professional: but still, the impact of live streaming from warzones footage is undeniable.

Journalism has involuntarily switched from a vertical centralized hierarchical system of censorship and selection to a horizontal unprofessional messy flux of information, available to anyone. News websites, television corporations more often use amateur footage sent by readers and spectators. Youtube has become a never-ending source of reporting. Many scandals and secreted information had been show after imprudent “posting” of videos on the World Wide Web. Thus, the private sphere of citizens somehow has mixed with the public journalistic network.

Digital communication means has also become the favorite instrument to communicate of terrorists groups, which goal is to bypass media corporations’ mediation between source and receivers.

Journalists face a new demanding challenge: what to censure of these materials, often showing execution of prisoners and other atrocities? To which extent can the right of reporting go further? Has press become a “weapon of mass distraction”? Can this weapon be considered as a unconventional war strategy?

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